

River Valley Charter School Board of Directors
Meeting Meeting # 263 February 25, 2020 7:00 pm

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 Pam Armstrong Mark
Belanger Mark Bishop Nancy Durkee Ali Fields Amber Hewett
Alfred Link Catherine Martin Jennifer McCormack Karina
Moltz Erin Seaton

Absent: Nina Keery

Director: Jonnie Lyn
Evans

Members of the public:

Dan Bouchard Deb
McCrevan Anna
Wetmore Nell Franchek
Albert Ting Chris Getz
(Foundation)

Called to order 7:05 pm

River Valley Revelation: Laura Hunt, middle school teacher Language Arts teacher, former curriculum director. Montessori inspired MS - but Montessori never actually ran a middle school, but the spirit of her ideas remains. MS program is very hands on, interactive, connected to Montessori's theories. Project-Based learning: Hero's Journey Menu Project Read The Alchemist Watched Star Wars Framework of hero's journey - a call, a refusal of the call, gain allies, have tests, gain treasure Point-based items: like appetizers, entrees, etc. Complexity of items and time required increases with points earned for assignments. Presentation to E2 teachers and students with stories, games, dioramas, venn diagrams, ES: this kind of project gives students choices and gives them the responsibility of being in charge of their learning. Is there a way to develop this theme without using Hero's Journey as a framework? It is very white and patriarchal. Teacher: the idea is that it's a mono-myth, and can be applied to many different cultures/settings. PA: would be interesting to have students cycle back later in education and reflect on this idea AL: include this in COLs

Public Comment: AW: thanks JLE for sending out Director's Report. It was very helpful to read that someone is thinking about and acting on issues that come up for parents on a daily basis.

Approval of Minutes: Corrections to minutes: changes of spelling to Zuercher, not Zurker, Rebecca Hamel With modifications of spelling, motion is made to approve

minutes from last meeting. Motion: Pam Armstrong Second: Mark Bishop Roll call:
Yes: all except for Mark Belanger and Jennifer McCormack Abstain: Mark Belanger
and Jennifer abstain

Director's Report

- Lottery enrollment shut down this afternoon
- 240 applications
- Megan Tierney will pull names for the lottery
- 31 siblings, 16 kindergarten siblings, leaving 11 spots available
- Accountability Plan approved! Included in Feb board documents
- Contracted w National Montessori Association who will do a Montessori audit this spring
- AF: question Accountability Plan item about goal of developing critical thinking skills within a certain time frame
 - JL: it covers an age range so isn't focused on one grade level
 - ES: Ali, how is critical thinking evaluated?
- AF: debates, open response answers on MCAS, writer's workshop practice of critiquing work of peers
 - MB: it would be great to document COLs more. Invest in videography?

Vote to approve Accountability Plan

Motion: Mark Belanger 2nd: Alfred

Link Roll call: Yes: all approve

Field Trip Approval Vote to approve 2 overnight field trips to West Greenwich, RI. End of April, 3 day overnight field trip, Motion: Mark Belanger 2nd: Ali Field Roll call: all approve

Discussion: ES: what is the protocol for non-binary students on this trip? JLE: not sure of exact accommodations for this trip but teachers will always ask MBe: this will be really difficult and taxing for teachers if they have to keep coming to the board for approval Nancy: good for board to be involved w reviewing policy for field trips MBi: what is the frequency
Deb: trips should be approved as a slate at the start of the year KM: why is it necessary for board to approve trip if we approve the field trip policy? JLE: thinks that legal policy means that board has to approve overnights. Trips have been a very valuable part of curriculum and experience, but some kids don't participate. Maybe having trips approved and all elements planned for will make kids more likely to join? AF; some kids are not ready for overnight field trips ES: others may not want to go if they don't feel that the accommodations fit their needs

Director's Report continued...

