

**River Valley Charter School  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Meeting # 288  
January 11, 2022 7:00 pm**

In accordance with the Executive Order applying to MA Open Meeting Law, this meeting will be held virtually on Zoom ID: 89494737131 at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm.

*In attendance:*

Pam Armstrong  
Mark Bishop  
Nancy Durkee  
Amber Hewett  
Erin Bradley Irose  
Nina Keery  
Alfred Link  
Catherine Martin  
Karen Popken  
Erin Seaton  
Albert Ting  
Anna Wetmore

*Absent:*

Matt Renninger

*Also Present:*

Jonnie Lyn Evans, Director  
Dan Bouchard, Assistant Director  
Tanya Murdy, Public  
Jen Tramontana, Public

**Public Comment:** Two letters were submitted. Responded to by Pam and JLE.

**Vote:** Accept November BOT Minutes and January committee minutes with minor edits to fix typographical errors in BOT minutes.

Motion: Anna Wetmore  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Catherine Martin

*Yes:*

Pam Armstrong  
Mark Bishop  
Amber Hewett  
Erin Bradley Irose

Nina Keery  
Catherine Martin  
Karen Popken  
Albert Ting  
Anna Wetmore

*No:*  
None

*Abstain:*  
Nancy Durkee  
Alfred Link

### **Comment from Chair**

Acknowledges the turbulence of the past week in relation to Covid and that has affected the ability to complete such things as the Director's Report.

### **Director's Report: Jonnie Lyn Evans presented report**

School updates:

Described the changes to the specials and PBE schedule. They were spurred by specials teachers' lack of planning time, some students having back to back specials and some classrooms having large variations in their lunchtimes. Adopted a six-day rotation for E1 and E2 and kept a five-day rotation for Kinderhaus and Middle school. Now specials are at consistent times for each grade level and planning time is consistent for teachers every day. This also allows for the Montessori uninterrupted work cycle. Response from teachers has been extremely positive.

Described changes to PBE. Students are now attending by grade levels rather than classroom. There are now 16 kids out with 2 adults. This allows for easier transportation once the new van arrives.

Described upcoming Montessori audit. Will deliver oral and written reports. It is part of the accountability plan at an approximately 10K expense.

Out of the blue, NBPT City Engineer Jon-Eric White reached out about the concerns about the traffic issues on Low St. He proposed an entrance directly from Low St into the school parking lot which does not seem feasible. Creative thinking will be necessary. Mark wonders if this is a question of pedestrian traffic.

Covid updates:

There have been a little shy of 30 cases since the beginning of winter break. Pooled testing has been moved to the beginning of the week. Due to back up at the lab, results are starting to come back later.

With input from local boards of health, school physician and school nurse, a new Covid response plan was released Sunday, January 9th. The health office is spread extremely thin even with additional help brought in.

Staff is being asked to be flexible in order to keep school afloat. We have the benefit of having two teachers in most classrooms which is very helpful.

Erin Seaton, who works with over 50 schools, acknowledged how hard RVCS is working to keep kids in school in a safe way.

Nina asks if there is a numerical tipping point at which you'd have to make changes and go remote. JLE doesn't know.

Snow day pushes out school until a half day on June 22nd after a three day weekend.

## **Committee Updates**

### **Finance Committee**

RVCS received more tuition than expected at the end of December which is really good news. This is due to the above foundation rate changing to make an increase. The potential increase is a 220K+ increase for the year.

Cash balances are just over 1.8M which is about a 5% increase over last November.

The recently completed retaining wall project brought down restricted cash. Exact cost was \$49,500, just under the quoted amount of \$50,000.

All HVAC units have been inspected and a preliminary report has been received.

JLE and Debbi identified the capital needs assessment will occur in February. We have recently had some facilities related expenses. Our building is over 20 years old and a plan needs to be made to allocate money for future projects. This is covered by the budget; no vote is needed.

### **Accountability Committee**

MCAS will continue as scheduled.

Montessori audit is scheduled.

There was discussion about ways to improve the parent/caregiver survey. The committee is considering doing more surveys regarding 504 and IEP. This could be an area that is underserved in regards to our communication. Shooting toward amending the survey for 22-23 while preserving the longitudinal data collected in previous years.

### **Development Committee**

Discussed how to engage families, particularly Kinderhaus and first grade families. Perhaps more connections with teachers, maybe live Zoom-ins. More parent events when things settle down hopefully in the next few weeks.

Discussed running a green audit. Are there ways to use our space effectively while maintaining environmental sustainability?

Discussed expanding the play area, perhaps using some of the parking spaces. The pavilion is now over 20 years old and will need attention.

Pam is curious if parent events are more within the scope of the PA. Dan answers that some parents are really lacking the community aspects of the school and we need to engage them as early as possible. It is also important to reach out to the greater community.

JLE was able to schedule a meeting with a private foundation and we are incredibly lucky to be in receipt of another donation. They have increased their donation to \$125K for this year. They acknowledge the need for the school to have access to funds that are unrestricted.

### **Committee on Trustees**

Meeting virtually now expires April 1st. We may be forced to start meeting in person. A live poll was performed to determine comfort level with returning to in person meetings. There was no clear answer from the Trustees' responses.

The Complaint Committee has to have five members, we now have four volunteers. The committee will meet once when the members are found, but will not meet regularly after that unless a complaint is received. Note: there is a school complaint process that is laid out.

Recruitment season: Emphasizes the importance of recruitment and the difficulty recruiting when not in person. Please encourage folks who may be interested to contact Amber. Pam highlights the need for people who would be a good fit for development and finance.

Pam reminds the Board that she will be stepping down from her position as Chair. She will remain on the board for one more year. Asks anyone who may be interested in the Chair position to reach out for a chat. Amber also has one more year left. Both Pam and Amber are in a good position to support the incoming Chair and Vice Chair.

### **Strategic plan update:**

This has been on the docket for 2.5 years, but this has been second priority to Covid matters. JLE has been working with a small group to move forward. It is officially in process and significant progress has been made. This sets the goals for the future of the school.

### **Public Comment:**

None.

**Vote: To adjourn meeting.**

Motion: Erin Bradley Irose  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Nina Keery

*Yes:*

Pam Armstrong  
Mark Bishop  
Nancy Durkee  
Amber Hewett  
Erin Bradley Irose  
Nina Keery  
Alfred Link  
Catherine Martin  
Albert Ting  
Anna Wetmore

*No:*

None

*Abstain:*

None

Karen Popken and Erin Seaton had already left the meeting.

**8:35 pm Board adjourns**