

**River Valley Charter  
School Board of  
Directors Meeting  
Meeting # 258 September  
10, 2019 7:00 pm**

In Attendance: Officers: Chair: Pamela Brockmeier-Armstrong, Vice Chair: Amber Hewett, Treasurer: Mark Bishop, Secretary: Karina Moltz Trustees: Pam Armstrong Amber Hewett Mark Bishop Karina Moltz Nancy Durkee Mark Belanger Catherine Martin Sam Jordan (remote) Erin Seaton Nina Keery Jennifer McCormack Ali Fields

ABSENT: Alfred  
Link

Katherine  
Brown

\* All votes taken via roll  
call

Public: Dan Bouchard, Deb McCrevan, David Seaton, Jenny Langson (Williamson?)  
(MPCSA) Convened at 7:05 pm

**Montessori Minute (renamed to be RVCS Revelation?)** Lainie: engineering teacher, 1-6th graders, starting Lego buddies, sees a representative sample of all students in the school. Problem solving through creating something and going through iterations to make it better. Researching idea of “cradle to cradle” engineering - think about the end of the product’s useful life. What’s going to happen to the product when I’m done using it? Should be reused or recycled or biodegradable. Woodworking program is also developing. RVCS as a “green-maker” school is an exciting and innovative idea.

**Approval of Minutes** Motion:

Mark Belanger 2nd: Amber  
Hewett Roll call, unanimous vote  
to approve

**Director of Charter School Affairs**

Understanding the landscape of charter school  
affairs

- Important to know legislators

- Determine per pupil funding
- Facilities funding
- Existence of charter schools

- Most legislators are anti, negative or neutral about charter schools, only a handful are actively pro-charter

- Last session, approx 28 anti-charter bills were filed, many were refiled this session. A hearing in October is scheduled that will be important for charter school health.

- What can we do? Work to educate, influence, and build relationships with state decision makers. District schools have institutional advocacy structures in place that individual charter schools do not. We need to show up as a community to protect our school and ensure it can thrive for years to come.

- Relationship building is critical. Most reps who are anti or neutral charter schools haven't actually been in to a charter school before.

- Advocacy agenda:

- Increase facilities per pupil rate for charter public schools - 5% increase secured!
- Increase per pupil funding for all public school students: 3 bills filed, expectation

is that a bill will soon be released that will result in increased funding (if possible, targeted fix): statutory permissibility to weight lotteries for students with higher needs (SPED, ELL, low income, etc) - hearing taking place in early fall on H547 An Act relative to increasing access for vulnerable students

- Identify your board's advocacy representative for "Advocates4Charters" community and submit the name to Jennie Williamson ([jwilliamson@masscharterschools.org](mailto:jwilliamson@masscharterschools.org))

- Reach out to your legislators (reps and senators) to set up a meeting and/or invite them to tour the school (see Advocacy Toolkit for guidance)

- Continue to engage in ongoing communication with your

legislators Questions:

- Erin Seaton: is there data to support the positive role of charter schools? Yes, on website.

- JLE: is it valuable to invite legislators from other areas? Only if they have some relationship w RVCS students (like from sending towns)

- Pam Armstrong: what do we say about the draining funds argument? Talking

points are on the website?

- Nancy Durkee: question about the weighted bill - are costs like transportation taken into account? JLE will connect w Nancy to discuss ideas for improving transportation access for families in surrounding towns.

**Director's Report** Very positive energy to the start of the school year. Taking a cue from the project groups that were offered in the MS last year, staff were asked to identify projects about which they are passionate. "Tribes" have been put together, with some form of deliverable coming from each group. Nice way of staff being empowered.

2 admins from Putney School in VT came to visit. School runs free program for educators, 2 days and a tour of the school and experience of the classes. JLE and Colin may go.

