

RISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

November 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 7:04 PM. In attendance were Chris Schelleng, Laura Stearns Flynn, Sean Kelly, Sandy Kozlowsky, and Amy Norris. Also in attendance were Michael O’Keefe, Head of School; Zahra Williams, Interim Principal/Assistant Head of School; Maureen Herrmann, Assistant to Head of School; and Eric Mello, Business Manager. John Polvere and Ian Rivera, new Board members awaiting the Commissioner’s approval, were also present.

GUESTS

None

ATTACHMENTS/HANDOUTS: November 20, 2023, Agenda; 2023 October Board Meeting Minutes; October 2023 Financial Reports

MEETING MINUTES

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

SCHOOL REPORT

Enrollment Update

Michael stated as of this morning, we have 121 applicants – up about 33% from this time last year. We have had a virtual enrollment Open House and plan to have another after the holidays. There will be several in person events in January and February. New this year, Michael has hosted a couple of “Coffee & Conversation” events for prospective families to learn about our curriculum and programs. To date, 3 families have come in.

Rubrics/Report Cards

Zahra reviewed what a rubric is after finding it was a new term for some parents. She likened it to a performance review, where students know what is expected from them, and can monitor their progress before, during and after a project. All departments are compiling rubrics for various skill assessments to create a “bank of rubrics” teachers can utilize. There has also been an effort to create consistent verbiage for grading categories that teachers will incorporate into their syllabuses.

Theresa Szczepanski, RTCPS STEM Instructional Coach, and Cindy Favret, Humanities Instructional Coach, worked hard to create comment dropdowns for report cards this year. Broken down by benchmark skills, there are lists of Expectations with corresponding Recommendations for teachers to select from. This has afforded a more efficient, but still meaningful, insight for students and families. Feedback from teachers were incorporated before implementing for this Term and will be fine-tuned moving forward.

School Accountability/MCAS Results

Michael said although we want to make sure teachers are aligned with state frameworks, it is not just about the MCAS itself. He reviewed the broad overview of Spring MCAS results he reported on last month. Looking at average scaled scores of Rising Tide students compared to the State in subgroups of All Students, Students with Disabilities, Low Income, and High Needs, Rising Tide did better than the State with just a few exceptions.

Sean left the meeting at 7:50.

Michael brought up MCAS data on screen and reviewed ways in which leadership are looking at MCAS data to see where work is needed on particular skills. Theresa and Cindy have used this information to give guidance to teachers through the Fall. They have also reviewed student growth percentile, looking at areas where there has/has not been growth compared to peers across the State.

Back in September the Board voted on Rising Tide’s Accountability Plan for the next five years. The State also has an accountability plan for all schools and Michael reviewed the categories the State is holding schools accountable for. He shared DESE’s Accountability Statistics for Rising Tide and we are in the 82nd percentile, but we want more progress towards our targets.

Zahra stated that targeted support was rolled out over the last couple of weeks. Students are grouped based on skills they need to work on.

NEW BUSINESS

New Board Members

Maureen stated the DESE Commissioner reviews all new potential Board members once/month and should consider our 2 candidates before our December Board meeting.

Placement of “Public Comment” Agenda Segment

During COVID the Board had shifted the “Public Comment” section from the beginning of the Board meetings to the end since sometimes people were coming onto the Virtual meetings too late to participate. Since fewer people are attending, we will try to move it back to the beginning, so guests do not have to sit through the entire meeting to make a comment.

FINANCIALS

October Financials

Eric presented the October financial report which incorporated the updated budget approved last month. State tuition is based on 620 students at \$18,303/student. Total Income is over budget by \$10,748. Currently, there are 622 students.

Expenses are under budget by (\$1,585). The year-to-date Net Income compared to budget is \$12,333. We have a healthy cash flow balance of \$1,976,538. Our benchmark is \$1,934,565 (60 days of operating cash flow). Eric is working on our charter school end of the year financial report which is due December 1.

Eric met with Select Energy for a consultation on solar energy. Due to large pieces of equipment on the school roof, solar panels will not work there. They investigated solar canopies in the parking lot, but the savings were minimal over time. New technology in solar glass panels may be an option in the future.

Amy made a motion to accept the October financials. Laura seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Nominating and Governance – Working on an emergency and long-term succession plan and hope to have at the December Board meeting.

Communications and Advocacy – Reviewed enrollment initiatives – postcards will be going out, the school will be doing events, and discussed starting parent ambassadors for new families. Next week will start a “season of giving” annual fundraiser; we have a \$4,000 match.

Finance and Audit – Nothing to add.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURN

Amy made a motion to Adjourn. Laura seconded the motion. All voted in favor to Adjourn.