

Citizens Comments to the Board

- Public comments can be submitted in writing before the meeting, or given in-person during the meeting. For written public comment, please complete this form and email your comments to the board secretary, Sarah Avery, at avery4@gresham.k12.or.us by 4:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. For in-person public comment, complete and submit this form to the board secretary prior to 7:00 p.m. in order to speak at this meeting. The chair will call people in the order forms are submitted.
- The Board Chair may require that a proposal, inquiry or request be submitted in writing, and reserves the right to refer the matter to the administration for action or study.
- Speakers and/or written comments may offer criticism of school operations and programs; however, the board will not review personal complaints concerning school personnel or against any person connected with the school system. If there is a legitimate complaint involving individuals, the chair will direct them to the appropriate means for board consideration and disposition.
- Your input is valuable to the Board; however, the chair may limit the time for your comments (3 minutes per guest/15 minutes total). If you wish to provide a written statement, space has been provided on the back of this form.
- Please make sure to include your name for the record, whether you are a resident of the district, and the name of the group or organization you are representing, if applicable.
- Only one spokesperson should be designated to represent a group with a common purpose.
- Questions asked by the public will be referred to the superintendent and/or the appropriate staff member for response at a later time.
- The board's regular business meetings are digitally recorded. They are no longer televised on cable access, but can be live streamed for virtual attendance through Zoom, on the district website, or on the district's YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/@gresham-barlowschooldistri5482>

This is an opportunity for the board to listen and learn from the community. Board members are not able to respond to public comments during the meeting, but appreciate hearing your input. The board sincerely appreciates your interest in the Gresham-Barlow School District and thanks you for attending this meeting.

Name: *

Sam Runckel

Phone: *

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Email: *

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District Resident? *

Yes

No

How would you like to provide your comments to the board? - *please select one option below* *

Submit written comment only

Speak in person at meeting

Speak virtually at meeting

Group / Organization: *

GBEA Member
.....

Topic: *

School Counseling
.....

Citizens Comments to the Board

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Please list your comments in the space provided.

Good Evening,

My name is Sam Runckel, and I currently work as a school counselor at Gresham High School. I would like to start by acknowledging the challenging nature of the work you do, and difficult decisions you have recently had to make.

With that said, I am here to express my concerns over what has happened, and what is coming for counseling in Gresham Barlow. To give context, our district currently employs 36 licensed school counselors, next year that number will drop by 6. That is a loss of more than 15% in our school counseling staff, and will mean a drop in our student to counselor ratio from 1:313 student to 1:400. This also comes in the context of long term declines in counseling in our district. At Gresham High School where I work, counseling staffing declined from 8 counselors in the 1990s, to 6 in 2008, and now to 4 next year. That is the fewest school counselors employed by Gresham High School since school counseling was recognized as a profession by the state of Oregon in 1967.

Since I know that students are the reason why we do this work, and why you volunteer your time to serve on the board, I'd like to share the impact of what these cuts will mean at Gresham High. When students come into the GHS Counseling Center they are asked to sign in so we can show data about our impact. In the past year (with five days remaining) we have had more than 4800 unique student sign-ins. Those run the gamut from discussions about college and careers, to check-ins about grades, to connections with food and housing, or serious mental health concerns and assistance. With a cut of 1.5 counselors at Gresham High School next year, we can conservatively estimate that 1309 fewer student sign-ins will take place. This isn't conjecture - we can't hurry up appointments, rush through crisis response, or offer group meetings for students' private family concerns. I am profoundly concerned that among those 1309 missed appointments will be critical, potentially life saving or changing moments.

Counselors are often among the only staff in schools licensed and trained to support students in crisis, so we also often respond to emergencies outside of our offices. We wear many hats within our school system, especially at the elementary level. In middle schools, our counselors are at the forefront of providing social and emotional education and support to students at one of their most significant developmental stages. And as high school counselors, we sit with our students as they make choices that will define the course for the rest of their lives. As you think about and prioritize what matters, it is critical to think about what is lost in the confidential work that we do. It may not easily show, but it is essential to building thriving schools and students.

For me it is too late. This week I made the incredibly painful decision to resign my position at Gresham High for next school year. I felt that I couldn't stay in a job that I know is so important for our students, with a district that is choosing to not support their best interests. I hope, though, it isn't too late to make changes for future years. Please prioritize this work, our students need it. Thank you for your time, and I will always be rooting for the best for Gresham Barlow.

Please select an option below if you would like to have someone contact you regarding the topic * described above.

- I would like to have someone contact me regarding my questions / concerns.
- I would just like to submit my written comments and do not need someone to contact me.

This form was created inside of Gresham/Barlow School District.

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