

Environmental Charter School
February Board Meeting
February 17, 2021
6:30 pm-8:00 pm Eastern Time

1. **Call to Order - Meeting commenced at 6:32 PM** (Michael Aronson)
2. **Pledge of Allegiance** (ALL)
3. **Recognition of Guests** - Statement from Board President, Michael Aronson - You know, I'm really incredibly grateful that the ECS community showed up tonight, and I am so happy to see so many passionate parents, staff, teachers, and administrators supporting our school and joining us tonight.
4. **Public Comment - The Board can not comment on personal matters going on within the organization but we understand the emotions going on and we appreciate everyone sharing. Guests are asked to keep comments to a two minute time limit to allow everyone who wants to speak to have a chance. Please see the continued pages for the transcription of the Public Comments and the requested submissions of email statements as well.**
5. **Consent Agenda - Nothing pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion.**

Board Meeting Minutes - January 2021

Financial Reports as of December 2020

- i. Draft Balance Sheets December 2020
- ii. Draft Budget vs. Actual - July 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020
- iii. Draft Income Statement - July 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

Payments over \$500, including credit card transactions over \$500 December 2020 Financial Statements

January 31, 2021 Cash Flow

Quotes/Invoices/Contracts over \$10,000

- i. Connectivity Communications - \$6,007.50
- ii. Connectivity Communications - \$11,471
- iii. Open Literacy - \$16,700
- iv. CDW-G - \$12,980
- v. Glade Run Lutheran Services - approx. \$17,000
- vi. Gateway Engineers - \$77,850 plus potential additional services

Resolution 2022-02-2040: be it resolved by the Board of Trustees of the School, that the Consent Agenda for February 2021 be approved - Motion to approve at 7:05 PM, all in favor and none opposed.

6. **Board Education**

Return to School - Dr. James Doyle)

Summary of students that have returned. Primary Building - we have a total of 286 students within the primary building and of those, 223 which is 78% have opted to return to in person instruction. Intermediate Building - we have a total of 312 students and of those, 242 which is 78% opted to return. Middle school Building - we have 311 students and of those, 189 which is 61%, have opted to return. High school, we have 61 students and of those 41 have opted to return which is 67%. The overall average for in person returning students is about 72%, or 695. Specifically from a facility and building readiness perspective, the hybrid model that we have that will be implemented does allow us to be able to essentially cover an account for all students, but then still maintain both from a student perspective and an adult perspective, six feet of physical distance, and the the requisite barriers and other protections that we have within these spaces. Obviously, we have a mandatory mask requirement throughout the buildings and the facilities, and then all of these spaces and places have been outfitted and insured that airflow and purification is present.

Dr. Amanda Cribbs - We have had a series of parent nights, and our administrators and teachers have been hosting them to answer questions. If you haven't had a chance to join one of those

meetings, they are being recorded, and offered to parents to answer any last minute questions that might come up. To My team, my administrators, my curriculum and professional development team, I just wanted to publicly say that everyone has been doing a great job in preparing and our teachers have been working really hard this week, and prepping and making sure that that transition is smooth for all of our students. We are really excited to see those 72% of our students when they come walking through that door on either a Monday or a Wednesday of next week. We are also going to diligently work for the percentage of families who have chosen to stay home and remain virtual and to make sure that their instructional program is also kept to that high standard. So I did want to let the board know that our teachers and our nurses, our counseling, support staff, cafeteria staff, they're all working really hard to get the building ready from an instructional perspective, as well as just a facility standpoint, and they're just doing a phenomenal job.

7. Other Business

Executive Session - Motion to move into Executive session at 7:11 PM, all in favor and none opposed.

HR/Staffing Monthly Report (James Doyle - COO)

ECS Collective Bargaining Agreement Update

HS Real Estate Update

Motion to close Executive Session at 8:41 PM, all in favor and none opposed.

Adjournment of Trustee Meeting/ Board Committee Meetings - Motion to adjourn at 8:41 PM, all in favor and none opposed.

| Attended Remotely | Did Not Attend |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Michael Aronson Molly Bennett Latonia Cherry Kevin Chung Amanda Cribbs M. Bernardine Dias James Doyle Lisa Elliott Angela Holtzman Dan Kiefer Dwight Laufman Meryl Lazar Jon McCann Sapna Parker Sarah Piot Michelle Resnick Andre Samuel Nikole Sheaffer Ben Witsberger | Daniel Foreman Robert Jones |

Speaker 1 - Hi thank you for having me. I'm a parent. I have a second grader, a fourth grader and kindergartener at ECS. We love it here. We feel so lucky to be a part of this community. We've been amazed by the Virtual Learning Plan and how great that has been. I come tonight with two concerns. One is that the hybrid model felt rolled out really quickly. I didn't, we hadn't even heard about it. And then we got the email and it was signed up in the next two days. And my impression from that and from the way communication has been presented was that that was done in discussion and agreement with teachers. And so I've been very surprised to find out that that's not true, which doesn't mean there's not some teachers who want to be there. But I feel misled by how that information was presented. I am also really concerned with how with what is unfolding with Mr. Williams and I feel like that is not a good model for our kids for how to be a good citizen.

