

## BOT Meeting Thursday July 11, 2024 Minutes

Board Members in Attendance: Jim Sander, Robert Ansbro, Christopher Brignola, Sean Blackwell, Ted Hurwitz (Ex-Officio)

Administrators in attendance: Norma Hurwitz, Eddie Kubina

Not in attendance: Lucas Doe

Guests in Attendance: Ted Francavilla

Meeting Called to Order by Jim Sander 6:40pm

### I. Approval of Minutes

Robert motioned to approve the minutes, Jim seconds, all in favor

### II. Nomination of New Board Member

- A new board member was nominated by Robert Ansbro, Ted Francavilla. His resume was sent for review and in one month a vote will take place on August 29th to determine if he will become a board member. Robert has known him for some time, knew he was retired, and felt he would make a good addition to the board. He is impressed by his qualifications. He hopes he will be added to the board. Jim seconded the nomination.
- Ted Francavilla feels if Robert is part of the board, then it is worth joining. He had a meeting with Ted and Norma about the school. The school has impressive results. He is interested in being part of the board because it is a good cause. It is important to provide children with a good education. He would like to add value to the school. The timing is good because he was a member of the board for the American Foundation for the Blind for 12 years. He is moving away from this and now has some free time so he would like to be part of this board to keep busy with a good cause. He researched our finances and sees that they are in good shape. He would like to see if he could help with marketing to help get enrollment up. He is happy to answer any questions.
- Ted Hurwitz states he is very impressed with the qualifications of Ted Francavilla.
- Jim states that we could certainly use help recruiting staff and students. If Ted has any ideas to share they are certainly welcome. He states that Ted would be a fine asset to the school.
- Norma states that it is welcome to have someone of broad knowledge. We already have a person with a finance background, but it is good to have someone else who can add to the existing knowledge base. It is nice to have someone who is genuinely interested in helping the school and does not have a separate agenda in mind.
- Ted Francavilla states our finances are in good shape. He worked at a college with a marketing and enrollment program. He wants to know if we have looked carefully at the new expenses of our new building and if we will still be able to have a surplus.

- Norma states we will not likely have a surplus, but we will be able to stay on budget. We have staff and we have money that is still coming in. We will be fine for the coming year since we projected higher expenditures and will not likely use the full amount. Recruitment of students is paramount for us right now. We are looking for around three new staff members. We also have put in our high school proposal and would like to be optimistic about the decision.
- Our school has an accountant that works for us and he is sure we will be fine and not have to go into our savings.

### III. Extended Year Summer Program

- The program is going well. Our students are happy to be in school. Attendance has been good and we have gained more students since it started. The kindergarten students are happy and enjoying being in our school. The middle school students are practicing plays and singing songs as part of the program and are enjoying it. We are transitioning to a more process based program and so far it has been going well.
- We have Bloomberg dollars to pay for the summer program.
- Recruitment has been effective. The brand new building will be a centerpiece, we will look to hold events there in order to attract families. The end of August when we come back for PD we will look to have parents come in. Norma is optimistic that we will attract new students. She is optimistic about the high school so we can retain students rather than letting them go.
- Robert is happy to hear that recruitment seems to be more optimistic. He feels more comfortable with the direction things are moving.

### IV. Education

- Paola Coste has been helping with the refinement of our practice. We are not a scripted school so it is a bit challenging for the teachers. The longer day has teachers teaching more anthologies and novels. We understand that our teachers are being asked to do what most of the networks do not do. They tend to have a scripted curriculum, one of the advantages is that the administration controls what goes on in the classroom. A complaint is that they are too militaristic and the inquiry that is essential to have a good education is not present. The pacing needs to be a little tighter and it needs to be more organized for teachers to follow. Several teachers will assist with the implementation of the PD. Paola Coste will be helpful having taught in both elementary and middle school. Adam Berg and Adam W will also assist with the development of staff. Pacing calendars need to be more crisp and clear. Most teachers have taught their grade level for many years, however some have developed poor habits that are not helping with ELA and Math. Eddie who has always done well with math will be leading Math. Paola will be leading science. Adam W will be doing social studies. Adam Berg will be handling literacy. We are trying to tighten everything up by the end of the school year and relate it to the result. The scores that we see in the six week assessments will help us analyze everything. Some of our exams have been too challenging and not really measuring the students' abilities. We are going to avoid running the curriculum without having students well invested. We want to see the six week assessments more closely aligned to what

students are learning and have the instructional program settled down and more experiential. Norma does not want to give up our freer way where teachers are able to have thoughts and opinions. Jim is glad that we are always looking to improve even if our results have been good in the past. Anything that can help our teachers do the best job they can is worthwhile.

