

**Snake River School Board of Trustees
Held at the Snake River Community Library
924 West Highway 39, Blackfoot, ID 83221
Tuesday, September 8, 2026**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chairman Lon Harrington called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Other board members present were Carol Hepworth, Josh Sorensen, Larin Mortimer, and Spencer Larsen. Also attending was Superintendent Mark Kress and Board Clerk Terisa Coombs.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Josh Sorensen and seconded by Spencer Larsen to approve the agenda as presented. All board members present voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.

3. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Under Idaho Code 74-206 (1)(f) To communicate with legal counsel for the public agency to discuss the legal ramifications of and legal options for pending litigation, or controversies not yet being litigated but imminently likely to be litigated. Roll call vote was taken: Josh Sorensen, aye; Spencer Larsen, aye; Carol Hepworth, aye; Larin Mortimer, aye; and Lon Harrington, aye. Motion passed 5-0.

The board went into Executive Session at 3:33 p.m. Idaho Code 74-206 (1)(f) was discussed until 4:43 p.m. At 3:39 p.m., Employee A and spouse entered Executive Session. They exited at 3:52 p.m.

At 4:43 p.m., the doors were opened and the board returned to Regular Session.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Larin Mortimer opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. PUBLIC INPUT

Chairman Lon Harrington read the following statement: Patrons can sign up for the patron forum by filling out the Request to Address the Board form and noting which action agenda item they would like to address. The form will be collected by the board clerk 5 minutes prior to the start of the meeting. The Chairman will ask each person wishing to speak to give their names for the record. Comments about personnel are not allowed at any time. Each speaker will be limited to 3 minutes and the patron comment period is not to exceed 30 minutes (Policy 4105).

With a time limit of three minutes each, Sherrilynn Bair, Mark Bair, and Gina Dawson all read statements during Public Input. All three requested that their statement be entered into the official record. Please see the attached statements.

6. BOARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Superintendent Kress reviewed school board meeting policies and clarified the board's responsibilities and authority during and outside of meetings. He asked members to review Policies 1205, 1500, 1500B, and 1600 and proposed scheduling a two-hour ISBA training session, possibly before the October board meeting, to support the new and existing board members.

7. ACTION ITEMS

A motion was made by Carol Hepworth and seconded by Larin Mortimer to change the library liaison and assign it to another board member. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.

Carol Hepworth then requested that nominations be opened for the library board position.

Larin Mortimer nominated Carol Hepworth to serve as the library board member. Spencer Larsen seconded. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.

A motion was made by Carol Hepworth and seconded by Larin Mortimer to censure Trustee Lon Harrington and have the Vice Chairman, Josh Sorensen, take over. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.

Vice Chairman Josh Sorensen opened up nominations for Board Chairman.

Lon Harrington nominated Larin Mortimer to serve as the Board Chairman. Spencer Larsen moved that nominations cease and Carol Hepworth seconded. Larin Mortimer will serve as Board Chairman. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.

Carol Hepworth then requested that nominations be opened for Vice Chairman.

Spencer Larsen nominated Josh Sorensen serve as Vice Chairman. Lon Harrington seconded the nomination. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.

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8. ADJOURN

Lon Harrington moved and Josh Sorensen seconded to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

ATTEST:

Terisa Coombs

Clerk

Larin Mortimer

Chairman

September 16, 2026

Date

Chair Harrington and Members of the Board:

On September 4, I submitted a formal written complaint regarding repeated comments and conduct by Chairman Harrington concerning my compensation and employment.

The catalyst for my decision to bring this complaint forward was the unprofessional and disrespectful manner in which Gina Dawson was treated publicly by a person in a position of authority—specifically, the Chairman of the Board representing Snake River School District. Watching an employee be addressed that way publicly made me realize that remaining silent about my own experiences was no longer appropriate. This is not simply about how I have been treated. I am concerned about the standard of conduct we accept from those entrusted with leadership and authority in our district.

On June 30, Chairman Harrington told my husband that I “make too much money” and, while discussing the possibility of my someday retiring and returning to work under PERSI rules, stated that would happen “over my dead body.”

On August 3, before a Library Board meeting, Chairman Harrington asked me how much money I make. When I explained that I am on the teacher salary schedule with extended days, he responded, “There is no way in Hell you will make that much money.”

