

**River Valley Charter  
School Board of  
Directors Meeting  
Meeting # 265 April 8,  
2020 5:00 pm**

In accordance with the Executive Order applying to MA Open Meeting Law, this meeting will be held virtually on Zoom <https://zoom.us/j/309379100> at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order at  
5:05

*In attendance:*

Pam Armstrong  
Mark Belanger  
Mark Bishop  
Nancy Durkee Ali  
Fields Amber  
Hewett Alfred Link  
Nina Keery  
Catherine Martin  
Jennifer  
McCormack  
Karina Moltz Erin  
Seaton

Director: Jonnie Lyn  
Evans

**Members of the public:** Dan Bouchard Deb McCrevan Liz Fabel (president of the Foundation) Sheila Spalding – parent of kinderhaus student, member of Newburyport School Committee Jane Noyes – E1 teacher

**Opening comments from Pam Armstrong:** Thanks the Board for participating and for being present despite stress in lives. Important to re- member that our charge is to speak up, to speak our minds, and not necessarily persuade anyone to join your side. We hire the director, we approve the budget, we support the running of the school (written version of Pam’s comments will be filed with other meeting documents).

**Public Comment:** Sheila Spalding thanks the school for all of the communication and work that has been involved in school closure.

**Approval of minutes from last meeting will happen next meeting.**

**Accountability (Alfred Link)** two meetings: first was in February and is largely moot at this point because of pandemic. The two or three primary responsibilities of AC in the spring include the progress reports, parent survey. It's been decided that the parent survey should not happen. The administration will be sending out surveys for particular needs and purposes, but not doing the official parent survey. Alfred Link will speak with EC to explain about parent survey and discuss impact on Director Review.

**Development (Jennifer McCormack):** in a regroup phase. Had an event scheduled with Chamber of Commerce for next Friday. That can't happen. Committee was supposed to meet last week but that didn't happen, so meeting will happen soon. Decision needs to be made about Maritime Mixer. Graduation celebration in April has been cancelled.

Dan has attended meetings that include other schools discussing galas, fundraisers, etc. Boston Academy was going to have an ad-hoc virtual gala. Seems like schools are just trying to figure out what to do. There is some debate about having benefits or fundraising efforts right now.

JLE: feels like if money needs to be raised it should be raised for people who are more in need. If we decide to raise money we should scale down expectations.

PA: maybe the time is right for some focus on next year with another person at the helm of Development, since Jennifer's term is ending.

**Committee on Trustees (Amber Hewett)** Membership: we should be able to vote on a couple of new members at the May meeting. Several people have agreed to fill out questionnaires, and a couple of other interviews are planned. Amber suggests we stay open to voting members in at the June meeting if need be. Anna Wetmore has agreed to complete a questionnaire. Amber reminds every one to let Amber know if you have any candidates in mind for Board membership. If members are approaching the end of their first term, please check in with Amber to see if you want to stay on.

JLE: in the past there have been matrices to look at what kind of holes we have on the board. Would like to encourage representation from each of our districts if possible. Helpful to know what's happening calendar-wise, school closures, etc. When Covid closure happened, districts decided and didn't loop in RVCS. We should always be thinking about expanding past our current parent body, thinking about alumni parents or people from outside of RVCS. JLE has sent two names to Amber for consideration.

Board retreat: this would typically happen in June, and Amber strongly recommends waiting to set a date with the hope that we can actually meet in person. Even if we have to do it during the summer it would be worth it. Everyone is stretched and it's hard to pay attention during a virtual meeting.

KM: my only hesitation is that having a retreat without outgoing members would be a shame. AH: there's no rule saying that outgoing members can't come to the retreat

**Finance: see report:** monthly tuition was received on time. Expect a minor decrease in tuition payments for April. Details are in documents. No disruptions to payments to staff except for after-care and before-care. Foundation is reviewing audit cost proposals.

DM: the audit is very important to move forward with. Has been working with Dave Kelleher in the last weeks, sat in on business roundtables, getting a lot of info from AAF (not sure what that is). Wants to make sure we can get on the schedule. Can we vote on the audit next week?

PA: Mark Bishop will follow up with Deb.

DM: has sat in on Mass Charter School meetings. Bleak season next year for budget planning. Lots up in the air. Tuition will change, we don't know by how much. Going to be a late season – state budget might not even get passed by June 30.

PA: in terms of BOT approval of the budget, how will we be affected?

DM: that is probably not going to happen if we have a budget meeting in early May. A week or two later in May would be more possible.

PA: We can have a special meeting if we need to. Board should expect meetings to happen as needed for votes, etc.

Next Finance meeting will be in the next weeks, last one was cancelled bc of Open Meeting Laws. Discussion of how Zoom meetings should be planned and communicated. JLE and DB will work on figuring out a plan for that.

