



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
September 24, 2026**

1.0 OPENING ITEMS

1.1 Meeting Date and Location:

September 24, 2026 – District Office, 1985 Barkley Blvd., Bellingham, WA.

1.2 Call to Order/Land Acknowledgement

Mr. Ritchey called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. He acknowledged that this meeting is being held on the ancestral homelands of the Lummi people and Nooksack tribe.

1.3 Roll Call

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

1.4 Audience:

- Marta, a senior and a peer tutor at Sehome High School (SHS), shared her dissatisfaction with the new high school schedule.
- Spike is a paraeducator at SHS who believes the school is understaffed.
- Michael Berres talked about the district's promise to protect students from hate organizations.
- Kate Martin, parent of two Carl Cozier students, expects transparency and a full cost benefit analysis related to school closures.
- Kevin Probasco, parent of two Wade King students, defended the character of Scott Ritchey, who he knows to be a thoughtful school board member.
- Amy Malone, parent of an Options High School student, talked about her disbelief that the district is considering closing schools.
- Cameron is a resident of Lynden who is disappointed the district may consider leasing a building to a far-right religious organization.
- Dean described how attending a religious school negatively impacted him.
- Stephanie Barber is disappointed with administrator salaries.
- Holly Pai believes the district has manipulated enrollment at Columbia Elementary School.
- Shelley Avery is frustrated by comments from school board members.
- Lisa Citron would like a town hall meeting to talk about school closures.

1.5 Superintendent's Announcements and Report: Summary of Dr. Baker's comments:

- Dr. Baker noted that no decisions have been made about facilities. He reviewed the district's elementary enrollment over the last 110 years. He also shared a comparison of the district's elementary enrollment to other districts in Northwest Educational Service District 189 (NWESD 189) with more than 5,000 students.
- He talked about the status of enrollment for the 2026-27 school year.
- Dr. Baker read an excerpt from State Superintendent Chris Reykdal's recent letter to Governor Bob Ferguson addressing the state's failure to adequately fund the basic education needs of students.
- It is expected that the governor will share his proposed budget in December.
- Dr. Baker highlighted the amazing work of staff and students with photos of recent events:
 - Block Party held at Bellingham High School.
 - The all-staff back-to-school event.
 - First day with students.
 - Activities and athletics.
 - The opening of two new universal playgrounds at Geneva and Northern Heights elementary schools.
 - Sustainability celebration.
- Upcoming events include a college fair on October 8.

2.0 CONSENT ITEMS:

Ms. Mason made a **motion** to approve the following consent agenda items:

- 2.1 Approval of Minutes of the August 20, 2026 Regular Meeting and August 21, 2026 Special Meeting**
- 2.2 Approval of Expenditures and Payroll – August 2026**
- 2.3 Resolution 19-26, Deposit of Unrestricted Capital Projects Fund Investment Earnings**
- 2.4 Resolution 20-26, Acceptance of Capital Facilities Plan**
- 2.5 Northwest Educational Service District 189 – Whatcom Discovery Program Amendments to 2026-27 Interlocal Agreement (#2627-023A, #2627-023B, #2627-023C, #2627-023D, #2627-023E)**
- 2.6 Central Washington University Interlocal Agreement (#2627-080)**
- 2.7 HUB International Northwest, LLC Contract (#2627-089)**
- 2.8 Personnel Recommendations**
- 2.9 Personal Services Contracts**

Mr. Benjamin seconded the motion. Unanimous affirmative vote.

Following approval of the consent agenda and some continued outbursts and comments from the audience, the board took a five-minute recess.

3.0 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

3.1 GP-7.2 2025-26 Annual Board Agenda, Revised – general review.

3.2 School Board Directors' Reports. Highlights of comments:

- Ms. Mason shared that the all-staff event at Bellingham High School was incredible, and she appreciated that a more private room was provided for staff who need less stimulation. She has met with multiple parents and families over the past few weeks and acknowledged that civil dialogue is important. She appreciates when respectful conversations can take place even when both parties do not agree.
- Mr. Benjamin acknowledged that the individual and small group meetings he has participated in have been enlightening. He reminded the board of the town hall meeting hosted by Fund Schools Now scheduled for 6 p.m. on October 14, 2026, at Horizon Middle School in Ferndale. He understands that Marissa Rathbone, Assistant Executive Director of Government Relations for the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), will facilitate the town hall. Ms. Rathbone was formerly a lobbyist for WSSDA.
- Mr. Ritchey has also had meaningful exchanges with community members and has appreciated the constructive dialogue.

4.0 NEW BUSINESS

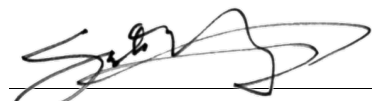
4.1 n/a

5.0 CLOSING ITEMS

5.1 Board Assessment of Meeting: Mr. Benjamin assessed the meeting. He scored all items except for Meeting Conduct with ratings of 3. He did not rate the Meeting Conduct item.

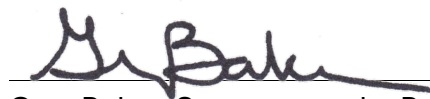
5.2 Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Approved:



Scott Ritchey, Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: October 15, 2026