I subsequently spoke with Superintendent Kress, who confirmed my contract and his understanding of my compensation and duties.

Then, during the August 19 School Board meeting, my compensation and employment were publicly discussed. Although I was not present, I listened to the recording afterward. I was particularly concerned by comments suggesting that my compensation was inappropriate and that my employment could be in jeopardy.

This has now followed me outside the workplace. On August 30, while attending an 8th grade football game, a community member approached me and called me an “overpaid staff member.” Another comment was made to my husband about my salary and how I was being paid too much.

I understand and respect this Board’s responsibility to oversee budgets, contracts, and public funds. That is not what my complaint is about.

My concern is an individual Board member repeatedly making personally directed comments about my compensation and employment, including statements that I believe could reasonably be understood as threatening my future employment.

The District’s policies establish procedures for addressing personnel concerns and recognize that individual Board members do not have unilateral authority over employees. I am simply asking that those procedures—and the standards of professionalism and respect we expect throughout our district—be followed.

My written complaint contains the specific incidents, applicable policies, and the actions I am requesting from the Board. I ask that it be formally reviewed and that I receive a written response.

I have served this district and community professionally, and I want to continue doing my job without fear of personal targeting, retaliation, or public threats concerning my employment.

Thank you.

Sherrilynn Bair

September 4, 2026

Snake River School District No. 52 Board of Trustees
103 S 900 W
Blackfoot, ID 83221

Re: Internal Complaint and Request for Board Action Regarding Board Member Conduct

Dear Chair Harrington and Members of the Board:

I am submitting this letter as a formal internal complaint and request for Board action regarding conduct by Board Chairman Lon Harrington that has caused substantial concern, disruption, and distress in connection with my employment as Library Director and the ongoing relationship between Snake River School District No. 52 and the Snake River School/Community Library District.

I respect the Board's authority to consider budgets, approve agreements, and discuss matters properly before it. I also understand that public employee compensation may be discussed in appropriate contexts. My concern is not that the Board has oversight responsibilities. My concern is that Chairman Harrington has repeatedly made comments about my compensation and employment in a manner that appears personal, threatening, disruptive, and outside the appropriate role of an individual board member.

The District's own policies appear to recognize these boundaries. Policy 1600, Item 4 provides that individual Board members may not commit the Board to action unless authorized by official Board action, and Policy 1500B, Item 23 similarly recognizes that individual Board members do not have authority and may not take unilateral action. Policy 1600, Item 6 and Policy 1500B, Item 26 further recognize that the Board's role is to establish policy and that administrative authority rests with the Superintendent. In addition, Policy 1500B, Item 12 directs personnel complaints and criticisms to the Superintendent through the Board's Uniform Grievance Procedure.

On or about June 30, 2026, after a Republican Committee meeting held at my home, Chairman Harrington spoke with my husband, Mark, and stated words to the effect that I "make too much money." He also stated, in substance, that if I were planning to retire and return to work under PERSI rules, that would not happen, including words to the effect of "over my dead body." I had not made any such plan, and I understood these comments as inappropriate personal statements about my employment and future opportunities.

On August 3, 2026, before a Library Board meeting and budget hearing, Chairman Harrington arrived early and asked me, "How much money do you make?" I responded that I was on the teacher salary schedule with extended days. He then stated, "There is no way in Hell you will make that much money." I did not confront him at that time because I did not believe doing so would be productive, but the comment was deeply concerning to me. It suggested that an

individual Board member was threatening or attempting to influence my compensation outside of the proper process.

I later discussed the matter with Superintendent Kress. Mr. Kress indicated that I had a contract and that my understanding of my placement on the salary schedule was correct. Mr. Kress understands how my compensation is structured, including my additional work with the online school.

On August 19, 2026, the School Board considered the library agreement. I was unable to attend because of a prior commitment, but I later obtained and reviewed the audio recording of the meeting. Based on that recording and reports from individuals who attended, Chairman Harrington objected to the Library Director's salary and made comments indicating that I should not make that amount of money and that my employment was in jeopardy. Although he ultimately voted to approve the agreement, the way my compensation and employment were discussed caused significant concern.

I am further concerned that the discussion included reference to a specific dollar amount regarding my salary and used personally identifying references such as "her" and "she" in circumstances where there is only one Library Director. Again, I understand that certain salary information may be public. My concern is that this information was used in a public meeting in a manner that appeared to target me personally and to create doubt about my employment, rather than to address a legitimate policy issue through appropriate channels.