Enrollment: 31 students left the school. Reasons were varied, ranging from "fit" to "need for structure" to "social issues", religious based reasons. Many new students are coming from

Amesbury. Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Association (MVRTA) that runs from Nbpt to Amesbury and other areas, families can be dropped off along the line. Erin - ecological consideration also. Nancy - could RVCS do a private bus? Amber - public transit is an underused resource. Kids who ride public transport turn into adults who ride public transport. Mark - does anyone want to take this on as a project?

Identify where students are in proximity to the line What are the funding reimbursement sources that we could use? non profits, foundation Put a proposal together - if a barrier to access is supervision, a teacher could be a monitor on the bus as a temporary measure David - environmental aspect is part of his interest. Environmental project group. JLE - Mary (long time RVCS teacher) is excited about ventures that come from the students, she could help to look at this project. Funding side of bus project would be huge. Mark Bishop - parental perceptions would be important to get a read on Nancy - is it equitable for students in other towns to have a bus route that is so different? Pam - important to consider all perspectives, right now we are engaging in conjecture.

Nina - have we thought about trying to put these reasons for leaving into "buckets"? Mark Belanger - yes. This year is higher, but over time the efforts to look into why people leave have not been very successful. JLE - 50% of students who withdrew were getting some level of SPED services

John Gregorio is resigning from Foundation, need to find a new

president.

## Security

cameras:

- Only on the outside of the building
- Safety, security, observation - not watching students or teachers, not spying on anyone
- Nina - what do local schools have? All schools have cameras locally.
- Mark - before we go too far into discussion, good to think about boundaries, FERPA protections, privacy laws. Personal safety is paramount, other concerns are not compelling for him.
- JLE - talked to insurance company, there are standard plans/measures in place that could be used
- Nancy - feels reassured by the idea of cameras as a security measure
- Would be a school cost, and policy is impacted, so board would need to approve.

Data management system - collection of math assessment data. First results will be out in next weeks, will help teachers to revise and shift instruction/focus based on assessment.

*Property and Facilities Update:* Civil engineers came to visit RVCS today. Trying to get MS students involved in process. A scope and sequence of work is the next step.

## **Accountability**

Alfred not in attendance. Nancy reported about meeting - beginning of the year discussion of priorities. Review of calendar. AC will hold off on recommendation making/structural changes until JLE has been in her role for a bit longer. JLE will pursue DESE about accountability plan and if it's been approved.

**Development** Jennifer will be reaching out about BOT members attending Chamber of Commerce events. Chamber typically holds two types of events - morning breakfast mixers, very casual, everyone can talk about their business or the school. Evening

events have cocktails and food and it's more of a social mixer.

**Committee on Trustees** New by-laws have been approved by the state. New members will have orientation in October, potentially the hour before the BOT meeting. Director evaluation was discussed, no decisions made, but topic will be further discussed. Equity is a topic that keeps coming up, and the COT will lead the BOT in learning more about ways to bring equity into our lives and discussions. Parent of a former RVCS student will come in to speak about transgender awareness. BOT members can also attend.

**Finance** No Sept meeting. Cash balance report was circulated. Increase of \$438,000 for state payments. July payment was late, August payment was right at the end of August. Stability over next 10 months for payments. Audit will begin in one month, lasts for 10 days. Audit meeting is October 16th at 6:30 pm. The following week we will vote on whether or not to approve the audit.

Mark Belanger - the tuition went down? Deb - yes but a cushion had been built in so the impact was not as great. Mark - do you have any concerns about last year's audit in relation to the Foundation? Deb - the problem had to do with a private donor and the wording of the gift so there is no concern bc the situation has gone away.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Giving reminder - link is in Happenings. Board members are encouraged to give an amount that is personally meaningful.
- Josh Porter has resigned. He is very busy with his own work and feels that he isn't able to contribute what he would want to, and will hope to return to the Board in the future when possible.
- Board members are on staggered terms, so the face of the board will always be changing. The COT is in charge of cultivating the board, but all BOT members can also reach out to community members. Would be valuable to have members who are not RVCS parents to give fresh perspectives.

### **Motion to**

**adjourn:** Made by:

Nina Keery 2nd:

Mark Belanger