



**Endeavor Emergency Board Meeting Minutes: February 2, 2021**

**7:00 PM in the Multi-Purpose Room and via Zoom:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85926333534?pwd=UIYwTzRFdDYrb0dJK28zZkoxQzgvUT09>

**Present:**

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Start</b>	<b>Term Ending</b>	<b>Present</b>
<b>Amy Tharrington</b> Start: July 1, 2016	Member	July 1, 2019	June 30, 2022	Yes
<b>Jaclyn Parks</b> Start: April 8, 2019	Member	July 1, 2019	June 30, 2022	Yes
<b>Bill Kroll</b> Start: May 19, 2016	Chair	July 1, 2019	June 30, 2022	Yes
<b>Tracy DeMarco</b> Start: June 15, 2017	Secretary	July 1, 2020	June 30, 2023	Yes
<b>Ashley Hicks</b> Start: June 15, 2017	Member	July 1, 2010	June 30, 2023	Yes
<b>Kim Keith</b> Start: May 25, 2017	Vice-Chair	July 1, 2010	June 30, 2023	Yes
<b>Nick Cerullo</b> Start: March 19, 2018	Member	July 1, 2018	June 30, 2021	Yes
<b>Israa Kanfoud</b> Start: July 12, 2018	Treasurer	July 1, 2018	June 30, 2021	Yes
Start: July 12, 2018	Member	July 1, 2018	June 30, 2021	

**Call to Order:**

**Bill Kroll**

- Bill Kroll called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.
- Mission Statement: Endeavor Charter School’s mission is to engage K-8 students by integrating a challenging, hands-on academic program with multi-faceted fine arts courses in a familial environment.
- Vision 2018: Endeavor Charter School’s vision is a community of educators and families working together to graduate students who are motivated and curious, capable and confident, and prepared to make a positive impact on the world around them.

**Approval of Agenda:**

**Tracy DeMarco**

- Tracy DeMarco moved to approve the February 2, 2021 Agenda. Bill Kroll seconded, and the motion passed unanimously

### **Approval of Minutes:**

- Tracy DeMarco moved to approve the January 5, 2021 Minutes. Bill Kroll seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Foundation Board Update:**

**Michael Reinhardt**

- Michael Reinhardt reported that the Foundation Board met with BCCG last week to work out some issues with designs for the entry. The group came up with a great solution.
- Construction is still scheduled to wrap up before the end of July, leaving plenty of time for the staff to move in to the new building before start of the 2021-2022 school year.
- Finally, Michael reported that construction is complete on the frame for the concrete slabs that form the walls. There will be visible changes to the new building soon.

### **PAWS Update:**

**Allison Blatz**

- Allison Blatz reported that PAWS is getting ready to begin taking orders for 8<sup>th</sup> grade tribute pages in the yearbook.
- PAWS will host the second and final virtual book fair from March 8<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>. PAWS will encourage families to purchase books online.

### **Committee Updates:**

- **Finance Committee**

**Bill Kroll**

- Bill Kroll introduced the latest BCCG for construction expenses related to the expansion and confirmed that the amount is in line with the budgeted projection.
  - Bill Kroll moved to approve payment of \$844,226.55 to BCCG. Ashley Hicks seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- Bill next reported that Molly Blanchard solicited several quotes to paint the bathrooms. The lowest quote was from Triangle Precision Painting (“TPP”), a vendor that the School has used in the past with success. TPP’s quote was more than \$6,000 less the next competitive offer.
  - Bill Kroll moved to approve payment of \$25,960.00 to Triangle Precision Painting. Kim Keith seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- Finally, Bill reported that the January financials are not in yet, but everything looks on track. Charter Success will join the next Finance Committee meeting to advise on budget for next year.

- **Governance Committee**

**Tracy DeMarco**

- Tracy DeMarco reported that the Board received an unusually high number of applications for the open board seat from very qualified applicants. The Governance Committee will be reviewing resumes this week and contacting applicants for interviews to take place before the end of the month.

