

APPROVED BOARD MINUTES

ASD Board Meeting December 14, 2011 @ 6:42 p.m.

Board Members Present: William Bonner, Matt Collins, Jack Donovan, Thomas Frischknecht, Kent Glossop, Idina Holden, Patty Humphrey, Brandon Jackson, Heather MacDonald and Michael White.

Board Members Absent: Karen Graham and Kimberly Lavallee

The meeting was called to order at 6:43 p.m.

1. Public Comments

Mr. Joel Preminger asked why the Board members were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement in the last meeting, especially as the law indicates which information is private. After discussion among the Board members and with Mr. Preminger, Mr. Jackson asked that the minutes state clearly that the agreement is a reaffirmation of the legal commitments that Board members already have, and it does not represent any additional private information over and above what is covered by the RSA. Mr. Jackson also asked that the agreement be made available to the public who may want to see it.

Students Andrew Slebodnick and Dominique Dadelion asked whether there would be an opportunity for a student Board member to be added. They stated it would benefit both the Board and the Student Council to have a closer connection. Mr. Glossop and Ms. MacDonald explained there is such a policy in place (BBBF) and asked the students to research the policy and discuss with the Student Council to determine how they would like to elect their representative. They were invited to return to the next Board meeting to review the results.

Student Robert Glossop requested an exemption of either one or two years of foreign language credit so he could be allowed to graduate this year instead of next year. He has completed almost all the graduation requirements for ASD except for foreign language, and any courses he took next year would have to be at a community college. He has three years remaining of foreign language despite multiple attempts. He plans to complete one year of Spanish credit this semester and take a second year of Rosetta Stone over the summer.

Ms. Jennifer Cava said that ASD should support Bobby's growth as an individual to grow and go to college, and, on the other hand, she expressed her concern for setting a precedent of releasing a student from a requirement.

Mr. Bonner noted that programming languages have been used as a language at other schools.

Ms. Humphrey suggested that Robert could use the year to do independent study and take time to grow up and enjoy life. Robert answered that he hasn't had time to focus on the stuff that does interest him, such as computing and programming, which he could do in college more fully. Ms. Humphrey asked why this is a Board decision. Mr. Glossop answered that the graduation requirements are spelled out in the charter and any exception would have to be authorized by the Board.

Mr. Jackson asked if Robert has three years of programming experience. Robert answered that he has learned the grammar and syntax for at least three

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different programming languages. This has been one year of C++, one year of Visual Basic and short course work in C and Java as well.

Ms. MacDonald asked if the colleges have language entrance requirements. Robert answered that some of the colleges require two years of language, which is why he would take more this summer. Robert would need to know this month of the Board's decision.

Mr. Donovan recommended that a programming language could be used in place of one year's credit. Mr. White agreed and suggested that the Board set in stone that we could be flexible about what constitutes the equivalent of a 3rd year of coursework, but that we require two years of foreign language. Ms. Cava mentioned that we review the New Hampshire Scholars program, which is a slightly more rigorous curriculum, which all of our students satisfy by meeting our graduation requirements.

Mr. White moved that the Board authorize the Director to investigate the remaining details and decide whether to grant the exception with the full authority of the Board. Mr. Bonner seconded. All voted in favor.

2. Approval of Board Minutes from the Prior Meeting

Ms. Holden moved to approve the minutes from the November 16 meeting. Mr. White seconded. All voted in favor.

3. Items of Board Business

a. Board Chairman

- Confidentiality Agreement: Agreements have not been signed by Mr. Donovan, Ms. Holden, Mr. Glossop and Ms. Humphrey. These members will follow up after the meeting.
- Jim Hochberg resigned from the Board effective today due to continuing conflicts with his work schedule.
- Employment Benefits: Mr. Collins has been working to bring in professionals to explain to the board about Benefits that could be put in place to improve the recruiting and retaining of the school's employees. He introduced Ketler Bosse from New York Life and Neil Tullis from Third Party Administrators.

Mr. Bosse explained that they could work together to set up a defined contribution plan for the school. New York Life could set up the plan and take care of the servicing. Third Party Administrators would take care of the administration of the plan. Third Party Administrators would sit down with a committee from the school to figure out how best to design a plan to work within the regulations. New York Life would work with the employees and the investments. Mr. Bosse can offer investments from companies other than New York Life.

