OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
July 23, 2026

1.0 OPENING ITEMS

1.1 Meeting Date and Location:
July 23, 2026 – District Office, 1985 Barkley Blvd., Bellingham, WA.

1.2 Call to Order/Land Acknowledgment:
Mr. Ritchey (President) called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He acknowledged that this meeting is being held on ancestral homelands of the Lummi people and Nooksack tribe.

1.3 Roll Call:
Present: Directors Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Scott Ritchey (President), Katie Rose, Superintendent Greg Baker and Sheri O'Day (recorder). Director Jenn Mason was unable to attend the meeting.

1.4 Audience:
- Bill would like to know about administrator pay and promotion policies.
- Lisa spoke about the advantages of neighborhood schools.
- Amanda thanked the district for closing schools and promoting private schools.
- Kim has questions about the potential closure of schools.
- Katherine spoke about a student transfer request due to safety concerns.
- Michelle asked that the district see students as a whole child.
- Petra talked about accessibility issues at Options High School.
- Lisa read a letter describing the impact on a family if Carl Cozier is closed.
- Spencer requested meetings be live streamed and video recorded.
- Susan shared an AI comparison of the Bellingham and Olympia school districts.
- Kenny does not want Columbia students to carry the burden of adults.
- Vanessa would like to see district office staff working from the schools.

1.5 Superintendent's Announcements and Report: Summary of Dr. Baker's comments:
- Regarding the facilities planning work, our district is not alone with issues related to declining birth and enrollment rates. Funding from the state is tied to the number of children we serve, and districts across the country are engaged in this same work. We continue to process recommendations, and we know that all of our schools will remain open for the 2026-27 school year. Next steps will

include looking at adjustments to attendance areas, exploring ideas for possible use of spaces and waiting to see the next set of birth rates and enrollment data.

- Dr. Baker shared some highlights from the draft 2026-27 budget, including information on MSOCs (Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs). He also showed comparisons of how Bellingham Public Schools uses resources vs. the state average.
- Extended school year programs are currently in operation.
- Construction of the Community Transitions facility at Whatcom Community College is progressing.
- New playgrounds with improved accessibility are being installed at Geneva and Northern Heights elementary schools, and roof, track and gymnasium improvements are being made at Squalicum High School.
- Staff will start returning in August to participate in professional development and to prepare for the students to return.
- Dr. Baker responded to questions from board members.

2.0 CONSENT ITEMS:

Mr. Benjamin made a **motion,** seconded by Ms. Diaz Hackler, to approve the following consent agenda items:

2.1 Approval of Minutes of June 11, 2026 Regular Meeting
2.2 Approval of Expenditures and Payroll – June 2026
2.3 Resolution 12-26, Transfer of Funds from Capital Projects Fund to General Fund
2.4 Resolution 13-26, 2026-27 School Board Regular Meeting Schedule
2.5 Community Transitions Change Order 008
2.6 WSIPC and PCG Amendment to Interlocal Agreement – IEP Online (#0405-001B)
2.7 Washington Health Care Authority Contract Amendment (#2425-135A)
2.8 Northwest Educational Service District 189 – Whatcom Discovery Program Amendment to 2025-26 Interlocal Agreement (#2526-010E)
2.9 Balanced Behavior Addendum to Agreement for Services (#2526-102A)
2.10 Whatcom Family YMCA Facility Use Agreement (#2526-281)
2.11 Puget Sound Energy Commercial Electric Facilities Contract (#2526-288)
2.12 Vamos Outdoors Project Agreement for Services (#2526-289)
2.13 Scoreboard Media Equipment and License Agreement (#2526-293)
2.14 Northwest Playground Inc., KCDA Agreement – Geneva Playground (#2526-304)
2.15 Northwest Playground Inc., KCDA Agreement – Northern Heights Playground (#2526-305)
2.16 Northwest Educational Service District 189 Interlocal Cooperative Agreement – Whatcom Discovery Program (#2627-023)
2.17 Empyrean Elevator, LLC dba Washington Elevator 2026 DES Maintenance Agreement (#2627-033)
2.18 Jennifer Rix Agreement for Services (#2627-034)

2.19 City of Bellingham Housing and Human Services Financial Assistance Agreement (#2627-035)
2.20 Bellingham Technical College Running Start Program Agreement (#2627-037)
2.21 Sendan Center Agreement for Services (#2627-038)
2.22 NWESD 189 Interlocal Agreement – NWRDC/WSIPC Membership (#2627-040)
2.23 Salish Sea Deaf School Contracts (#2627-043)
2.24 Alliance Health Center Non-Public Agency Agreement (#2627-044)
2.25 Personal Services Contracts

Unanimous affirmative vote.

