Board of Education Special Meeting - 1st of 2 (Monday, April 27, 2026)
Generated by Kimberly Grilli on Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Members present
LaToya Dowdell-Burger, Kathleen Walsh, John Kershner, Ashley Zimmer, Dionna Herbert

Meeting called to order at 5:35 PM

A. Call to Order

Procedural: 1. Call to Order - Latoya asked to start on time, but Kathy said John will be here in a moment. Started at 5:35 pm.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

Procedural: 1. Pledge of Allegiance

C. Roll Call

Procedural: 1. Roll Call - All present

D. Agenda Approval

Action 2026-168: 1. Adoption of Agenda
Remove Item G - All agreed because it was not on Special Notice.
John and Kathy submitted a statement that will be added to the minutes about why we should not be having this meeting. Kathy and John expressed that doing this is not what the Board should be doing. The Administration should be doing this, not the Board.
Ashley and Latoya wanted the employees to be heard and express their ideas and thoughts. Latoya brought up that we have done this with other administrators in the last year multiple times and the Board has met with them to hear their complaints/concerns. Why not let these people talk to the Board?

May 27, 2026 School Board Meeting Statement John Kershner Re: Board-Level Exit Interviews This is an attempt by the Board to conduct business that is not Board business. An exit interview is an administrative function, the results of which should be available for public inspection. This appears to be an attempt by the Board to conduct exit interviews in secret and to bind the Board to confidentiality under the threat of lawsuits. This would be a continuation of the Board's violation of Ohio's anti-SLAPP law, officially codified in Ohio Revised Code Sections 2747.01 - 2747.06. I waive all rights of confidentiality regarding this executive session and retain all rights to take notes and share information for the good of the district and in the spirit of proper administrative exit interviews. The information shared will not be statutorily confidential, and I intend to treat it as such. This is a repeated pattern of our current administration and some Board members, following their recent attempt to discuss budget reductions in executive session and their subsequent refusal to have that discussion in public. Please also note that the invited participants are under no obligation of confidentiality, and I am participating as an observer to protect the public's interest. I intend to ask questions that would be typical of such an interview. I do not have any idea who is going to be interviewed. That appears to be held in confidence by a select few. How can any Board member prepare themselves under this shroud of secrecy? I also believe that the Board will be left with two simple choices: one is to conduct a proper interview and violate the Open Meetings Act, or to restrict the speech of those being interviewed in such a way as to make true and complete answers impossible. Additionally, I am very concerned that this meeting and the actions leading up to it may involve Open Meetings Act violations and round-robin communications. These concerns are heightened by a prior settlement agreement that former Board President Latoya Dowdell-Burger entered into without Board authorization, which cost taxpayers an exorbitant amount of money to settle and reportedly bound Board members to potential $10,000 fines, among other penalties. A settlement agreement purchased at such a substantial price without supporting documentation or evidence of the underlying claims is deeply concerning. After that, another $50,000 was spent with full knowledge of that agreement and disregard for it, again without Board authorization by Seth Bower. The names and faces have changed slightly, but the activity appears the same. The public deserves transparency, lawful governance, and a Board that conducts its business in the open whenever possible and I believe all of the board members when running for this office committed that to the public.

