

Meeting Minutes of September 23, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Kottkey called the business meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and welcomed everyone; she then led the pledge of allegiance. The following were in attendance:

Board of Directors

Kristy Kottkey, Chair
Alma Lozano, Vice Chair
Kate Grandusky (Zoom)
Peter Truax
Brisa Franco (Joined at 5:34 p.m.)
Maya Andrade, Student Representative

Staff

Suzanne West, Superintendent
Arturo Lomeli, Assistant Superintendent
Kim Shearer, Director of Student Services (absent)
Ilean Clute, Director of Finance
Enrique Pinon, Technology Manager
David Warner, Director of Communications
Sarah Hamlin, Director of Human Resources
Bethany Magnuson, Executive Assistant

PRELIMINARIES

Approval of the Agenda

Director Truax moved to approve the agenda as presented, Vice Chair Lozano seconded and the agenda was approved.

Student Representative Report

- ASB's monthly table featured Latino student representation.
- Preparations underway for parade and community events.
- "Latinos in Nation" program kicked off for Hispanic Heritage Month.
- Planning activities and spirit weeks, including events for staff learning.
- Boys soccer team won their Friday game.
- Mariachi group performed at a football game and received positive feedback.

Board Report

Chair Kottkey asked Superintendent West to share a comment:

- Acknowledged the concern and strong feelings in the community regarding a teacher's recent social media post.
- Confirmed that the educator remains on paid administrative leave during a thorough investigation and will not be in school during the process.
- Emphasized that as a licensed educator, the individual is entitled to due process under district policy, contractual obligations, and Oregon employment law.
- Thanked community members who shared their perspectives respectfully, while noting that personnel decisions cannot be guided by public demands but must follow established legal and procedural steps.
- Promised the community that once the investigation is complete, the outcome will be communicated.

- Reaffirmed the district's unwavering commitment to safe, welcoming, and supportive schools, and to upholding the dignity and safety of every student.

Director Truax shared the following:

- Reflected on the Founding Principles of the United States, recalling Benjamin Franklin's statement: *"A republic, if you can keep it"* and the subsequent adoption of the Bill of Rights.
- Highlighted the central role of the First Amendment in protecting freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and petition, noting that democracy can be "messy."
- Shared personal experiences as Mayor of Forest Grove, defending the rights of citizens to protest even when expressions were offensive or unpopular.
- Recounted a debate with colleague Ray Giansante regarding *Texas v. Johnson* (flag burning case), underscoring that differences of opinion should not destroy friendships or community bonds.
- Cautioned that name-calling and threats solve nothing, urging the community to choose respectful dialogue instead.
- Quoted Robert F. Kennedy's remarks after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., calling for love, wisdom, compassion, and justice over division and hatred.
- Closed with an appeal: *"Let us work together for ourselves, our neighbors, our children, and our students to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world."*

Chair Kottkey shared the following:

- Comments:
 - Emphasized the importance of working together to build trust and reach solutions, noting that the district, board, staff, parents, and students have consistently shown resilience, including in recent weeks.
 - Expressed gratitude for the superintendent's immediate and careful communication following recent events. The first message acknowledged what had happened without interfering in the information-gathering process. A follow-up message explained the investigation steps and when the next update would come, setting clear expectations for the community.
 - Clarified that while some demanded additional information or conclusions, the board must operate within due process and legal requirements, and cannot deviate from established procedures.
 - Thanked those who reached out directly with questions or support, describing this as productive and respectful communication. Encouraged community members to contact the board or district directly rather than posting online, where rumors and emotions can take over.
 - Reminded the public that school board meetings are business meetings, not town halls, but the board is working on new ways to engage more meaningfully with the community (Action Item #5 – Board Purpose Statement).
 - Urged those tuning in for the first time to continue watching meetings and volunteering in schools, emphasizing that involvement helps strengthen the district.
 - Thanked front office staff, teachers, parents, students, the district administrative team, and especially Administrative Assistant Bethany, for remaining focused on learning and providing

steady leadership during challenging times. Highlighted the district's ongoing work on reading skills, maximizing classroom learning, and supporting student success.