- **Resource Development Committee**

**Nick Cerullo**

- Nick Cerullo reported that the Resource Development Committee has been working with Lauren Manfreda to plan community engagement activities for the spring. The Committee is considering a spring Fun Run as well as some other events to raise community spirits.

### **Director's Update:**

**Christi Whiteside**

- Christi Whiteside reported that the School held 3 virtual open houses last week, 2 for anyone and 1 specifically for middle school families. All were well-attended.
- There are currently more than 1600 applications for next year.
- The School has been getting painting estimates for classrooms in the current building. Most teachers will be moving rooms and the classes have never been repainted.
- Update on hiring: ECS has hired 3 new curriculum coordinators, a 3rd grade math and sci/ss teacher, a 7th SS, an 8th SS, a 3-5 EC, a PE teacher/recess coordinator, a 6th grade reading, and a TA.
  - There are still several positions available, so we hope everyone will help spread the word.
  - In reviewing the 100% Social Worker position, and the admin team has realized that the School would be better served by having a 50% Social Worker and a 50% MTSS Coordinator. Christi asked whether the Board approve of that change. Members expressed agreement with the proposal.
- Christi next reported an update to the ECS Beginning Teacher Program policy to reflect changes required of the State Board of Education. The two significant changes are moving to the state evaluation tool rather than just our school developed tool and a requirement for BTs to complete a survey at the end of each BT year. Tracy DeMarco, Kim Keith, and Bill Kroll reviewed the revised policy in advance of the meeting, and the Board did not have any questions.
  - **Tracy DeMarco moved to approve the Beginning Teacher Program Policy. Nick Cerullo seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**
- Finally, Christi shared the proposed 2021-22 ECS school calendar. Of note, third quarter will end and fourth quarter will begin *before* the April track out. This is a departure from the School's normal calendar caused by a later-than-usual spring break. ECS has committed to matching WCPSS's spring break—which will take place in mid rather than early April in 2022—to accommodate families with children in both systems. The Board indicated it had no objection to the calendar. No vote was taken as the school calendar does not require Board approval.

### **Re-Opening Committee Update:**

**Kim Keith**

- Bill Kroll began by acknowledging the press conference held by Governor Cooper and Secretary Cohen earlier in the day on the topic of school re-opening. At the briefing and in a letter addressed to school board members and superintendents state-wide, Governor Cooper strongly urged all public schools to provide in-person instruction using the safety protocols outlined in the NC Strong Schools Toolkit. He noted that “[i]n person learning is fundamental to children’s development and well-being” and that the CDC recently cited North Carolina as “an example that schools can reopen safely when they follow specific COVID-19 mitigation strategies even during periods of high community transmission.” A copy of Governor Cooper’s letter is attached to these minutes as Exhibit A.
  - In addition, Dr. Cohen announced an update to the Strong Schools Toolkit. New language urges that students “should return to in-person instruction five days per week to the fullest extent possible while following all public health protocols in the Strong Schools Toolkit.”
- Kim Keith next shared a reminder of the phased reopening plan ECS has been following. She recounted that the School began the 2020-2021 school year with all students remote, and began bringing students back to the school in September, beginning with our youngest

learners. Face-to-face learning (whether in-person or remote) took place in an abbreviated schedule (8:30-12:00) to that students would not need to eat lunch on campus.<sup>1</sup> By November, students in all grades were given the opportunity for in-person learning, with some grades attending every day on Plan A, while others remained on an A/B week schedule in Plan B. In late October, Bill asked Kim, Amy Tharrington, Ashley Hicks, and Christi Whiteside to form a Re-Opening Committee and to identify staff and teachers to serve on the committee alongside them. The purpose of the Committee was to come up with a plan for further re-opening within the parameters of the Board's stated goal: to return as many students to campus as possible using the safety measures outlined in the Strong Schools Toolkit.