The conduct also appears inconsistent with Policy 1500B, Item 9, which provides that Board members should avoid inflammatory or personally directed language and actions that create a negative impression of an individual, the Board, or the District, while encouraging debate to occur thoughtfully and with respect. Where a Board member needs additional background information on a business item, Policy 1500B, Item 14 provides that the member should contact the Superintendent in advance of the meeting. My concern is that the August 19 discussion publicly escalated an employment and compensation issue that should have been addressed through the Superintendent and applicable procedures before the meeting.

The August 19 meeting also raised broader concerns about meeting conduct and governance. I have been informed that the meeting was hostile and that other individuals, including an employee and a student presenter, were treated in an unprofessional manner. The policy analysis I have reviewed identifies concerns that staff were publicly criticized during open session and that requests or criticisms directed to staff should instead proceed through the Superintendent under Policy 1500B, Items 11 and 17 and Policy 1600, Item 9. I have also observed prior conduct by Chairman Harrington that I believe reflects a pattern of exceeding the proper role of Board chair, including telling other Board members to "shut up" or otherwise attempting to silence them during meetings.

This matter is no longer limited to internal discomfort. On August 30, 2026, while attending an eighth-grade football game to watch my grandson, a patron said to me, "Hey you overpaid staff member." Another comment was also made to me regarding my salary and being paid too much.

These comments suggest that the public discussion of my compensation has already affected how community members perceive and interact with me.

The situation has adversely affected my ability to perform my work without distraction, anxiety, and concern about retaliation or further public criticism. I am committed to serving the students, patrons, Library Board, and District professionally. However, I do not believe it is appropriate for an individual Board member to make repeated personal comments about an employee's compensation, threaten or imply jeopardy to that employee's continued employment, or interfere with day-to-day employment matters outside established procedures.

I therefore respectfully request that the Board take prompt action to prevent further disruption and retaliation. Specifically, I request that the Board:

1. Direct that any concerns regarding my employment, compensation, evaluation, contract status, or job performance be addressed only through the Superintendent, applicable Board policies, the Board's Uniform Grievance Procedure where applicable, and appropriate official Board action;
2. Direct individual Board members not to threaten, imply, or suggest adverse employment action against me outside of official Board procedures;
3. Confirm that my current employment contract, compensation, and duties will be honored unless modified through lawful and established procedures;
4. Confirm that I will not be retaliated against for raising these concerns, making this complaint, requesting records, consulting counsel, or participating in any internal review;
5. Consider whether Chairman Harrington should be removed as the School Board representative to the Snake River School/Community Library District Board, particularly in light of the Library Board's concern and request for a different representative;
6. Consider whether Chairman Harrington's conduct warrants formal sanction, reprimand, censure, or other corrective action under Policy 1600, Policy 1500B, or any other applicable Board policy;
7. Consider placing Board reorganization, Board officer assignments, or representative appointments on a future agenda, if appropriate under District policy and Idaho law;
8. Preserve all records relating to this matter, including meeting audio, agendas, minutes, Board packets, communications regarding the library agreement, communications regarding my compensation or employment, and communications concerning the School Board representative to the Library Board; and
9. Provide me with a copy of any policy or procedure the District contends governs this complaint, including any policy addressing complaints against Board members, Board ethics, Board chair authority, employee grievances, harassment, retaliation, or respectful workplace expectations.

I am not asking the Board to avoid legitimate budget oversight or policy discussion. I am asking that employee matters be handled through proper channels, that individual trustees not make personal threats or comments that disrupt employment relationships, and that the Board take reasonable steps to prevent further public targeting, workplace disruption, and retaliation.

I remain willing to participate in an appropriate internal process and to provide additional information, including the audio recording of the August 19, 2026 meeting and witness information. I also request that any response to this complaint be provided to me in writing.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

Sherrilynn Bair, Library Director Snake River School/Community Library District

cc: Superintendent Kress Snake River School/Community Library District Board Chair;
Natalie Raymond

Statement Regarding Conversation with Lon Harrington on June 30, 2026

On June 30, 2026, I hosted a meeting of the Republican Executive Committee at my home. Lon is a member of the committee. The meeting was held at my house because I had recently undergone knee surgery and was unable to get out and attend meetings elsewhere.

