

NEWS

Bremerton school board calls holiday meeting to appoint interim superintendent



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Kitsap Sun

Published 1:52 p.m. PT July 3, 2024

The Bremerton School District board of directors has called a special meeting for Thursday, a national holiday for the Fourth of July, with a brief agenda that includes the potential of placing Superintendent James Crawford on administrative leave and appointing an interim leader for the district.

The school board last week unanimously voted to not extend Crawford's three-year contract for another year, during a special meeting June 26 that was called with just 24 hours notice. The board recessed into executive session that day to "review the performance of a public employee," deliberating for a half hour before making a decision in a meeting at the district office. After the board's vote, community members in attendance caused a verbal uproar, but the meeting agenda did not include time for public comment and board members did not elaborate on the vote.

This Wednesday morning, July 3, the board held another executive session "to meet with legal counsel," according to an agenda that was publicly noticed a day in advance. Following that meeting, at 11 a.m., Thursday's special meeting was announced.

The school board agenda lists a special meeting, open to the public on July 4, to begin at 11 a.m. at the district office, 134 Marion Avenue. The agenda includes three items: discussing the "consideration of placing employee on administrative leave," the "consideration of appointment of interim superintendent" and the "consideration of releasing a public statement from the board."

The board on June 12 had voted to approve a letter of engagement with Haggard & Ganson LLP, a law firm specializing in municipal law, investigations and neutral services,

for the stated reason "to conduct an independent investigation of the conduct of a school district officer on behalf of the Bremerton School District."

Crawford, a 1998 Bremerton High School graduate, previously served as the interim senior director of high school academics for Portland Public Schools, assistant superintendent for Federal Way Public Schools and as a teacher in the Puyallup and Pullman school districts.

As superintendent, Crawford led an effort to pass a 25-year \$150 million bond to fund capital projects at schools across the district last February, in addition to a two-year educational programs and operations levy that also was approved by voters.