- After frequent meetings, the Committee came up with a great plan for second semester, which the Board approved. All elementary students electing in-person learning would return to school every day on Plan A with desks spaced 3 feet apart. Middle School students would continue on a hybrid A/B week schedule in Plan B with 6 feet between desks until the governor relaxed distancing requirements for those grades. From January 3rd to February 17th, the school would run from 8:30-1. Students would eat two snacks, but no lunch on campus. On February 18th, the plan called for the school to move to full days of instruction (8:30-3:15) with one asynchronous day per week. The asynchronous day was intended to give teachers more planning time to address increased work load required to accommodate remote students and supervise classrooms during fine arts. This plan was communicated to staff and parents in December, and the Board voted to approve it.
- Shortly before track out, the Board voted on a slight modification to the plan. The entire school would follow a remote learning plan for the week following track out.
- Now that the teachers have been living the 8:30-1 plan for nearly a month, they have elevated some concerns to the Board.
  - Lunch and Recess.
    - Staff raised a number of concerns about the logistics of lunch and recess, including that students would remove masks while eating and whether there would be sufficient supervision to ensure that safety protocols (including no talking while eating) were followed. Historically, ECS has used parent volunteers to supervise lunch in the classroom. However, to reduce the number of individuals entering the building, the School has hired two lunch monitors who will supervise in-classroom lunches throughout the day. The Committee raised concerns that two monitors would not be sufficient, so the Board has authorized Christi to hire a third lunch monitor to assist.
    - The Committee also raised concerns about recess protocols, including equipment cleaning, keeping students in cohorts, etc. Kim reported that Josh Burt, ECS Athletic Director, will be supervising recess with others and has a plan in place that complies with safety guidance.
    - In short, there is a detailed plan for both lunch and recess, and Christi will be sharing the mechanics of that plan with staff tomorrow.
  - COVID Concerns.
    - The Committee conveyed that the staff remains concerned about transmission levels in the community. Kim acknowledged that while community transmission has been high, there has been no community transmission at ECS to date, and data from the ABC Science Collaborative

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<sup>1</sup> On this schedule, students ate one snack in the classroom.

confirms that spread within schools using the Strong Schools Toolkit has been very significantly lower than rates in the surrounding community. Community – number of cases in community. She also noted that Governor Cooper and Dr. Cohen today reported that case numbers have stabilized and that the rate of child-child transmission and child-adult transmission is very minimal.

- Academic Concerns.
  - The Committee reported a variety of academic concerns, including whether it is developmentally appropriate for K-3 remote students to have a full school day of screen time, whether students will be able to sit without moving around classrooms, whether the new schedule offers any real increase in instructional time given the asynchronous day, etc.
  - Kim noted that many of these concerns are issues more appropriate to be addressed by the administration, and they are working on solutions to many of these issues.
- Kim next explained that the Board has spent many, many hours talking with each other over the past weeks considering all of these issues. She acknowledged the staff who have sent emails, urging the Board to delay the move to a full day of instruction. On the other hand, the Board has also weighed directives from the Governor, State Board of Education, and Superintendent of Public Instruction urging the importance on in-person schooling. Taking all of these perspectives into consideration, the Board has talked about how to maximize instructional time, particularly in light of the Governor's press conference today.
- Ashley Hicks reiterated that the Board has spent countless hours educating themselves about safety, school transmission, instructional issues, etc. However, the common goal among all Board members since this summer has been to get students back in the building as much as possible. She acknowledged that the decision the Board is making tonight will be unpopular to some, but the Board has not come to any decision lightly. Ashley underscored that the critical feedback shared has been heard, debated, and seriously considered.
- Jaclyn Parks noted that there is no easy answer to the issues facing the community right now and acknowledged that teachers have had to reinvent the wheel many times already this school year. She said that this next step forward will provide a consistent schedule for the rest of the school year.
- Nick Cerullo stated that the Board is looking to create a plan moving forward that can create consistency for all of our stakeholders. He thanked the teachers that took the time to write the emails and explain what they are going through.
- Kim Keith noted that in a non-pandemic time period, the Board typically does not involve itself in the day-to-day operations of the School. She noted that the Board has stepped into a place this year that none of us anticipated when we accepted our position on the Board. That said, the Board has to take the input of folks that are on the front line and weigh it against the input of other stakeholders. In particular:
  - Based on the December survey responses, the Board knows that the half-day schedule is not workable for everyone in our community. There are 26 families who prefer in person schooling for their children, but could not accommodate the half-day schedule. Those families are counting on us to take this next step to a full-day schedule.
- Kim next explained the Board's proposal: the School will still move forward with a full-day schedule this quarter. However, instead of making that transition on February 18<sup>th</sup>, the