3.0 ACTION ITEMS

3.1 Construction Supply - Invoice

Ms. Diaz Hackler indicated that because one of her immediate family members is employed by Construction Supply Co., and to avoid a conflict of interest per RCW 42.23.030, she will recuse herself from voting on item 3.1. Ms. Rose made a **motion,** seconded by Mr. Benjamin, to approve payment of the invoice. seconded the motion. Unanimous affirmative vote, with Ms. Diaz Hackler abstaining.

3.2 Opportunity Council - Invoice

Ms. Rose indicated that because she is employed by Opportunity Council, and to avoid a conflict of interest per RCW 42.23.030, she will recuse herself from voting on item 3.2. Mr. Benjamin made a **motion,** seconded by Ms. Diaz Hackler, to approve payment of the invoice. Unanimous affirmative vote, with Ms. Rose abstaining.

3.3 Personnel Recommendations

Mr. Ritchey indicated that because item 3.3, Personnel Recommendations, includes a recommendation that affects one of his family members, he will not be participating in this vote, nor will he facilitate a motion or vote relating to the item. Mr. Benjamin made a **motion,** seconded by Ms. Rose, to approve the Personnel Recommendations. Unanimous affirmative vote, with Mr. Ritchey abstaining.

4.0 BOARD RESPONSE TO MONITORING

4.1 Board Response to Monitoring – EL-1, Expectations of Superintendent – Final Summary Vote

There was discussion regarding the summary of the board responses to the EL-1 report that was prepared by Mr. Ritchey. Following discussion, Mr. Benjamin made a **motion,** seconded by Ms. Rose, to approve the monitoring response document (Attachment A). Unanimous affirmative vote.

4.2 Board Response to Monitoring – Ends 1, 2, 3 (Combined) – Final Summary Vote

There was discussion regarding the summary of the board responses to the Ends 1, 2, 3 (combined) report that was prepared by Mr. Ritchey. Following discussion, Ms. Diaz Hackler made a **motion,** seconded by Mr. Benjamin, to approve the monitoring response document (Attachment B). Unanimous affirmative vote.

5.0 POLICY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

5.1 Revision to EL-1, Expectations of Superintendent

At its June 11, 2026 regular meeting, the board discussed changing language in policy EL-1 to align with that of WSSDA as it pertains to the classification of district policies. This would entail changing the classification of "Essential" to "Critical" and "Encouraged" to "Important". Mr. Benjamin made a **motion** to update the EL-1 policy with those changes. Ms. Diaz Hackler seconded the motion. Unanimous affirmative vote.

5.2 GP-7 Agenda Planning – Annual Review

No changes were made to the policy.

5.3 GP-7.1 Board Self-Assessment – Annual Review

No changes were made to the policy.

5.4 GP-7.2 Annual Board Agenda (2026-27)

Ms. Rose made a **motion,** seconded by Ms. Diaz Hackler, to approve GP-7.2, Annual Board Agenda for 2026-27. Unanimous approval.

6.0 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

6.1 School Board Directors' Reports. Highlights of comments:

- Ms. Rose has been engaging with community members regarding questions pertaining to our schools. She expressed appreciation for the agreements that are entered into with the district's labor groups.
- Ms. Diaz Hackler had nothing to report.
- Mr. Benjamin attended a meeting with a group of parents regarding technology use by students. The group is willing to meet with other board members if requested. He participated in an interview with Cascadia Daily News about superintendent contracts and the perception that the approval of superintendent contracts is perfunctory. He noted that the recent contract process used was identical to the process that has been used for many years. He has had conversations with individual board members about WSSDA's Board of Distinction award, and he and Ms. Diaz Hackler will work with district staff to complete the application that's due in September. He requested that the board include time for a board retreat at the annual WSSDA conference in November. He spoke about his concern regarding social media posts.
- Mr. Ritchey noted that summer is a great time for reading. His family has enjoyed learning about a different culture from a visiting exchange student. He shared that his day job involves a lot of technology, and as AI continues to evolve, he has done a lot of reading on the topic. He would like the board to dive further into the topic of AI at a future study session. It has been a challenging few months, and he appreciates the pace and consideration that is being taken regarding facilities. It's uncomfortable, and he appreciates the district and board for the diligence to do their best to make the right decisions.

7.0 NEW BUSINESS

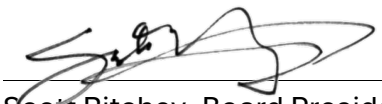
7.1 n/a

8.0 CLOSING ITEMS

8.1 **Board Assessment of Meeting:** Mr. Benjamin assessed the meeting, with overall ratings of 3, 3, 3 and 3.

8.2 **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Approved:



Scott Ritchey, Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: August 20, 2026