- Reported on community engagement:
 - Legislative visit: Senators Weber, Sollman, and Rep. McLain are scheduled to visit schools in November.
 - Community events: Thanked board members and Communications Director David Warner for volunteering at the district booth at the Wednesday Market and at the Corn Roast.
 - Shared feedback heard from parents on topics such as dual language programs, math pathways, school start times, and recent power outages.
 - Highlighted student conversations: a kindergartner excited to make new friends, two fourth graders who enjoyed science and writing, and a junior embracing the challenge of AP Social Studies coursework.

Director Franco shared the following:

- Enjoyed the Corn Roast, especially hearing directly from students; looks forward to more opportunities to engage with students and parents.

Vice Chair Lozano shared the following:

- Spoke with parents and grandparents at community events; noted one grandparent offering to volunteer and students expressing happiness about being back at school. Welcomed community concerns and emphasized her dual perspective as both a board member and parent.

Director Truax shared the following:

- Attended the Chalk Art Festival and the high school football home opener (loss to McKay, followed by a win the next week). Noted the importance of community traditions and events.

Director Grandusky shared the following:

- Shared about her work unpacking the Cornelius Library during the summer; expressed appreciation for the board's diverse skills and strong commitment to community engagement.

Superintendent Report

- Community Engagement:
 - Reported on successful outreach efforts, including setting up a district table at the Forest Grove Farmer's Market, which generated many constructive conversations with families, community members, and staff. The district intends to continue this practice during the next season.
 - Attended the Corn Roast, where he met with families and students, and enjoyed food and activities from local vendors.
- School Visits:
 - Forest Grove High School: Observed an AVID classroom, where students were practicing relationship-building and collaborative learning. Activities had students problem-solving in pairs, moving quickly back to seats, and checking in with partners—laying the foundation for both academic success and social-emotional growth.

- Tom McCall Upper Elementary: Visited a classroom where students were learning about the brain, practicing vocabulary such as *cerebellum*, *cortex*, and *hippocampus*. Students showed determination as they engaged with challenging material and demonstrated enthusiasm for the learning process.
- Harvey Clarke Elementary: Observed a kindergarten class where students were developing fine motor skills through cutting and pasting while sequencing story images. He highlighted the importance of teaching these foundational skills and praised kindergarten teachers as “superheroes” for their work.
- Across classrooms, emphasized the absence of cell phones, underscoring strong classroom focus on learning.

Forest Grove Education Association

None

Unscheduled Public Appearance

Chair Kottkey started by addressing the audience:

- I'll start by reading our standard script before public comment. After that, I want to share a few quick reminders about process and expectations.

The board appreciates community members sharing information during public comments. Public comments can be made in-person or through Zoom by submitting the designated form on the webpage. Public Comments will be limited to 3 minutes as is the protocol for board meetings. Board members will not comment or respond to questions. Public criticism or complaints about school district personnel are not allowed.

First, public comment is always welcome in writing at any time. You can use the form on our website, email me directly, or contact the district office if you have questions. Written comments become part of the public record, just like the ones made here tonight.

Speaking at our meetings is an additional courtesy. Not everyone will have their name drawn, so I encourage you to submit your full comments in writing if you are not called to speak.

For tonight's oral comments: if someone calls for consequences for a specific staff member tied to an active investigation, I'll pause them with the gavel, and I will move on to the next person. We can't allow that during public comment. We *can* hear input about district policy, state or federal guidelines, or personal experiences and impact. If a comment starts moving toward a specific person or investigation, I will gavel again, and if this happens twice, we'll close public comment for the evening and ask for written submissions instead. If your prepared comments do not meet those expectations tonight, I will ask you to withdraw your name when called and submit them in writing instead.