**Comments from teachers about the state of RVCS teachers: JN:** in the unique position of having grown children, so the children she teaches are her children. She looks forward to seeing her class. The E1 team is struggling to manage schedules and teaching load. It's stressful to have parents worry about their children's behavior on the screen. Teachers and kids have a respect that includes being allowed to not attend meetings. Jane misses the kids a lot and feels for them. She worries about the first graders. Third graders are more self-sufficient.

**AF:** personally is doing fine. Situation seems surreal, but that is true for everyone. Ali sent message to the staff to hear how they're doing. She wonders if she's doing enough. Families seem to want to do more Zoom calls, and Ali hates zoom calls. Trying to figure out if she's doing enough, but parents have been so appreciative and kind. Other teachers are worried about Montessori aspect. Some teachers are worried about their own kids – they're working too much to give enough to their kids. A new teacher said "I just want to tell you that I've been in so many different school settings, and RVCS is such an amazing place. Through this it's been all the more evident". Teachers are hoping that community can come back together physically whenever allowed, even if it's not during the school year.

### **Director's Report**

Hard to talk about anything but covid. One staff member is in quarantine. Lost a family member to Covid-19. Feels like an incredibly sad situation. Another has a very close friend who died of Covid-10 in NYC. RVCS is starting to feel some of the impact closer and closer. Nothing else has been reported by anyone else within the community.

General business: items that pop up

- Spoke to attorney about exposure to cyberdamage
- Big thunder/lightning storm last week took out 3 components of the server. Has

been a challenge bc tech person is out of commission right now. Trying to figure out exactly how to do the tech stuff. Network is back up but bigger damage will have to be repaired at another time.

- Concerns about Zoom bombing. Monitoring that, using tool in a way that doesn't increase any more exposure.
- Kimberley Putney has been called by Dept of Health bc she is pursuing a MPH. All colleagues of public health have been called in to help with tracing. She is welcoming the opportunity to help and to gain more knowledge about the spread of Covid-19.
- JLE has been working hard to make sure that legal protections are in place in terms of special ed during school closure. MA was being hands-off on approach to SPED during closure, but federal govt intervened and said to be as creative as possible, and to deliver services in some way. Lots of disclaimers that school needs to get legal disclosures in place.
- One Special Ed team member is having a difficult time managing responsibilities because of family obligations, etc. JLE has been stepping in to help manage cases during IEP meetings, etc.
- JLE participated in a zoom call by Mass Dept of Education about two virtual schools who came forward to share their wisdom. Big focus should be on "driver's ed", to teach teachers about how to use these methods before they start using them with the kids. If we had time it would have been good to do things differently.
- Some families have given feedback about the volume of communication – it's overwhelming. JLE is trying to figure out how to make it more manageable for all families.
- Both Kinderhaus classrooms created website for classrooms where teachers can access information
- Music classes may start happening online
- E1 is in a more difficult position bc the range of skills from 1-3 grade is really different. E2 students can more consistently access material across the grades. E1 team is working hard to figure it out.
- One interesting and positive outcome – for many years, initiatives that are being worked on or are future lists have included an online portfolio. Never had the bandwidth to develop that. But now, working with MS staff who are trying to facilitate Celebrations of Learning, it is happening. Each student might have their own website where they can display their work and progress. Trying to expand plan that would allow students to document their work all the way from K-8. Started

with the idea of kindergarteners submitting their work online. Will keep working on the idea and project. Will probably end the year with a structure in place.

• Yesterday and today are the first days that JLE has been able to take a breath and sit back for a moment. Now that pace has slowed a bit, starting to think about upcoming events:

- Kindergarten screeners
- Maritime Mixer – how do we connect families with each other?
- Families will be asked to share information about their children’s learning style
- Planning for re-entry – what happens for immuno-compromised students?
- A plan needs to be put into place in case someone gets sick or worse and there is a community crisis. How would we bring the community together?
- Staff contract agreements need to be given and returned soon

○ April vacation:

- Responses from teachers came right down the middle
- Some teachers felt like a break is really needed
- Other teachers felt like it was better to just keep going
- DB reported that in Amesbury the schools are having April break as scheduled. Newburyport teachers don’t know yet. Triton is undecided, DB doesn’t know about Pentucket.
- JLE says that Hillview is going to keep doing school during April break to maintain connections with students
- AF: feels like a week off and coming back may be harder
- JLE: says that teachers feel more fried than families are, or so it seems to be
- PA: survey has gone out to Newburyport district school reps asking their perspective on April vacation and what to do. A question of “survival” (for teachers) or “thrival” (students may thrive more)
- AH: when we were thinking of a 3 week closure initially, cancelling April break made sense. Now it sounds like we should give teachers the time. We really need to honor the teachers and their effort. Making a decision to take away April break would be difficult.
- We voted at the last meeting to authorize administration to make decision about spring break

- JLE: staff felt like they had better boundaries when they were coming to work every day. Teachers should be reminded to have boundaries and to enforce them.
- PA: important point

**Vote: motion to adjourn** Made by:  
Mark Belanger 2nd:  
Mark Bishop

*Vote:* Yes: All in attendance No: Abstain: Alfred had to leave the meeting before adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 6:35 pm