

RISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

April 28, 2025

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 Schelleng called the meeting to order at 7pm.

In attendance: Chris Schelleng, Chris Talamo, Erin Koh, John Polvere, Sean Kelly, Eric Mello. (Laura Flynn was not in attendance) Also in attendance was Head of School, Michael O'Keefe.

Guests: no guests, no public comment

MEETING MINUTES:

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes: motion to approve meeting minutes for March 17, 2025 was made by Amy, Sean seconded. The vote to approve was unanimous.

SCHOOL REPORT:

Michael O'Keefe reported on school enrollment projections for the 2025-2026 academic year. The school is hovering around 615 students but will budget for 610 students. There is a full cohort in 5th grade, with a waiting list. The numbers for 6-8th grade are around 91-93 students with the potential to increase the 8th grade cohort to 96 students. 9th grade cohort could be between 53-71. The school is still waiting on a commitment from at least 15 students. The rest of the highschool expects 56-64 per grade. Sean asked if there is a waiting list for 8th grade and if we can increase the 8th grade cohort to build momentum for the transition to the high school. There was some discussion around how to reach out to 9th graders who are not committed and what it takes to retain students. Michael reports that charter schools across the state are having some struggles with student retention while the tech schools are seeing increases in enrollment. Chris asked what are the demographics of the students entering Rising Tide. The number of students from the Plymouth area has decreased while the largest increase in enrollment now comes from the Wareham area. The discussion also included some open ended questions of whether to add another 6th grade cohort, and what is the messaging for the next 5 years to continue to attract and to retain student enrollment.

NEW BUSINESS:

A review of the proposed preliminary budget for FY 26. The numbers are based on last year's numbers with most increases due to increases in salaries. The school is budgeting for 610 pupils with \$19,644 per/pupil rate, a 3% increase of what the school currently receives. The

school is still expecting 80% reimbursement from the state for school bus transportation. However the cost of transportation will increase in the '25/'26 school year with 2 new students requiring alternate transportation as mandated with their IEP. The school is budgeting for a 3% cost of living raise for the staff. There is a projected 10.25% health insurance increase, but dental insurance will not increase. 91% of the school funding comes from pupil tuition, 4% is state transportation and 2% is federal grants. 70% of expenses is cost of staffing, 15% is facilities and maintenance and 15% is other costs.

The school is looking at a \$105,000 surplus to keep in good standing with the bank covenant. This budget is a proposal with a final budget to be presented in September. The move to vote to approve the preliminary budget was made by Amy and seconded by Chris. The motion passed unanimously.

Eric also suggested the Board vote on a motion to release (unrestrict) the current restricted cash balance of \$201,172 for FY 25 capital purchases and restrict the cash balance of \$300,000 for reserve funds for future capital projects. Chris made the motion to approve, John seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Review of the Board of Directors Effectiveness survey:

8 board members responded to the survey. Chris highlighted some of the details of the report received. The Board rated well for overall effectiveness. The survey demonstrated strengths in communication and engagement and some weaknesses in Board recruitment and diversity within the Board. There was also some discussion of building a new long term strategic plan for the school and the need for new Board members as some of the present members will be aging out of their commitments.

Old Business: none

Financial Matters: The finance committee had met previously. Eric highlighted some numbers from the March 2025 financial report. There are some savings from Health insurance and transportation. The school is in good shape financially with a surplus. Erin made the motion to accept the March 2025 financial report, the motion was seconded by Amy and passed unanimously.

Board Subcommittee Reports:

- Nominating and Governance - no meeting- this month coming up
- Communications and Advocacy - no reports
- Finance and Audit - no additions

Other business not anticipated by the chair 24 hours in advance:

Michael proposed an in person Board meeting for May 19th. The Board agreed to meet in person at Rising Tide Charter Public School at 7pm on May 19th.

Sean made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Chris seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.