We'll draw speakers randomly, with priority for district residents. Each person will have three minutes. I won't shorten that time tonight since many of you have prepared full remarks, and anything additional can always be submitted in writing.

During comments, the board listens quietly and respectfully—and we expect the same from the audience. Please refrain from clapping, cheering, booing, or any other audible reactions. Silent head nods or head shakes are fine. If we hear responses, I'll gavel once. If it happens again, even if it is a single person, I'll gavel a second time and close public comment for the night.

This standard helps us model respectful discourse—especially important with student leaders in the room who are learning how public meetings work. And don't worry—there *will* be times later in the meeting when applause is welcome, like during celebrations, exciting action items or spotlight awards. Hopefully you will stay for that!

With that, we're ready to begin.

Kelly Jones; District resident and parent of former students; School Policy/ Social Media

- Addressed staff conduct and social media policy.
- Acknowledged staff rights to personal views but emphasized handbook boundaries requiring respect and clarification that opinions are personal, not district positions.
Warned of potential disruption: media attention, board meeting unrest, and fear among students.
- Stressed schools must be safe, inclusive environments.
- Called for review and strengthening of policies; staff who violate them should be removed promptly and permanently.

Amy Patton; District resident and parent; Communication from Superintendent West

- Thanked the board for their service and shared concerns about lack of responsiveness from district leadership.
- Reported that she and a group of 30–40 parents emailed or called about concerns (including disability-related issues) but received no response.
- Contrasted with the previous superintendent, who was consistently responsive.
- Stressed parents want to build bridges with the new superintendent, but two-way communication is essential.

Sandra Landis; District resident; First Amendment right and free speech

- Expressed concern over a Forest Grove educator placed on leave for a personal social media post.
- Cited a New York Times article describing a trend of educators being punished for online comments, particularly liberal viewpoints.
- Argued that the First Amendment protects such expression, even if controversial.
- Quoted the ACLU's position that firing educators over personal views infringes on constitutional rights.
- Urged the district to remember its responsibility as a public institution to uphold free speech.

Malynda Wenzl; Mayor of Forest Grove and teacher; City update

- Thanked the board for service and for moving meetings to **Tuesday nights** to allow greater collaboration with the city.
- Provided a **city update**: completion of the long-term *2040 Plan* focused on economy, growth, health, and connections, with extensive community engagement.
- Highlighted possible **overlaps with the district**, including:
 - Shared use of recreation and athletic facilities (e.g., reciprocal agreements for gyms and aquatic center).
 - Communication partnerships between city and schools.
- Encouraged continued collaboration to strengthen community ties.

- Board and Superintendent agree they can give the city time on the agenda instead of public comment time for city updates.

CONSENT

2025-116 MOTION: Director Franco moved to approve the consent agenda, Vice Chair Lozano seconded, unanimously carried with a vote of 5-0.

Item 1: Board Minutes of the September 9, 2025 School Board meeting.