Ms. Holden asked Mr. Myers and Ms. Cava to see whether there are specific brand names that would be more important to the faculty than others. Mr. Jackson asked for faculty feedback on the option of a 401(k) vs. a 403(b) type plan.

Mr. White reminded the Board that ASD is a start-up non-profit contemplating an expensive move. Mr. Tullis explained that 11-40

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employees would cost around \$2,300/year for administration. Employees would contact Mr. Bosse's office for advice and annual investment reviews.

Mr. Frischknecht asked that the Personnel Committee take this question on for review.

b. *Board Treasurer.*

- Audits. Mr. White updated the Board that the contracted accountant, Ms. Nancy Chabot, has confirmed that we are now ready for the audits to take place, however Mr. White has not been able to identify an accounting firm to take on the audit. He and Ms. Chabot had identified one highly recommended contact, but then found that the school is a section 115 quasi-governmental agency instead of a 501(c)(3) organization. The contact felt she was not qualified to perform the audit on a section 115. Ms. Chabot is investigating with an expert the true difference between section 115 and 501(c)(3) for audit purposes.

Ms. MacDonald asked whether the first audit was done correctly and if the auditor knew that we were a 115. Mr. White said the first audit was signed off by a CPA firm. He suspects that at the end the process would not have been any different.

Mr. Glossop asked about the deadline for the audit. Mr. Frischknecht explained that the charter documents have to be submitted by end of February and should include five years of audits. Mr. Frischknecht already disclosed to the DOE that the audits have not been done and the school is reconstructing accounting, and he suspects that we could ask for an extension.

Mr. Glossop suggested asking the Charter Office for an extension. Mr. White agreed. Ms. Cava will ask whether an exception would be available for the audits only and share the outcome with Mr. White. Ms. Cava will also ask other charter schools who they have used in the past.

Mr. Glossop explained that the school consciously chose not to be a 501(c)(3) several years ago, and he suggested that we consider in the spring whether we would like to pursue that affiliation. Mr. Frischnecht assigned that question to Strategic Planning Committee. Mr. Preminger asked what affiliation other charter schools have. Ms. Cava answered that she could only find one other charter school that is a 501(c)(3). For most things it does not matter, but there are some donor groups that insist the school be a 501(c)(3). Ms. Humphrey said that she has confirmed in the past that donations to this school are tax-deductible.

- Budget. Ms. Kim Harmon, Business Manager, presented the budget for the current year. Overall, Ms. Harmon is projecting a \$56k deficit, not including revenue projected from the Annual Fund Drive and not including expenses associated with relocation. Mr. White added that Ms. Harmon has been doing a great job of looking at some of the accounts and controlling expenses, especially in the areas of certain vendor expenses. Mr. White also explained that \$56k deficit is not large on a \$1M budget, so it should not be a cause of concern for salaries being paid.

So far, \$12,995 has been pledged for the Annual Fund, and \$12,495 has been received. Last year the letter went out several weeks earlier. The letter

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competed with the toy drive and food drive as well. Mr. White thanked Ms. Harmon for her hard work in preparing this budget and that every day she is doing forensic work and working to make the school more efficient.

4. **Acting Director's Report**

- a. *Faculty Board Position* – Ms. Cava facilitated an election for a faculty board position as requested at the last meeting. Six faculty members stepped forward for the available position, and Mr. Andrew Myers was elected to the position. He teaches Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science and Behavioral Ecology. This is his first teaching position. Mr. Myers thanked the Board for creating the position. He said he sees his role as primarily listening and disseminating information to the faculty. He may also bring questions and suggestions from the faculty to the Board.
- b. *Quarterly Report*. We will be moving to monthly financial reporting instead of quarterly to ensure appropriate monitoring. Ms. Cava asked for suggestions on encouraging donations to the Annual Fund. Several Board members asked Ms. Cava to send out a follow up request in the next several days reiterating that the contribution is tax-deductible.
- c. *Dissemination Grant*. Ms. Cava learned that \$25,000 of the grant has been allocated to our school to help a new charter school get started. Funds have been allocated to individuals named in the grant to pay their salary as they help the new school get started. We have some work to do to be in compliance with that grant. Ms. Cava is putting together a program that will meet the needs of the new school that is being created. They are interested in competencies and we would provide guidance over the course of the year. Ms. Humphrey reminded Ms. Cava that Matt Southerton wrote the grant and can help her understand how to comply. Mr. Jim Overman remembered speaking to Mr. Chauvette about the grant when it first came in about how the money would be spent. Mr. Frischknecht asked that Ms. Cava get to the bottom of the obligations related to this grant.
- d. *Events*. Tomorrow night is an open house for prospective students. To date the school has 92 applicants, including the 58 prospective students grandfathered from last year. The Open House will include a tour of the school and speeches by Ms. Cava, Ms. Angela Overman and Ms. Lavallee.

