

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting # 281
March 9, 2021 5:00 pm**

In accordance with the Executive Order applying to MA Open Meeting Law, this meeting will be held virtually on Zoom ID: 88074824313 at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order at 5:03 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

RVCS Revelation

Rebecca Schwer shared photos and experiences from outdoor learning, and shared some new technologies that are being used (like Padlet).

Public Comment:

Doug Wilcox: parent of RVCS student. Addressing status of full time return to class. Understands that some folks don't feel comfortable with a return as soon as April, but he feels that there are critically important reasons to return in April. Feels that his son's education has been degraded due to a 50% reduction in learning. Kids can't afford a gap year in their learning. Feels that the return to full time learning is essential to their education. Asks that April be set as a unequivocal return date.

Lydia Supple Pollard: read letter from 15 RVCS families. Letter is part of board packet public comment.

Andi Egmont: signed on to letter that was read by Lydia. Also wanted to speak individually

about her concern about being able to put some playtime into the day. The school has been very creative when it comes to the older students, and Andi is hoping that the BOT will support the administration in being creative about thinking about plans for K/1 students.

Vote: To approve minutes from the February 9th meeting -

Motion: Greg Noyes

2nd: Mark Bishop

Yes : Armstrong, Bishop, Durkee, Hewett, Irose, Keery, Link, Martin, Moltz, Noyes, Schwer, Seaton, Ting, Wetmore

No

Abstain Nancy Durkee

Comments from Pam:

Marking the anniversary of Covid beginning and recognizing the impact of remote meetings on the role of the BOT and communications.

Director's Report

Guidelines were put out today by the Commissioner of Education. Updates to teaching and learning slideshow will be included in board packet. Adjustments were made to the required number of hours for remote and in person instruction, and hours were reduced. Requirement for hybrid program were 17.5 hours/week. RVCS worked to meet those required hours. New legislation says that hybrid and remote instruction no longer count towards structured learning time.

As of April 5th, hybrid and remote hours no longer count toward those hours. Remote programs (like Family Selected Remote at RVCS) will continue through this year but not beyond.

Guidelines were shared as part of Commissioner's directive, including a recommendation to survey families about their selected mode of attending school.

Legal mandate, so no board vote is required.

This could result in changes to programming, even changes in class/teacher assignments.

School is still trying to work out what the consequences will be of this change. JLE went over next steps in terms of what the school is going to have to consider. E2 will not be impacted by this – grades 1-3 will initially be impacted

Discussion:

Pam thanks JLE and the teachers for their incredible hard work and all of their flexibility. A rhythm has been established and now more changes are necessary, but the creativity and dedication of the RVCS staff is always evident.

Nina – guidelines that were shared today seem so oriented toward a traditional school setting. Is there any wiggle room in how we implement the guidelines? How will other non-traditional school settings respond?

JLE – there won't really be any wiggle room. One school that is similar to RVCS has some flexibility because they have access to outdoor space. Assumption is that the Commissioner won't be forcing schools to give up any programmatic changes that they've made.

Can the outdoor ed program be expanded for more grades? In such a short time frame, and with limited available spaces and staffing it would be essentially impossible.

Will the school need to buy desks to meet these directions? Guidelines around desks can be interpreted a little more leniently.

What happens if we have to roll back programmatic changes and have full classes back together, and we can't do that with 3 feet? Funding would be denied, DESE would measure the space, we may have to expand the school year.

Meeting on Thursday will be town hall style, and JLE will share ideas about what the implementation might look like.

Question about applicants to the lottery – is the number higher this year than in previous years? JLE says it's higher. Do we ever ask families why they applied to RVCS? We ask how they heard about the school, but we don't specifically ask why RVCS.

Accountability

Alfred thanks the Accountability Committee for all of their steadfast work. Document is in the board packet. Informal staff survey results were briefly reviewed, results are included in board packet. Parent survey goes out every spring, though it did not go out last spring. The survey this year was intended to track key measures, though some changes will need to be made (like changing "classroom" to "learning environment"). MCAS tests, originally starting in April, have been changed to 3-5 graders from May 10 – June 11.

Development Committee

Next meeting will be in April. A member of the public attended to see what has happened at RVCS bc she has been disappointed to watch what has happened in Newburyport Public Schools.

Finance Committee

No updates to the state budget yet. Committee went through scenarios looking at different possible tuition. By the end of March, above-foundation rates will be known. Documents in board packet include updates to the budget and statements about current status of revenues received. Discussion of funds granted through the CARES act.

Committee on Trustees

COT met and discussed aligning surveys with Accountability Committee in the future. Continued to work on DEI education and training. Idea had been pitched about a podcast, reading, text, prior to each BOT meeting. Members are asking us to consider imbedding time into each BOT meeting to discuss DEI. March begins COT's work on bringing in new BOT members and new perspectives. We currently have 14 members on the board, and we can have up to 20. Nina shared information about nonprofit leadership training available through Essex Country Community Foundation. Link was shared.

Public Comment

Colin Irose: Thanks everyone for their hard work. Wondering if Jonnie Lyn has considered a full day return to kindergarten. Would love for his kindergarten student to come back full time.

Vote: Motion to move into Executive Session under MA Open Meeting Law under section 6

Made by: Pam
2nd: Alfred Link

Yes: all in attendance
No:
Abstain:

Board returns from Executive Session, 7:24 pm

Vote: to adjourn

Made by: Pam
2nd: Alfred

Yes: all in attendance
No:
Abstain:

7:25 pm Board adjourns