Item 2: Personnel

Temporary Hires

8/25/25 - Hannah Shields - 1.0 FTE - ELD Teacher - ES

Resignations

9/30/25 - Sara Ogle - 1.0 FTE - TOSA - FGHS

9/09/25 - Laney Hudson - 0.87 FTE - 6th-8th Grade Orchestra/Mariachi - NAMS

Item 3: Policy Revisions

PRESENTATION

2024-25 Integrated Programs Annual Report

Presented by Dr. Suzanne West, Superintendent

- Annual Requirement: The report is required by statute under the Student Success Act, which provides funding through several consolidated grants. Districts must submit quarterly updates to the Oregon Department of Education and provide an annual update to the board.
- Purpose of Report:
 - Reflect on the plan's implementation and outcomes.
 - Identify barriers to effective use of funds.
 - Outline progress toward long-term student success goals.
- Administrative Time:
 - Superintendent acknowledged the excessive and fragmented grant reporting requirements that take significant administrative time.
 - The state is currently working to consolidate grants and streamline reporting, but it may be a year or two before improvements are realized.
 - COSA (Coalition of Oregon School Administrators) is actively providing feedback, and the state has contracted with a third party to explore moving toward one consolidated reporting system.
 - There is "cautious optimism" that future reporting will be easier and more efficient.
- Discussion by the board and superintendent– Assessment in Bilingual Programs:
 - Director Truax asked whether the district was alone in recognizing the limitations of English-only testing for bilingual students.
 - Superintendent explained that while the district has partners advocating for better measures, Oregon currently requires the third grade reading test in English only, with no state-approved Spanish equivalent.
 - Locally, the district measures Spanish literacy and acquisition, emphasizing that strong literacy in a student's first language supports long-term success.

- Developing proficiency in English takes five to seven years, so the district is focusing attention on realistic expectations and growth trajectories for bilingual learners.

ACTION

FGEA and FGSD Licensed Employee Agreement 2025-2028

Presented by Serena Fitz, FGEA Representative and Sarah Hamlin, Director of Human Resources

The Forest Grove Education Association (FGEA) and the district completed negotiations and reached a three-year agreement covering 2025–2028. Negotiations began in February and concluded in June, with teams meeting biweekly and often outside scheduled sessions.

- Process:
 - Leaders described the bargaining as collaborative and equity-focused, incorporating inclusive language (e.g., “educator” instead of “teacher”) and holding healthy discussions even on difficult topics.
 - Both parties emphasized that while not all proposals were adopted, the conversations were valuable in building understanding and trust.
 - The three-year agreement was chosen to provide budgetary stability during uncertain times.
- Key Outcomes and Priorities:
 - Compensation: Adjustments designed to help recruit and retain high-quality educators.
 - Class Size and Caseload: Agreement includes language and supports, with continued monitoring through committees. Board and Association emphasized the importance of manageable class sizes for student success.
 - Preparation Time: Guaranteed prep time for educators when assigned to cover classes.
 - Special Education and 504 Supports: Language addressing support for students with complex needs.
 - Safe Learning Environments: Recognition that some educators do not feel safe; the contract includes steps to improve consistency across schools.
 - Extra Duty Assignments: Clarified recognition and compensation for roles that build student connectedness (arts, clubs, activities).
 - Professional Development: Expanded continuing education fund available equitably to all educators; additional credits impact placement on the salary schedule.
 - Bilingual Stipends: Stipends available to educators who pass the STAMP language assessment in Spanish/English, offered annually.
- Board & Leadership Reflections:
 - Board members expressed appreciation for the collaborative tone and respectful process.
 - Chair Kottkey praised negotiators’ professionalism and communication, highlighting the importance of trust between leadership and staff.
 - Directors Franco and Truax raised questions on bilingual stipends, class size monitoring, and continuing education.
 - Superintendent West commended the process, noting that curiosity and persistence guided the discussions even when agreement was difficult.
 - Several directors remarked on the district’s tradition of respectful bargaining and the shared commitment to balancing limited financial resources with student needs.
- Acknowledgments:

- Thanks were extended to FGEA leaders, HR staff, administrators, and former board director Mark Everett for their service during negotiations.
- Special recognition was given to staff for their data work, communication skills, and ability to sustain collaboration through challenging conversations.

2025-117 MOTION: Director Franco moved to approve the attached proposed three-year FGEA and FGSD Licensed Employee Agreement to be effective for school years 2025-2028, Director Truax seconded, unanimously carried with a roll call vote of 5-0.

Overnight Trip Request: FGHS Wrestling

Presented by Dr. Suzanne West, Superintendent

The Forest Grove High School Wrestling team is requesting an Overnight Trip to the Rollie Lane Wrestling Tournament in Nampa, ID on January 1 through January 4, 2026. The students will not miss class time since this tournament is held during winter break. The total cost of the tournament is \$3500, which will be fully funded from fundraising efforts.

