

MINUTES
VSWEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 2021
VIA [Zoom](#)

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Gregory Schneider (GS) – President

John Tanner (JT)

April Sauer (AS) – Secretary

Danielle Martinez (DM)

Dan Franks (DF) – Treasurer

Nellie Grossenbacher (NG)

Kerstin Kubina (KK)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

The President, Treasurer, and Secretary were present, and a quorum was reached.

GUESTS

Invitees of the Board:

Frank Mirizio (FM)

Members of the public present via Zoom/Registration through Google Forms:

- Michelle Kratzer
- Tammy
- Barb Cunningham
- Sophie McCurley
- Helena Moriarty

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- Laura Heaney
- JJ
- Adeline Carrera

OPENING VERSE / INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting was called to order at 6:35pm. GS welcomed the public to the meeting, read the opening verse, and reviewed meeting procedures.

The Board members introduced themselves along with FM.

GS Provided an overview of the agenda.

STUDENTS

GS Reviewed the information FM provided via email regarding two students who didn't perform well on AZ Merit reading test. MOWR states that those who don't perform well do not pass to the 4th grade. Anything to add, FM?

FM This year being so odd due to virtual, hybrid, in person. It affected students. We think that's an extra consideration to make. I agree with our reading specialist Ms. Moriarty and Ms. Makowski. These students meet enough criteria to say let's move them on to 4th grade and monitor it as we go.

GS moved to permit the two students FM emailed us about to advance to the 4th grade. DM/JT second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: JT, GS, AS, DF, DM, NG, KK. **Motion passes.**

BUDGET AND FINANCE

2021-2022 Budget

GS KK has some questions regarding the budget. Can she meet with you regarding those questions?

FM Will contact KK and Monique Garza to discuss the budget.

GS We're hoping to see a written draft of the budget soon. FM and Monique are continuing to work on that.

Enrollment Update

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FM When school starts on 8/11, we'll have 311 students enrolled. He's concerned about enrollment for incoming 9th grade and incoming seniors. There may be some changes there, so we're underestimating enrollment for budget creation. He walked campus with Steve and Hector today to discuss campus and current needs. It would be nice to have a higher enrollment than what we're budgeting. Governor hasn't addressed the budget yet. We're hoping to get that information soon. But we're being conservative just in case. We have 11-13 tours this week. 6 are high school, which would be great. Crystal has been doing great giving these tours.

GS Sounds like overall very good news. Thank you for your continued efforts there.

Tax Credits

GS We got an email from Ms. Deb regarding tax credits and how they are tracked and designated. She suggested this was a board decision. I don't have the answers for you tonight, but I'd like someone to look into this.

FM I've done this a long time. There was a day when you could designate your tax credit. I'm not sure if that has changed. It may have in recent years.

DM I'm happy to do some research on that.

GS That would be great if you could figure out the relevant information and the legal parts about it. Maybe you and I can take a look and then maybe KK can look into it as well.

FM Is money allowed to go to field trips from tax credits? Can the school cover field trips using tax credits if we need to cover a student who cannot cover the expense?

DM Could this be covered via fundraising?

FM Sure. Still curious if the district is required to cover field trips.

GS There is a specific statute regarding what you can use the tax credit for. What I haven't looked into is the ability to say where that money is allocated.

DM Let's say all of that is possible, does Aspire or Jessica have the accounting tools to track that?

FM Yes, we have a line in the budget for tax credits. This also allows me to write thank you's. We just want to make sure that we're doing it correctly.

DM I'm on it.

Fundraising

GS I'd like to discuss fundraising for next year. The May Pole Event was well run, but I'd like to look into obtaining someone for continued efforts for the fall. I'd like to hear more from Melissa

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Sutton. I know she's done well with other charter schools getting six figures in one event. I'd like to hear more.

DM Based on the one we just did, we know it would be more effective to be on campus and have faculty and parent involvement.

GS Can you follow up with her and see if she's available for our next board meeting? That way we can check in with her and ask questions.

DM Yes.

GS Any other ideas to discuss?

DM It would be nice to find someone to edit the footage we have leftover from the May Pole Event.

GS NG, is that something your family could possibly help with?

NG I can check with Larry regarding that. What other footage do we have?

DM There's some walkthrough of the campus and some artwork from students. We'd love to add some scripts or voice overs to that. We'd like to develop that in some fashion.