- In the K-2 program we do have testing that can measure growth. If tests are aligned to what students are learning, it is an easy way to measure their progress.
- Chris wants to know if we adapted any universal screeners such as NWEA. There are programs that assess more specific things. Math is done 3 times every half year. Teachers can measure trends. HMH uses their own diagnostic programs. We could use their math growth measure to track student progress. Chris strongly recommends using a math program. For upper grades, math 180 and for lower grades, Illustrative math. He does not focus much on ELA. Wants to know if we got our June instructional report yet, so he can do a calculation to show where we are. He mentioned the importance of theory of action and progress monitoring. He asked how staff monitors progress. NWEA should be taken 5-6 times a year. It can be used as a benchmark. Teachers need to make plans on how they will then address the issues. We can look at trends for the grades. We might be over testing. We have to build mapping and curriculum around assessments. We need to see if students are mastering strands. It is good for teachers to see what is being mastered and what the areas of weakness are. The assessment will help teachers. Test prep books are not the best. A better book needs to be used for the curriculum for the lower grades.
- Jim states we need to focus on getting results for the children.
- Book 2 results were good for ELA in all grades with the exception of 6th grade. 6th and 4th grade struggled with math. There is optimism for 4th grade however, as many book 2 scores were just below 70%.
- Chris adds that not all classes need to follow the same curriculum. Some students can follow a more remedial program. Differentiation should take place. We would benefit from assessment monitoring programs.

#### V. Real Estate

- We got the right to occupy the first four floors. The TCO was submitted and they thought it might take about a month. Robert called to ask an associate to try and speed things up. We should be taking over the building. Norma adds that we have staff going into the building. There is a list of things that need to be resolved. It seems to be a recurring conversation. The contractor has about 30 issues that need to be resolved. Norma was a bit discouraged that certain things have not been addressed. Robert would like a copy of the list of items to try to address it. Based on the meeting Norma had, Nina will go over to the building at some point. It seems that mistakes are made between the contractor and architect. We always end up paying for silly mistakes. Norma was a bit upset about these items. Design concerns are more important, however that is not something we get to address directly. We would have liked to be in sooner. Since we do not have the certificate of occupancy we can not get school lunch staff in, we cannot get bus services, or a nurse. We have to purchase an ATS machine. All small items cannot

take place without the certificate of occupancy. Dept. of health provides nurse services, they have been difficult to reach.

VI. Finance

- The bond will not cover the full amount of the new building. The school will need to fund about \$530,000. There would likely be some additional expenditures and it is difficult to tell what the amount will be. The board would need to approve any additional funds that would be needed. Jim proposes that the board votes on approving up to \$1,000,000 of funds to cover final costs of the building. It should be approved since it is outside of the normal budget. Sean states that someone should be involved in looking at the specifics of the budget. The bulk of the overage is going to signature and that can easily spiral out of control if it is not closely watched. The contractors are likely to ask for overages due to extended timelines. There should be a line by line breakdown to see why there is such a large amount for the overage. Everyone is in agreement that Sean makes a good point and we should really have a more detailed report on why we are paying extra.
- Norma states that a mechanical engineer made mistakes and then we were being charged to fix them. Norma is upset that the contractor made decisions that were not approved and we are now responsible for correcting them. Sean states there needs to be documentation and then a claim can be filed against their mistakes. It can become expensive to go that route. It needs to be documented that items were not signed off on. David can be of assistance with the items that have not been done to code. Sean is happy to take part in a meeting with David and the contractors to provide clarity.

Meeting adjourned at 8:13pm