Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Date: December 14, 2021

Held at The Birches Academy

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

CES called meeting to order at 5:41pm

General

Board meetings are intended to take place in person again, though committee meetings may still be via Zoom.

Approval of minutes from November 9 regular meeting. CM motions to approve, MG seconds. All others in favor. None opposed.

Correspondence

- 11 letters related to school reopening plan; will submit into the record when we get to that part of the agenda
- No other correspondence

Upcoming events:

- January 26: Spotlight Tour
- February 2: Kindergarten lottery
- CM has developed a spreadsheet for the Board to sign up to be represented at all events; admin team will add events and Board members will be at ~4 events each throughout the year

Next meetings

- January 11: 5:30pm Finance committee (remote)
- January 25: 5:30pm Board (note: may change; Board is exploring new dates)
- February 8: 5:30pm Finance committee (remote)
- February 15: 5:30pm Board

Dean of School update

COVID update

- CES welcomed the in person audience, shared that the Board will not vote today because a member is not available and the decision was made in August that all Board members need to be available if we are to vote on masks
- Admin team sent out the proposed changes to the mask policy and invited the school community to comment; as of this meeting 72 responses were gathered. There was an appearance of leaning to keeping the protocol as is but we did not make an official tally. CES pointed out that she was happy the dialogue was very positive on both sides. AR will use some of the input to update the FAQ.
- CES confirmed that we have not taken any funding that requires masks
- CDS shared numbers
    - Current quarantine: 15
    - Current positive with school exposure: 5
    - Current positive without school exposure: 4
    - Close family member on quarantine (student not positive): 6
    - SASS results have all been negative; up to 51 participants
    - School employees positions on masks
        - At this time, CDS's opinion is that we should continue to require masks; he understands there are other opinions but he believes we should err on the side of caution because he takes his responsibility to protect the children very seriously.
        - CDS has had multiple conversations with several stakeholders; feels everyone is arguing their point of view in good faith and have just drawn very different conclusions from the available evidence.
        - At this time the teachers do not seem to have shifted their stance on mask wearing.

Board comments on COVID plan:

- CES said Board has been talking about having the mask requirement at all school events
    - PS believes that the mask policy, like all policies, should apply at all on and off campus events and it was not followed at the Friday evening middle school trampoline park event
    - MG, DK, CM spoke about the positive impact social events have on our students and expressed their preference that we have events where parents can choose if their child masks or not and not to offer only events where masks are required as long as the guidelines/plan is clearly shared with parents.

    - The board did not vote on if the mask guidelines for events off school property would have masks required as not all 7 board members were present. Also, there are no upcoming social events. Will discuss further in January
    - CDS took the blame; the site did not require them and thought the parents would know that when choosing to send their child/when signing the permission slip; some parents had asked so he thought all parents understood they were following the facility rules for the event. He has learned from this that he needs to be more clear. Board thanked him for recognizing this and appreciate his candor.
    - JW said this is the first evening activity since the start of the year; PS said it still felt like a field trip because usual field trip processes were followed and she signed a permission slip for Birches and sent payment to Birches and not the facility

Enrollment

- 221 enrolled; lost two students this month to their sending districts but have others planning to come
- Wait list at 97

Events and Updates

- Makerspace has been more successful with the younger students than with the older students; younger students seem more curious and follow directions well.
- Collected 1037 items to donate to “weCare” food pantry in Salem; they serve Southern New Hampshire.
- Mrs. Hawkes is working on the Memory Project again with our middle school students. They are creating collages for students in Nigeria and are really enjoying the new format.
- Mrs. Hawkes, Mr. Jones, and several parent volunteers decorated the Hills for the recording of the Holiday concert. Mr. Jones will record a video to be sent home and then he will also invite parents to workshops to observe music classes.
- Middle school teachers are tightening enforcement of no non-educational games in school. Students have been made aware and a few have been to see CDS for additional conversations. We will continue to address this issue as necessary.
- Charter renewal:
    - Need to establish a committee to start in January; PS and CM will represent the Board
    - In working on the Charter Renewal identified some language that needs to be discussed with the new committee; date to be set soon.
    - May need a vote in the January meeting if there are changes to the charter which needs to be submitted in February

Personnel Update

- Parent volunteer helped with recess. The extra set of eyes was very helpful, and this could happen as she was fingerprint cleared. CDS working to build our reserve of volunteers by getting more parents fingerprinted. This will be very helpful too for when we do another all-school trip.
- One open position: TA for Kindergarten
- JW will inquire with the Salem Senior Center if there are retired teachers who are willing to substitute

Foundation update

*Recent activity***:** Scholastic Book Fair December 10-17: held parent & family viewing times in conjunction with Mr. Jones music workshop classes and Book Stroll

Upcoming fundraiser: Cash Calendar drawing every day in January

Planned events:

- January: Cultural Fair, School Choice Week, Alumni Open House
- February: Candy Grams
- March; Read a Thon, Special Friends/Grandparents breakfast
- April; Fill OUR Cup (trying to reschedule)
- May: Spring party, Teacher Appreciation Week
- June: NH Day of Giving

Committee updates

Finance

- Motion to accept November with corrections to the merchant fee, income and expense. CM motions to approve, MG seconds. All others in favor. None opposed.
- Aiming to have a draft of 2022-23 budget for February, with a vote in March

Curriculum

- 7th grade math is splitting to address the two major groups in class. Teachers will utilize a co-teaching model and consult on scope and sequence going forward.
- 4th grade music class is being built from the ground up utilizing Universal for Learning. Mr. Jones has banked several videos and different assignments. This will be expanded as we move forward and may include accompaniment pieces which will allow Mr. Jones more time to plan other lessons and possibly to eliminate the need for an accompanist.

Governance

- MG is working closely with a potential member who joined the Board meeting today; will proceed with the process.
- Looking for an additional Board member to join the committee so there are 3 members

Outreach/Day of Giving

- Continuing to work through Day of Giving planning and 10 Year plan; team meeting next on Friday
- Looking at CoC event in January; have reached out to CoC with dates and looking at an activity
- CM to reach out to Senator Morse about doing the lottery draw for the 10 year anniversary
- K lottery advertised in Windham Independent each week

Personnel, Curriculum, Strategic Planning

- Personnel will schedule time with CDS for his review/goal setting before the break

Facilities Management

- Lease vote will take place in January meeting

Policy Reviews

December:

- **None**

January:

- ***Possibly* Code of Conduct**

CES motions to move into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(d) at 7:26pm. PS seconds. All in favor.

CM motions to move out of non-public session and into public at 8:12pm. AR seconds. All in favor.

Vote to seal the minutes of the non-public session because Consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community per RSA 91-A:3, II(d). PS motions to approve, CM seconds. All others in favor. None opposed.

DK motions to adjourn. CM seconds. All agree. 8:13pm meeting adjourned.