NG I'll look into that.

AS Discussion of various items with new DMS logo to be sold for fundraising purposes. I'd love to see bumper stickers, hats, shirts, mugs. If no one has any objections, I'd be happy to take that on and hear out any ideas or companies that have worked well for you for this.

NG Would like to add Waldorf book order forms. Mentioned store that has Waldorf items. Perhaps we can work with them.

DM We used to have a school store. Perhaps check in with staff to make sure we're not making anything that is typically done as class fundraisers.

GS Love these ideas. Would like to look more into Scholastic before cancelling that. I know in my home we can never have too many books.

KK Mentioned summer camps we used to have. Would love to look into that again and see if we can consider that for next summer.

GS It would be great to start on that plan so we can move forward for next summer. KK, if you want to take the lead and start looking into details on that, that would be wonderful.

KK I'd be happy to. I would be happy to hear about any other experiences.

DM I'd be happy to share my old pamphlets from those summer camps.

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JT KK, I'd be happy to give you some feedback on that offline.

KK Okay, I'll reach out to you.

301 Plan

GS Shared 301 plan on the screen.

FM The state has specific requirements to give teachers 301 money. What's your standing with the school, do you have SMART goals, are you achieving them, do you teach over half time—it's similar to qualifying for insurance. The teachers all fill this out mid-April. The committee and I go over each of these. There are specific points you have to achieve. 100 total. We give points for being highly qualified, being a board member, serving on activities and festivals, doing a play, coaching, parent council. Being bought in to the whole campus awards you the 301 money. Our teachers had to qualify a bit differently this year since so much was cancelled due to Covid—things like professional development and certifications for CPR, first aid, serving on committees. This year we had 14 people meet the qualifications. This is for the board to approve for next year. The 301 committee has been on top of it to make sure it can be approved before school begins in the fall. We'll go over this with our teachers before school begins.

GS Thank you for that thorough description. For our new board members, the 301 money is from the state, and it goes to teachers performing exceptionally well, but schools have to come up with the criteria for that.

FM This was voted on by the citizens of AZ, and there are a couple things that people don't understand. This only goes to classroom teachers. Other staff doesn't qualify for 301. This is very similar to what other districts do. Being highly qualified, serving on committees, working with students in extra curriculars. This isn't a far right or left plan. This is the norm. This is what I'm seeing around the state.

GS Any question about the 301 plan?

GS moved to approve the 301 plan for the 2021-2022 school year. DF second. The following discussion took place:

DM Is there a grand total or percentage? Did I miss it?

FM 100.

DM How does the staff feel about this form?

FM They've voted on it. Some staff believe it should go to every school employee, but that's not what the legislature says. I guess at some point we did it differently, and that wasn't following

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the criteria of the state. That's why our 301 committee formed to make sure that we are following the legislature. There are stringent rules that we should follow.

GS Any other questions?

Votes in favor: GS, AS, KK, NG, DM, DF. Abstained: JT. **Motion passes.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Update

GS You've sent over some capital projects. What do you think is the priority?

FM Fencing and the woodshop. He had another bid for the woodshop. A place who builds workshops and puts it on a pad, then he'd hire a contractor to add air. I think that's the 2nd priority. 3rd priority, adult bathrooms added to the high school. AC replaced in high school workshop. I'd love to work on a multipurpose room, but that would be about 1.8 million to do it. We're looking at foundations to help financially, but they only help title 1 schools. Bonnie is looking for grants. That building is a dream; it's just a high price. The high school fence needs replaced for the safety of our students. Steve will be getting pricing for a block wall we can stucco and paint with a gate. I don't think it would cost more than 15k, and I think we could cover that.

DM Title 1 is based on free lunch programs that many of our families don't fill out.

FM Yes, and I am going to make a big plea to our parents to get that form filled out. It will help us out tremendously so that we could qualify for other programs around the state like tutors or aides. Parents throw the form away because we don't have lunch. I'll explain that in the fall and make a big push to ensure we get that in by December. That money could also give us a full time counselor paid for with grants.

GS What's out total pool for capital projects?

FM It's about 175k plus the 105k left, so about 280k. The projects I named all fit under that amount with the exception of the farmhouse and the multipurpose room. I need to save funds for AC units.

