

GRESHAM-BARLOW SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10 JT.
Minutes of Budget Hearing

Thursday, June 4, 2026

The Gresham-Barlow School District Board of Directors conducted a budget hearing on Thursday, June 4, 2026 in the Council Chambers of the Public Safety and Schools Building, 1331 NW Eastman Parkway, Gresham, OR 97030. A Zoom link was provided for virtual meeting attendance.

Board Members present:

Heather Coleman-Cox, Shawn Farrens, Kris Howatt, Blake Petersen, Brenna Puderbaugh, Holly Riegelmann, Erasto Sedda.

Cabinet Members present:

Dr. Tracy Klinger, John Koch, Dr. Sara Deboy, Michael Sweeten, Carla Gay, Heidi Lasher, Jeff Gibbs, Athena Vadnais, Pete Bejarano

Opening Items

1. Call to Order (6:45 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:45 p.m. by the board chair, Blake Petersen.

2. Roll Call (6:46 p.m.)

All members of the board were in attendance at the meeting.

Open Budget Hearing

3. Budget Overview and Purpose for Hearing (6:46 p.m.)

Chair Petersen reviewed information in the agenda. He explained that the purpose of the hearing was to receive public testimony and respond to questions concerning the budget and fiscal policy decisions reflected in the budget.

4. Budget Hearing and Public Testimony (6:48 p.m.)

Chair Petersen opened the hearing for public testimony at 6:48 p.m. Those from the public wishing to speak to the budget were invited to do so. There were 10 members of the public who indicated they would like to speak.

Sam Runckel currently works as a counselor at Gresham High School. He addressed the challenging work and difficult decisions the district has recently had to make. He shared concerns over the counseling changes at Gresham High next year including loss of counseling staff, student to counselor ratios, and the impacts these cuts will have for students in crisis. He asked them to make changes for next year and prioritize this work.

Amie Reiterman is an educational assistant in the district who spoke about the impacts of reducing music at the elementary level, and the proposal to retain music teachers halftime in the elementary schools. She expressed frustration that funds are spent on iPads and devices for kindergarten and 1st grade students. She feels that primary students don't need this technology at school, they need more art and music. She asked them to listen to the community on this issue.

Kristina Etzel is a music specialist at Hall Elementary. She graduated from Sam Barlow in 2005, student taught at West Orient Middle School and West Gresham Elementary, and shared that she intentionally chose to live in the district. She

expressed shock at the decision to eliminate elementary music. She shared that they have heard from many parents looking for other options, and a budget committee member has expressed that there is enough money to provide music. Historically the board has delegated most decisions to superintendent, but they hold the authority for these decisions. She noted that they have talked about a levy and how it is very costly to put out. Music educators have extensive experience organizing people and would be valuable partners to propose a levy. She shared that if they find a way to maintain elementary music, several elementary PTC groups have expressed willingness to fundraise to fill the gap. Union leadership would also not be opposed to revisiting the RIF process if elementary music was retained. This is an opportunity to stand together for their students.

Bryant Cruz Salazar is a graduating senior at Gresham High School. He thanked his community, friends, and teachers for the overwhelming support noting that when he heard the district was cutting elementary music education, and his band and choir directors he knew he must act. He established a petition to raise awareness of situation. It started slow but as more people knew it grew to 5,526 signatures. As a Hispanic teen that deeply cares about music for all ages, he thanked everyone that shared.

Hillary Flood is a parent with students in the DLI program and an educator. She asked them to reconsider eliminating elementary. She shared examples of difficulties students face noting that one student struggled with academics, but connected through music and it was one of the few places he experiences success. Students involved in good music show strong attendance, greater engagement, and better skills in letter and pattern recognition. She understands the district is facing difficult financial decisions, but the parents didn't expect these eliminations. They could discuss different schedules, noting that other districts reinforced they would never eliminate music and the arts.

Cristofer Cruz Salazar spoke on behalf of music for elementary and for music educators at Gresham High School. He shared that music matters a lot because without it he was shy before and music has allowed him to speak up more. He doesn't want the cutting of elementary music to happen because younger kids need to learn music. It empowers people, and makes a lot of memories. He shared how Ms. Bundy has supported him and that he cares a lot about music.

Joe Graham is a parent with students at Hogan Cedars, Dexter McCarty, and Gresham High. He has lived in Gresham for the last 35 years. His son is going to be valedictorian and is a national merit scholarship winner. He drops him off at school at 6:30 a.m. for jazz class prior to the start of school. He has music during the day too, along with all of their concerts and programs and competitions. It is a good place for people who are not in sports. When Emily Bundy started 5 years ago, they had 55 kids, now they have 105. He expressed how important the need for music is in schools.

Karen Harshfield is a Counselor on Special Assignment (COSA) in the district. She expressed deep concern about counseling in the district and the critical impact of recent budget reductions. She shared that counselors teach students how to learn, work, and navigate college and career paths. They provide vital social, emotional, and personal support through many modalities. The district has faced 729 suicide screenings, with the highest percentage from 5th graders. Many districts kept mental health intact due to this. She knows from experience that grant money or unexpected funds materialize during the year, and asked that they prioritize mental health and bring back counselors first if and when this happens. She shared current counselor ratios compared to next year's ratios for the different school levels. The cuts create a staffing inequity and carry a heavy impact for students. She hopes to see all counseling positions reinstated, but allocating more to one than the other is not acceptable. Cutting resources at the foundational level compounds the struggles they will have later on.

Ali Appleton is a social worker for REY Academy middle school students. She works with students often disconnected from traditional systems. She understands the financial realities Oregon districts are facing, but believes they have a responsibility to examine the human impact. If enrollment is declining, what are they doing to understand why? Have

they truly listened to community needs and addressed them based on updated data. Many families are struggling with basic needs and when these are unmet engagement is difficult. When students feel seen, valued, and supported they engage. When crucial services are removed so is that connection. Equity is not simply language, it is what they protect when budgets become difficult. They must understand and confront causes, not just react to consequences. She urged the board to consider what is necessary to sustain students and families relying on these supports.

Mike Bundy is the father of a Hollydale Elementary School student. He expressed frustration with the music cuts noting that the administration's proposed one music TOSA would only provide a few hours of music a year, and that is assuming they only taught in classrooms. The state says to give students music. Chromebooks and YouTube sing-alongs are not music. Music transcends politics, and is universally supported by all. Last Friday band kids openly wept for the end of an era. He argued that the district will see a drop in music enrollment, and categorized their unwillingness to value it appropriately as a lack of leadership. He shared more frustration around the high school and middle school directors losing their jobs, noting that great teachers build legacies. He stated that they have the funds to restore these programs right now, and he wants them to do better for their kids and community.

Chair Petersen received the comments during the hearing, and shared they would have further discussion during the business meeting under the budget adoption action item.

Close Budget Hearing

5. Closure of Hearing (7:25 p.m.)

The hearing was closed at 7:25 p.m.

Closing Items

6. Announcements (7:25 p.m.)

A regular business meeting of the board followed the budget hearing.

June 4, 2026: Regular Board Business Meeting - 7 p.m.

Council Chambers
Public Safety and Schools Building

7. Adjourn (7:25 p.m.)

There being no further business, the budget hearing was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Submitted by: _____

Sarah Avery
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and
Board of Directors

Note: These minutes were approved by the board on _____:sa