

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting
Meeting # 293
April 11, 2023 7:00 pm**

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

In attendance:

Pam Armstrong
Erin Bradley (via telecomm)
Lainie Ives
Ken Jackman
Nina Keery
Tim Letson
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin (via telecomm)
Tanya Murdy
Eric Simone (via telecomm)
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore
Chris Whitford (arrived 7:25)
Jonnie Lyn Evans, Director

Absent:

Nancy Durkee
Denise Herrera
Erin Seaton
Eric Simone

Public:

Christine Getz

Note from the Chair:

Introduced Chris Getz, founder of school and foundation member.

Notes to keep eyes open for email about Celebration of Learning sign ups; choose at least two that work with your schedule.

Vote: To approve minutes from the March Board of Trustees meeting and submitted April committee meeting minutes..

Motion: Anna Wetmore
2nd: Nina Keery

Yes:

Pam Armstrong

Lainie Ives
Ken Jackman
Nina Keery
Tim Letson
Catherine Martin
Tanya Murdy
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore

No:
None

Abstain:
Erin Bradley
Amber Hewett
Alfred Link
Eric Simone

Absent:
Nancy Durkee
Denise Herrera
Erin Seaton
Chris Whitford (arrived later)

Director's Report: Jonnie Lyn Evans presented report

The Director's Report appears in the packet. Time was allowed for questions and comments.

Additional things:

JL Evans, Jane Patterson and Colin Vandenburg are working on the Montessori internal audit. They are performing observations in classrooms to check work engagement and the prepared Montessori environment. They will then use a rubric to write a report with findings and recommendations. Accountability requirements in the Accountability Plan will contribute to the annual report and charter renewal. Both are due July 30th.

ELA will kick off MCAS testing tomorrow. Make ups will be after April break. DESE is pushing on chronic absenteeism. We are often at about 10 percent absenteeism. At 10 percent missed, you can be considered for retainment.

Counseling will be broken into K-3 and 4-8. One counselor is working on addressing absenteeism. The K-3 will be working with K screening. An interning counselor will be returning next year as an employee.

Charter renewal: Expectations/context: Been through 5. In the past, it didn't feel like they were looking for "gotchas." Now, it feels like they are. In the last few years, less than 75% are renewed without conditions. Trying to address any potential issues ahead of time. Most

findings are in two areas: Governance and licensure requirements. When opened, no requirements for licensure. Now any teacher who teaches in a core subject must have a bachelor's degree and pass a MTEL for the subject within one year of employment. We have focused on quality and Montessori training. Working on this now.

JLE would like feedback on the future of the playground. It would be a mistake to take action without a bigger plan. Parking, pond, playground, middle school recreation area are all interconnected. Ponds are stormwater retention ponds, so conservation may not be an issue. Could they be lined, or made smaller and deeper, etc? Approx \$40K for a plan w/in 6-8 months. Have a few appointments lined up to gather information.

ATing - You mentioned Governance issues within the Charter Renewal?

JLE - Many 2020-2023 had problems w bylaws, open meeting laws, director review method.

TMurdy - Has the assistant director position been posted?

JLE - Trying to figure out the wording. Posting has closed. Now under review. New organization is for July 1 or June 15. There are two people in teaching positions who cannot take on the new positions until that is done. Integration specialist is finishing this year, earlier than expected. An idea is to hold her in a consulting position.

TMurdy - do you think it will be hard to fill the K-3 special ed position?

JLE - Have a list of contacts and ideas for moving positions within the school. Has also interviewed someone. Feels ok.

NKeery - Are other schools offering a signing bonus? Would we consider it?

Reaction is that it is hard to do that. What do you do for other folks already here?

ALink - Is parent caregiver survey going out this week?

JLE - Haven't received a directive from Accountability.

Family Engagement Team invited families in for community art. Very good turnout and lots of fun.

Finance Committee

Starting the budgeting process now. We lock the salary line item a little early so that hiring can happen. This is just salary, not benefits. In the interest of efficiency, meetings may not happen every month next year. Perhaps meetings will just be a budget review four times a year.

Initial long range forecasts from DESE, foundation and above foundation. Models are looking like funding next year will be 2-4% increase. Still lots of variables. Recommending a 3% increase for 23-24. Last year, it was 6% increase, 5% increase, 21 0%, 20 3.1, 18-19 12%

increase. Average is about 3.4% increase. Does not translate to everyone getting a 3% salary increase.

