

# **RISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL**

## **Minutes**

### **Board of Trustees Meeting**

**March 20, 2023**

*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 7:00 PM. In attendance were Chris Schelleng, Norm DeCoste, Sean Kelly, Sandy Kozlowsky, and Amy Norris. Also in attendance were Michael O’Keefe, Head of School; Eric Mello, Business Manager; and Maureen Herrmann, Assistant to Head of School.

#### **GUESTS**

Marisa Ronan, Parent/Co-Chair, Rising Tide SEPAC  
Lauren Macpherson, Director of Student Support

#### **MEETING MINUTES**

**Attachments/Handouts:** February 27, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes

Sandy made a motion to approve the February Board Meeting Minutes. Sean seconded the motion. All voted in favor to approve.

#### **SEPAC OVERVIEW**

**Attachments/Handouts:** Rising Tide SEPAC Annual Report 2023

Maureen Herrmann shared the Rising Tide SEPAC Annual Report 2023 on screen. Marisa Ronan gave a brief overview on Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (SEPACs). She currently serves as Co-Chair along with Jenna O’Donnell; Maureen Patroliia serves as Secretary. Marisa reviewed the group’s accomplishments to date since she came on in 2021. The group hosted 3 free public virtual presentations last year. They were well attended by parents from Rising Tide as well as from other school districts. The group’s biggest problem is reaching people. They

developed a logo to help avoid confusion with Rising Tide's parent group. Marisa will be stepping down this year, so they are actively recruiting parents to join the group and their Board. They plan to send out a survey before the end of the year to help capture new parents. Marisa will try to locate links of the 3 presentations from last year for posting on Rising Tide's website as well as to include in the Monday Memo.

The group would like the Board to consider a small line item of \$1,500-2,000 in next year's budget, mainly for presentations and for an annual membership to MassPAC (\$500/year). MassPAC conveys many benefits to the SEPAC, including free presentations to members. There was discussion of sharing presentation costs with other charter school SEPACs. Marisa will reach out to one of the leaders at MassPAC about creating a subgroup specifically for charter schools to meet and talk to each other regularly.

## **SCHOOL REPORT**

### **Presentation by Lauren Macpherson**

Lauren reviewed RTCPS student support services, focusing on the Special Education enrollment trends and staffing needs, and how it impacts the budget. The percentage of students needing Special Education services at Rising Tide has increased since expanding the High School in 2014, and now exceeds the statewide average. This may be due to the fact that we are now a regional school and parents unsatisfied with their home district are choosing Rising Tide. Lauren went over Special Education eligibility requirements and legally mandated services, as well as various types of service providers and current staff at Rising Tide. Ideally, the case load would be 15 students/Special Education teacher; if over 20 we would need to think about adding additional staff. Currently we have 10 Special Education teachers along with multiple service providers and adjustment counselors. We have contract service providers for less frequent services such as physical therapy, vision and hearing specialists, etc.

In planning for the 2023-24 School Year, Lauren is looking at incoming IEPs, as well as other support services like 504 plans and English Language Learners (ELLs). The percentage of students on 504 plans are rising but are accommodated by general ed teachers. ELLs are a small but growing population as well; we currently employ 1 ESL teacher. There are 19 incoming students who will need to be screened for English language services.

### **Discipline Data Presentation**

Michael reviewed publicly available discipline data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website from the 2018-19 school year to present, including total number of students in school and number of students disciplined (either in-school or out-of-school suspension), broken down into various categories including students with disabilities, high needs students, male and female students, etc.

During the 2019-20 school year, students were only in school 2/3 of the year. The 2020-21 school year was a hybrid year, with students in school 2X/week for most of the school year. Although discipline percentages were down from the 2018-19 school year in the subsequent 2 years, it is hard to compare since students were not in school full time. After the pandemic, the 2021-22 school year showed a drastic increase in discipline cases, which reflected what was happening on an international level.

For September-March of this year, the trends are going back down, especially with out-of-school suspensions and emergency removals. Michael looked at individual students and found a similar trend for those with disabilities/high needs, but not to the pre-pandemic levels. The team needs to pay attention to this to see how we can make the percentage more equitable. For our next meeting, Michael will evaluate the proportion of discipline instances of high needs group at other schools to see how we compare.

