

**River Valley Charter
School Board of
Directors Meeting
Meeting # 262 January
14, 2020 7:00 pm**

Meeting was called to order at
7:05

In attendance: Pam
Armstrong Mark Bishop
Nancy Durkee Ali
Fields Amber Hewett
Alfred Link Nina Keery
Catherine Martin
(remote) Karina Moltz
Erin Seaton

Out: Sam Jordan
Jennifer
McCormack Mark
Belanger

Jonnie Lyn
Evans Dan
Bouchard Deb
McCrevan

Members of the public Lucinda Cathcart, parent/MS Creative Coordinator
Rebecca Hamel, E1 teacher David Seaton, student Jennifer Tramontana,
parent/RVCS foundation representative (Foundation will send a rep to board
meetings periodically) Michael Zuercher, parent Leidy Zuercher, parent

Montessori Minute/RVCS

Revelation Lucinda Cathcart,
creative journaling

- Began with a “spelective on
journaling”

- Based on helping students learn to use journaling for a variety of purposes: documenting experiences, a daily record of events, self-reflection and communication.
- Important to consider types of brain functions: 1st (reflex), 2nd (feeling), 3rd (thinking).
- Two prompts given each day (example from today: what was a positive thing that happened in 2019? Hard for the kids to answer. They quickly go to the negative, and are also keenly aware of negative things happening.)
- ES question: how does this connect with Montessori middle school approach?
- LC: in readings of Montessori, sees a strong theme of students directing their learning. Journaling feels connected to that – students having agency and some control over their expressions.
- Board members given “every day good!” mini journals to keep track of one happy/good thing that happens every day.

Public

Comment:

Approval of November Minutes Motion: Nina
2nd: Alfred Roll call: Amber, Catherine, Alfred,
Karina abstained

Approval of December Minutes (Karina will edit repetitive paragraph) Motion: Amber 2nd: Alfred Roll call: Nina, Mark Bishop
abstained

Director’s Report (see report) highlights:

- Description of student-led donation project, students worked together to pick a charity to which they will donate proceeds from school based movie event. Students chose Center for Reproductive Rights, and went through exercises to make sure that nobody felt offended or excluded.
- Drew Balanoff recently hired. Started as a position overseeing afterschool program, also doing substitute teaching, now teaching from 10-6, in a classroom and also doing after-school.
- Leak in windows on the front of the building. Building is 20 years old, siding is

starting to fail. When the windows were installed, they were screwed into some of the siding, which is why there is now leaking. Plan is to remove some of the siding, redo the windows, repair the flashing. Norman is getting bids for project. Might be needed to redo the siding for the front of the building. Roof leak is separate, and will be

Vote: Policy on Staff Participation in Political Activities

To approve the Policy on Staff Participation in Political

Activities Motion: Nina Keery 2nd: Ali Fields Roll call: all approve

ES: wishes the policy statement is more encouraging of civic engagement MB: this feels like it's to protect work time and staff productivity AH: as a candidate, can't talk as the candidate in her workspace, but can talk about politics in general ES: can a teacher have a bumper sticker?

KM: court cases have said yes bc it's private property, but not in their classroom MB: can we just use this as a blanket statement from the Mass Charter School Alliance rather than coming directly from River Valley? JLE: yes, we can do that ES: can we expand this to include situations that aren't explicitly included in the statement? For instance, email isn't included. MB: can we check back w the Mass Charter School Association to see if there is policy language that includes more of an expansive range of items? JLE: what if we add "or other school resources" into the statement? CM: it's wise to use a resource that is provided, and she's comfortable with what's recommended here. AH: in the roll-out of this policy, you should encourage everyone to run for office! MB: wouldn't want the message to be conveyed that a job is contingent on political engagement David Seaton: a big theme that's being discussed is diversity, including political diversity. Grap- pling with how people close to use can have very different political views. With the election sea- son coming up, so important that we honor our differences and use this as a leadership oppor- tunity. ND: we don't want to mix the policy with discussions of political engagement, or put everything into a statement. If we want to create a culture of engagement, it doesn't have to happen in this very narrow policy. PA: our role is to approve the policies, review the policies from a legal/administrative standpoint. The educational/curricular piece is up to JLE to design and implement. JLE's curricular design is supported and encouraged. In the rollout, JLE will include any information that she wants to in terms of encouraging civic engagement. AH: in terms of workplace culture, it's really helpful to have a workplace that encourages that kind of engagement and encourages people to run for office. JLE: we can't let

RVCS teachers use public funds (even by taking time off from work) to run for office
MB: wonder if there is some kind of encouragement that can happen in the handbook, etc, for encouraging teachers to be civically engaged and keep the policy separate. AF: we have a culture of civic engagement. It's part of who we are as teachers. We are all involved in different ways in our communities and in how we talk with students, etc.
ES: policies matter and represent a school, and how they are written matters. MB: original standard document – did it have any delineation of it's origin? JLE: no.

