

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting # 249
November 27, 2018 7:00 pm**

In Attendance: Officers: Chair: Mark Belanger, Vice Chair: Mason Mitchell-Daniels, Treasurer: Pamela Brockmeier Armstrong, Secretary: Katherine Brown **Trustees:** Nina Keery, Jennifer McCormick, Nat Coughlin, Todd Atanasoff, Josh Porter, Alfred Link, Karina Moltz, Peter Zetlan, Amber Hewitt

Director: Andy Willemsen

Public: Deb McCrevan, Jonnie Lyn Evans

Faculty Representative- Jane Patterson

Call to Order: 7:07

Alternative Structured Learning Day Program-

Caroline Keery and Karen Popken presented the RVCS version of Blizzard Bags to the Board. Examples of assignments were shared with while Caroline and Karen both emphasized the meaningful aspects of the work. Clear directions were provided for each of the 8 Cs with levels added for E1 and E2 classes.

Vote: Mark Belanger called for a Motion “To Authorize the Executive Director to implement the draft ‘Blizzard Bag’ curriculum.

Motion by Nat Coughlin, 2nd Katherine Brown. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous.

Public Comment: none

Acceptance of Previous Minutes:

Vote: Mark Belanger called for a Motion “To Accept Previous Minutes”

Motion by Nina Keery, 2nd Karina Moltz. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous.

Director’s Report: Andy Willemsen

Andy Willemsen updated the Board with his monthly Director’s Report (see Appendix A).

Board Advocacy-

Andy gave a brief overview of the conversation with Rachel Busby and Lori Fresina as it related to rebuilding public support for charter schools and asked if the Committee on Trustees could take this on.

RVCS Wellness Policy-

Vote: Mark Belanger called for a Motion Motion “To Approve the RVCS Wellness Policy amendments as presented November 27, 2018

Motion by Nina Keery, 2nd Nat Coughlin. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous

Committee Updates-

Development Committee- Jennifer McCormick presented updates on Giving Tuesday, the Annual Appeal, and upcoming alumni events.

Accountability Committee- Karina Moltz reported on the Accountability Committee meeting notes (see Appendix B) the committee asked Andy several questions in regards to the MCAS scores, specifically the 4th graders.

Committee on Trustees- Mason Mitchell Daniels reported the group had a meeting directly before the Board meeting and therefore, no notes for the group.
The Committee has been reviewing the bylaws and will bring updates to the Board in January for a potential vote item. Meeting discussion included : Attendance at Board meetings, Board updates in Happenings, Board Survey, and Director Review. The committee discussed a spectrum of ways to improve the process for the Director Review and would like to hire a professional consultant to assist in the process.

Finance Committee- Pamela Brockmeier Armstrong reported on Finance Committee notes (see Appendix B)

In addition, Pam noted additional monies are going towards new consultants Ben Scherz and Elizabeth Slade. Mark Belanger added that the cash position is still strong and it's nice to see fiscal choices paying off.

Andy Willemsen spoke to the Board about his time at RVCS and stated that this would be his last year with the school. Discussion continued, with Andy Willemsen present, in regard to the procedure for a new head of school search between now and the January meeting. The Board is authorizing the Executive Committee to move the process along in the interim.

Vote: Mark Belanger called for a Motion “To Authorize the Executive Committee to Operate a Search Process and to Make the Operational Decisions to Run the Search Process”

Motion by Nat Coughlin, 2nd Josh Porter. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous.

Vote: Mark Belanger called for a Motion “To Adjourn”

Motion by Nat Coughlin, 2nd Pam. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous.

Adjourn: 8:40

Appendix A.



Director's Report to the River Valley Charter School Board of Trustees November 27, 2018

Alternative Structured Learning Day Program

Included in this month's Board Packet is a document with assignments at all grade levels for the RVCS Alternative Structured Learning Day Program – also known as Blizzard Bags. DESE has designated school Committees/Boards as the authorizing authority for these programs. Faculty have worked to meet the guidance for this alternative, and have structured most assignments around our Habits of Learning Curriculum. Below is an excerpt of the DESE guidance on these programs:

These programs may be an alternative option for schools to pursue as long as they can ensure that the program meets the standard for structured learning time and that the assignments and/or projects are substantial. These programs must also be accessible, include appropriate oversight and teacher involvement rather than resembling traditional homework assignments, and be approved by the district school committee or charter school boards of trustees.

RVCS teachers will be present at the November Board meeting to present the curriculum and respond to Trustee questions. I will be asking the Board to review this document prior to the meeting and consider a vote to approve the Alternative Structured Learning Day Program for the 2018-2019 school year.

Board Advocacy

Several Executive Committee members and I participated in a call with Rachel Busby & Lori Fresina of M&R Consultants to discuss strategies to advocate for charter schools in Massachusetts. M&R, along with the Mass Charter School Association, are working to engage schools and Board members to take a more active role in this work. The overall intention is to rebuild public support for charters after the defeat of Question 2, and to influence the state legislature to protect the funding and autonomy of charters. The Association has created an Advocacy Tool Kit to help guide this work. One suggestion is to designate one Trustee and one staff member as advocacy Representatives for the school. Other core strategies primarily revolve around communication with our elected officials. Based on the phone call and input from the MCPA, we plan to invite area legislators to RVCS for a tour. Board member and parent representation at this event is encouraged.

Wellness Policy

Included in this month's Board packet is the updated RVCS Wellness Policy. Kimberly Putney addressed the concerns identified by the Board at the October meeting. I will be asking the Board to vote on this updated policy at the November meeting.

