



Pullman School District

Minutes

Special Meeting: Joint Meeting with the Pullman City Council

Date and Time

Wednesday April 1, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Location

Community Room
Pullman Public Schools District Office
240 SE Dexter St.
Pullman, WA 99163

Directors Present

Arron Carter, Deena Bayoumi, Lisa Waananen Jones, Stephanie Horn

Directors Absent

Craig Nelson

Guests Present

Anayah Passmore (PHS Student Ambassador), Andrew Chen (PHS Student Ambassador), Ann Parks (Councilmember), Bob Maxwell, Bryan MacDonald (Councilmember), Courtney Hodge, Eric Fejeran (Councilmember), Francis Benjamin (Mayor), Joram Tenywa (PHS Student Ambassador), Kevin Chi (PHS Student Ambassador), Nathan Weller (Councilmember), Ryan Mulvey, Tawny Szumlas (Councilmember), Trevor Vance (Councilmember)

I. Opening Items**A. Record Attendance****B.**

Arron Carter

Signed by Arron Carter on 4/20/2026

Call the Meeting to Order

Arron Carter called a meeting of the board of directors of Pullman School District to order on Wednesday Apr 1, 2026 at 5:32 PM.

C. Introductions

Introductions of the members of the Pullman City Council and Pullman School District Board of Directors. Board President Carter provided an overview of the format of the meeting which would include small group discussions around specific topics and then a share out with the group key takeaways from those discussions.

II. Discussion Items

A. Sharing Strategic Plans

Superintendent Bob Maxwell and Mayor Francis Benjamin provided overviews of their respective strategic planning efforts, highlighting key priorities, areas of alignment, and opportunities for collaboration to better serve the Pullman community.

Superintendent Maxwell shared that the district's strategic plan is grounded in its cultural beliefs, with a student-centered focus. School improvement plans align with district goals in four priority areas: English Language Arts, Math, Behavior, and Attendance. Board goals include reducing chronic absenteeism during key transitions (5th–6th grade and 8th–9th grade) and increasing support for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds through targeted resource allocation.

Mayor Benjamin outlined the City's strategic planning process, which occurs every two years and includes both short- and long-term priorities. Identified focus areas include business and economic development; community accessibility and engagement; facilities planning; financial sustainability; operational projects (e.g., parks, design standards); staff support; housing affordability; regional and governmental partnerships; tourism; community welcoming efforts; transportation; and consideration of underutilized railroad infrastructure. These focus areas are currently under review and will be prioritized as part of the City's strategic plan development.

B. Building Lines of Communication

Board members, Pullman High School student ambassadors, and City Councilmembers participated in small group discussions focused on strengthening communication between elected officials, students, and staff. Conversations emphasized improving transparency, consistency, and timeliness of information sharing.

Following breakout sessions, group members reconvened to share key takeaways. Common themes included the importance of collaboration on legislative priorities, increasing student engagement, and establishing a regular annual meeting between

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Pullman Public Schools and the City of Pullman. Group members highlighted the need for a more intentional effort to keep one another informed and to expand communication beyond internal district channels to better reach the broader community.

Additional suggestions included cross-promoting information across multiple platforms, partnering with local organizations and businesses to amplify messaging, and linking district and city websites to improve accessibility. Group members also discussed attending each other's board and council meetings, providing regular updates during public comment opportunities, and leveraging connections to enhance community engagement. Opportunities to involve student clubs in city events and initiatives were also identified as a way to strengthen connections and promote a welcoming community.

C. Community Outreach and Engagement

Group members engaged in breakout discussions to explore ideas for joint outreach efforts, events, and activities. Conversations included opportunities for co-hosted events, coordinated messaging, and increasing visibility at community gatherings.

Following the discussions, representatives from each group shared key themes, emphasizing the value of collaboration and identifying opportunities to strengthen connections with the broader community.

Key takeaways included the benefit of hosting combined, purposeful events—such as the Lentil Festival and other downtown activities—to bring the community together. There was also discussion around attracting individuals and families who value education, including efforts to market Pullman and its schools to students and families outside the community, particularly in partnership with the university.

Groups highlighted the importance of building community culture around students, celebrating their accomplishments through events, parades, and arts-centered activities. Expanding recreation and outdoor engagement opportunities was also discussed as a way to connect students, families, and community members, including aligning efforts around shared priorities such as mental health and access to resources.

Additional ideas included strengthening partnerships by combining existing events, exploring new initiatives such as a community fun run that highlights local schools, and developing a welcome packet for new families. This resource could be shared through real estate agents and the university and include key information about schools, community resources, and local connections.

D. Future Relationship between Pullman School District and the City of Pullman

Group members participated in breakout discussions to consider long-term collaboration goals and a shared vision for the partnership. Discussions focused on identifying mutual priorities and opportunities for sustained collaboration.

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During the report-out, group representatives emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong partnership, aligning on shared goals, and continuing to build a foundation for ongoing collaboration to benefit the Pullman community.

Key takeaways included expanding community access to school facilities, such as opening buildings in the evenings for classes, activities, and events. Sharing resources—including programs and facilities—was identified as an opportunity to better serve residents while also increasing community familiarity with school spaces.

Discussions also highlighted the potential for enhanced after-school and community-based programming by leveraging local expertise, including partnerships with organizations such as the senior center and service groups. Participants emphasized the importance of staying connected and building on existing events, such as resource fairs and multicultural nights, to strengthen relationships.

Additional ideas included showcasing student talent through public art displays in community spaces such as libraries, airports, or vacant downtown storefronts, as well as exploring joint efforts around long-term planning, including bonds and land use. Participants noted the value of aligning messaging and goals to better engage the broader community, particularly those without direct ties to the school district.

Finally, discussion included the need to create more community gathering spaces and opportunities for social connection, recognizing Pullman as a “return town” and identifying ways to encourage people to stay and remain engaged in the community.

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:57 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arron Carter

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