

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting
Meeting # 290
January 17, 2023 7:00 pm**

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

In attendance:

Pam Armstrong
Erin Bradley (left at 9:01)
Denise Herrera
Amber Hewett
Lainie Ives (left at 8:36)
Ken Jackman
Nina Keery
Tim Letson
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin (via telecomm)
Tanya Murdy
Eric Simone
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore
Chris Whitford
Jonnie Lyn Evans, Director

Absent:

Nancy Durkee
Erin Seaton

Public:

Deb McCrevan

Comments from Pam Armstrong, Chair:

Welcome back to the in person meetings!

RVCS Revelation:

Cindy Chapman, Kinderhaus teacher, discussed the Science of Reading, a whole language approach to teaching reading. She covered the steps used in teaching and the manipulatives used in the classroom as support.

Gratitude goes to Cindy for this presentation.

Note: To approve minutes from the November Board of Trustees meeting with edits as presented at this meeting and submitted November and December committee meeting minutes.

Motion: Anna Wetmore
2nd: Nina Keery

Yes:

Pam Armstrong
Erin Bradley
Denise Herrera
Amber Hewett
Lainie Ives
Ken Jackman
Nina Keery
Tim Letson
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin
Tanya Murdy
Eric Simone
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore
Chris Whitford

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Absent:

Nancy Durkee
Erin Seaton

Director's Report: Jonnie Lyn Evans presented report

The Director's Report appears in the packet. Time was allowed for questions and comments.

Additional things:

RVCS was invited to present a grant idea to the NBPT Resiliency Committee. Two project ideas were submitted. The Committee liked both and are interested. One project is for a climate mural the other is to work on the Little River Trail.

Matilda, a play, was a great success.

Enrollment: Five or seven students have left. Two came for a few days at the start of school. Most came later and found that it didn't work for the family. There may be one more withdrawal. We would not fill that space if it is after Feb 17.

TLetson - What's the average loss over the past few years? JLEvans - Estimates that this is on the upper side for mid year.

EBradley - Do we offer alternatives if they are thinking about leaving? JLEvans - Not if they've already left, but beforehand, yes.

A week before winter break, the RVCS lunch provider went out of business. Fortunately, an RVCS family was opening The Cormorant and has taken on lunch provision. The food options appear to be more healthy. While the restaurant is not open on Monday and Tuesday, they go in to fix the food for the school.

Human resources: JLEvans made a front office hire; the original Board secretary. This hire frees up Michelle to take on other tasks. An instructional assistant started to support specials. JLEvans is interviewing a Spanish teacher. Before care is staffed. Prices and pay for staff was increased. A planning group formed to look at the entire grounds.

An automated billing system is coming on board.

JLEvans met with the family foundation that has been regularly contributing to RVCS. They are reducing the amount of funds to 50-60K for the next two years and are hoping to come back stronger in 2025. They are very supportive of the PBE program and changes to the grounds.

Bruce Tarr's aide visited. They hope to have Sen Tarr back for a visit soon.

PAarmstrong recommends having board representation there. ATing - is there an ask that we have for him? JLEvans - not really. ATing - Perhaps things that aren't Charter school related? JLE - I'll try to find out his stances and go from there.

Strategic Plan

It's been years since we've been operating with a solid strategic plan. The goal is to have an approved Strategic Plan by the end of this school year. 2015-2020 was the last one, developed by AWillemson and NCoughlin. The break was intentional for the purpose of giving JLEvans a year to settle in and before beginning the planning process. That got derailed by the Covid pandemic. In the fall of 2021, we were able to get back to some aspirational planning. NKeery, ALink and PArmstrong met with JLEvans over several weekends to discuss a draft plan. The next step is to bring it back to stakeholders. The Strategic plan is a document that the board approves and is mainly developed by the director. The director is hired to be the expert in Montessori, so they are able to see that big picture; they are also responsible for carrying out the approved plan.

The next steps in the process are:

1. Pam will provide the previous Strategic Plan and the draft plan to Trustees.
2. Within 2 weeks, families will be made aware that this is happening.
3. In February and March, the Executive Committee will schedule several meetings:

board/foundation (separate meeting), 2 family feedback sessions (one in person, one zoom, in the evenings)

4. Committees can discuss in their regularly scheduled meetings.
5. JLEvans will present to and get feedback from staff and talk to teachers about getting student feedback at the middle school level.
6. At the end of March, JLEvans will edit the plan, taking into consideration feedback.
7. At the April BoT meeting, Trustees can ask final questions and provide final feedback.
8. In May, the BoT will vote to approve the new Strategic Plan,

DHerrera - Are we looking at a plan to get us to 2025? PArmstrong - We are talking about a three-year plan, with this counting as the first year. NKeery - There are advantages and disadvantages to a longer plan, but with this aligning with her contract, this seems to make sense. CWhitford - What's the significance of the five-year timeline? PArmstrong - Aligns with charter renewal.

NKeery - Can we pull in feedback from folks who aren't able to access the meetings by offering a variety of avenues for feedback? Perhaps an email box, etc. The more you ask, the more you'll get and that's a good thing.

ATing - Do we have access to other Charter Schools' Strategic Plans? PArmstrong - Yes, would suggest we go look for them.

KJackman - Highlights the importance of seeing other schools' plans.

Committee on Trustees

The CoT held two meetings, December and January. Both meetings were centered around reviewing what expectations are in our current documentation and looking at what if any changes we should make. It felt straightforward initially, but as the discussion progressed we found that there are shortcomings to different formats and we ask for another month before bringing a recommendation. The goal is to report out next month with what might be right for board expectations and some of this might be better to discuss at a retreat.

Finance Committee

RVCS continues to run well. The transition from internal to external resources is going well. There has been a reduction in tuition, 2.3%, but this will be revised upwards. It is not a large reduction in the context of the entire budget. The Committee will keep the board apprised of this situation.

Development Committee

The Committee will be meeting at the end of January.

Accountability Committee

The next two months will be chewed up by the Parent Caregiver Survey.

Public Comment:

None.

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: Alfred Link

Yes:

Pam Armstrong
Erin Bradley
Denise Herrera
Amber Hewitt
Ken Jackman
Nina Keery
Tim Letson
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin
Tanya Murdy
Eric Simone
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore
Chris Whitford

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Absent:

Nancy Durkee
Lainie Ives (left meeting at 8:36)
Erin Seaton

Reentered Public Session at 9:08 pm.

Vote: To adjourn.

Motion: Anna Wetmore
2nd: Chris Whitford

Yes:

Pam Armstrong
Denise Herrera
Amber Hewett
Ken Jackman
Nina Keery
Tim Letson
Alfred Link
Catherine Martin
Tanya Murdy
Eric Simone
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore
Chris Whitford

No:

None

Abstain:

None

Absent:

Erin Bradley (left meeting at 9:01)
Nancy Durkee
Lainie Ives (left meeting at 8:36)
Erin Seaton

9:10 pm Board adjourns.