President Statement: Before we proceed, I need to place several concerns on the record regarding the notice and development of this special meeting. First, in my opinion, the process leading up to this meeting raises concerns under the Open Meetings Act. There may be evidence of possible serial or "hub-and-spoke" communications, where members individually contacted the administration to shape the agenda outside of a public meeting. That risks improper deliberation. Second, the stated purpose is problematic. The notice asserts that the Board "believes it is imperative to hear directly from exiting employees... and to better understand the organizational climate and improve staff retention". In my view, that statement is itself evidence of a consensus or collective position formed outside of an open meeting, to my knowledge, it was never discussed or adopted publicly. Third, that same stated purpose describes administrative, day-to-day functions-not Board business-and does not clearly align with a valid statutory purpose Fourth, there are significant notice concerns. Not all members received notice in the manner required, and I still do not have clarity on who is expected to attend, who requested to meet with the Board, or what specific matters are being presented for Board consideration. Fifth, I received additional information this afternoon between approximately 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. I have not had sufficient time to fully review it; however, based on an initial review, it does not appear to support the assertion that there is an HR crisis. To be clear, if the Board wishes to consider exit interviews with specific high-level employees, that determination should be made in open session at a properly noticed meeting. Finally, given the Board's prior Open Meetings Act settlement, proceeding under these circumstances creates legal and substantial financial risk to the district and to individual board members, and may constitute a violation of that settlement agreement. For these reasons, I object to the meeting as noticed and to proceeding under the current notice.

- Ms. Zimmer - Made request to Ms. Walsh to talk to Ty Olverson when he first made the request. Ms. Walsh shot it down, didn't even bring it to the table to have a discussion.
- Mr. Grube - Didn't the Board already set this precedent by meeting with several other people over the course of this year in executive session about concerns and complaints?
- Ms. Dowdell-Burger - Yes, the Board has met with other members of our district, without legal counsel, so this is not the first time that we're meeting with someone who's requested to speak with the Board. We did seek legal counsel. We went through the proper channels.
- Ms. Herbert - I'm embarrassed to be sitting here as a part of this Board at this moment. It's really unprofessional, unbecoming, and doesn't represent our students well at all. Intimidation and bullying tactics are inappropriate towards our staff. I thank you all who did come to speak to us. I'm open to hear what you have to say, and I apologize.

Move that the Board of Education approve the agenda

Motion by LaToya Dowdell-Burger, second by Ashley Zimmer.
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yes: LaToya Dowdell-Burger, Ashley Zimmer, Dionna Herbert
No: Kathleen Walsh, John Kershner

Action 2026-169: 2. Move that the Board of Education approve a 5 minute recess.

Motion by Ashley Zimmer, second by LaToya Dowdell-Burger.
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yes: LaToya Dowdell-Burger, Kathleen Walsh, John Kershner, Ashley Zimmer, Dionna Herbert

E. Executive Session

Action 2026-170: 1. Recommendation to Adjourn to Executive Session
It is recommended that the Groveport Madison Schools Board of Education enter executive session to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion or compensation of a public employee or official, or the investigation of charges or complaints against a public employee, official, licensee, or regulated individual, unless the employee, official, licensee, or regulated individual requests a public hearing by division (G)(1) of section 121.22 of the Revised Code

- Ms. Dowdell-Burger - I want to make sure that the employees that are here have the chance to say if they wish to even go into executive session with the statement being read this evening, in regards to confidentiality.
- Mr. Kershner - If you do an exit interview, you do a whole exit interview, not limiting it to items that are specified under the Open Meetings Act.
- Ms. Zimmer - Can we just not do the executive session, because no one is going to be happy.
- Ms. Herbert - We're talking about a hypothetical. We don't know what our staff wants to talk with us about. I requested legal to be here to make sure we stay within the bounds of what's appropriate for executive session.
- Ms. Walsh - Objects to the recommendation but will read it.

Motion by LaToya Dowdell-Burger, second by John Kershner.
Final Resolution: Motion Fails
Yes: LaToya Dowdell-Burger, Dionna Herbert
No: Kathleen Walsh, John Kershner
Abstain: Ashley Zimmer

F. Reconvene Open Session

G. Board Item

Action, Discussion: 1. Consideration of Executive Session and Discussion (if needed)

H. Adjournment

Action 2026-171: 1. Motion to Adjourn
Adjourn at 6:19 pm

Motion by Kathleen Walsh, second by John Kershner.
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yes: LaToya Dowdell-Burger, Kathleen Walsh, John Kershner, Dionna Herbert
Abstain: Ashley Zimmer