

RISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

August 15, 2022

Virtual Meeting

Narrative Mission Statement:

What is the purpose of the school?

“...The Rising Tide Charter School provides students with community-based education each day, using the Town of Plymouth as a local yet dynamic textbook which will provide fertile ground for the development of higher-order thinking skills.”

Leadership and Governance:

“In accordance with MA Charter School Law, the Board of Trustees is ultimately accountable for the school’s educational mission, performance and adherence to its Charter.”

Call to Order

Chairman, Chris Schelleng, called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. In attendance were Chris Schelleng, Norm DeCoste, Sean Kelly (joined late), Sandy Kozlowsky, Amy Norris, and Mary Schiess. Also in attendance were Michael O’Keefe, Head of School; Eric Mello, Business Manager; and Maureen Herrmann, Assistant to Head of School.

Guests

None

Meeting Minutes

Attachments/Handouts: July 20, 2022, Board Meeting Minutes; July 28, 2022, Special Board Meeting Minutes

Maureen shared the July 20th Meeting Minutes and July 28th Special Board Meeting Minutes onscreen.

Sandy made a motion to approve the July 20th Board Meeting Minutes. Mary seconded the motion. All voted in favor to approve.

Sean Kelly joined the meeting at 7:08 PM.

Amy made a motion to approve the July 28th Special Board Meeting Minutes. Mary seconded the motion. All voted in favor to approve with the exception of Sandy, who abstained.

New Business

Attachments/Handouts: DESE Charter Renewal PowerPoint Slides

Michael reviewed the MA Charter School Performance Criteria that will be used to assess the School's Charter Renewal package.

After internet interruptions disconnected Amy, she rejoined the meeting at 7:13 PM.

As part of the Charter Renewal process, there will be a site visit conducted on October 24, 2022. The scope of the visit will look closely at Mission and Key Design Elements, Program Delivery – Instruction, Program Delivery – Supports for Diverse Learners, and Governance. These criteria are being evaluated for all Charter Schools at this time.

Old Business

Attachments/Handouts: Updated By-Laws, Rising Tide Charter Public School

At the last meeting, there was a discussion about whether or not we could have the Secretary have a designee. Michael followed up with our attorney who made that adjustment on Page 12.

Sean made a motion to approve the by-laws, but permitting any technical changes as required by the Department to be made before submitting to the Commissioner for approval. Mary seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Financials

Attachments/Handouts: RTCPS Financial Reports for the period ending July 31, 2022

Eric presented the July financial report, which is for the first month of the Fiscal Year. Currently we are in the middle of the audit for last year. We found out that we will need another single grant audit done because we were over the \$750,000 Federal grant limit due to ESSER and lunch program grants.

On the Income side, this budget is based on the preliminary budget approved by the Board in May. Since the preliminary budget was approved, State tuition numbers are coming in, the facilities rate/student was approved, and the Student Opportunity Act is kicking into gear. We do not know yet what towns will be spending over their foundation rates or what our actual enrollment will be. We are under budget by \$3,033.

On the Expense side, we are under spending by \$6,547. Our Net Income against budget is \$3,514. Our cash balances total \$1,672,188 which is lower than normal because the State did not pay the July tuition until August 2nd.

We have budgeted \$135,186 in ESSER III Grant money and will carry \$117,062 into FY24.

For July, State Tuition has been budgeted at an estimated \$958,477, which is 1/12 of our annual amount. Our grants came in at \$30,852. We are not receiving one of the grants from last year because it was a one-time special education grant. On the Expense side, our health and liability insurance is over budget because we paid a big premium up front for the month of July due to changing from Blue Cross to Cigna. We will have a more concrete number for insurance once all staff is onboarded.

Eric hopes to have an updated budget for approval next month once we have more accurate enrollment numbers, tuition, and other pending items.

The Board approved a deficit budget of \$137,102 at the May meeting. Eric and Michael were in discussions with Webster Bank to inform them of why we were planning on a budget deficit year, as well as to look at the bank's financing covenants to make sure we're going to comply. There is a debt to cash flow ratio the bank requires to make sure we have enough money to cover our debt. Because of a boiler replacement last year, one of the covenants came in slightly under where the bank required. The bank is considering removing one time capital purchases which would allow us to stay within the required covenant ratios.

Mary asked about health insurance premiums. The school pays 80% of the premiums as well as the deductible portion (\$2,000/individual and \$4,000/family), which is a big benefit for staff.

Amy made a motion to accept the July financials. Mary seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Board Subcommittees

Strategic Planning – Kathryn Earle (Touchstone Advisors of Cohasset) put together a condensed version of the brainstormed Board and Staff goals from the recent integration meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee and school leadership, which Michael shared onscreen. Chris & Michael detailed each goal for the Board and staff accordingly.

After questions and comments from Mary, Michael confirmed the school has a Native American curriculum component but will be building on it. He also stated that the Foundation Board will be the primary driving force for seeking additional school funding. Over the last several years, we've been trying to set up structures and practices that will live beyond us.

Nominating and Governance – Did not meet.

Finance and Audit – Nothing to add.

Communications and Advocacy – Did not meet.

School Report

There will be no mask mandate/protocols from DESE this year related to COVID. If anyone wants to wear a mask, they can. There will be no required testing programs and no reporting out of cases either. The MA State budget includes money to continue the free lunch and breakfast program that was ending on the Federal level.

Eric has coordinated many facilities improvements this summer including fresh paint, replacement of flooring on stairs in atrium, replacement of some carpet, and replacing four egress doors. After a security audit done in late Spring, traffic patterns are being redone to keep buses on the south side of school and cars on the north side in order to keep the east side of the building free from traffic so that we can use for students.

In addition to the three new school leaders we met, there have been some internal staff changes. Justin Howard has been promoted to the Middle School Dean of Community; Shawna Weekly has had her responsibilities extended and is now the Director of Wellness, Safety & Equity; and Melissa Jackson has been promoted to Data & Assessment Manager. The roles of two long-term teachers have been shifted to help support and lead other teachers – Cindy Favret will be a full-time Humanities Instructional Coach and Teresa Szczepanski will be a part-time (3 days/week) STEM Instructional Coach. We hope to be fully staffed by the end of the week. Teacher turnover was 3 Middle School and about 9-10 Upper School teachers.

We have not been able to secure any overnight community/team building activities for students, but we are setting up other community building stuff for the first few weeks of school. Beth Choiniere has known motivational speaker, Ed Gerety, very well and has organized an event next Monday night for the entire school community.

Enrollment dipped a little for 9th, 10th and 11th grades, so another enrollment period for Upper School grades was opened. So far there are 11 new applicants. There will be an email reminder sent to 8th grade families that withdrew to invite any back that have changed their minds.

Public Comment

None

Other Business

None

Adjourn

Sean made a motion to Adjourn. Sandy seconded the motion. All voted in favor to Adjourn.