We have a school psychologist and 8 paraprofessionals that are in Lauren's team that are supporting students. Shawna Weekly heads up the Wellness Team that works with each division team on reparative work when kids make mistakes. There are also full-time adjustment counselors in the Upper and Middle Schools. This year we've added a Behavioral Support position to the Wellness Team who does functional behavioral assessments and also teaches wellness classes.

### **Enrollment Update**

Michael presented an active working grid that Melissa Jackson produced showing the planned rollover enrollments per grade, new students enrolling, and potential summer withdrawals, to come to a potential enrollment number of 644 students for next year.

We had a successful Accepted Students Day. In trying to build enrollment, we continued our 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> efforts with a panel of Juniors/Seniors and an alumni panel around Thanksgiving talking to 8<sup>th</sup> graders, as well as connected Middle School with the Upper School students through Arts Night and the Talent Show. Other initiatives include the dual enrollment with Southern NH University. We are also working on a possible partnership with 4Cs (Cape Cod Community College) and their Aviation Maintenance Program. People who run the program came in to talk with students about it; 25-30 students showed interest in the program. Martha Popoloski is also featuring an "Eye on Alumni" section in the Monday Memo showcasing what alumni are doing now.

We will open another enrollment period for the High School grades from early April until mid-May to try and capture those just hearing about the school. We will also open up a period for 5<sup>th</sup> grade because our waiting list is not large and may get exhausted before February 15. A lot of families have called since the lottery looking to get in, perhaps as a result of redistricting of Plymouth elementary schools.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Enrollment Policy Update**

**Attachments/Handouts:** Proposed Updated RTCPS Enrollment Policy

Michael reviewed the evolution of our enrollment policy from the start of the High School until now with regard to admitting 12 grade students. Now that we are offering dual enrollment with SNHU and we have room, the proposed updated enrollment policy has been changed to include admission of 12 grade students.

Sandy made a motion to approve the updated Enrollment Policy. Sean seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

### **Board Meeting Dates 2023-2024**

**Attachments/Handouts:** Board of Trustees Meeting Dates SY23-24

Michael shared on screen the proposed Board of Trustees meeting dates for next year, which presented options of 17<sup>th</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> in July.

Amy made a motion to approve the proposed meeting dates for next year, with July 17<sup>th</sup> as the July date. Norm seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

## **FINANCIALS**

### **February 2023 Financial Report**

**Attachments/Handouts:** RTCPS Financial Reports for the period ending February 28, 2023

Eric presented the February financial report. On the Income side, current enrollment is 619 students, however the State will use 624 students, since they use our mid-February enrollment number as the final for the year. Our year-to-date Income is under budget by (\$141,704). We've had savings under Expenses which amount to (\$23,746) under budget. Our year-to-date Net Income compared to budget is (\$117,958) and our Cash Balance is \$1,884,454.

Reimbursement of State Transportation will be paid at the end of the year and we anticipate it will be at 90% as budgeted. Enrollment is (\$121,785) under budget. We spent \$13,383 over budget on additional legal services and marketing. We were over budget on contracted instructional services, and plan to include more in next year's budget. There were savings on snow removal as well as health insurance.

Eric and Michael are going line by line on next year's budget to see where we can save. They should have a proposed budget ready for approval at the next Board meeting.

Amy made a motion to accept the February financials. Sandy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

## **BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Nominating and Governance** – They discussed rejuvenating the Foundation Board. There was a Board survey from the MA Charter School and we got enough participation to receive a free personalized dashboard. They reached out to potential Board members over the last couple of weeks, but there's nothing definite. Maureen Herrmann has been working on an electronic binder for new Board members that could also be shared with all Board members, which Michael shared on screen.

