

# **RIISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL**

## **Minutes**

### **Board of Trustees Meeting**

**March 17, 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:** Chris Shelleng called the meeting to order at 7pm.

In attendance: Chris Shelleng, Laura Flynn, Chris Talamo, Erin Koh, John Polvere, Sean Kelly, Eric Mello. Also in attendance were Head of School, Michael O'Keefe, Assistant Head of school/Principal, Zahra Williams and Academic Dean, Theresa Szczepanski.

Attachments and Slides: Reports on both MCAS and Star testing from Theresa Szczepanski.  
Proposed Student Competency Determination Policy

**GUESTS:** - no guests, no public comment

### **MEETING MINUTES:**

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes: motion to approve was made by Amy; Chris seconded. The vote to approve was unanimous.

### **SCHOOL REPORT:**

Michael O'Keefe - recognized that there is talk in a general sphere around public funding in education and the US department of education with the new administration. Michael mentioned that Rising Tide continues to receive assurances that the federal funding re: special education around \$250,000. will still be available and accessible and that the school is still monitoring to make sure that is still true. The school is also monitoring FAFSA, loans and grants for students considering secondary education.

Chris asked if there is more funding that goes through the state that might be in jeopardy? Eric answers that at least the transportation funds from the state have already been released so he thinks there will not be a disruption in State funding. Chris asks about any changes with USDA loan? Eric answers that is locked in. No further questions regarding funding.

**On enrollment** - Michael reports that we are past the first round of registration and there is a full class for 5th grade after letting in 15-20 from the waitlist. In the 9th grade - 42% admitted have registered, 33% of 10th graders have registered and 90% of 11 graders have registered. The

school just offered 1 spot for 6th grade; there is a sizable waitlist for grades 6-8 and also a wait list for 5th grade.

There will be another enrollment period beginning in March and ending in May. There was some discussion about the education of the staff about enrollment.

**Recent Events:** Zahra Williams Principal/Assistant Head of School reported on author Dusti Bowling's visit to RT. Last week, all students taking Latin participated in the National Latin Exam. Wednesday was accepted students day where new students explored the school. Zahra recapped the latest Full PD Day with the faculty. There were workshops on MCAS training and the staff was able to choose workshops on building relationships with students, creating learning checks with formative.com with support from the school librarian, and dealing with stress and anxiety for students and their families ie: how to support them and maintain strong academic expectations. Zahra received positive feedback on the last workshop from faculty who reported this is a workshop everyone can benefit from.

The PD day ended with curriculum and advisory team building meetings focusing on final exams, a concrete timeline for checkpoints for building final exams and assessments for students. Zahra reported that Eric gave a helpful overview about funding and enrollment that was informative for the faculty to understand where/how salaries are funded and how it relates to enrollment.

**Winter Star Data and Spring 2024 MCAS Data** - Theresa Szczepanski, Academic Dean. Theresa shared summary slides on 2024 MCAS analysis, a full version is on the RT BOD portal. The biggest takeaway is the accountability score is in the 86th percentile - which is classified as making "substantial" progress towards key metrics- a bump up from '23 reports of "progress" The Upper school made more progress in writing skills reflecting a focused academic shift in curriculum at Rising Tide. Prior to 2023 writing was below average while reading was average or better - Post 2023 - the writing scores demonstrated great improvement. The upper school math scores also improved with a focus on adding more lessons in statistics to the curriculum. The middle school scores are variable. There was some clear progress made with reading informational texts and writing in the 6th grade and some underachievement in math. Theresa was able to recognize two topics: geometry and measurement that the students were missing instruction and found ways to reinforce these lessons with curricula in both math and Stem classes.

Theresa demonstrated that data from MCAS test results can be used as a lens to spot growth patterns and then encourage team planning across faculty in each grade to focus on specific skills. Chris commented that the slides/data show great success stories and asked if other schools use the MCAS in the same way? He commented that the work that Theresa does is valuable and not necessarily available to all schools.

Mr. O'Keefe commented that we are lucky to have the work of Theresa. Rather than just share the aggregate numbers with the staff, Theresa's analysis takes a deep dive to look at actionable

ways to focus curriculum to hone in on the skills that are needed to be successful and help improve the scores.

Next was a summary of STAR assessments of which there are 3 screenings throughout the year. There will be one more in the spring. All families have been notified of the latest scores. This report was for the winter of 2025 for grades 5-10 in Math and English. Rising Tide aims for an accountability goal of 80% at or above benchmark. Generally things look good over the past two years. The high school program continues to maintain achievement goals. Improvements were made in 5th grade math, but scores were low in 6th and 8th grade math. Theresa mentioned that intervention with reading specialists clearly results in higher growth scores in ELA, but there is no intervention specialist or intervention programs available for numeric skills. Other trends that were noticed were a lack of confidence with informational texts in 9th and 10th grade and scores in arithmetic and polynomials were significantly below the state average across the board. Chris asked if the other districts are receptive to inquiries about improvements or their methods. Theresa responded that the principal of the Kingston school responded to her inquiry right away and she spoke with some staff at the school.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Nomination for Clerk Officer: Erin Koh. Laura moved to approve the motion to nominate Erin Koh, John Polvere seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

On the topic of MA temporary provision for Remote Participation in Open Meetings- Chris asked if we are going to lose the ability for remote meetings? Michael answered that the current provision expires at the end of March and thinks it might be extended, however, until otherwise notified, the April meeting will be in person. Chris commented that he hopes it will be extended.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**Proposed Student Competency Determination Policy** - a subset meeting was held last week to discuss the guidelines for graduation after the State voted to withdraw MCAS scores as a requirement for graduation. The subset meeting included- Michael, Zahra, Chris S., Laura, Chris T. and Erin. Michael presented the new Rising Tide Charter Public school guidelines for graduation and competency determination.

Draft 3.12.25 - Competency determination requirements slide (refer to slide for details)

[Preview attachment RTCPS Competency Determination Policy DRAFT 3.12.25.pdf](#) -

Michael presented guidelines for the classes of 2025 and 2026. The determination for the classes of 2027 and beyond are different as there is no way to determine grades from final assessments that have already been administered. Chris Talamo commented that the standards proposed reflect a balance of demonstrating mastery and also maintaining high standards. Laura agreed that this policy allows some wiggle room for those students who don't meet the typical standardized benchmarks a chance to demonstrate mastery and competency at the school's high standards.

Sean motioned to accept the proposed Competency Determination Policy, Laura seconded the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

**Integrated Monitoring Review Report** - Michael reported that findings have come out from a monitoring report from DESE and are available on the RT portal. Members should take a look for transparency. Corrective action needs to be addressed on the RT restraint policy, which demonstrates partial implementation of the standard criteria. For Rising Tide to be in compliance, the policy and 2 training slides need to be updated.

#### **FINANCIALS:**

Review of February 2025 Finances Eric reported we are still projecting 614 enrollment at \$19,072 per student for a total of \$11,710,208. Transportation reimbursement was projected at 80% of total cost. DESE has already paid a portion. The total Income as of February 28, 2025 was over budget in income of \$64,883

Expenses - under budget by \$121,432 - due to lower cost in admin expenses, special education transportation, food service and health insurance.

Not much has changed month to month - on track to have another positive year on the financial side. No questions.

Laura moved to accept the February 2025 financial report and John seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve.

#### **BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

Nominating and Governance - haven't met - still want more board members parents, legal, medical experience

Communications and Advocacy- haven't met

Finance - nothing to add

**OTHER BUSINESS** - no other business.

#### **ADJOURN**

Sean made a motion to adjourn. Laura seconded the motion. There was a unanimous vote in favor to adjourn