GS We have quotes for the fence project. The quotes look identical apart from price. Is there any reason why we wouldn't just go with the cheaper option?

FM DF just sent me something. He knows of another company, Allied Industries, that he thinks will come in lower. I don't want to wait two weeks. I know the board needs to approve it.

GS I think if we approve the expense instead of an invoice that would work out.

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FM Would that be more of an approval of 21k and then if I have a lower bid, I can go with that one?

GS Yes, we can do that. You're on the ground and talking to contractors. You'll know which is the better contract.

DM Do we know the composition and materials?

FM It's a vinyl, so it's good in the hot weather. You can replace a section of it if there's an accident. The posts are heavier since they're in the ground. Those will hold the weight of the horizontal slats. There will be a couple of gates for entry. Gates cost more than just the fencing, but it's not significant.

GS So we have two quotes, one for 18k another for 24k. Potentially you'll get a third. If we approve the expense up to 24k that would be the leeway you'd need to figure out which is the best contractor. I don't want to sacrifice quality for the cheapest price. We want it to be durable and last. Plus, it's the face of the school. It needs to withstand wear and tear. Before I make a motion are there thoughts about approving this amount?

KK I have a question regarding the vinyl. We have vinyl fencing at our home. It's sheets and hasn't held up well. It may be different in the contracts you've received.

FM The sheets are a different thing. Think about horse fencing. It's solid. I asked those types of questions. They said you don't want metal or wood. This is the new way to do it. Horse properties use this type of fencing all the time. I'm comfortable that this should last 10-12 years. A wood picket fence wouldn't last that long. A 4th grader could beat that up.

DF The vinyl can last up to 40 years.

GS Other thoughts?

GS moved to approve the expense of the fence for the front of the school up to \$24,000 at the discretion of FM choosing the best qualified contractor with the best quality fence. DF second. No further discussion. Vote unanimous in favor: GS, AS, DF, DM, KK, JT, NG. **Motion passes.**

GS Any other updates about the end of the school year or the survey that went out to families?

FM On Friday, the survey said only 10 families wanted to stay online. Not every family completed the survey.

FM 8th grade promotion was wonderful; so was high school graduation. Kudos to students for their speeches—that's always the best part of those events. Staff was eloquent and well spoken. Special thank you to Colleen Pope who provided delicious cupcakes. I took home some leftovers, and my family enjoyed them. Special thanks to Hector and Steve for moving our benches five times during this last week. The rose ceremony was outstanding, the tea party, the

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rainbow bridge. Wow, that was wonderful. We really know how to do end of year activities. I'm happy to report that.

DM This was my first experience seeing graduations on campus, and it was just gorgeous. It was elegant and intimate. The weather was cooperating. The ceremonies were so outstanding and heartwarming. Thank you to everyone who put those events on.

NG I have a question regarding teacher openings. It's important to me that we have Waldorf teachers, especially for our 1st grade.

FM Happy to report we have a Waldorf certified teacher interviewing tomorrow. JT is involved in that process. We'll see how this interview goes tomorrow. I'm tickled pink that this teacher has thrown her name in the hat.

NG Are we honoring those ten families who want to be online, or is that our decision?

GS That's our next agenda item.

COVID-19

Hybrid Education

GS Originally Governor Ducey said we cannot offer hybrid unless we had already offered online prior to covid. Then legislature stepped in and authorized schools to do that if they met certain criteria. It's all criteria we could meet. The question is do we have the resources, and do we want to do it when we're no longer required to do it? How we should proceed?

DF Is there any information why families would want to remain online after vaccines have rolled out?

DM If we rolled out hybrid, I wouldn't want it to be done the same way.

DF It's a crazy amount of extra work.

GS We've seen the struggle all year long. I don't think we have extra people to just do an online portion. I don't think it'd be fair to ask our teachers to do that.

NG Is it possible that some families stay at home because they don't want to wear masks?

FM We didn't ask that question. We simply asked if they were planning to come back in the fall in person or online.

KK A point was raised by a staff member that it's not pedagogically appropriate to offer online instruction. It boiled it down to a core question of regardless of covid, is this the direction we want to go?

DM I was shocked we went hybrid to begin with.

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GS We were required to do so.

NG I think it would be nice to look at the core principles of Waldorf and have the media aspect looked at in regards to classrooms.

Gs I'm not sure I'm following.