Speaker 2 - Hi, there. Again, thank you for having me. I just would like to echo everything that Lauren said, I feel that the hybrid model was rolled out very, very quickly. Initially, I was given the impression that it was something that all of the stakeholders had had an equal say in. And I was dismayed to find that that wasn't the case, especially when the communications earlier in the year led me to believe that was true. I was extremely concerned to hear about the teachers misgivings, and I am so grateful to them. Because truly right now, I feel like they're the only ones who have been honest and open with me about what is going to happen next week. And I am deeply, deeply shaken and my faith in ECS, over what is happening with Mr. Williams, and I understand you can't comment and respond, I just want you to know that my family is devastated by this decision, and I am begging you, literally begging you to restore my faith in this community. Thank you.

Speaker 3 - I've been at ECS since the day the school opened, as a member of the faculty on my primary reason for wanting to comment here is just to let the easier to, to hopefully, let the ECS community and parents know that there appears to be a unified message coming out from the, from the ECS, Federation of Teachers. And I think that that message, makes it appear that 200, you know, teachers that you trust and trust with yours. So thankfully, trust with your kids every day, think that reopening is a bad idea, among other things, or that it is unsafe. And that is simply not the case. So there's a diverse set of opinions among the teachers. And I think that and I want parents to know that. To my knowledge, there has not been a violation of the mou that the union has agreed on, to my knowledge that there, therefore, therefore, it's, you know, I believe it's safe to return. And I will be returning No, no problem. You know, it's not perfect. Again, just that the mlu. Again, in addition to I don't think that that anything is, I have no knowledge of any violations, even beginning the process in the mru. That is spelled out for teachers if they feel that something is unsafe. So again, I'll be there on Monday. And I you know, I'm looking forward to welcoming students back.

Speaker 4 -I, um, yeah. And I'll try to make this quick. I had something prepared. But I don't know if it's under two minutes. We've been at ECS for six years, with children and some in fourth. I'm not here to talk directly about Mr. Williams, other than to say that we've never had a bad teacher at ECS. But Mr. Williams shines. I'm also not here to argue for against reopening school because I know that it's not an easy decision. And I don't know that I have any pertinent data. But I am interested in voicing how I feel like we as community have been let down. Mr. Williams has displayed immense courage speaking out on behalf of not only himself but other teachers with similar misgivings. And I understand that this is not a solid, every teacher feels

this way. But um, I I feel that he was probably speaking out for teachers that maybe felt that they weren't able to voice their concerns. And it seems to me and I think it seems to a lot of other parents that his suspension is an act of retribution and response to what we would consider an act of bravery and possibly driven by business concerns with ECS. I'm really dismayed by the handling of this incident, if you like ECS should have worked harder to address the concerns of teachers in the development of the reopening plan, and should have communicated these concerns to students and their families. Because my perception is that it's a very one sided presentation that everything is is going to be up Pretty good. Um, and and i don't think that they shared the concerns that that other people had. If there are external pressures forcing ECS to open early, especially compared, for example, PPS, which, as far as I know, isn't until April, I feel like you see, I should have communicated these pressures better to our family. Um, I feel like the abortion, that that ECS should have communicated more clearly, about this manner before it was mentioned and then silenced last night in the meeting, especially given the fact that I think that there were people there that were probably able to make comments instead of just ending the meeting really quickly. Um, and finally, and worst of all, if this is a case of retribution against the teacher who is speaking up about their concerns, I think that's absolutely unacceptable. Not the kind of behavior we expect from ACS, as an organization sets a bad example for our children. And it sets a precedent that will make other teachers afraid to voice their concerns. it directly opposes the core values that we see in ECS motto, punishing a teacher who has shown character and commitment, and severely damaging the trust needed in order to collaborate. And, yeah, I think that this has really ruined a lot of the trust that the parents have had in the easiest administration. And I don't think that we're gonna see our faith restored, until the entire incident has been investigated and communicated to satisfaction of everyone involved, including Mr. Williams, and apparently ECS students.

Speaker 5 - I'm here, just to support Mr. Williams. And it seems like our family group is really, really hoping that all the administration and board will consider the concerns that he had the amazing education that he provides for our kids, and that this is a really, really hard time for them, and would be a really, really bad, bad time to lose him as their trusted adult and coach and teacher. And I actually, I think that ECS has done a really great job. With opening, I support it. Um, of course, I don't know anything behind the scenes. But I just hope that we can support the educators. However, they feel as much as we can, from home in whatever ways we can.

