

## Highland School District #203

### District Office

Monday, May 4, 2026

### Regular AM Board Meeting -7:30 a.m.

The **May 4, 2026, AM Regular Board Meeting/Study Session** was convened by Vice Chair Cindy Reed at 7:39 a.m. Those present included board members Craig Chronister, Kerry Jones, and Carlos Lopez, Superintendent Mindy Schultz, Director of Business & Operations Francis Badu, incoming Executive Director of Business & Operations Patrick Timme, and Recording Secretary Julie Notman. Board member Lupita Flores was absent.

#### II. Business:

**A. Communication Check-In:** Nothing to report/share.

**B. Employee of the Year Nominations:** Francis shared that he selected Angel Flores Lagunas for the Business & Operations Employee of the Year. Angel is a bus driver but also our mechanic who does repairs in-house saving the district from having to outsource work, thus saving the district money. He trouble-shoots problems and finds answers and is a very valuable asset to the district.

HMS Principal Don Strother joined the meeting via speaker phone from 7:42 – 7:52. Nominees: Certified Jami Pottratz, and Classified Lourdes Díaz. They both work very hard, take their work very personal, and take on so much. They are open and own what they do at the middle school. They don't have to be asked to do things because they just do it. Lourdes is the face of HMS, always has a smile and is in a good mood, she is steady, a rock and a treat to work with every day. She connects so well with both the staff, the students and their families. Jami: I think every year she maximizes her load. Math is her 'baby' but she is also teaching US History for the first time and doing well, she took on the Leadership class, and the ASB and Yearbook advisor positions this year. She has incorporated a lot more student voice and participation, impacting the culture and atmosphere of our school. She has a very high standard of doing things.

TES Principal Brandon Jensen joined the meeting 7:53 – 8:02. Brandon explained how the nominees are selected from staff input that most often matches his own choices. José Gutiérrez was chosen for Classified and Cristian Tejeda for Certified. Brandon said Jose has tremendous pride in the school, seeks ways to improve efficiency and makes the school cleaner and more presentable. He is a great example for the students, who always want to help him. José is always smiling and eager to help. Cristian is a humble person, always seeking input to improve his teaching. He builds relationships with students who seek him out: he is one of the only teachers that takes his own time to be out on the playground and in the lunchroom to interact with students, is very professional and has awesome classroom management skills.

Director of State & Federal Programs Kirsten Lenz joined the meeting from 8:13 – 8:22. Kirsten explained that she and Director of Special Ed & SEL, Courtney Sund, collaborate each year on Employee of the Year for the Student Services Department. This year Melissa Larson was selected for Certified and Jizelle Barajas for Classified. Melissa, nominated by her colleagues, is dedicated, there for the kids, uses every single minute to teach. Besides her work in the buildings, she also works in the Newcomer Center helping new students that may not only lack English skills but may not have had any formal education. She comes up with fun and new ways to keep students engaged. Jizelle, also nominated by her peers, works as the SEL para at both MWC and TES with small groups, building emotional regulation skills, she is bilingual, has a wonderful relationship with district families and students, and is very friendly with a caring heart.

HHS Principal Jeremy Gillespie joined the meeting 8:23 – 8:26. Vanessa Williams is the HS Certified nominee. She has 30 years with the district, has served on numerous committees such as the SIT School Improvement team, and served many years as the National Honor Society advisor. Our LEA scores are top of the valley in part due to her, she is a mentor to both teachers and students, and she started the

Student of the Month program. Amanda Baughman is the HS Classified nominee. Amanda is the district nurse, she trains staff and reminds teachers about [medically] high needs students, has made binders for the teachers for those students so it is easy to handle a situation if there is an episode. She manages this and the other nursing needs at all four buildings.

MWC Principal Andrea Wickenhagen joined the meeting 8:17 – 8:33. Lucy Pérez, Certified nominee: She is dedicated to and has high expectations for her students, building confidence and success. Lucy is a true educator-teacher of all ages, is a mentor/leader in the building working collaboratively with staff and is the most requested teacher for college student teacher placement. She embodies excellence in education. Classified nominee: Sarah Peters. Sarah is outstanding, dedicated to student growth, reliable, a leader with her colleagues, needs minimal supervision, helps students be confident and reach their full potential. Sarah connects with students, takes pride and leads by example.

After the last presentation, the board discussed the Business & Operations nominee and decided to award Employee of the Year to Francis as he would never nominate himself. They are impressed with his management of the district's finances which have kept us in good standing financially and with the annual audits. For the other categories, the board reviewed the list of previous nominees and winners as well as this year's nominees. After deliberation they chose Vanessa Williams and Lourdes Díaz for Certified and Classified Employees of the Year, respectively.

**C. 2026-2027 Budget Update:** Francis shared the district's budget policy, and six financial charts explaining each in turn. The first chart, Area District Fund Balance, showed comparisons of fund balances of all area districts over five years. The Cash Flow Forecast chart has HSD monthly revenue and expenditure cash flow throughout the 2025-2026 school year to March 2026, projected monthly amounts through August, a projected total for the year, and an estimated ending fund balance. Francis explained each line item on the 2026-2027 In-Progress Budget chart that listed projected revenue (state and federal) and expenditures, with salaries and benefits being the largest cost. The Actual Budget History chart had the actual district annual revenue and expenditures for school years 2019-20 through 2024-25, and projected amounts for 2025-26 and 2026-27. The next chart, Evaluating Cash Flow, detailed by month the net operation and cash in bank balances for years 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 (through April 2026). The final chart, Capital Levy Cash Flow, is an evaluation of the district's ability to pay for future projects. It showed the LGO Loan, New Bond Debt payment, Tax Collection, Earnings, Expenditures, and Balance from 9/30/2022 to projected amounts on 12/31/2028. Francis shared that the district policy was to maintain a 7.5% fund balance but a couple of years ago the board voted to increase that to 9.0%. It is important to look at finances from the standpoint of how to meet operations in the case of an emergency and how many months we would need to maintain cash flow. If we can maintain 9% of revenue then we are financially stable.

**D. 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of New and/or Revised Policies:** 3220 Freedom of Expression

**E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of New and/or Revised Policies:** 6220 Bid or Request for Proposal Requirements. Both are revised policies. The board acknowledged having read them. Discussed the previously passed 3424 Opioid Related Overdose Reversal policy and who is the first defense in that scenario. Model policies come from WSSDA (Washington State School Directors Association), which has a legal department that stays on top of changing rules and laws and creates or updates policies as needed. Districts can edit them to meet their needs and/or that of their community. The board generally has three opportunities to review each policy and discuss and edit or amend it before adoption.

**F. Superintendent Evaluation, Contract Review:** The board discussed and completed the evaluation, then reviewed it with Mindy. The single area of improvement was an encouragement to continued effort to increase communication, however, it was acknowledged that communication is a two-way street. They commended Mindy for always trying to make things better. Next her 2026-2027 contract was reviewed. There were some language updates, and an increase in salary to more closely match like-sized area district superintendents' salaries. Kerry moved, Carlos 2<sup>nd</sup>, to approve the 2026-2027 Superintendent's Contract as presented; motion passed unanimously.

**G. WSSDA DA 8 Regional Meeting:** May 6, Wapato. None of the board is available to attend.

### **III. Closing Items**

There were no final questions nor comments.

The May 4, 2026, AM meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

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Chair

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Secretary