

# **RISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL**

## **Minutes**

### **Board of Trustees Meeting**

**March 18, 2024**

*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**

Chairperson, Chris Schelleng, called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

In attendance were Chris Schelleng, Laura Stearns-Flynn, Sean Kelly, Amy Norris, and Dr. Ian Rivera. Also in attendance were Michael O’Keefe, Head of School; Zahra Williams, Principal/Assistant Head of School; Eric Mello, Business Manager; and Maureen Herrmann, Assistant to Head of School. John Polvere was absent.

**ATTACHMENTS/HANDOUTS:** March 18, 2024, Agenda; 2024 February Board Meeting Minutes; February 2024 Financial Reports; Head of School Succession Plan Draft

#### **GUESTS**

None

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

#### **MEETING MINUTES**

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

#### **SCHOOL REPORT**

##### **Enrollment Update**

Michael stated that there were approximately 100 families (about 65 Middle School and 35 Upper School) in attendance at the Accepted Students Day in early March. The afternoon consisted of hearing from current students about extra-curricular activities, sports, and clubs. Children and parents were then split between the Middle and Upper Schools where students were able to participate in inquiries/skills workshops while their parents got to participate in

Q&A as well as got to know one another. The event concluded with Upper School dance, theatre and music performances.

Of the 92 Middle School students chosen in the lottery, 78 have accepted and registered; 14 declined, so we began to contact families on the waiting list to fill those slots.

In the Upper School, about 30-35 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, and a handful of 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and one 12<sup>th</sup> grade student(s) accepted. There will be another Upper School enrollment period in April, and we anticipate a summer and September one as well.

### **SNHU Partnership Update**

Zahra reported on the partnership started with SNHU this year, which includes 2 Spanish, 2 English, and 2 History courses. Students can enroll in these advanced courses like they always have at Rising Tide, or they can additionally enroll with SNHU to earn simultaneous high school and college credits. Many students have taken advantage of the dual enrollment opportunity.

We are planning for these courses to run again next year with SNHU. Zahra is waiting for approval from SNHU on additional courses, including advanced statistics and biology. Tomorrow, Ms. Trauttmansdorff, College and Future Planning Counselor, and Ms. Carde, Upper School Assistant Principal, will be working with upperclassmen to make course selections for next year. They will do another round next week with another group of students.

Zahra is pleased that everything is already built into the regular Rising Tide programming, so there is nothing additional students have to do for coursework. Rising Tide teachers teaching the courses are adjunct professors with SNHU. It is also very cost-friendly for students; currently only \$100/course (3 college credits), and around \$125-150 for courses with lab components (4 college credits). For any participating student that qualifies for the free/reduced lunch program, Rising Tide has covered the cost for SNHU to make it accessible to everyone. Many colleges recognize credits earned should students decide to pursue post-secondary education somewhere other than SNHU.

### **Other School Updates**

Michael reported today was the first day of Spring athletics. STEM night was last week led by Ms. Szczepanski and Ms. McCullough; it was well attended by about 100 families. Ms. Szczepanski also put together a video from alumni; the link is on our Facebook page and was in the Monday Memo. Today students from the Showa Institute in Japan visited students in the Middle School. This was the first visit since 2019. Lastly, this year's graduation will take place at Memorial Hall in Plymouth. There is a shift in time to 2:00 PM. It will be a ½ day of school so staff can attend, as well as any students in grades 5-11 who wish to come.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Recognition of Sandy Kozlowsky's Service to the Board**

Sandy was unable to attend the meeting, but Chris expressed his thanks for her time on the Board. He commented on how extremely vocal, helpful and wise she was, and that she was a strong school advocate, making sure Rising Tide was accessible to all. Michael echoed Chris'

sentiments, adding that she spent 9 years serving the school community, including the first building project where she was a vocal advocate for the school, and that she was always keeping students at the center. We will miss her and appreciate her leadership and service.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Head of School Succession Plan**

Board members were given the Draft of the Head of School Succession Plan at the last meeting and were asked to review. Laura suggested we include leaders from both Upper and Middle School on a Search Committee, and suggested wording was discussed.

Laura made a motion to approve the Head of School Succession Plan with the added verbiage, "Representation and perspectives from both Upper School and Middle School should be included.", in the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph under "Recruitment & Hiring, 1) Select a Search Committee" on page 5. Ian seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

## **FINANCIALS**

### **February Financials**

Eric presented the February financial report. On the Income side, we are projecting 617 students net for the year at an \$18,303 per pupil rate. We are waiting for DESE's final tuition numbers after all districts have reported spending. Should have a good idea by early April. Since we budgeted for 620 students, we are under budget by (\$42,708). On the expense side, we are under budget by \$71,640, which brings us to a positive Net over Budget of \$28,932 year-to-date. We have a healthy cash balance of \$2,074,249. Our benchmark is \$1,934,565, which is approximately 60 days of operating the school.

We have been working with Webster Bank to get better interest on our cash balances and have been told they will be improving our rates.

Eric reviewed the Summary page of the Profit and Loss Statement. On the Income side, we are projecting 80% reimbursement of transportation based on last year's rate. Tuition is under budget due to fewer students.

On the Expense side, we've had savings under Administration Expenses because we have not had to use legal or recruiting services as much. Due to staff being out on PFML there were savings on salaries, however savings were offset with pay for substitutes. There are savings on security guards – we were overcharged for services last year and we have been credited back on any overcharging. This was due to a new security company and the way they were invoicing.

Chris questioned deposit insurance limits at Webster Bank. Eric reviewed the 2 other banks we use. As part of the loan covenant with Webster Bank, we are required to have a certain amount of money with them. Our auditors look at this every year, and although it is not a risk, Eric will look into it to see if any risk could be mitigated. Sean said when they talk with Webster about rates, they can confirm the amounts we have to hold with them.

Eric stated we now have a fraud protection service to cut down on fraud. ACH and checks we cut are confirmed with the bank and anything suspicious is brought to our attention.

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

#### **BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Nominating and Governance** – There were two action items from our last DESE site visit. One was to put together a Succession Plan, which was completed tonight. The second was to invigorate our discussion and review of student performance data, which was done over the last couple of months by looking at MCAS and STAR data. Chris has reported back to DESE with Meeting Minutes and presented materials to close out those action items with them.

**Communications and Advocacy** – Have not met. Amy mentioned we have several new Board members that may be interested in participating in a Subcommittee. Chris asked them to reach out to him if they have any interest.

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

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

None

#### **ADJOURN**

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