- JLE asks for feedback about School's response to the recent explosion at SEQENS (9 Opportunity Way in Newburyport). JLE was away, Dan handled incident.
 - CM: feels that communication was very good.
- Policy will be coming next month about school and family communication. It was previously labeled a "statement", but attorney recommended that it be considered a policy. New policy draft will be forthcoming before the next BOT meeting.

Miscellaneous

Mark

Belanger:

- Discussion of preparedness for corona virus
- Response should be immediate, give choices, defer to expertise
- Do we have ourselves set up for the same thing here?

● Amping up soap stations, amping up healthy resources, amping up training for Kimberley Mark Bishop: Does Kimberley have contact with CDC or other authorities? JLE: Kimberley is very by-the-book, very good at her job, very careful. JLE will check in with her to see what she thinks. ND: could we use old Blizzard Bags if school had to close for coronavirus? AL: seems like the school can make it's own decision if the government is not moving quickly and the situation feels like an emergency MBe: spoke w Dr. Fayre at Anna Jacques, and flu prevention is very similar to corona virus prevention. PA: good to know that we can hold an emergency meeting of the BOT if need be. We could hold a meeting by phone if need be.

Discussion of traffic patterns at arrival and dismissal: ES: closing off the car line early has made it more dangerous for kids coming into the driveway. JLE: parents felt like school starts at 8:30 and arrived in car line at that time, and that was disruptive and difficult. Everyone is really encouraged to use the Riverwalk. School acknowledges that there is an issue, trying to brainstorm ways to improve the system. ES: is there anything we can do to improve the situation? Bussing? Pathway? Sidewalk? MBe: does this merit a subcommittee to come up with some ideas? PA: maybe a task force/focus group could work on this. If you know of anyone who is willing to work on this, ES: could students work on this? Could a gravel pathway work? JLE: would need snow plowing to be effective - would need a sidewalk rather than gravel PA: maybe families need to be reminded about best practices and why they are important JLE: we share the road w DPW: a private street. DM: DPW was here first - we should be partners w them because they have been plowing the road for years. MBe: does our liability increase since this is a private road? JLE: targeted emails seem to get traction MBe: parents have come to him with concerns, he tells them to write to him with specific concerns.

Accountability Committee

- Parent survey will be launched in a few weeks
- Will remain constant with the last 3 years so that data is longitudinal and can be viewed over time
- External Montessori audit (ongoing)
- Policy review
(ongoing)
- Next meeting date: Monday, March 2 6 pm at
RVCS

Finance Committee (see documents in February 2020 documents)

- Cash balance
- Solar array system: net loss. Explanation in document (denial of net metering from National Grid and increase in consumption)
- Beginning to engage in contract negotiations with auditing company. Spoke to David Keller about pricing of audit.
 - PA: can we appeal decision about net metering?
 - MBI: no, we'd need an exemption
- AH: state cap on net metering. Exemptions are rare. Discussion is ongoing about eliminating the cap (at the state level)
 - PA: thanks to everyone for their work on this

Committee on Trustees

- Recruitment of new board members (ongoing) - contact Amber directly if they are interested
- Message will go into Happenings
- Director Evaluation: Amber spent a lot of time with last year's evaluation, and COT will present new proposed evaluation plan as soon as it's available
 - Retreat will be upcoming - June - if anyone wants to help plan the retreat, reach out to Amber.
- PA: Sam Jordan has resigned from the board due to work responsibilities increasing. If we can recruit more alums it would be really helpful.
- On agenda for following meetings: how to formalize the structure of having a student(s) on the BOT
 - Next meeting date

TBD

- PA: we need to recruit
- Description of position: Focus is on planning events for alumni and our current families. A background in grant writing and marketing would be really helpful. If there is a direct ask then money can be raised for specific events/parts of school life. Not much specific asking for money.

Development

- Event planned for April for alumni who are graduating from college
- Direct appeal textathon
- Fund-raising cocktail party
- Little lower this year in Annual Appeal: \$15,000

Motion to Adjourn

8:55

pm Motion: Mark

Belanger 2nd: Mark

Bishop Roll call Yes; all in attendance