TLetson - If there is a windfall, can we vote again?

ALink - yes.

JLE - due to new systems, we can make shifts easily.

CMartin - Does this figure include projections of salary of new administration?

ALink - yes, but our purview is only the single line item. Allocation of the line item is at the discretion of the director.

Vote: The board authorizes \$3,615,633 for salaries and wages for the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget to enable issuing timely Employee Agreements.

Motion: Alfred Link

2nd: Chris Whitford

Yes:

Pam Armstrong

Erin Bradley

Amber Hewett

Lainie Ives

Ken Jackman

Nina Keery

Tim Letson

Alfred Link

Catherine Martin

Tanya Murdy

Eric Simone

Albert Ting

Anna Wetmore

Chris Whitford

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Absent:

Nancy Durkee

Denise Herrera

Erin Seaton

Strategic Plan Update

There were no major changes at the Strategic Planning Session, but there was some discussion on phrasing. There was significant discussion as to what to do with the Action Plan document. It's management's tool, but the board wants to know it exists and see it. JLEvans can use it to come back to us to report progress. It is not something that the board will vote on.

The board will see a final draft of the plan and a populated form a week or so before the May meeting. This gives time for review and questions about the documents. By the May meeting, we will have hashed it out and can vote on it. The vote will be on the acceptance of the Strategic Plan, not the Action Plan. They are two separate documents.

PArmstrong made a clarification of how we communicate outside of the board. When we share documents among the board, they are not meant for wider consumption until they appear in the board packet. If you receive an email from the board, the attachments are for us. The Chair is the spokesperson for the board. The board holds the school's charter. Perhaps we haven't been explicit and had good training on this.

Committee on Trustees

The committee had a productive in person meeting. The committee formalized the application process for future trustees, created a full advertisement which can be used repeatedly and made a list of places to advertise for prospective trustees. It is coming up fast. Feel free to disseminate at will. As a board, we need to follow the schedule of nominating at the May meeting and voting at the June meeting. We will also nominate new members of the Executive Committee. Anyone who has any interest to reach out to Albert or any other executive committee member within the next two weeks.

Any previous interest is being folded into this process.

JLEvans - Does it make sense to include a statement about a commitment to DEI? It is in all school applications.

NKeery - It is addressed in the communications.

JLEvans - Would like to directly address upholding DEI. JLEvans will send to ATing; ATing will update.

June 1, 5-9 pm is the winning date and time for the retreat. The retreat this year could be used really well for team building. For the first couple of hours the board will participate in a service project at the school. The last hour and a half or so, the board will head to a restaurant to eat, get to know each other. General governance training could be in August.

Accountability Committee

The April meeting was canceled.

Development Committee

Maritime Mixer: met with the Maritime Museum chair and reignited the relationship. The Museum has agreed to allow RVCS to use the room for free on May 18. The school will handle planning the details. It would be great if board members can attend.

Tallship Breakfast: July 7, breakfast on the boardwalk followed by a tour of the boat. Price is in hand, RVCS can decide if they'd like to cover it.

Volunteerism part of the re engagement plan will start after April break.

Working to develop some calendar items to get expected events rolling. This could be populated within Happenings. As a board, we can take a leadership role and get involved in these things.

The clothing swap was a success, thinking of building on it and perhaps holding another in the Fall.

The way the Parents' Alliance stands right now isn't working. There are two parents, one of which is a Kinderhaus parent who is just getting to know the school. There has been discussion about making it its own committee. There is a blurred line between the Development Committee and the PA. It makes sense for it to be more of a typical PTO type organization. Perhaps this can be part of the volunteerism leg.

There is a clear go ahead for the PA to form and start scheduling events and grow. There are still people in the community who can be resources to learn about the history of the PA and how it worked in the past.

Public Comment:

Christine Getz - It seems like a productive meeting especially coming out of the pandemic. There are some things in the history of the that can be built on. Building a strong team can make it happen.

Vote: To adjourn.

Motion: Alfred Link

2nd: Tim Letson

Yes:

Pam Armstrong

Erin Bradley

Amber Hewett

Lainie Ives

Ken Jackman
Nina Keery
Tim Letson
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin
Tanya Murdy
Eric Simone
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore
Chris Whitford

No:
None

Abstain:
None

Absent:
Nancy Durkee
Denise Herrera
Erin Seaton

8:49 pm Board adjourns.