

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting # 279
January 12, 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: ID: 81515506591, Password: J4nC3sXRZ7 at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order at 5:03 pm

In attendance

Pam Armstrong
Mark Bishop
Nancy Durkee
Amber Hewett
Erin Bradley Irose
Nina Keery
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin
Karina Moltz
Greg Noyes
Rebecca Schwer
Erin Seaton
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore

Vote: To approve minutes from the December 8th and December 30th BOT meetings

Amendments:

Motion: Catherine Martin
2nd: Nina Keery

Yes all in attendance

No

Abstain

RVCS Revelation – no RVCS revelation this meeting

Director's Report

Jonnie Lyn reported on the reopening of school after winter break. Specials are reduced for younger students. Middle school is participating in outdoor programming at location near Maudslay.

Last week has been extremely busy because of all of the programming changes that have been made. During break, a number of families came forward and decided to switch to a remote program.

New hires were discussed. Pool testing is being considered. Kimberly Putney is currently getting covid vaccine and will then volunteer to give vaccines to others (at a senior center).

Question raised about pool testing – do parents need to give permission? Kimberly is attending a webinar about this. Might be done at home, and kids drop off samples before they enter.

Question raised about participation of Kimberly in local health department discussions. A RVCS parent is going to help connect Kimberly with local health dept officials.

Applications are coming in for spots for 2021-2022. Typical level is around 150-175, and JLE expects that level, or maybe more. Dan shared that applications are a little behind where the school was at this time last year, but expects to catch up.

Question raised about student teacher potentially coming from Salem State. Are they Montessori trained? JLE says no, but teachers typically learn a lot about Montessori instruction when they join RVCS.

Request made that the \$30,000 mentioned in the report be labeled as Foundation money, rather than “unrestricted”.

Question raised about school-transmission mentioned in Director’s Report. The transmission happened outside of the actual classroom, and was staff-to-child.

Charter school association reached out to ask if they can spotlight RVCS as an example of “How Massachusetts gets back to school”

Vaccinations may be available as soon as February (or as late as April).

Discussion: what does the BOT think of mandating vaccinations for teachers?

Catherine Martin: has heard that business will be allowed to impart a decree saying that teachers have to be vaccinated. Her school is private so may be different.

Mark Bishop: are there different levels of control that we could consider? Is there a way that we could recommend but not require?

Nina Keery: in favor of mandating vaccinations. It’s a public health crisis, and is in the interest of the community.

Erin Bradley-Irose: torn on the question. Pro-vaccine, but also uncomfortable with the school making medical decisions for people. The vaccine was made with embryonic cells, and that could be a big issue for some people.

Albert Ting: EEOC is saying that a safe environment must be provided for workers. His workplace says that the vaccine provides a safe environment for workers, and can be mandated. The question may be how the vaccine is incentivized and could we encourage people to do it as a willful choice?

Greg Noyes: as part of a community, you have a responsibility to that community. People need to get the vaccine to protect those who are more vulnerable.

The vaccine would make people less likely to get very sick, would not prevent the virus from being spread.

Are there differences between the specific vaccines?

Teachers could be surveyed to see if they would plan to get the vaccine, or to see if they would feel comfortable working with others who are not vaccinated.

Rebecca Schwer – torn about the question also. Teachers have much more contact with students than they do with each other.

Nina – agrees that it would be really useful to get out in front of this, and to socialize the idea of vaccinations potentially being required. Maybe we explain our thinking and start to share the ideas and the process of deciding.

Nancy – we've gotten accustomed to thinking about who is vulnerable in terms of the elderly and people with pre-existing conditions. There are also children who are vulnerable and won't be able to be vaccinated for a long time. We need to do our part in our country to get vaccinations. Falls on the side of mandating vaccinations by next fall.

Alfred – if other vaccinations are required for students, why should this one not be required? There are a lot of ways to address this, but only one provides maximum protection for the community right now. If a teacher pushes back, we can address that on an individual basis.

Mark – we have to be careful about our approach. We don't want to bully anyone, or make them feel shunned or isolated because of their decision. It is reasonable to have some apprehension of the vaccine.

Albert – liability should be considered – for private companies, the company may be liable if something goes wrong or if someone has a negative reaction.

Amber – a mandate seems like an overreach in the absence of a larger mandate. Governmental distrust is extremely high, and people may be afraid of the vaccine. If the children are not vaccinated, the community will have so many unvaccinated people that it doesn't make sense to mandate vaccines.

Accountability Committee

As of now, MCAS are still on. Commissioner has said that the format will be pared down, and results will not be used as part of accountability, but to illustrate deficits in learning that have happened

JLE shared that historically faculty have not been enthusiastic about data, but that trend is shifting – teachers are more willing to look at data and reflect on trends, etc.

JLE is potentially going to work with a platform that will help to identify skill areas that are lacking or need more support.

February 1 is the next meeting: 6 pm

Development Committee

Dan Bouchard reported on recent Development meeting. Committee report is in board packet.

There have been more attendees at Development Committee meetings this year, and the Committee is considering forming smaller “pod” groups that can allow for focused work on specific areas.

Committee members are doing soft outreach with local business, to share information about RVCS and to make connections with the school. Enrollment lottery ads are being put up in sending districts. Not Groveland, Rowley, or Merrimac yet on a city level, but ads are being put in coffee shops, etc.

We don't have adequate representation from each sending town, so focusing on specific towns is the right approach.

Pam recognized the work that Dan and the Development Committee have done, and acknowledge the scope of the work that lies in the purview of that committee.

February 3, 6 pm is the next meeting

Finance Committee

Notes are in board documents. Important discussion was had about the tuition. Foundation rate was increased almost 2% around November, and the Facilities rate remains a fixed amount. Those two parts of the tuition are known and stable. The above-Foundation rate remains unknown. That won't be known likely until March. DESE posted that there's a potential for an overall tuition increase, but details won't be known still for awhile. Reviewed cash balances. Business Office is right now working on Q2 financials, which should be presented to the BOT next month. BOT members are asked to carefully review the Q2 information when it comes in.

Debbi talked to the Finance Committee about some HVAC units that may need to be replaced soon. At least one unit needs to be replaced in the near future. Details about this kind of project will come up in the Q2 reviews.

Question raised about how the solar panel exchange works. Do we pay retail and then resell the energy at wholesale rates?

Pam acknowledges the work that Deb and her office have been taking on, and appreciates everything that the Business Office has been doing.

February 2nd is the next meeting.

Committee on Trustees

Continued discussion of potential retreat at the end of January. Asking for a show of hands of how many people would be available on a Saturday, from 10 am – 12 pm. First hour would be getting to know each other a little more, and then doing work on racial consciousness in the second part of the retreat. Most BOT members can do January 30th.

BOT members are asked to listen to a podcast in advance of the meeting. COT will share out the questions in advance that will be asked in the second hour.

COT shared recommendations for Director's Review with EC. Next step may be to keep the modified 360 review in sight for next year, but to focus on a more manageable approach for this year.

Next Tuesday 5 pm will be the COT meeting through the end of January.

Vote: Motion to adjourn

Made by: Erin Bradley-Irose

2nd: Alfred

Yes: all in attendance

No:

Abstain:

7:05 pm Board adjourns