

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting # 274
November 10, 2020 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: 82826757524 Password: TCOmY7XG69 at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order at 5:07 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

Discussion of public comment decision:

Pam explained that the BOT will ask members of the public to submit comments in writing 24 hours before the meeting, so their comments can be reviewed.

Discussion:

The idea of restricting public comment to written comment feels exclusionary and not inclusive. Although it may be state law, it could serve to keep some members of the public from speaking or participating. What are the checks on who is reading the messages and deciding that comments need to be submitted in writing?

It feels like a very non-RVCS policy to keep members of the public from speaking at meetings and requiring written comment to be submitted.

The policy could be exclusionary, assumes that people can read and are comfortable submitting comment via writing. At the same time, JLE recognizes that the policy is partly there to protect her during public comment if grievances are aired.

In Amesbury, public comment was not required to be submitted in advance, and Board members were also not required to respond to public comment.

Meetings don't have to be nice or comfortable, and trying to keep things nice and comfortable should not be the goal.

Public comment is just that – comment that is stated, and nobody has to respond, and the topics brought up can be discussed at future meetings.

RVCS Revelation: Eli Rosen (MS teacher) spoke about how the school and student body responded to the election.

All MS students take Humanities, and each term includes one over-arching topic. This fall the overarching topic has been democracy, both from the lens of classic Greek democracy, and also through the lens of the 2020 election. Switching between the two contexts has given a broad sense of democracy. An understanding of voting rights and civic rights is essential. Students may feel like their voices can't be shared if their view are not aligned with the majority of other students. Eli presented a slideshow

Vote: motion to approve October 2020 and October 29 minutes

October 29th – refer to public comment document and slideshow

Motion: Alfred Link

2nd: Erin Bradley Irose

Vote

Yes: all in attendance

No:

Abstain:

Director's Report

Two RVCS teachers have new babies – very exciting and also challenging to cover leave, but plans have been put in place. Briefly discussed parent survey results – results were largely positive in terms of reactions to what the school has been doing.

Development related news – previously the School had been receiving some grant money in the \$100,000 range, which was then pulled back to half that. As of January, the Foundation will receive a grant that will be back at the 100,000 level. Additionally, JLE heard from a “friend of

River Valley” who offered to make a donation and set it up as a matching donation, which wound up coming in at \$60,000. \$30,000 is set aside for teachers for stipends and recognition. Pam asked Board members to make a donation of whatever amount is comfortable and meaningful for your family.

Health and Safety update:

First case of Covid-19 brought about a lot of anxiety in the community. There was a second case, and the family is very open to information being shared – second case was a sibling of the first case. The second child tested positive on the 13th day of quarantine (Kimberley predicted that was when a close contact would typically show signs of infection). Family is still in the midst of their quarantine. School was in very close contact with Dr. March at the time. JLE wouldn’t change anything that was done, except in the future an entire cohort will likely be put into remote learning if a child in the class has a positive diagnosis. Impact on teaching staff is too intense to have a teacher working with kids in person and also teaching remotely.

DESE called a Friday meeting to say that the Governor was coming out with new guidelines. Announcement was that the metric was being changed and the color coded map would no longer be released each week.

Kimberley sent information to staff about effectiveness of keeping virus particles away – masks really work.

E2 plan: to go to half days in the morning, maintaining A week and B week cohorts. Indoor teachers teach the indoor week, and outdoor teachers teach the outdoor week. In the afternoons, teachers are presenting services to the students (who are at home) in their respective cohort. Several assistants will be reassigned to other levels as a building sub, or as teaching support.

Right now, kids in grades K-3 are getting specials 4 days/week. E2 kids are only getting specials on their indoor week. New change that has not yet been shared, is to move specials to twice a week for E1 kids.

What has the reaction been from parents? It feels like everyone wants things to stay as they are. It’s confusing for families who have kids in the the K-3 program and also E2. Tried to balance schedules so that families won’t have to do as many trips to and from locations as possible. That has been the biggest source of concern for families. Schedule is like a house of cards in a hurricane – every change has huge impact for other parts of the program.

Will this go into effect Nov 30 when semester ends or after winter break? Unclear. JLE will talk to teachers about it.

Middle School will stay with current schedule, and school is looking for some outdoor options as well.

Question about after-action review that was discussed at the October meeting. No official review was done, but JLE and Kimberley and Dan and others meet daily to discuss and strategize and plan.

Question asked about availability of testing. Testing might be available but would have to be limited to a restricted number of people. From Abbott company.

Rebecca Schwer thanks JLE for being a step ahead of planning and being proactive about keeping staff and students safe.

Committee on Trustees

BOT members confirmed their committee membership:

Pam Armstrong – EC

Mark Bishop - finance and EC

Nancy Durkee - Accountability

Amber Hewett – Committee on trustees

Erin Bradley Irose - COT

Nina Keery – COT and EC

Alfred Link - accountability

Catherine Martin - COT

Karina Moltz - EC

Greg Noyes – finance and development

Rebecca Schwer -

Erin Seaton - COT

Albert Ting - accountability

Anna Wetmore – accountability

Committee will meet soon and will go over progress and goals and next steps. Nina alerted BOT members to an email that just came out from the Charter School Association about a workshop that is worth considering.

Finance Committee:

Committee did not meet in November, but cash balance and other forms are in the board packet. Audit review last month was successful, and the report has been uploaded to the portal. A CVRF reopening grant has been filed.

Discussion:

If there is extra space in the budget, would it be possible to enlarge the budget line item to cover staffing needs?

JLE: is planning to request an increase in the budget line item to cover maternity leaves, subbing, staff medical needs.

Can we recognize teachers in a monetary way this year? Pam is talking to the Foundation and JLE shared that the “friend of River Valley” would like to help fund support for teachers at the end of the calendar year.

Accountability Committee

Title 9 policy has been revised and should have been approved last August, but will be considered instead in December.

Surveys will be coming out from Accountability to parents, kids, teachers. Progress reports are underway.

Development

\$16,000 committed since September (part of \$19,000 overall). Committee won't meet this month until tomorrow. Last meeting had great participation and lots of folks from different related areas.

Discussion

Greg Noyes shared his impression of attending the recent development meeting, and wondered whether or not we can have students be involved in the fundraising process. Greg also wondered if a strategic plan for certain items, programs, etc, is more efficient than raising money for the operating fund.

JLE would rather see students take agency and try to fundraise in a way that is connected to the school and it's priorities, and not try to raise money for the school as a whole.

RVCS was selected as one of three charter schools in the state to describe the creative ways that we have reopened.

Vote: Motion to adjourn

Made by: Greg Noyes

2nd: Mark Bishop

Yes: all in attendance

No:

Abstain:

7:02 pm Board adjourns