

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting # 284
June 22, 2021 5:00 pm**

In accordance with the Executive Order applying to MA Open Meeting Law, this meeting will be held virtually on Zoom ID: 89100045832 at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm

In attendance

Pam Armstrong
Mark Bishop
Nancy Durkee
Amber Hewett
Erin Bradley Irose
Nina Keery
Alfred Link
Karina Moltz
Erin Seaton (arriving late)
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore

Absent: Catherine Martin, Rebecca Schwer

Jonnie Lyn Evans, Director

Comments from Pam Armstrong, Chair:

Thanks everyone on the BOT for their hard work this year, and particularly thanks Jonnie Lyn Evans and Deb McCrevan for their tireless work and leadership.

Pam acknowledges the resignation of Greg Noyes. His resignation letter went to the entire Board, and will be included in the Board packet as a message that was given to the entire Board. Pam appreciates the dedication of Greg and appreciates his support of students and staff.

We consider Committee Meeting minutes as “approved” when they are shared with the general BOT in the Board packet. Greg stated concerns about not voting on meeting minutes for individual committees during larger BOT meetings.

Vote: Allow the Board to engage the School’s attorney immediately to investigate the issues raised in Greg Noyes’s resignation letter about Open Meeting Law practices. The purpose of this would be to insure our compliance with Open Meeting Law.

Discussion:

All meeting minutes are reviewed by the auditors and by DESE.
It might be a better idea to run the situation by the Mass Charter School Association.

Albert Ting: was surprised by the level of discontent expressed in Greg's email. It reflects on the health of the Board and we should consider an exit interview as part of the process of members leaving the Board.

Karina Moltz: the concerns about Open Meeting Law postings were not a surprise. Greg had shared his concerns with me over the course of the year,

Jonnie Lyn: makes a recommendation that the BOT consider recording exit interview info through a survey so that responses are preserved. Though the BOT has gotten much better at keeping records, there is still often not institutional memory that is preserved.

Decision was made to not have a vote.

Public Comment: moved to the end of the meeting

Vote: to approve minutes from the May meeting

Edits: add Jonnie Lyn Evans, Deb McCrevan, and Dan Bouchard to the minutes as being in attendance.

Motion: Pam Armstrong
2nd: Anna Wetmore

Yes: all in attendance other than Nina Keery

No

Abstain Nina Keery

Director's Report: Jonnie Lyn Evans presented report

Graduation took place last week and was lovely.

COLs were successful. JLE thanks the Board for their participation.

Kinderhaus students came back for full days for the last weeks of school.

HVAC system installation will begin this week.

Summer school begins next week, with a 6 week session. Remarkable that RVCS was able to staff for such a long time when it's very difficult to find people willing to teach during the summer.

Rumor is that schools will not be required to mandate masks for the 2021-2022 school year.

Human Resources work is ongoing.

- Staffing: 4 individuals who functioned in lead roles will not be coming back next year. Jonnie Lyn created an exit survey to try to capture some information before people left. In the future the survey will not come from Jonnie Lyn, but will come from someone more neutral.
- Jonnie Lyn is working to create an Associate Teaching position which will enable teachers to enter the retirement/benefits system earlier in their careers.
- RVCS is working with an online HR platform to streamline access to benefits information. Changes were made to the benefits offered to teachers. Changed the amount of money that teachers contribute.

Jonnie Lyn reviewed programmatic changes anticipated for next year. Notes will be included in the Board packet. Outdoor education will remain a part of the RVCS program.

Jonnie Lyn described the instrumentation program that will be introduced starting with 4th graders. The former instrument program was orchestra based, and will move to strings.

Kinderhaus will have engineering starting in the fall.

How many positions will be posted? Approximately 5. One teacher has 12 years at the school and is getting ready to semi-retire.

Accountability

Structure of the Accountability Committee will largely remain the same. Discussion has taken place about the role of the Accountability Committee, the role of surveys in the life of the school, and how to move forward.

Development Committee

No report from Development this month, as Development currently includes no Board members.

Finance Committee (Erin Seaton joined partway through the section of Finance Committee)

Mark Bishop reviewed the documents included in the Board packet.

Vote: Approve a transfer \$40,000 from unrestricted cash reserves to restricted capital reserve funds for future capital improvements

Motion: Nina Keery

2nd: Alfred Link

Yes: all in attendance

Abstain:

VOTE: To Approve Proposed Budget FY 2021-2022

Motion: Nina Keery

2nd: Erin Bradley Irose

Yes: all in attendance other than Alfred Link

No

Abstain: Alfred Link

Mark Bishop explained the historical perspective on having surplus money and letting the Director use their discretion to spend the money on an identified range of items before the end of the fiscal year.