**Finance and Audit** – Nothing to add.

**Communications and Advocacy** – Martha is working on securing the Jones River Trading Post on Thursday, September 28, for Rising Tide's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Wendy and Stan Marshall expressed concern about the impact on college applications for students because of staffing changes. Michael suggested they contact him directly after the meeting.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Extending Revolving Line of Credit**

**Attachments/Handouts:** Third Amendment and Note Modification Agreement and Third Amendment of Mortgage

#### 1. Revolving Line of Credit

WHEREAS, Rising Tide Charter Public School (the "School"), as borrower, and Webster Bank, N.A. (the "Lender"), as lender, entered into that certain Revolving Credit Agreement dated November 18, 2016, (as amended, the "Credit Agreement"), with regard to a \$500,000 revolving line of credit (the "Line of Credit"), evidenced and secured by a Secured Promissory Note dated November 18, 2016 (as amended, the "Note"), in the original principal amount of \$500,000 and by a Security Agreement dated November 18, 2016 (as amended, the "Security Agreement").

WHEREAS, as further security for the obligations of the School to the Lender in connection with the Line of Credit, Plymouth Rising Tide Foundation Corporation (the "Foundation") entered into, in favor of the Lender, (i) a Guaranty dated November 18, 2016 (as amended, the "Guaranty"), and (ii) a Mortgage and Security Agreement dated November 18, 2016 and recorded with the Plymouth County Registry of Deeds (the "Registry") in Book 47762,

Page 222 (as amended, the “Mortgage”), encumbering the property known and numbered as 59 Armstrong Road, Plymouth, Massachusetts 02360. Any and all documents executed by the School and/or the Foundation in connection with the Line of Credit, including without limitation the Credit Agreement, the Note, the Security Agreement, the Guaranty, and the Mortgage, are hereinafter referred to as the “Transaction Documents.”

WHEREAS, the School and the Lender entered into that certain Amendment and Note Modification Agreement dated December 31, 2018, which amended the Transaction Documents, and the Foundation and the Lender entered into that certain Amendment of Mortgage, dated December 31, 2018, which amended the Mortgage.

WHEREAS, the parties extended the term of the Line of Credit under the Credit Agreement (the “Term”) to November 30, 2022, pursuant to that certain Second Amendment and Note Modification Agreement dated February 3, 2021 and effective as of November 30, 2022 and that certain Second Amendment of Mortgage dated February 3, 2021.

WHEREAS, the School, the Foundation, and the Lender desire to extend the Term to November 30, 2025.

WHEREAS, the School and the Lender expect to enter into that certain Third Amendment and Note Modification Agreement, which further amends the Transaction Documents, and the Foundation and the Lender expect to enter into that certain Third Amendment of Mortgage, which further amends the Mortgage, copies of which are attached hereto as Exhibit A (collectively, the “Third Amendments”).

NOW, IT IS THEREFORE:

VOTED: That the Board of Trustees of the School (the “Board”) approve the execution of the Third Amendments and approve the Line of Credit as extended therein.

VOTED: That the Board approve the extension of the Term to November 30, 2025 (which extension may be made effective as of November 30, 2022), and approve all subsequent extensions thereof, as may be necessary, appropriate, or convenient in the sole discretion of any one or more Authorized Officers (as hereinafter defined).

2. Omnibus Resolutions

VOTED: That the following officers of the School are each hereby designated as an “Authorized Officer” (and collectively, the “Authorized Officers”):

Chairperson of the Board  
Head of School  
Treasurer

VOTED: That Authorized Officers are, and one of them acting singly, hereby is authorized to sign, seal, make oath to, acknowledge, deliver, and file any and all amendments, agreements, contracts, assignments, guaranties, security agreements, documents, certificates, and other instruments of every nature, which may be necessary, appropriate, or convenient to consummate the transactions authorized by the foregoing votes, to otherwise extend the Term and amend the Transaction Documents to evidence such extension, or which may be required by the Lender, in such form and containing such terms, provisions, and conditions as any Authorized Officer may deem necessary, appropriate, or convenient, in his or her sole discretion (including without limitation, changes to any amounts described herein).

VOTED: That the signatures of any one or more Authorized Officer shall be conclusive evidence of the approval of the form, of all of the terms, provisions, conditions, and of the signing, execution, sealing and delivery thereof for and in the name of, and on behalf of the School.

VOTED: To ratify, confirm, and approve all actions taken by the Authorized Officers in connection with any and all of the transactions referred to in or contemplated by the foregoing votes.

EXHIBIT A

Third Amendment and Note Modification Agreement and  
Third Amendment of Mortgage

Sean made a motion to approve extension of the revolving line of credit as presented here. Sandy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

**ADJOURN**

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