Speaker 6 - Hi, thank you. My name is Molly Latina, I am a parent of a child and Mr. Williams class in 4d. And the perspective I wanted to offer was as the parent whose child has been back in person since November, early December, I can't remember exactly when it's a bit of a blur. It was, um, it was a heart wrenching and awful decision to have to even go through the process because I felt that she was in danger at home, and also in danger at school. And that ECS did a very good job of providing me with as much information as they could, as much information as there was. And in imperfect and terrible reality, we had to make an imperfect and terrible decision and went back and forth between regretting it and feeling guilt at risking the health and safety of my daughter's aid. And the other teachers who were asked to be or I don't know, whether it was a requirement or an ask to be in the building with her. And having gone through that process, I just I can't even imagine what it is like for the educators now going through the process to come back and be at a level of exposure that is so much higher than when a very small number of children were brought back into the building. At the end of the fall. When that very small number of children were brought back in the building at the end of the fall. There was

there was a sense of relief at home that my daughter had access to what she needed. But also it severely heightened and escalated the sense of, of unhappy I mean just just feeling bad about the position that being a member of an educational community, you know, was doing to other people through no real Have any one's own. And so it was very, it's, it's been a challenging time. And so I was, I was struck by the things that I was hearing, my teacher and my daughter's teacher talk about of how we make informed decisions. And, you know, we only have the information that we have. And so one of the things that I feel that I need as a parent, in order to feel that my daughter is safe to continue being in the in the building, which she utterly needs is, is more information I need, I need some more details in there, they just haven't.

Speaker 7 - I want to thank you guys for the ability to be able to express my concern. While I do sympathize with the persons that be that had to make the decision for us to come back to school early, I do think it was a bit premature. And as a result, we do have the situation that we have where, you know, a teacher expressed their concerns, their fear that many of us have, just with our day to day life. So I can only imagine going, coming back to work, and not fully being prepared or knowing what the outcome is going to be. So I just would like everybody to remember that, you know, when decisions are made at such a rapid rate so quickly, although we think that there's they're well, they're well thought out, you know, the impact is, is that we have a teacher here, Mr. Williams, who wasn't able to voice his concerns, I think he did a great job at, you know, stating the expectations for the school, the children, reminding them, educating them on what the changes were going to be. And, you know, I hope this wasn't him being penalized because of it. But, you know, I, I certainly hope that we can correct this, I will say that I'm really, you know, grateful for the group and the collectiveness the parents have displayed with, you know, expressing their support of him. But I just think that we can do better. And I think that, you know, sometimes we we just need to slow down and really think about the impact that's going to have on everybody and allow them the ability to be able to afford 60 seconds. But that being said, Thank you

Speaker 8 - I'm Josh raulerson. My daughter Annelise is in 4D Mr. Williams's class. My older daughter Gretta had him before that. So we're well acquainted with Mr. Williams. I recognize there's diversity of opinions, you know, among faculty among families, and they're very good reasons for all that, and I respect where everybody is coming from. And for my family's part, where, you know, we're still figuring it out. To that end, I really appreciated the insight shared by Mr. Williams and his colleagues the other night on the parent meeting. It was quite eye opening to me, it's changed my thinking. And, you know, I guess, I feel like I have to confess, like, I have not been a very involved parent in this community. I've not participated in many meetings. And that's on me. But the reason for it is because I have felt, you know, in my complacency, really confident that ECS is led by capable, caring, thoughtful people who share the same values as me. And this has really made me question that it is so surreal, to have to stand up and defend mark williams of all people, I'm honest to God, one of the most extraordinary teachers I've ever had the privilege of watching work. And by the way, a lot of us have had ample opportunity to get to know our teachers, just by being round this past year. And we see the philosophy at work, we see the talent and the commitment and the compassion and love. And it's made maybe not obvious to people that don't get to have that experience. But it's, it is profound. And I think our faculty deserve better. Again, I don't even want to register an opinion one way or the other on the merits of the route the plans to return in school instruction, but I think there had to have been a better way to deal with this situation. Whatever the details may have been, and I'm

looking forward to learning more about it, but very disappointed, very frustrated. Thanks for listening.

