

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting # 282
April 13, 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 5:04 pm

In attendance

Pam Armstrong
Mark Bishop
Nancy Durkee
Amber Hewett
Erin Bradley Irose
Nina Keery
Catherine Martin
Karina Moltz
Greg Noyes
Rebecca Schwer
Erin Seaton
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore

Absent: Alfred Link

RVCS Revelation – no revelation this month

Public Comment: no members of the public spoke

Pam Armstrong recognized the BOT for their continuing efforts and dedication during the Covid crisis, and acknowledges that as lives keep shifting, everyone is adapting and continuing to work hard on behalf of RVCS.

Mark Bishop recognized Jonnie Lyn and Deb and Dan for their ongoing incredible dedication and hard work. The shift to full time school has required a great deal of hard work and flexibility and the community is very appreciative.

Vote: to approve minutes from the March meeting

Note: though the finance committee notes say that we will receive the above foundation rates by the end of March, we did not.

Motion: Greg Noyes

2nd: Cathy Martin

Yes : everyone in attendance at the time (Rebecca Schwer not yet there)

No

Abstain

Director's Report

Jonnie Lyn described process of developing the calendar. She tries to align with sending districts whenever possible. Labor Day falls late, so school begins before Labor Day. Board's attention drawn to a couple of topics related to the calendar: half days, several days before holidays, days after winter break used for planning. Calendar included in board packet.

Discussion:

Are calendars aligned with Newburyport Schools? Would be good for kids to be able to participate in activities with peers from other schools. Dan will follow up with Youth Services to see if they can have any programming for RVCS kids.

Would it make sense to use the terms identified by the state to mark holidays? When citizens look and see what days are marked and represented, it can be a good way to educate students and families and bring up questions about what days are recognized and how.

Jonnie Lyn included holidays that feel less inclusive than others.

A change doesn't necessarily need to be made, but the question should be considered.

Erin Seaton appreciates the thoughtful approach that Jonnie Lyn has taken toward the calendar, and feels like it's better to take an inclusive approach than to go with the State's official calendar and titles of days.

Vote: to approve the 2021-2022 calendar as presented by the Director at this meeting.

Motion: Pam Armstrong

2nd: Greg Noyes

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

No:

Abstain: Nancy Durkee

Director's Report Continued...

Jonnie Lyn described the gradual return to having everyone in school full time. MCAS will go on as planned, but in many different iterations and on different days to follow Covid protocols.

287 students are currently enrolled – not totally full enrollment. Policy changed a few years ago, stating that if there was a change in enrollment after February break, the spot would not be filled.

Trying to figure out numbers for next year – there were 30 openings all together, because 30 students are graduating.

A parent survey was sent asking parents to indicate if their student will be returning or not. Two parents have indicated that their student will not be returning, but forms making that decision official won't be sent out until after April break. \

Rules about “backfilling” are complicated. Enrollment numbers at younger levels have to stay at specific sizes (a certain number of 1st graders, etc). In middle school, it can be an overall number of students, not specific to a certain number of seats per grade.

Would be interesting to know what numbers look like from the towns that were newly included in public postings, etc.

Dan read numbers of applicants for the school, comparing this year and last year.

Does the school's approach change if surface transmission is not such a concern? Not really at this time.

HVAC Unit Failure: one HVAC unit totally failed, and another was condemned. Three classrooms in the front of the building were not heated, and still during winter months. Temporary heating units were brought in, and Deb did extensive research into replacement options. RVCS was granted emergency exemption from public bidding process, and the school is in the process of arranging for new units to be installed.

Did we consider using local contractors who are people of color? We used contractors who were recommended by local people.

There was a immediate need to approve funds to cover this expense very quickly. The EC met to authorize this expenditure. Vote is included in board packet. The Board is asked to vote to receive and fill this vote.

Vote: to receive and file the EC vote to approve up to 100,000 from cash reserve to replace two failed HVAC units, pending review of quotes inclusive of equipment cost.

Motion: Pam
2nd: Nina

Amendment: change vote to reflect only members of the EC, who were able to vote.

Yes: all in attendance
No:
Abstain:

Accountability

Anna Wetmore reported out on Accountability Meeting. Discussion of need to potentially amend the annual survey that goes out. Decision was made to go ahead and send out the survey this year, and to consider amending the survey in the future.

Discussion was had at Accountability Meeting about how well the survey supports the work of Jonnie Lyn and the school. The design is not conducive to communicating helpful information, mainly because it doesn't correlate responses with specific ages of children (when family has more than one child in the school). Jonnie Lyn drafted a new version that specifies about which child the comments are being written. It's a good time to make a change, since there is a new Director in place (surveys weren't sent last year due to Covid).

Nancy Durkee suggested that Jonnie Lyn bring changes to the next Accountability meeting, and the committee can review it. Jonnie Lyn explained that the changes are not to the content or question, just the format so that better information can be collected.

A revised Enrollment Policy will be in the May board packet for review.

Development Committee

Greg Noyes connected w Rebecca about potentially bringing some beehives to the school. Kevin Milholmm has connected with some local banks about grants or sponsorship. Looking into a greenhouse on campus. PA ran an online bookfair, and are organizing a Teacher Appreciation Week starting in early May.

Katie Ives is the president of the Chamber of Commerce, and Dan is working to connect with her.

Looking at ways to fund long term and short term dreams/plans. Maybe raising funds for an endowment to raise teacher's salaries. A shorter term idea would be to raise money to continue outdoor programming.

Pam and Jonnie Lyn met with Sean Reardon, and showed him around the school and talked about the program, working to build a relationship with him.

Finance Committee

Mark Bishop reviewed documents in board packet. Things are always a bit unsure because we don't know our above-foundation rates until we've already made decisions about how to spend money.

Committee on Trustees

Deb McCrevan paid for the entire BOT to be able to participate in the Institute for Trustees that is happening over the next month. Four dates are encouraged:

10:30-12, or 12-1:30

April 27, Inclusive Leadership
May 3, Strategic Planning
May 5, Governing During a Crisis
May 10, Addressing the Challenges of a Multicultural Board

Sessions are also recorded, and can be watched after the fact.

COT will soon share potential dates for a June Retreat.

Pam reminded everyone that there is the potential to run for Executive Committee roles, and there can be several people vying for the same roles.

Public Comment

Vote: Motion to move into Executive Session under MA Open Meeting Law under Open Meeting Law Purpose #2 (to discuss executive compensation)

Made by: Mark Bishop
2nd: Erin

Yes: all in attendance
No:
Abstain:

Board returns from Executive Session

Vote: to adjourn

Made by: Greg Noyes
2nd: Mark Bishop

Yes: all in attendance
No:
Abstain:

7:45 pm Board adjourns