OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING AND STUDY SESSION
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
October 15, 2026

1.0 OPENING ITEMS

1.1 Meeting Date and Location:

October 15, 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 Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Jenn Mason, Scott Ritchey (President), Superintendent Greg Baker and Sheri O'Day (recorder). Director Katie Rose was unable to attend the meeting.

1.4 Audience:

- Lisa Citron would like a public town hall meeting.
- Petra DeBoer was disappointed by the Trinity Classical School facility tour.
- Felix Santana is curious about the board's current thoughts.
- Susan would like access to an OSPI report that is due October 23, 2026.
- Alex Pandell asked the board to pay close attention to tonight's study session.
- Claire has lost trust in district leadership due to administrative salaries.
- Abby asked the board members if they are listening to their constituents.
- Josh spoke about his experience of transferring schools.
- Michelle raised concerns about the district's analysis documents.
- Colleen Mitchell is concerned that Kulshan student concerns have not been addressed.
- Stephanie asked the school board to listen to parents and hold a town hall.
- Mark talked about his review of growth data in the county and city, which he gathered from various sources.
- Aaron asked the board to carefully consider Dr. Baker's recommendation before accepting it.

After the conclusion of public comment, the board took a five-minute break.

2.0 CONSENT ITEMS:

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

2.1 Consent Agenda Description
2.2 Approval of Minutes of the September 24, 2026 Regular Meeting and September 29, 2026 School Visit
2.3 Approval of Expenditures and Payroll – September 2026
2.4 EL-5 Monitoring Report – Communication and Counsel to the Board
2.5 EL-10 Monitoring Report – Race, Equity and Inclusion
2.6 Office of System and School Improvement (OSSI) School Improvement Plans
2.7 Cascade Bicycle Club Grant Agreement (#2627-066)
2.8 Cascadia Renewables Agreement – Solar Installations (#2627-111)
2.9 Personnel Recommendations
2.10 Personal Services Contracts

Mr. Benjamin seconded the motion. Unanimous affirmative vote.

3.0 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT | STUDY SESSION

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

- Dr. Baker shared photos from highlights in the district:
    - Western Washington University (WWU) basketball team's visit to Cordata Elementary School.
    - Last week students were recognized with Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center's Peacemakers Award.
    - Community partner Action League of Bellingham raised more than $30,000 to purchase gift cards for students in need in our community.
    - The Central Kitchen's Taste Washington day.
    - College Fair at Sehome High School, attended by over 50 colleges and universities.
    - Indigenous Peoples Day at Lummi Nation School.
- The consent agenda includes monitoring reports for EL-5 (Communication and Counsel to the Board) and EL-10 (Race, Equity and Inclusion).
- Dr. Baker acknowledged that facilities decisions are difficult and that closing a school is among the most challenging experiences for a district and community. He recognizes that he will face criticism as a result of the process.
- Staff and board members met with over 20 small groups last week to discuss the facilities work. This week, he shared with the community the feedback gathered during those meetings.
- Dr. Baker referenced the analysis documents and discussed the nationwide trend of districts considering school closures.

Dr. Baker responded to questions from board members.

3.2 Study Session – Facilities

Dr. Baker provided the board with an overview of the analysis documents for Columbia and Carl Cozier Elementary Schools. The directors asked clarifying questions, which were addressed by Dr. Baker and staff.

4.0 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

4.1 GP-7.2 2026-27 Annual Board Agenda, Revised – general review.

4.2 School Board Directors' Reports. Highlights of comments:

- Ms. Mason enjoyed the board's visit to Birchwood Elementary School, where members had the opportunity to hear from students and staff about their experiences. She noted that each school has a unique culture. She has met with many families who have pushed her to be a more vigorous thinker. She recently attended the Healthy Teen Network Conference in San Diego, California, which focused on teen sexual and reproductive health.
- Ms. Diaz Hackler shared that she was unable to attend the previous regular meeting due to a family commitment. She attended the sustainability event at Options High School, where she learned more about solar arrays and propane-powered buses. She also attended the WSSDA General Assembly, the board's visit to Birchwood Elementary School and the Indigenous Peoples' Day event at Lummi Nation School.
- Mr. Benjamin echoed Ms. Mason's comments about the board's visit to Birchwood Elementary School and commended the students for their excellent participation. He attended small-group meetings at Columbia Elementary School, Sunnyland Elementary School and the District Office and described the conversations as meaningful, though at times challenging. He also met separately with some Columbia families and found them sincere in sharing their perspectives and feelings about the school.
- Mr. Ritchey shared that he was unable to attend the Birchwood Elementary School visit and noted that upcoming work-related travel will prevent him from attending the November board meeting.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

5.1 n/a

6.0 CLOSING ITEMS

6.1 Board Assessment of Meeting: Ms. Diaz Hackler assessed the meeting, with overall ratings of 3, 3, 3 and 3.

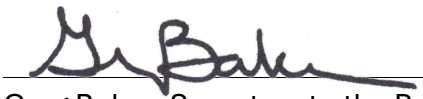
6.2 Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Approved:



Scott Ritchey, Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: November 12, 2026