Through a donation from ASDEF there is a holiday celebration for the teachers on Dec 22.

Food drive was very successful and in the newspaper. We are in the midst of the toy drive – we have over 200 toys toward a goal of 400 toys, along with donations of cash.

A 7th grader received recognition for achieving a perfect SAT score in Math.

ASD 8th graders took 1st place championship in the First Lego League Championships. ASD students were also on the team that took 2nd and 18th places.

5. **Committee Reports**

- a. *Curriculum*: Will start meetings as of January. There are several immediate issues to be addressed such as those raised by Robert Glossop today.
- b. *Policy*: The Policy Committee presented a new policy (JH) on attendance and truancy, created at the request of the administration and based on a new template provided by the state.

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The Board discussed the implications of the policy for family vacations. Ms. Cava explained the difficulties for a teacher to accommodate an absent student.

Ms. Humphrey asked if one could forgive every student in the school a certain number of assignments in the class, then a student going on a short trip would not have to do the work. Ms. Cava agreed that would be a choice available to the teacher. Mr. Myers expressed concern that such a policy could be troublesome as many of the assignments are cumulative.

Ms. MacDonald emphasized that the policy is to set expectations, where we expect that students should normally be in the school and should do the work.

Mr. Jackson expressed concern about the phrase “as if they were in attendance” and suggested “in a timely manner” to provide more flexibility. Ms. MacDonald explained that it was getting at the teacher not having to reteach the material just to that student because he/she was not in class. Mr. Glossop reminded the Board that the teachers would always have flexibility to delay the due date for an assignment. Mr. White suggested instead “extensive supplemental instruction would not be provided.”

Ms. Jill Cane explained that the school is based on mastery – if a student can demonstrate mastery without doing the work, then it should be acceptable. Ms. Cane also talked about the school’s policy on homework and assignments, which is a different issue for the administration and faculty to hash out.

Mr. Frischknecht suggested sending the policy back to the Policy Committee for additional review and to bring back for the next Board meeting. Board members are asked to send comments to the committee chair.

- c. *Personnel* – No update.
- d. *Outreach*: Mr. Collins said that the Food Drive was very successful and students and parents did a wonderful job. We are doing a Toy Drive in December, shooting for 400 toys, split between Toys for Tots and a hospital for children in Nashua. These drives highlight the students’ participation in community service. Mr. Collins encouraged Board members to provide donations of money or toys for the drive. The hospital will take pictures of how the toys benefit their patients and will send these back to the school for the students. December 22 is the last day for donations. The toys will go to Toys for Tots on Dec 22 and to the hospital on either the 22nd or 23rd.

Mr. Collins has invited a special guest from TD Bank for next Board meeting to review an idea to help raise money.

Ms. Cava thanked Mr. Collins for his very generous donations to the toy and food drive and for his participation in incentive days for kids.

- e. *Strategic Planning and Finance*: The committee looked at several new locations and will look at some next week as well with an eye to size, location and cost. The committee plans to present a recommendation to the Board in January.
6. Mr. Glossop asked for status on the Director search. Mr. Frischknecht explained that the search cannot begin until the Board understands the budget. Ms. Holden asked that we move ahead with setting up the committee. Mr. Frischknecht requested that this committee be formed after the next Strategic Planning and Finance Committee meeting (scheduled for January 4).

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7. The next Board meeting will cover improving communications, facilities and budget.
The next meeting will be January 11 at 6:30 p.m.

The Board meeting adjourned at 8:53.

Respectfully submitted,

Idina Holden
Secretary