new schedule will begin on March 1, 2021. The additional week and a half in the current schedule will allow time for the staff to plan for the next change, which is a common request in the communications we've received. In addition, the Board noted that the current schedule does not allow any asynchronous days in fourth quarter. To give teachers needed planning time through the remainder of the year, the Board proposed to space out the asynchronous days through 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. In other words, there will be no consistent asynchronous Wednesday through the remainder of third quarter as originally planned, and those days will be reallocated throughout the remainder of the year to be determined based on Christi's recommendation. The Board is also open to early release days in lieu of asynchronous days, and will defer to Christi and the administration team as to which option is best.

- Additional Planning Concerns.
  - The Board has also spent significant time discussing how to maximize planning time for teachers during regular school days and is urging the School to find a way to hold fine arts classes in person rather than virtually.
  - Bill Kroll noted that the Board also wants the School to look critically at what flexibility students have in the classroom.
  - Tracy DeMarco noted that one of the things Dr. Cohen talked about at the press conference is that there is a lot of leeway in the Strong Schools Toolkit. That document does not mandate that students stay in their seats at all times while in the classroom, and we can figure out ways to work with the guidelines so that we are keeping the school safe, while also allowing some flexibility back into the day.
- Christi Whiteside thanked parents in the community for all they have done this year. She noted that parents have gone above and beyond to give the School flexibility as we navigate these uncharted waters. She also thanked the staff, noting that they would talk about all of these issues further in the staff meeting tomorrow. Christi stated that she believes the School is on the right path, but acknowledged that every step forward has been hard.
  - She underscored that the Board has thought very critically about this next step, and that she agrees it is the right one for the School. Christi noted that she and Sarah Ipock, ECS Nurse, attended the NCDHHS conference for educators before the press conference, as well as one hosted by State Superintendent Catherine Truitt later in the day. She said that both meetings were a very reassuring joint effort. Importantly, she noted that other schools have implemented fewer safety measures than ECS, and their numbers are still incredibly low. For all of those reasons, Christi reiterated her confidence in the next step.
  - Sarah Ipock and I attended DHHS conference before press conference. And I attended one with Catherine Truitt afterwards. It was the most reassuring joint effort. I feel very confident after seeing those numbers today. They were incredibly reassuring. For all of these schools that are doing less than we are, the numbers are incredibly low, and I feel really confident.
- Kim Keith acknowledged and thanked parents. She noted that its very important that parents answer screening questions honestly and keep kids home when they have symptoms. .
  - **Kim Keith moved for the School to continue on the 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. schedule from February 18, 2021 to February 26, 2021; beginning March 1, 2021 the School will move to full-day instruction, 5 days a week, with asynchronous and/or early release days spread throughout 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter on dates to be determined. Bill Kroll seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

**Public Comment:**

- Amanda Ford asked whether middle school students will have to continue on A/B week in the full-day schedule. Bill Kroll responded that middle school must stay on the A/B week schedule until Governor Cooper relaxes the distancing requirements in those grade.
- Another parent asked whether, with the number of student electing in-person vs. remote, the hybrid schedule is necessary. She noted that her daughter had only 4 kids in her class when she first returned to school. Kim Keith responded that the School has been attempting to fill as many seats as possible. There are currently two middle school classes that do not rotate weeks because the numbers allow all to attend school without distancing. However, all other classes must rotate weeks to meet the distancing requirements.

**Closed Session:**

**Board**

BK moved to go to closed session pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a) at 8 p.m.

**Adjournment:**

**Bill Kroll**

Bill Kroll moved the Board to open session at 8:34 and adjourned the meeting at 8:34.