Director Franco asked, "They are raising their own money so what is our role in approving it?"

We have a policy that if they leave the state of Oregon it requires board approval.

Director Truax stated they are representing the Forest Grove School District.

2025-118 MOTION: Director Truax moved to approve Forest Grove High School Wrestling team's request to attend the Rollie Lane Wrestling Tournament in Nampa, ID from January 1 through January 4, 2026, Director Franco seconded, unanimously carried with a vote of 5-0.

2026-2027 Budget Development Calendar

Presented by Ilean Clute, Director of Finance and Operations

Attached is the proposed public budget process calendar for the 2026-2027 fiscal budget. A number of key events are outlined in the calendar.

No major changes made from the prior years process have been made.

2025-119 MOTION: Vice Chair Lozano moved to approve the proposed 2026-2027 Budget Development Calendar as presented, Director Franco seconded, unanimously carried with a vote of 5-0.

Budget Committee Vacancies

Presented by Ilean Clute, Director of Finance and Operations

This year there are two open vacancies on the Budget Committee plus the Alternate position. The administration is seeking direction regarding the process for filling the vacancies.

The District has the following vacancies:

- 1 - 1 year position (Truax's remaining term)
- 1 - 3 year position
- 1 - Alternate

Attached is a proposed Time line and process, publishing and application to fill the vacant positions.

Administration is seeking feedback and direction for filling these vacancies.

The budget committee consists of members of the School Board and an equal number of community members that are appointed by the School Board. Terms are typically 3 year terms and staggered so that

two are elected in year one, two year two and one year three. If a budget committee member leaves the position early, a new community member will be selected to fill out the remaining term.

Current Budget Committee Members and Term Expiration:

- Melinda Fischer - Term Expires: June 30, 2026
- Jordan Miller - Term Expires: June 30, 2027
- David Andersen - Term Expires: June 30, 2027
- Open (3 year term) - Term Expires: June 30, 2028 (Bower)
- Open (1 year term) - Term Expires: June 30, 2026 (Truax)
- Alternate (Open) - Term Expires: June 30, 2026

2025-120 MOTION: Director Truax moved to declare the Budget Committee vacancies, Vice Chair Lozano seconded, unanimously carried with a vote of 5-0.

2025-121 MOTION: Vice Chair Lozano moved to approve the timeline and process for the 2026-2027 budget, Director Franco seconded, unanimously carried with a vote of 5-0.

2025-122 MOTION: Director Truax moved to appoint Vice Chair Lozano and Director Grandusky to complete candidate interviews and recommend appointments, Director Franco seconded, unanimously carried with a vote of 5-0.

School Board Purpose Statement

Presented by Kristy Kottkey, Board Chair

On September 9, 2025, the Board reviewed the draft Purpose Statement. All members had the opportunity to provide feedback, and the statement has been adjusted accordingly.

The Purpose Statement clarifies the Board's role in supporting the successful implementation of the District's Strategic Plan and Superintendent's goals.

2025-123 MOTION: Vice Chair Lozano moved to approve the revised Purpose Statement and Commitments for adoption, Director Franco seconded, unanimously carried with a vote of 5-0.

FIRST READ

Superintendent Evaluation and Timeline

Presented by Dr. Suzanne West, Superintendent

- Conducted a first read of the Superintendent Evaluation materials, which included proposed goals reflecting discussions from the summer board retreat.
- Adjustments were made to narrow focus areas, including a specific Panorama survey question on teacher–student relationships.
- A proposed timeline was presented, outlining upcoming work sessions, opportunities to integrate other board topics, and the overall evaluation cycle.
- The plan includes executive session discussions, as well as time for the superintendent to reflect with the board before the final evaluation deadline later in the year.

INFORMATION



1728 Main Street | Forest Grove, OR 97116

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting is adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Bethany Magnuson, Executive Assistant

Kristy Kottkey, Board Chair

Date: _____