Renewal

We have not yet received our charter renewal Summary of Review (SOR) report from the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign. We have, however, been informed that the new expected timing

of the Commissioner's renewal recommendation to the Board of Education will take place "on or about" January 10th. Between now and January 10th we will receive and have the opportunity to review the SOR for factual corrections and to provide a response that would be appended to the final SOR. The final document is presented to the Commissioner as evidence for his renewal recommendation.

Progress Reports

The new progress reports hit family inboxes on November 16th. While the faculty feel positive about the new version, they have also generated suggestions for further improvement now that they have fully experienced the new process. We are gathering parent and staff feedback, and will continue to tweak the reports in order to assure valuable information is transmitted to families while reducing the stress and time influences on teachers.

Clean Contractor

We have experienced consistent difficulties with our new cleaning contractor. After multiple attempts to improve the cleaning program in the school, we have terminated the current contract and have signed a new contract with Clean Tech Systems, Inc. Clean Tech served as our contractor for over 10 years, and we are confident that they will be able to provide a high level of cleaning services to the school. Clean Tech is meeting with Heidi Wiclox, our cleaning consultant, to assure that their products and systems are sensitive to the health of occupants and the environment.

RVCS Alumni High School Transcripts

We have drafted a Transcript Release Form for parents of RVCS 8th grades to sign authorizing high schools to share the transcripts of our graduates with RVCS. Both the Amesbury and Newburyport Superintendents have approved this approach, and we will continue to reach out to other area high schools – both district and independent – to broaden this effort. This data would serve as a valuable perspective on our mission statement ambition of our students being "fully prepared to succeed in future schools."

Holiday Party

Mark your calendars! The annual Faculty & Board holiday party is scheduled for December 11th at 5:00 at the Newburyport Brewing Company. All Trustees and significant others are invited, and the River Valley Ramblers will provide the musical entertainment!

Appendix B

Accountability Committee Meeting Minutes:

Date of meeting: November 26th, 2018

Present: N. Durkee, J.L. Evans, S. Houghton, A. Link, K. Moltz, A. Willemssen

Discussion:

Destination School Transcript update

Andy shared a letter that he sent to both the Newburyport and Amesbury district superintendents requesting access to the transcripts of RVCS graduates. Mr. Fulgoni of Amesbury responded and agreed to help move the effort forward. Andy has yet to hear from Newburyport. Discussion followed concerning possible uses of the data and the optimum time

to request parental permission. The Committee also discussed reaching out to the Triton and Pentucket school districts in order to help incent Newburyport's participation.

MCAS – Follow up

Alfred asked Andy if he had looked further into the E2 math scores. More specifically, if he had looked at the 4th grade math results by classroom. Andy said that he had not, due to his desire to avoid over-emphasizing MCAS scores. He did share other actions the E2 faculty and staff had taken to address the issue including additional assessments, a new math screener and faculty collaboration.

2018/2019 Accountability Committee Calendar

The draft calendar was adopted with a single change: the December meeting was cancelled and it's agenda items moved to the January meeting. Further, the January meeting was scheduled for Monday, January 7th at 6:30p.

Review of RVCS Master Policy List Review

As per the above calendar, Jonnie Lynn and Andy shared the results of their review of the RVCS policy list. The following policies were identified as needing review and possible updating:

- Abuse/Neglect Reporting/51A
- Attendance Policy
- Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
- Code of Conduct
- CORI Policy
- ELL Policies and Procedures
- FERPA
Financial Hardship/Free Lunch
- Homelessness (McKinney Vento)
- Medical Emergency Response Plan
- Medication Administration
- Overnight Trips
- Social Media Policy
The Attendance Policy, Overnight Trips and the Social Media Policy were all identified as places where committee members might be able to contribute. Members were encouraged to reach out to Jonnie Lynn with thoughts and contributions,

Parent Survey 2019

After a brief discussion, the Committee recommended executing this year's survey the week after the Parent Conferences (now scheduled for March 7th and 8th). The Committee agreed to

make no changes to the survey questions or format in order to gather three years' worth of consistent data.

Assessment Inventory

Alfred asked that the Administration find, update and present the Assessment Inventory in preparation for the Program Delivery discussion now scheduled for January 7th, 2019. This document was initially presented in 2017 and lists all of the methods used to assess students at the school.

River Valley Charter School Finance Committee – November 13, 2018 Quarterly Review

Attendees:

Pam Armstrong
Mark Belanger
Dana Lowell
Deb McCrevan
Stu Steinberg
Andy Willemsen

Meeting Notes & Highlights:

1. Overall, all in good order.
2. Note that the state has been behind on tuition payments, in some cases by as much as a month. Fluctuations in cash reflect lack of timeliness in these payments. (See Cash Balance documents.)
3. Deb has closed 2 Citizens Bank accounts (Capital Reserve Fund, Money Market) as of November 1. Two accounts (Operating, Payroll) remain open until outstanding checks can be confirmed clear. These accounts should be closed before year end.
4. Of note in comparing to previous years budget and actuals: Program Fees (Student & Classroom) higher due to many overnight class trips taken at the beginning of this year rather than waiting until the end of year. Consultant and Service Contractor comparison also looks very high because it reflects Ben Sherz and Elizabeth Slade services. (See Previous Year Comparison document.)
5. Accounting change to note: New lease accounting procedure now assumes all leases are capital leases and does not differentiate between operating lease and capital lease. This procedure must be implemented for periods after Dec 15, 2019. The School and the Foundation are adopting the procedure now as advised by our accountant.
 - a. The building will not remain on the School's books. It will look like a loss (Lease Liability) for the school as it moves over. (See Statement of Net Position Previous Year Comparison document, refer to Long Term Liabilities.)
 - b. The building will appear on the Foundation books. It will look like a gain (Lease

Receivable) for the Foundation.

- c. Together the loss and gain will cancel.