

RISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

July 29, 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 7:00 PM.

In attendance were Chris Schelleng, Laura Stearns-Flynn, Amy Norris, and John Polvere. Also in attendance were Michael O’Keefe, Head of School, and Eric Mello, Business Manager. Sean Kelly, Dr. Ian Rivera, and Zahra Williams, Principal/Assistant Head of School, were absent. Chris Talamo (new Board member awaiting the Commissioner’s approval) was also present.

ATTACHMENTS/HANDOUTS: July 29, 2024, Agenda; 2024 June Board Meeting Minutes; June 2024 Financial Reports; RTCPS SOA Plan 2021-2023 Final Approval Version

GUESTS

None

MEETING MINUTES

Laura made a motion to approve the June Board Meeting Minutes. Amy seconded the motion. Chris stated the auditors mentioned they would like to see more details in the minutes about group discussions of school data (not just presentation of data). In future meeting minutes we should capture that. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

SCHOOL REPORT (Michael O’Keefe)

Enrollment Update

Michael stated as of today we have about 625 students enrolled for next year. We anticipate losing a few before the start of school, which is typical. There are about 6-8 students being processed to refill Middle School spots, and we continue to have strong waiting lists there.

On the Upper School side, we have 38 new students coming into 9th grade; we continue to monitor this school entry point in order to optimize enrollment in the Upper School. Based on advice from the Charter School office, we are trying a new approach, offering 3 application deadlines for an additional enrollment period, to try to capture students at key points. The first is August 20th (catching students before school starts so they have a good chance of starting school on first day), the second is August 29th (2 days after start of school - to try and capture students who started school elsewhere and changed their mind), and lastly September 5th (one more window in case someone didn't catch the other 2; this allows time to get in before the drop/add period for classes).

There was discussion about this new approach and what the advertising/marketing initiatives would be. Michael said we will use social media for these deadlines.

Staffing Update

Michael stated the leadership structure (with a single Principal and Assistant Dean of School for each side) started a year and a half ago has allowed a more consistent and smoother operation. As of last week, we have filled all General Education teacher positions. There were a few last minute vacancies from long-term Latin teacher, Jen Papillo, and College & Future Planning Counselor, Isabella Trauttmansdorff, who were moving out of the school realm into other areas. We are still filling a couple of long-term sub positions.

Eric added that Thom Holdgate has been hired full-time as the Athletic Director. He had been in the position temporarily to replace Kelsey Kincade. Eric also relayed how staff turnover has been low, and those leaving were due to life changes, out-of-state moves, medical/family changes, etc.

Michael is hoping to finalize a Middle School special ed teacher this week, and just learned a Learning Specialist who was leaving has decided to come back.

Chris Schelleng and Michael spoke about discussions that Michael, Eric, and Kelsey had about having the Athletic Director as part- or full-time. It was decided to move forward with Tom full-time because he brings the skill set into running the program as well as filling in at school in other ways in a leadership role (administrative compliance, crisis response team, and shoulder season programming).

NEW BUSINESS

Student Opportunities Act (SOA) Plan

Michael reviewed what the Massachusetts Student Opportunities Act is. Every district and charter school must develop a 3-year plan and submit to DESE. Prior to the meeting, Michael provided the school's prior plan for reference.

Michael shared a final draft of the proposed new SOA plan for the next 3 years on screen. He needs to add in the summary. He stated like all public schools, Rising Tide has gaps of achievement between high needs subgroups and all students. In putting the plan together, he

looked at various MCAS, discipline, and attendance data. He shared the State dashboard and explored data in detail with the Board.

The school will use DESE's 3-year targets for the lowest performing student groups to deepen and improve the supports and interventions we're currently doing. Michael reviewed ways we try to engage families/caregivers. Chris Talamo prompted a discussion on strategies to better reach families not currently engaged. Laura suggested adding to the plan our use of social media as another way to reach families. Michael added that feedback from SEPAC group and the Leadership team, as well as ongoing discussions with the Board on STAR and other assessment data, were helpful in the development of this plan. Chris Schelleng suggested adding the use of STAR data, which Michael agreed should be added to the list of data in the 2nd section.

Michael reviewed the 2 core areas the school will focus on to best support closing academic gaps, commenting that we will continue to include work in the other areas as well. He also provided the anticipated amount of funding that will need to be allocated to implement these initiatives.

The group discussed holding off on a vote until later in the week in order for Michael to update/finalize the plan. The group decided they were comfortable in the overall direction of the proposed plan, with a couple minor adjustments, and to go ahead and vote tonight.

Laura made a motion to approve the SOA plan as presented with the additions discussed including social media approaches and STAR data. John seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

August 2024 Retreat Preview

John and Chris Talamo will not be able to join the August 7th retreat. The Board and Senior Leadership will meet and take a fresh look at the Strategic Plan and look at annual goals to see what we can realistically accomplish this year. It is also a great opportunity to connect in person with each other. The group considered ways to prepare and what they hoped to get out of the meeting.

FINANCIALS

June Financials

Eric presented the final (unaudited) June 30, 2024, financials. The auditors were in for a couple of days and will return in August. We had a very good financial year (over \$300,000 positive) coming off of a tough prior year (with a planned deficit of more than \$550,000).

Our actual enrollment number and per pupil reimbursement were almost exactly as budgeted in our mid-year projected adjustment. Actual enrollment was 617.2 students at \$18,303.36/pupil. The transportation reimbursement came in at 86% of cost, ahead of the 80% reimbursement budgeted. Total Income is over budget by \$78,773.

Expense savings were \$235,151. Net Income year-to-date is \$313,924. Eric detailed expense savings which included over \$47,000 in administration, almost \$69,000 in instructional services, and over \$112,000 in operations & maintenance (cleaning, electric, snow removal, and parking).

The auditors will present their findings at the October Board meeting.

Laura made a motion to accept the June financials. John seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Nominating and Governance – Have not met.

Communications and Advocacy – Have not met.

Michael thought coming out of the retreat next week, that we could establish the next meeting dates for all subcommittees. Chris Schelleng agreed with that goal.

Finance and Audit – Eric said they didn't meet and confirmed that John would be joining this group. Eric relayed that Chris Talamo's application is pending and waiting for approval from the State.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURN

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