



**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1J, MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON
Special Meeting of the Board of Education
May 20, 2020**

MEETING OVERVIEW

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the actions taken by the School Board and to provide a listing of the reports given. Anyone interested in viewing the full meeting, please visit the School Board website at <https://www.pps.net/domain/219>.

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education came to order at 6:03 pm at the call of Board Vice-Chair Moore.

Attendance

Board Present: Chair Kohnstamm*; Directors Bailey, Brim-Edwards, DePass, Lowery, Moore, Scott

District Staff Present:

Kara Bradshaw – Executive Assistant
Guadalupe Guerrero – Superintendent
Rosanne Powell – Senior Board Manager
David Roy – Senior Director of Communications
John Stellwagon – Legal Counsel
Stephanie Soden-Back – Chief of Staff

**Chair Kohnstamm in attendance, however she did not participate in the deliberations nor vote*

Pre-meeting

The virtual meeting opened for attendees to arrive at 5:45pm. No deliberation or decisions were made prior to the start of the meeting.

Complaint 2020-06

Board vice chair Rita Moore shared that a complaint was filed stating that Board Chair Kohnstamm did fulfill her responsibility to educate herself on a previous complaint, which was heard by the board on Dec 17, 2020. Director Moore provided information on the process for a complaint about a board member, noting that policy 4.50.032-P sets forth the procedures for complaints against board members. She shared that the policy states that a complaint against the Board Chair should be referred to the vice Chair, who will refer the issues to appropriate governmental jurisdictions or a third party for investigation, if a the majority of the board approves the referral. She stated that Director Kohnstamm would not participate in the referral vote.

Ms. Macon provided a summary of the complaint, noting that Board Chair Kohnstamm stated that there was an outburst and that it was unorganized, which she believes incorrect information, and that it seemed clear that the Director Kohnstamm had not fully prepared and considered the information provided.

The Board asked questions of Ms. Macon. Director Lowery stated that she read in the clarifying email from Director Kohnstamm that her intention was to state that the administration hadn't organized the chant, and asked Ms. Macon whether her understanding of Director Kohnstamm's statement was referring to the administration or the students. Ms. Macon replied that she heard Director Kohnstamm say that it was an outburst or unorganized, and that the administrator did know that something was going to happen, adding that it was his responsibility to know what was happening. Director Scott added that in the email from Director Kohnstamm there was an apology and he asked how she felt about the apology. Ms. Macon stated that she appreciated the effort behind the email, but that it could have come earlier and that it felt like it was only an apology that they felt the way they did. Director DePass asked if an apology were to come that took more responsibility for actions, how would she feel. Ms. Macon responded that her statements were made publicly, and an email apology is only shared with a small group of people, and so

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the majority of people think that the board is saying that everything is fine at Vernon, adding that she is not looking for an apology.

Director Kohnstamm declined to provide a statement on the complaint, she did state that she appreciates Ms. Macon's comments. She added that staff is working to respond to the substance of the important issues that the Macon family have raised about Vernon and is hopeful that in the process that they'll be able to reach some agreements and find a path forward to improve the culture, especially for black students.

Director Brim-Edwards stated that when the original complaint came to the board there was a reference to a video that was not shared with the board because it portrayed students in a negative light, though because it seemed like the video was important she asked to see the video. She stated that at the meeting (on December 17, 2019) she brought up that the lyrics don't meet district standards, but that it wasn't scripted by the district, but it was done on district policy and that she said she was sorry that it happened. She acknowledged that the district sent a letter outside of the public forum that stated that "school and district leaders are responsible for the activities that happen in school and on school sites and ensuring that inappropriate incidences are not repeated. PPS believes that this type of student behavior is unacceptable and we apologize for this disrespectful action... These are not actions that PPS condones or encourages and we are sincerely sorry you and your family had to experience this." Director Brim-Edwards added that the PPS complaint process is not a judicial process and that there are no laws that specify how a public official prepare for an issue that they vote on. She stated that for those reasons, she does not believe that the actions meet the standard of a referral. She extended an apology to the Macon family for the harm that was caused.

Director Bailey stated that while what was stated by Chair Kohnstamm did not match what happened, and that it is cleared there are many things to be worked out at Vernon and other schools, that he does not believe there is a need for a referral.

Vice-Chair Moore read the resolution statement for clarity of what was being voted on. The Board determined that the actions by Chair Kohnstamm did not warrant an outside investigation.

Following Items were Approved by the Board

- None

Following Items were Not Approved by the Board

- Resolution 6113

Adjourn

Director Moore adjourned the meeting at 6:28 pm.

Submitted by:

Kara Bradshaw
Kara Bradshaw, Executive Assistant
PPS Board of Education