Vote: To approve the Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity policy. Post-poned.

PA: one section says that gender won't be disclosed unless a student wants to disclose. Do we need to state that? NK: in section E, is it necessary to have all of the information about separate changing spaces etc? Feels like kids would be separated and stigmatized. JLE: middle school doesn't have gender neutral bathrooms, but they are available throughout the school

PA: the inclusion of the word non-stigmatizing helps to cover the transition of getting parts of the school to where we want it to be NK: the policy seems outdated David Seaton: so important to have a space in the middle school where students feel like they can use the bathroom without having to choose or walk far away. Someone who feels aligned with their biological gender would feel more comfortable than someone who doesn't. JLE: many students choose to use the individual bathrooms in the hallways, regardless of gender, for the sake of privacy. ES: it's great progress that the school wants to have a policy like this. Might be important to include definitions at the start of the policy. Also should include field trips. KM: is there a new field trip policy coming through Accountability? JLE: it should be in this policy, not field trip policy. Or maybe in both. PA: we should table the vote, wait for the policy to be updated.

*Director's report
continued....*

- Jonnie Lyn planned to share a statement with the BOT about family communication and how information is shared with step-parents, grandparents, other caregivers, but statement is not ready yet.
- Initial thought was to be limiting in terms of who else gets the information. JLE is choosing to err in the other direction, and to say that to the full extent that we possibly can, all information should be given to caregivers.
- JLE: best interest of the child to have all adults on the same page and informed. No separate conference, everyone gets information that is needed to meet the

needs of the child.

- A statement was written, but is now sitting with the lawyer.
- NK: does the school get a lot of requests for separate conferences?
- PA: the school is moving forward in a spirit of communication unless we get legal direction to go otherwise
- ND: what if a situation occurs and a teacher wants to have a quick conversation with a teacher?
- JLE: up to the discretion of the teacher. Not a policy, but a guideline.

Accountability see report Accountability report is not yet back from the state. Challenge in September was to find a way to specifically measure parts of charter goals, and JLE has been leveraging different resources to try to get that data and set some more specific measures. Report approval has taken far longer than expected, but progress is being made.

JLE spoke with Allison Bagg (sp?) and went through the areas that were still not approved, and JLE resubmitted the report.

External Montessori Audit: typically the external audit would happen before the internal audit. Reached out to the Montessori Association who would usually lead that process, but the director of the organization just passed away and it's not clear that we can have an external audit done this spring as planned.

AL: could we do the internal audit first? JLE: yes, that would be the plan.

Development: see report in packet. Pam reminds BOT that we need to cultivate a successor for Jen. Keep it in mind as board members are being recruited.

Committee on Trustees: no January meeting

- Committee is starting to work on recruitment efforts for next year. If BOT members know of anyone who might be a good addition to the board, please let Amber know.

- Pam: nonprofit board conference is on March 14th. Could be very worthwhile for anyone to attend who is interested and able. Pam will send out link so that everyone has the information. Variety of workshops so if enough members attend, several workshops can be attended. Fee is approx. \$100/person, but can be reimbursed by the School. Let Amber know if you can make it.

Finance No January finance committee meeting. Financial documents are put together, but we're still waiting for bank documents and other documents to be sent in. Work in progress documents were shared w EC, not with whole BOT. *insert summary from email from Mark*. Budget will be kept consistent.

Comments from Deb: update on tuition. 14 students from Newburyport left the school, replacement students came from Amesbury, Triton, Pentucket, Beverly and Haverhill. Changes in tuition rates from different towns came from the towns/districts doing their end of year reports.

Above foundation rates: Newburyport increased by approx. 90 dollars per student Triton increased tuition by 595 per student. Pentucket decreased by 188 dollars per student Amesbury increased by approx. 200 dollars per student Variations in tuition will happen again in March.

JLE: Student Opportunity Act will infuse money into districts with more students from lower SES backgrounds.

Evaluation Subcommittee: no report

Motion to adjourn:

Made by: Mark
Bishop 2nd: Nina
Keery

Vote: roll call: all in favor