Speaker 9 - Hi, oh, my family has had children at ECS, since the very beginning, the very opening of this call. And we, throughout all these years have felt that our children were in good hands, because there was a precious capital in terms of teachers. And we are sending our daughter back next week. Now, at this point, we are more concerned, however, about the how of certain decisions than about the content of those decisions. I said that ECS is incredibly rich, in terms of that as a basic asset that teachers are. I am also convinced that it could make way more with those precious resources, if it didn't have an administrative leadership that perhaps has proved just brilliant, brilliant and consistently brilliant at managing that resource, actually, we could see that sometimes we feel that we should be thankful to our teachers for being able to deliver so much in spite of the mistake of their super some of their supervisors. But what makes it more irritating is that after hearing so much rhetoric, about values, and diversity, et cetera, et cetera, we start to think that there may be too much hypocrisy going on. In my house, we have a joke that the motto of the school should be, we grow critical citizens, but not in our garden. Or we like critical people, as long as they remain quiet. You know, an institution that claims to

Speaker 10 - Hi, my name is Kevin. I'm the PCO Board Rep. But I'm not speaking in that capacity. The PCO is Switzerland, as far as everything goes, they're just listening. I'm just speaking as a parent. And I think that what a number of people have started to say, but ran out of time is that it seems to go against the core values of ECS. That, that we say that we believe in equal literate science based informed decisions and engaged citizenry. But that there sometimes seems to be a lack of forum for that disagreement, but that citizenry and when that engagement seems to rub up against certain other opinions, that there at least leads to some strife. And in, as an example this like, we can look at the Facebook page, which is getting really ugly. I would love to see a way where people can engage civilly and profile where there's a forum where people can engage in, in democratic fashion, hear one another and engage not just because it statistically always leads to better decisions, which does. That's the idea of democracy is that you get two very opposing decisions. And by listening to one another, a third way comes that strictly superior to either individual, but also because it's the value of the school. They teach their children if teachers, the faculty, teach the staff on how to how to move forward, I would love to see some type of system or some type of way that this can be engaged more accurately. I have tried to have a seat at every time Every table, I understand that the reopening was a very, very complex issue. I was in quite a lot of the conversations around it. And so I appreciate that it was that complex issue. I appreciate the thoughtfulness with which it's around this, this bit of citizenry, this bit of disagreements that I have trouble With.

Speaker 11 - Hi, I'm a parent of two kids to ECS. And we've been there for only two years now. But we love the school. And we love the teaching that Mr. Williams provides to our son in grade four. However, in this week, I've become really frustrated. And I think that the reason that I'm frustrated is that there's a lack of communication at all levels, whether that be between the parents, and the teachers, the teachers and the building managers or the building principals. And then with the home office, from the meeting last night that I attended, I heard a rumor that Mr. Williams was suspended. I didn't know what to tell my son and whether or not he would see Mr. Williams in math today. And it wasn't until in the middle of the morning, that we received an email telling us that Mr. Williams was suspended. And I think that that shows you right away that

there's a problem with communication, especially because in home base, earlier than that email went out. The teachers were having difficulty expressing to the children, what they could say and what they should say in regards to that. I also feel that what's been lost in this lack of communication is all of the success that that schools have had in the greater Pittsburgh area in opening for in person school, whether it be in Mount Lebanon, or Fox Chapel, or even some of the private schools here, I don't think that there's been any infections, and it's proved to be a safe model. And that information is not getting out into the community. And I think that would help relieve some of a lot of the fears. And in addition, if I had to guess these communications are really weak because there's something structural that ECS doesn't want us to know about whether it be that the buildings can't hold more children's, we have to do this quick in person two days a week thing, or something else, that they're not communicating with us, the parents and the stakeholders with our children in the building. Thank you.

Speaker 12 - Hi, thanks. I'm here as a fourth grade parent. You also may know me as a second grade teacher. And you may also know me as an ECS union rep. And I actually would like to stick to the fourth grade parent part a little bit more than anything else, because I don't want to unfairly represent my union membership in any way or act as if I'm speaking for them. In fact, so much so that I would like to read a statement from a fellow fourth grade parent. This is her words, and she did submit it to the public record for this meeting tonight. But it's so strongly echoed my own feelings as a parent, just a parent, that I wanted to read her words tonight, because I thought that they should be spoken aloud. ECS frequently boasts about raising citizens. For many families, Mark Williams embodies exactly the kind of citizen we send our kids to ECS hoping that they become Mark Williams is a role model. He is a role model to his students, and he is a role model for many, many ECS families as well. I strive to be a better, gentler and more positive parent directly from Mr. Williams example, to send students the message that Mr. Williams actions are wrong is incomprehensible. Mr. Williams has made the difficult choice to stand up for what he believes is right. And he has made it a choice to speak out of a sense of duty to the vulnerable. If the administration views his actions as egregious, then sadly, it is the administration that is out of alignment with ECS values, not the other way around. I can't emphasize emphasize strongly enough, the administrators who made this decision are working as antagonists to ECS's mission and core values. The board needs to take this seriously and reflect on this as ECS has grown. Have some administrators lost sight of the core values that brought this community together in the first place. Many families want to see ECS stay true to its values and want to see administrators display even greater commitment to these values. The events in our country over the last four years have made the significance of the education we are striving for clearer than ever, we must hold our administration to a higher ethical standard, the pandemic is a difficult time for every single person, it has certainly been strenuous and painful for students.