

**RISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Minutes**

**Board of Trustees Meeting**

**October 21, 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.”**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson, Chris Schelleng, called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

In attendance were:

Chris Schelleng, John Polvere, Ian Rivera, Chris Talamo, Laura Flynn, and Sean Kelly. Also in attendance were Michael O’Keefe, Head of School, Eric Mello, Director of Finance, Facilities, and Human Resources, Zahra Williams, Principal/Assistant Head of School, and Theresa Szczepanski, Academic Dean.

Guests: Colleen D’Alfonso, Valquiria Marcal, Erin Koh

**ATTACHMENTS/HANDOUTS:**

- **September, 2024 Financial Statements**
- **Meeting Minutes August 26, 2024 Board Meeting**
- **Board Presentation of FY24 Auditors’ Reports**
- **2023-2024 RTCPS Annual Report**
- **Proposed Updated FY25 Budget**

**2. Welcome to Guests**

Colleen D’Alfonso, Valquiria Marcal

**3. MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 26, 2024**

Laura Flynn made a motion to approve the August Board Meeting Minutes. Shawn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. There were no minutes from the scheduled September meeting because the meeting was canceled as there was not a quorum.

#### **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

#### **5. New Business**

##### 5.1 Auditors' Report - Colleen D'Alfonso and Valquiria Marcal, Daniel Dennis & Co.

Valquiria Marcal and Colleen D'Alfonso presented a summary of the FY24 Auditors' Report. The report includes an Unmodified Opinion on the Combined Financial Statements and No Opinion on Management's Discussion and Analysis. The report also found no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses identified in internal controls over financial reporting. The report also noted no material non-compliance. Within the Financial Ratio Profile, 6 out of 7 ratios were reported as low-risk, with one ratio, Unrestricted Days Cash, just crossing into the moderate risk category.

Chris Schelleng asked about the a discussion item in the summary that recommends the Board continue to monitor the 20% calculation. Ms. D'Alfonso responded that they make this recommendation to all charter public schools to be mindful the regulations around any cash reserves.

Ms. D'Alfonso noted that Mr. Mello does an excellent job in his oversight of the finances and in his preparations for the annual audit.

Chris Talamo made a motion to approve the Auditors Report. Laura Flynn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

##### 5.2 Nomination of New Board Member - with Board vote

Chris Schelleng shared that Nominating and Governance subcommittee has nominated Erin Koh as a new board member. Ms. Koh is a current parent who is a farmer and lives in Buzzards Bay. She has a son in grade 12 and a daughter in grade 9.

Sean Kelly made a motion to approve the motion for New Board Member. John Polvere seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **6. Old Business**

##### 6.1 Annual Report & Accountability Plan Overview - Michael O'Keefe, Head of School

7:24 pm - Michael discussed key points from the annual report, program highlights, current programs and leadership team that made it possible to achieve the success. Within the 2023-2024 Accountability Plan, only 3 measures were reported upon for the first year of the charter term. The first measure, for 80% of students in grades 5-10 participating in STAR Mathematics and Reading to be at or above the proficiency benchmark, was not met. Discussed accountability plan moving forward with multiple objectives. The second measure, for 95% of seniors to successfully complete the Senior Internship Course, was met, as 100% of the seniors in the course passed the course. The third

measure, for 75% of all students to participate in at least 1 extra-curricular program, was met, as 77.4% of students participated in at least one extra-curricular program.

## **7. School Report**

### **7.1 STAR Diagnostics Overview - Theresa Szczepanski, Academic Dean**

7:38 pm – Theresa Szczepanski provided an overview of the STAR Assessment results for the first screening period of September, 2024. Students in grades 5-10 participate in STAR Reading and Mathematics in the fall, winter, and spring.

In the fall Mathematics screening, students in grades 5 (82%) and 10 (82%) were at or above the proficiency benchmark, while students in grades 6 through 9 were between 70% and 76%. The percentage of students classified as urgent intervention in Mathematics is lower across all grade levels than the previous year.

In the fall Reading screening, students in grades 7 (80%) and 10 (84%) were at or above the proficiency benchmark, while students in grades 5, 6, 8, and 9 were between 71% and 76%. The percentage of students classified as urgent intervention in Reading is lower across all grade levels than the previous year, with an exception in grade 6.

Ms. Szczepanski also provided a chart of benchmark distribution for each grade level. Ms. Szczepanski shared the next steps for the faculty at Rising Tide this year. Middle School students have been placed in targeted support groups based on the areas of strength or weakness; teachers in Math and English have been given priority standards and text-types to target within that time. Students will be screened again in January, and the team will monitor student growth by subject, grade level, and population group as well as review grade level skill mastery reports.

Chris Talamo noted that the analysis of the data is helpful to see the work by Ms. Szczepanski and the faculty in supporting the students.

### **7.2 Professional Development SY25 - Zahra Williams, Principal/Assistant Head of School**

8:11 pm – Zahra Williams discussed professional development plans for the 2024-2025 school year. Due to the commitment to educator collaboration and professional development, every Wednesday is an early release day when students are dismissed at 12 p.m. Ms. Williams reviewed the linear calendar of professional development activities on Wednesday afternoons. The framework of meetings and workshops includes Advisory Team meetings, Department meetings, Teacher Mentor-Mentee program time, and Cross-Curricular Professional Development Groups focused on reviewing students work and teacher assessments of skills. Additional workshops and all-staff trainings also occur through the year. This year there are also two full days of professional development: December 11, 2024 and March 12, 2025.

## **8. Financial Matters**

### **8.1 Review of September 2024 Financials**

8:25pm Eric Mello reviewed the September 2024, financials.

The preliminary FY25 budgeted is for 620 enrolled students.

- 620 students at \$18,784 per pupil = \$11,646,077
- The transportation reimbursement budgeted at 80% of cost.
- Total Income as of August 31, 2024 is under budget by \$11,642
- Total expenses year to date as of September 30, 2024 are under budget by \$11,035
- Net Income year to date compared to Budget is \$607

Laura made a motion to accept the September financials. Chris Talamo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **8.2 Final Budget for FY25**

### **Budget for 618 students at \$18,784 (2.62% increase over FY24)**

Eric discussed the proposed final FY 25 budget. Savings on Health insurance has been significant. Regional bus, as well as special transportation service cost increased and reason for this explained in detail. The adjusted, final budget proposed is based on a slightly smaller number of students.

Laura Flynn made a motion to accept the proposed final budget for FY25. Chris Talamo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **9. Board Subcommittee Reports**

**9.1 Nominating and Governance** – Update on Meeting by Chris and Sean. In the previous meeting, the group reviewed the potential nomination of Erin Koh, reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the Nominating & Governance subcommittee, and reviewed the framework of the process for evaluating the Head of School

**9.2 Communications and Advocacy** – The group Met on October 16, 2024. At the meeting, they discussed the marketing activities, postcards and planning for open enrollment. They also discussed the Rising Tide Parent Group and parent ambassadors as well as the new parents/guardians on the subcommittee. The group suggested the continuation of Coffee and Conversations as a part of outreach to interested families.

**9.3 Finance and Audit** – The group met the previous week to discuss the proposed final budget for FY25. Quarterly meeting schedule going forward.

## **10. Other business not anticipated by the chair 24 hours in advance**

## **11. Adjourn**

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