Following the meeting, Lon remained at my home to visit and talk, as he sometimes does. During our conversation, he made a statement to me that I found unusual and concerning.

Lon said, "Your wife is making too much money."

I responded that, in my opinion, the opposite was true. I told him that I did not believe my wife was being paid enough considering the work and responsibilities involved in the jobs she performs.

Lon then referred to the state retirement program that allows an employee to retire, begin receiving retirement benefits, and subsequently be rehired while also receiving a salary. He said words to the effect of, "You know that PERS retirement program where you can retire and draw your PERS, and then be rehired and get your salary, too? Over my dead body is your wife going to get that."

As I recall, I did not respond to that statement.

I understood Lon to be referring to the state's PERS retirement program. His statement was unsolicited, and I found it particularly odd because the subject of my wife's retirement or participation in such a program had not been raised by me during our conversation.

This statement and the circumstances surrounding it are accurately described to the best of my recollection.

Mark Bair

Address to the Snake River School Board

Concerns Regarding Board Oversight and Transportation Department Management

Board Members,

I am addressing the Board today because I believe there is a serious concern regarding the line between appropriate School Board oversight and the direct involvement of an individual Board member in the day-to-day management and direction of the Transportation Department.

I fully recognize that the School Board has a responsibility to ask questions, provide oversight, and hold district departments accountable. I welcome that responsibility. I also believe, however, that questions and oversight need to be conducted in a manner that allows the Transportation Director to perform the duties of the position without unnecessary interference or personal scrutiny.

My concern became particularly clear during the August 19th Board meeting. I came prepared to present a plan for safety busing, technology improvements, student tracking, and a long-term strategy for replacing aging school buses. Instead, the discussion shifted into questions about my knowledge and ability to manage Transportation, including statements that I was costing the district hundreds of thousands of dollars because I did not know what I was doing.

I believe that type of questioning should be addressed through the appropriate administrative process rather than through an unexpected public confrontation during a Board presentation.

I am also concerned about the Chairman's continued and unusually detailed interest in the Transportation Department. This has included questions and involvement concerning how many buses are in the fleet, the condition of individual buses, drivers taking buses to away games, the cleanliness of buses, and other operational details.

I am also concerned about the Chairman personally walking through the Transportation bus yard and inspecting buses. If there are legitimate concerns regarding the condition, cleanliness, or operation of district vehicles, I believe those concerns should be communicated through the Superintendent and Transportation Director so they can be investigated and addressed through the proper chain of responsibility.

There is another issue that I believe deserves transparency. The Chairman has family connections to the transportation industry. I am not stating that this fact, by itself, establishes wrongdoing or improper conduct. However, because transportation is an area in which the Chairman has taken such a significant interest, I believe the Board should carefully consider whether those circumstances create an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest.

At a minimum, I believe the public deserves confidence that decisions concerning transportation operations, bus purchases, fleet management, drivers, and transportation vendors are being made objectively and in the best interest of Snake River School District. A timely response to plans and advancement of transportation needs and purchases were hindered by the interference and stopping of the presentation in the previous school board meeting. The state wants the board to understand and act on the updating of the fleet, this was not addressed because the whole presentation was not allowed to proceed in a timely manner.

I am also concerned about whether the State Board of Education has expectations regarding the appropriate role of a local school board member in transportation management. My understanding is that the Board's role is governance and oversight, while the Superintendent and designated administrators are responsible for carrying out the day-to-day operations of the district.

I am asking that this distinction be respected.

I am not asking the Board to stop asking questions. I am asking that questions be directed through the proper administrative process, that individual employees not be subjected to public personal criticism, and that Board members avoid becoming directly involved in the operational management of a department they are responsible for overseeing.

I want to work with this Board. I want our transportation program to be safe, financially responsible, transparent, and accountable.

My concern is not about being questioned. My concern is about **how, where, and by whom those questions are being asked**, and whether the level of individual involvement has crossed from appropriate oversight into operational management.

I respectfully ask the Board and Superintendent to review these concerns, clarify the appropriate roles and responsibilities, and establish clear boundaries that allow the Transportation Department to operate professionally while maintaining the accountability that the Board is responsible for providing.

Thank you.

Gina Dawson