NG Leaving media out of the classroom.

FM I would suggest we give these families some time. Maybe after July 4th, I check in with these families and set up a meeting and see what questions they have. I'd like to reach out and have a kind conversation.

GS I like the idea, but I don't think it's feasible to make this decision in mid-July.

FM No, I think we'd choose now, but I'd like to check in and see if the families changed their minds.

AS I think families who have said they can't return if we don't offer online have already made plans for next year. I imagine they are enrolled elsewhere already and just waiting to see what happens. I really want to show compassion for these families who cannot attend in person. If your high risk family member is under 12 and can't be vaccinated yet, that would be a reason to stay online. Or maybe it's another family member who's older who cannot be vaccinated due to other health issues. There are valid reasons for families to need an online option. We've certainly learned that hybrid is difficult for staff and students, and it certainly isn't great for Waldorf. I think we can all agree on that, but I still want to be compassionate to these families who cannot attend if we don't offer online. That being said, I'd love to see if we could keep them on the top of our waitlist, so if circumstances change and they can return, that it's easier to do so. No one wants to lose their spot. No one wants to leave, but they may have to due to circumstances they cannot control. I just want to show compassion to these families and speak with them and see what we can do to show that we care and offer some help in some way.

GS JT, thoughts?

JT I'm grateful for this conversation. Hybrid is difficult. The system is abused. Children are in and out. Families go on vacation. It's difficult to maintain educational standards. I agree with AS, I'd like to see compassion for these families who have circumstances out of their control. I'd like to see them move up on the waitlist as well. I'd like FM to work on that. I'm grateful that AS brought that up because it wasn't in my consciousness before. NG or KK mentioned that the educational system is changing and it's possible that we may be looking at some sort of online option specifically for high school in the future. But it is very difficult to maintain in the classroom for the teacher and for the students. I appreciate that we're having this conversation and making a statement to make sure that teachers and parents can make the decision that is best for their families.

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GS Thank you for sharing that. My thought at this point, is that we not pursue hybrid for the fall given that it's roughly 7% of our survey responses that said they'd leave, but AS made a great point to reach out to those families to see what the situation is and see if there's any accommodation we could make for them. Like AS said, we don't want to send the message that we're abandoning anyone, but we do have to make a decision that's best for the school. Teachers have been handling this for 18 months. We need to move back to the educational model that's best for us. I think we need to move past this unusual era.

FM The vote or decision made tonight is purely about hybrid not if the state shuts down. Is that correct?

GS Yes, absolutely. If the state said we needed to shut down, we'd have to do it. And that's different from the weird situation we were in when the state allowed us to choose the educational model based on the data. It was the worst possible choose your own adventure. I'm open to other thoughts, but that's my take on it. Okay, not hearing anything. There's no motion to make, but I would say that FM when you feel it's appropriate, please reach out to those families and see what we can do to help them out.

BOARD PROCEDURES

Approval of Minutes

GS moved to approve the 05/19/21 regular meeting minutes. DM second. No further discussion. Vote is unanimous in favor: GS, DF, JT, AS, DM, NG, KK. **Motion passes.**

Board Education

GS As distributed a form about board education. Has everyone had a chance to look at that?

AS That was a while ago. I don't everyone who was just voted on has seen the document.

GS Okay, let's table that for next time then. Can you please recirculate that?

AS Yes.

Current Board Projects

AS Working on audit items for Deb—gathering minutes, putting together other documentation as needed.

DM I can talk about what I've just signed on for during the meeting. Listed the projects she'll be working on.

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GS Thank you DM for doing all of that. On my end, I'm taking a look at the budget. I'm working on updating the charter board with our new membership. I'm also working on gathering some things to respond to our auditor for the end of June.

DF I'm reviewing the budget as well. I have some emails out looking into some science items. Also, trying to put together and push forward a form on the website for teachers to have wish lists up. I've emailed executive directors at Australian schools to start a conversation around how they implement Waldorf in their public format.

GS We've all been very busy. NG and KK, if you have any questions please reach out and we'll figure out what you can work on because there's plenty of stuff to be done.

GS moved to adjourn. NG second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: JT, GS, AS, DF, DM, NG, KK. **Motion passes.**

CLOSING VERSE

NG read the closing verse.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:06pm.

Prepared by AS on 06.02.2021.