

**Grants Pass School District No. 7  
Formal Budget Committee Meeting Minutes  
May 20, 2026**

**Date and Place of Meeting** The regular meeting of the Grants Pass School District No. 7 Board of Education was held at the GPSD7 District Office and virtually through Zoom, May 20, 2026. Recordings of the meeting can be found on our district web page 48 hours from completion of meeting.

**Attendance**

Board Chair Smith	Superintendent Sweeney
Board Member Pehrson	Director Stegemiller
Board Member Richardson	Director Thompson
Board Member Seable	Director Jones
Board Member Wilkins	Director Evens
Board Member Dybdahl	Director Kantola
Budget Member Higgins	Director Zottola
Budget Member Macy	Operations Manager Blanchard
Budget Member Long	GPHS Principal Napier
Budget Member Sager	
Budget Member Bassett	
Budget Member Erin Smith-Mateja	

Board Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM and asked those in attendance to stand and participate in the Pledge of Allegiance.

There were no adjustments to the agenda or announcements.

**Election of Budget Committee Presiding Officer:**

Nominations were opened for the position of Budget Committee Presiding Officer. Member Pearson nominated Juliette Long. Member Dybdahl seconded the nomination. No additional nominations were made. Discussion included confirmation that Juliette Long was willing to serve in the role. A roll call vote was conducted and passed unanimously.

**Adoption of Operating Rules:**

Discussion was held regarding adoption of procedural rules for the Budget Committee. Member Smith moved to adopt Robert’s Rules of Order as the committee’s operating procedures. Member Seable seconded the motion. No further discussion occurred. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

**Superintendent’s Budget Message;**

Superintendent Sweeney presented the 2026–2027 Budget Message and overview of the proposed district budget. Superintendent Sweeney expressed concern regarding future financial conditions for the 2027–2029 biennium, describing the outlook as “hazy” and potentially “scary.” Superintendent Sweeney thanked district staff, administrators, board members, and Budget Committee members for their collaborative efforts in developing a balanced budget.

**Budget Presentation and Review:**

Director of Finance Sam Stegall provided a detailed review of the proposed 2026–2027 budget document and accompanying Budget Highlights publication. [Proposed Budget](#) [Budget Presentation](#)

- 892 employees currently employed by the district
- 5,499 students currently enrolled
- 85% of the 26.27 budget is for salaries and associated payroll costs
- Beginning Fund Balance: \$8,004,424
- Ending Fund Balance: \$7,004,424
- No projected deficit spending if contingency funds remain unused

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- The district currently has 16.4% special education population. State funding cap at 11% of student population
  - Projected 902 SPED students. 298 students projected above the state funding cap and therefore not weighted for additional funding.
  - Mr. Stegall explained the district's allocation through the Southern Oregon Education Service District (SOESD), which provides: Specialized staffing support, Psychologists, Speech services, Other contracted support services
  - Unused allocations flow back to the district as revenue.

Budget Member Higgins shared concerns about whether the Budget Committee should approve the proposed budget at the current meeting or schedule a second meeting to allow for additional review and information gathering. He stated there are two primary reasons to consider another meeting. First, several committee members, including Member Richardson and Member Long, had requested additional financial information and analysis. He explained that the budget document is typically released only a few days prior to the meeting, making it difficult to thoroughly digest the material and conduct meaningful variance analysis, even with his own financial background.

Member Higgins noted that the budget document currently combines all 200–299 funds into a single section, despite the wide variety of programs and activities represented within those funds, including Title I, IDEA, Special Education, food services, student body funds, and Cool Schools funding. He commended Financial Officer Stegemiller for preparing a supplemental one-page summary that separated the funds into categories more consistent with how they had historically been presented. He explained that the summary provided snapshots of revenues and expenditures by major object categories, allowing committee members to better understand the purpose and financial position of each fund and ask more specific variance-related questions. He stated that this type of analysis was difficult to derive directly from the current budget document format. Member Higgins stated that the second area of consideration involved obtaining additional clarification regarding the proposed budget. He emphasized that he believed the administration had done an outstanding job presenting a budget that strives toward a break-even position without relying on contingency funds and acknowledged that difficult decisions had been made in the process.

He noted, however, that the committee may want additional discussion surrounding the impacts reflected in the budget presentation, particularly the staffing and program reductions shown in the presentation materials. He shared that he had requested additional statistics from Chief Financial Officer Sam regarding the impact of enrollment decline on staffing levels across various employee categories. Specifically, he wanted to better understand where enrollment declines were occurring, how the corresponding revenue losses were affecting the district, and which staffing areas were most impacted by those reductions.

Member Higgins further explained that the second category of discussion extended beyond the traditional role of a Budget Committee and aligned more closely with broader Board-level financial planning responsibilities. He questioned whether the Board, Budget Committee, and administration believed it would be useful for the committee to spend time looking ahead at the district's long-term financial outlook. Referencing Superintendent Sweeney's budget message and earlier discussions during the meeting regarding the district's uncertain financial future, he noted concerns about the scale of future reductions the district may face. He stated the committee should consider realistic long-range projections and scenarios, including whether the district could be facing approximately \$7 million in reductions over four years or potentially \$5 million in reductions over two years.

The committee agreed to have a Second Formal Budget meeting on June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5:00 PM. It was determined that the best way for Director Stegemiller to receive clarifying questions is through a document that the committee can submit questions by Tuesday, May 26 at 9:00 AM. Director Stegemiller would then have a few days to answer the questions and then get that information back to the budget committee before the second formal meeting.

Adjourn  
General  
Session

Board Chair Smith adjourned General Session at 7:20 PM

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Board Chair

Date

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Superintendent

Date

Approved by the  
Board of Directors at the  
June 9, 2026, Board Meeting  
The full board meeting can be  
viewed [HERE](#).