

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting
Meeting # 293
May 10, 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: 83474300440 at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm.

In attendance:

Pam Armstrong
Mark Bishop
Amber Hewitt
Erin Bradley Irose (arrived at 7:15)
Nina Keery
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin
Karen Popken
Erin Seaton
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore

Absent:

Nancy Durkee

Also Present:

Jonnie Lyn Evans, Director
Dan Bouchard, Assistant Director
Ken Jackman
Eric Simone
Jill Eichhorst
Deb McCrevan

Public Comment:

None.

Vote: Accept April BOT Minutes and April committee minutes.

Motion: Anna Wetmore

2nd: Alfred Link

Yes:

Pam Armstrong
Mark Bishop

Amber Hewitt
Nina Keery
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin
Karen Popken
Erin Seaton
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore

No:
None

Abstain:
None

Director's Report presented by Jonnie Lyn Evans

School Updates:

Things are heating up around school, both weather wise and activity wise. Boat trips, field day, field trips, MCAS for Math and STEM, COLs, sixth grade projects, trout release, among other events are planned.

Gratitude to the Parents' Alliance for breakfast and lunch during Teacher Appreciation week.

Solidified relationship with HR Knowledge. They will be handling payroll and benefits services.

Accountability:

Every other year we have an audit done with an outside audit company. The last one was canceled due to covid. The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS) completed a two-day audit. The initial oral read out was very positive. The final written report should be delivered by the end of May.

DESE has adjusted the definition of chronic absenteeism. The usual standard of chronic absenteeism is 18 days. It is 36 this year due to quarantine and isolation requirements. JLE expects it to return to 18 next year. Part of the problem is that there is no difference between excused and unexcused absences. It doesn't account for children who may have serious medical issues. RVCS is also looking for improvement year to year. 3-4 years ago, our final report pulled our rating down a bit. Living in a more affluent community, we do have families who take vacations leading to missed days. While we value experiences out of school, we are a public school.

Covid Updates:

DESE meeting referred to a “Swell” in Covid numbers, which compares favorably to a “Surge.” We are seeing the swell and think there may be some in class transmission. Approximate 15% of students and 30% of staff are wearing masks. Kimberly has asked to update the Covid Policy. Close contacts would wear masks for 7 days after exposure (exposures in and out of school). It is challenging to follow a straight line right now. Med advisors and school physicians agree with the policy change. Kimberly is dealing with a fair amount of push back from families and would be bolstered by board support of an update to the Covid Response Plan.

Vote: The board supports a change to the Covid Response Plan to require masking for 5 days after the last day of exposure for any student or faculty (vaccinated or unvaccinated) identified as a close contact. If unable to mask, a five-day quarantine outside of the school setting is required.

Motion: Pam Armstrong
2nd: Nina Keery

Yes:

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

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Committee Updates

Finance Committee

Capital needs assessment, like a home inspection, is a way to schedule and plan for long and short term expenses.

Budget: we vote on the salary line item so that the administration can begin to work on

employee agreements. In June, we will vote for the whole budget. Typically we see a 3-5% increase in the salary line item. There was no increase one year due to covid. It is important to note that an increase in salary line item does not correlate to each person seeing a salary increase in that amount.

95% of income from state funding. That's why we watch the state budgeting so closely. Foundation, facility, above foundation (from sending districts) can fluctuate. State looks optimistic for next year for public education (state budget passes at the end of June). It includes a facilities increase of about \$150/student.

Vote: Motion to authorize \$3,510,323 for salaries and wages for fiscal year 22-23 budget to enable timely employment agreements.

Discussion:

Albert: What happens when and if it isn't used? It goes back into the general budget.

Alfred: Why not more? Deb: It's not sustainable, we need to put money into the building. Alfred: It's a year to year vote.

Last year it increased 3%. 0% the year before. This year is 6%. It puts us at a small budget deficit. As far as sustainability, Deb forecasts 6%, 3%, 3% and at that point we're close to bouncing.

Nina supports the spirit.

Mark: This will be discussed again in June.

Motion: Mark Bishop
2nd: Anna Wetmore

Yes:

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

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Committee on Trustees

Pam highlights that voting on new Trustees is an action made in the interest of the good of the whole school. We serve without an agenda other than what is good for the school. Pam has met with the four prospective trustees and feels positively about all of them.

Albert supports Eric Simones's appointment, describing him as thoughtful and intelligent.

Alfred supports Tim Letson's appointment saying he is a useful contributor to accountability.

Mark supports Chris Whitford's and Denise Herrera's appointment pointing out that they have been strong contributors to the finance committee.

Terms start July 1st. New Trustee voting privileges will start then.

Vote: to approve Eric Simone's appointment to the Board of Trustees.

Motion: Amber Hewitt

2nd: Nina Keery

Yes:

Pam Armstrong

Mark Bishop

Amber Hewitt

Erin Bradley Irose

Nina Keery

Alfred Link

Catherine Martin

Karen Popken

Erin Seaton

Albert Ting

Anna Wetmore

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Vote: to approve Denise Herrera's appointment to the Board of Trustees.

Motion: Amber Hewitt

2nd: Erin Bradley Irose

Yes:

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

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Vote: to approve Chris Whitford's appointment to the Board of Trustees.

Motion: Amber Hewitt

2nd: Nina Keery

Yes:

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

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Vote: to approve Tim Letson's appointment to the Board of Trustees.

Motion: Amber Hewitt
2nd: Nina Keery

Yes:

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

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Amber will reach out to new Trustees.

June will have a vote for Officer positions. Anyone is welcome to run; please step forward. Pam and Amber are both stepping down. It is recommended for conversation to start early.

Retreat will be a 6-9pm weeknight evening. There will be no virtual option. Informal vote taken to find the best date for Trustees. Erin raises the point that this may raise an issue with equity (being in person). First choice, 6/13, second choice 5/26.

Development Committee

Pam will be taking over Development. Last meeting was a brainstorming session for where the Development is headed. Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for session notes.

Please sign up for COLs, Colin is waiting to hear from everyone to sign up before confirming time slots. Trustees will get confirmations from Pam and an email from the student.

Accountability Committee

The committee checked in on the progress of the Parent/Caregiver survey. At the time of the meeting, 101 responses had been received. The survey would be open for 6 more days. A handful of the responses leaned toward the negative; the negative responses primarily mentioned Covid response.

There is a 6/16 deadline for the DIBELS screener.

The Montessori Audit is complete and its initial report is extremely positive.

Vote: Executive Session

Motion “to enter Executive Session under the MA Open Meeting Law purpose for Executive Session #2: To conduct strategy sessions with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.” The purpose of this session is to discuss Director compensation.

Motion: Pam Armstrong
2nd: Erin Bradley Irose

Yes:

Pam Armstrong
Amber Hewitt
Erin Bradley Irose
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Reentered Public Session at 9:15 pm.

Vote: To adjourn meeting.

Motion: Pam Armstrong
2nd: Erin Bradley Irose

Yes:

Pam Armstrong
Amber Hewitt
Erin Bradley Irose
Nina Keery
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin
Albert Ting

Anna Wetmore

No:
None

Abstain:
None

9:18 pm Board adjourns.