Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Date: May 18, 2021

Held via Zoom video conferencing

Present: Chair: Christie Storniolo (CES), Vice Chair: Christine Miele (CM), Secretary: Alyssa Ross (AR) Treasurer: Michael Gendreau (MG), Bob Hawkes (BH), Pamela Sarantis (PS), **Staff**: Chris Smith (CDS), Jessica Wachsman (JW), Erin Balfe (EB), Ruth Templeton (RT), **Regrets**: Debbie Kruzel (DK), Aimye Haroutunian (AH))

CES called meeting to order at 5:34pm

General

This meeting is taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic; we are holding the meeting via videoconferencing software. The public was notified and invited to join. Please note even when school reopens the Board may continue to meet via Zoom in order to limit activity at school.

Approval of minutes from April 13 regular meeting. BH motions to approve, CM seconds. All others in favor. None opposed.

Correspondence

- None

Next meetings

- June 8: 5:30pm Finance committee
- June 22: 5:30pm Board
- July 13: 5:30pm Finance committee
- July 20: 5:30pm Board

Misc.

- 8th grade graduation June 15 at Salem-Derry Elks
- Staff outing at noon on June 18; request BBoT members to help

Staff Highlight

Allison Baldanado started to use a new tool called Classkick (Mrs. Baldonado's link) to make it easier for students who were remote to participate, share work and have their progress monitored. There are different tools for different subjects, and some of these make it easier to give students feedback and let them work at their own pace. Can also record voice, which helps with accountability in reading by letting teachers hear oral skills. Also easier to help the teachers

figure out who needs the most help, facilitates grading, set up and manage tests, etc. For math they can upload pictures of their work so the teacher can see the process to make sure they understand it and didn't just get the right answer. Can also share content with other teachers to replicate.

Dean of School update

Enrollment

- 2020-21 enrollment at 225, wait list at 142
- K is full for next year

Events and Updates

- School is back to five in-person days a week.
- Currently conducting state assessments.
- April break saw a lot of travel. Many people chose to self-quarantine and get tested. We have not seen a bounce in cases at the school.
- Mrs. Stolar has started coming back into the school to teach.

Personnel Update

- Ms. Edwards (middle school English) will not be returning next year; she is moving closer to her parents.
    - Interviews are taking place; have narrowed it down to two candidates.
- Mrs. Templeton announced that she had accepted another position.
- Mr. Jones has signed on as our full-time music teacher for next year.
- Ms. Osorio (Spanish) is taking a leave of absence for the first part of next year to finish her Doctorate.
    - We have a long-term substitute in mind, working to secure that

COVID update (based on questions from the BBoT)

- Have lowered some of the harder cleaning chemicals/frequency but are still enforcing hand washing, hand sanitation, using wipes to clean work space, etc.
- Mask mandate will remain in effect through the end of the school year; the kids are used to them/in a routine so it is easier to continue to mitigate risk to avoid an outbreak before the end of the year; they already have the option to remove masks when playing outside but many students choose to leave them on.
- Will look to see if microwaves can be put back in place in each classroom.
- We will not require vaccinations for students to attend next year unless the state mandates it.

- Barriers will stay up in most classrooms but many have already been lowered; no plan to take them out until the year is over.
- Have resumed Early Birds which quickly ramped up.
- Having some clubs but they still remain more limited.
- Offering a free Title I course for this summer - paid for by a grant - to help identified students who fell behind in the remote/hybrid model catch up prior to the start of the 2021-22 school year.
- Field Day is still TBD, but discussions are in process.
- K graduation is parents only in the parking lot at pickup, with breakfast for the students beforehand.
- 8th grade graduation is at the pavilion at the Elks; 4 tickets each but trying to get more per student. Students have the opportunity to speak as in prior years.
- Nurse Patricia Allen has been attending calls with the state since July, which continues - she reports that discussions often focus on how to manage in-school situations. Discussions are starting to take place about next year but information is minimal so far.