VOTE: To Authorize the school to utilize surplus revenues plus available cash up to a total of \$90K and not to exceed \$50K in deficit funds. These funds are to be used at the Director's discretion for items including staff compensation, classroom furniture and equipment, technology, and Montessori Materials. These funds would be spent prior to fiscal year-end.

Discussion:

Nancy: there has been discussion this year about bonuses paid out of public funds. Can we make a stipulation that there should not be bonuses given?

Mark Bishop: would caution the BOT to not make a change in bonus policy this year. There were no increases in pay offered this year, and this has been a standard practice in years past. Mark suggests that we consider that policy change for next year's discussion.

Karina supports Mark's idea of holding off on the bonus policy question until future discussions/years.

Jonnie Lyn suggests that we not use the word "bonus", but instead talk about stipends, or work done for extraordinary work.

Would we be notified of how the funds are spent?

(Karins's WiFi cut out so a portion of discussion was lost)

Amber discussed the perception of bonuses in the greater community. Feels that it is not the moment to make a big change in this year.

Dana Lowell, member of the Finance Committee, provides historical context for the surplus and the spending of surplus money.

- Uncertainty about what the actual tuition will be is historically consistent
- It's been in the practice of the Board and of the Director to spend that money
- Discussions happen almost every year about how to spend the surplus, and whether or not the money should be used for extra teacher payments.
- It has been the practice of Directors to give a set amount of money to teachers. It has not been the practice to give variable amounts of money – instead, the Director would give a set amount to everyone.
- The school typically gives smaller salary raises and instead offers a compensation of extra money for faculty members at the end of the year when tuition receipts are more dependable.
- The other option would be to give salary raises and then deal with potential deficits.

Anna Wetmore: discussions have been ongoing about the term bonus, and how the school approaches giving extra money to teachers.

Motion: Nina Keery

2nd: Pam Armsrong

Yes: Pam Armstrong, Mark Bishop, Nancy Durkee, Amber Hewett, Erin Bradley Irose, Nina Keery, Albert Ting, Anna Wetmore, Karina Moltz

No:

Abstain: Erin Seaton, Alfred Link

VOTE: Approve updates to fiscal policies and procedures guide 2018 revised

Motion: Pam Armstrong

2nd: Nina Keery

Yes: all in attendance

No:

Abstain:

Committee on Trustees

Nina Keery reminded BOT members to submit their financial disclosures to DESE. Two surveys were also sent out, one about the general health of the Board and one about the Director's review. A compilation of results will be shared with the Board via email in a draft form for every one to take a look at.

A new slate of officers needs to be elected for the upcoming school year. Looking for someone to take over the vice-chair role. Interest has been expressed by Amber Hewett. Proposed slate would be:

Chair: Pam Armstrong

Vice Chair: Amber Hewett or Alfred Link
Treasurer: Mark Bishop
Secretary: Anna Wetmore

Amber, Alfred, and Anna spoke briefly about their motivation for running and their goals in taking on leadership roles.

Discussion took place about the role of Vice Chair, and if it could be shared. Decision was made to vote on Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, and to delay Vice-Chair vote.

Public Comment

Vote: to elect Pam Armstrong as Chair, Anna Wetmore as Secretary, and Mark Bishop as Treasurer

Made by: Nina Keery
2nd: Erin Bradley Irose

Yes: all in attendance
No:
Abstain:

Vote: to include Karen Popken as the teacher representative to the Board of Trustees

Motion Nina Keery
2nd: Albert Ting

Yes: all in attendance
No:
Abstain:

Vote: to accept Matt Renninger's application to join the Board of Trustees

Pam discussed Matt Renninger's involvement in the Finance Committee, and his desire to join the Board of Trustees. Matt would be fully remote as a board member.

Will it work to have fully remote BOT members? The by-laws allow it, but physical quorum must be met in order to agree with the state Open Meeting Laws.

Motion: Nina Keery
2nd: Albert Ting

Yes: Pam Armstrong, Nina Keery, Erin Seaton, Anna Wetmore, Albert Ting, Erin Bradley-Irose, Karina Moltz, Amber Hewett
No: Alfred Link

Abstain:

Public Comment: Deb McCrevan expressed gratitude for the support of the

BOT.

Vote: to adjourn

Made by: Alfred Link

2nd: Albert Ting

Yes: all in attendance

No:

Abstain:

7 pm Board adjourns