Foundation update

FUNDrive Clothing Collection:

- Soft Total (lbs): 3267
- Small Household Goods Total (lbs): 487
- Books Total (lbs): 0
- Furniture Total (pc): 0
- Large Items Total (pc): 8
- Total Weight: 3754
- Projected Total Amount Raised*: $663.54
- Truck allowance: $75
- Projected Total Payment Amount*: $738.54

***Mega Cash Raffle*:**

- Have sold 57 tickets as of May 17
- Grand Prize $10,000, 2nd $2,500, 3rd $500
- Tickets
    - $100 each
    - Maximum 300 tickets
    - Need to sell a minimum of 230 tickets to make $10,000
    - If sell all 300 tickets, Foundation will make $17,000 after payouts
- Drawing date will be selected once 150 tickets are sold

At 45K of the 80K goal for the year; have some other money that's come in May and still have the cash calendar to factor in

Committee updates

Finance

- Reviewed April financials. AR motions to approve, MG seconds. All approve. None opposed.
- Audit report (governance letter and internal control letter) from period July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020 did not show any issues. AR motions to approve, MG seconds. All approve. None opposed.
- Building maintenance
    - Original property management company did not have us pay building maintenance
    - New property manager said we are responsible for building maintenance
    - CES had a lawyer review who feels there are gray areas in the contract but that we should be responsible to pay going forward.
    - We have repairs (water heater, sink drain, HVAC issues, toilet issues) that total over 9K. JW challenged some of the costs and got some discounts.
    - Request from finance committee to update the building maintenance line item by 9.5K (overage in case anything else comes up in the last weeks of this FY). The money will come from savings, some COVID funding, etc. Some of the fixes should be eligible for COVID grants.
    - Motion to change building maintenance line item by 9.5K in the 20-21 FY. AR motions to approve, PS seconds. All approve. None opposed.

Governance

- Holding a phone/Zoom interview this week or next week with another potential BBoT member; anticipate having this candidate interview with the full board in the June meeting
- Placed an ad in the Salem Chamber on May 14 looking for potential BBoT members. Received one potential prospect; MG in the Q&A part of the process. Updates to follow.
- Asked via the weekly school email updates:
    - Had one inquiry that was not a fit but who may participate in other activities including the capital campaign
    - Have one potential BBoT member from that outreach, with office management and board experience. MG in the Q&A part of the process. Updates to follow.
- Placed recruitment ads last week with Salem Life and country club list.

Curriculum

- Elementary school is working on a new explicit reading program.
    - Several teachers have researched the program and the others on the team are looking now.
    - This program fits with Fundations well and offers many resources free of charge.
    - Elementary teachers are reading a book together to explore the program.

Personnel

- CES and AR have finalized 2020-21 survey questions.
- Meeting this week to finalize process then will send the survey.

Outreach

- Continuing to keep Birches main FB updated, though more slowly than in prior years; AR will begin posting some of our wonderful testimonials from families to FB
- Plan on gathering lots of content for our social media - especially in order to kick off our Instagram page with robust and consistent content in the Fall
- AR met with rep from *Salem Life* magazine to add free content; placed BBoT ad and will look to do the same for kindergarten lottery
- AR to work with MC to hire a fall intern; reviewing job description and then Michelle will reach out to (at least) Merrimack, UMass-Lowell, SNHU
- CM created an Alumni/Past Donor newsletter; working to refine content. Plan to poll people to determine what they would like to see. We are also discussing a quarterly raffle for those that read the newsletter.
- One of the Parent Ambassadors will posting a flyer at local libraries.
- Meeting scheduled for later this week.

Capital Campaign

- CM met with consultant William Nevious (WN) about restarting the campaign; WN feels that we need to shift gears post-COVID but did not give many details yet - we need to discuss reengaging his contract.
- With so few properties available, we may need to extend the lease; WN said we need to be sure we get that in order.

Facilities

- Met on May 10
- Discussed potential need to renew lease
- JW has been looking into many financing options
- Talked to a few banks about what they believe we can afford

Strategic Planning

- No meeting or updates

Policy Reviews

Policy for Covering Bonus Pay with Federal COVID-related Funding. This is to show we were within the federal guidelines to use money to pay bonuses. PS motion to accept. BH seconds. AR abstains. All in favor. None opposed.

TBD policy review for June.

No non-public session.
No public comment.

CM motions to adjourn. PS seconds. All agree. 7:29pm meeting adjourned.