

**MINUTES**  
**VSWEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2022**  
**VIA [Zoom](#)**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Kerstin Kubina (KK)–President	Nellie Grossenbacher (NG)
April Sauer (AS)–Secretary	Ben Fong (BF)
Dan Franks (DF)–Treasurer	Myriah Mhoon (MM)
John Tanner (JT)	
Danielle Martinez (DM)	

**MEMBERS ABSENT: Scott Edwards**

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

**GUESTS**

Invitees of the Board:  
Frank Mirizio (FM)  
Michelle Kratzer (MK)

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

Andrew Young	Heather Sullivan
Barb Cunningham	Helena Moriarty
Addie Heartkin	Deb
Peter Rennick	JJ
Dan Warner	Barnaby McGillicuddy
Sami Rank	Andrew
Sophia McCurley	Sergio Elixavide
Barb Cunningham	Tammy/Tom
Amy Edwards	Laura Heaney
Nicole Goodman	Megan
Ms. Falconburg	Kelsey
MD	

**OPENING VERSE / INTRODUCTIONS**

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

03.02.22 Approved

The Board members introduced themselves along with FM and MK.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE**

FM We have had a good last two weeks. Currently we only have two adults with Covid--FM being one of them. A kindergartner has Covid, but they have not been in school. Those numbers are down. Student enrollment—Crystal is working hard. We are at 286 right now. Our preregistration numbers for next year are up to 316 students, and of those 316, 26 are 8<sup>th</sup> graders moving into 9<sup>th</sup> grade. That's the largest incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade class we've had. Things can change, of course, but we're hopeful to keep these numbers going up. Met with Monique to start discussing the budget. Tours with Dr. Darian, Crystal, and Bonnie are going well. The high school meets with him tomorrow to brainstorm ideas to recruit from middle schools. Job openings--our 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher has resigned. We are hoping for a new teacher to start on Monday. We have a special ed teacher who resigned, so we have an opening in special ed. Actually two. The team met today to put together a plan to get through the next 10 weeks. Finding a special ed teacher in the middle of the year will be difficult, but we do have a plan in place. We need to speak to some of our independent providers as well as Carol Moriarty. Our capital projects are still stuck in city hall in Phoenix. We are waiting for the permits. That's all I have to report right now.

DM Who does receive the applications?

FM They come to our website, and I get an email along with Deb Pawlo.

DM We don't keep a data base of previous applicants?

FM Yes, I have those in hard copy, and I can see them on the site as well. The people who have applied--90% are interviewed, but we've chosen not to move forward with those individuals. 10% were paper screened out.

DM What about those who applied previously and we offered, could we contact them?

FM No, because they've taken other jobs.

DM Things change.

NG Have you reached out to the teacher who was looking for a home here?

FM No, they didn't find a home.

NG Are we getting materials for the woodshop and bathrooms?

FM Yes, everything is ready to go. The contractors are ready to go as soon as we get the permits. This is all coming out of ESSER money, so we are good to go.

NG The metal for the woodshop is in transit?

FM No, they will not deliver it until we get the permits.

NG Okay, thanks.

03.02.22 Approved

AS I want to thank you and the staff who are helping with enrollment and tours—Dr. Darian, Crystal, and Bonnie. These numbers look amazing. Thank you.

### **PARENT COUNCIL UPDATES**

MK I'm the parent council chair. I have three kids at school. I just have a few things to share. Next week is the early release for parent/teacher conferences. One of those days we will have LGO donate the lunches. Thank you to Sophie for putting that together. And then we are planning on getting back to community workdays. We have a lot of things going on on campus and we're noticing a lot of trash, so Laura Heaney is putting together a sign up for those types of things and that should be going out soon. We'll be starting up garden days as well.

AS Are class reps arranging another day to feed the teachers? I know that was discussed at Parent Council, but I haven't heard anything about it since.

MK I know class reps had a meeting. I'm not sure about the outcome. I know we've done that previously. I can check with Sophie and see if she's able to have the class reps do that. The other thing we wanted to do was a knit and chat at the front of the school on Tuesdays and Fridays. There's a couple of us who help with first grade knitting, so we were going to see if others wanted to join us for a knit and chat.

NG MK, I'm grateful to see that cleaning up the campus is something you brought up. It was awesome to see so many classes cleaning up. I was helping with animals today, and there were a lot of classes picking up around campus. That's been a concern; I know there's been some posts on social media, so I'm glad that we're making an effort to clean up. With the sign-up sheets, what types of activities will we be doing? Pond? Compost? Are these all things we can get the community involved in?

MK Yes, those are definitely on the 'need to do' list.

NG That would take some pressure off Steve and Hector, so that would be great. Is there anything else we need around the campus like more garbage bins?

MK I'm not sure. I've talked to Steve about that, so I guess a follow up with him would be needed. I've also talked with him about bringing recycle bins back. It's almost like we need some reminders about what goes in which bin. Normally around campus, there's just trash cans here and there, and not both of them. We really need to get the kids involved.

NG Does the city pick up recycling in this area?

KK Yes, we have a big bin in the back.

NG It was really good to see kids helping out today.

MK Yes, it was really cute to see the kids so excited to be helping.

DM Have teachers expressed some need from parents to help with classroom cleanliness?

FM No, teachers are happy with the classrooms due to our new cleaning company. They're doing well with the high touch surfaces like the sinks and bathrooms.

03.02.22 Approved

## **BUDGET AND FINANCIAL UPDATES**

KK Shared her screen to show the Balance Sheet for January 2022. We still have money coming in from federal and state. I have the Profit and Loss as well. It shows our revenue and net income. We're maintaining good numbers there. I wanted to provide an update on our refinance. We've received a letter of commitment from Desert Financial and are consolidating 3 loans together. 20 year, fixed rate of 4%, and that will be a nice reduction for us. The appraisals and environmental is taking longer than anticipated. They're backlogged, so this will take us longer. I've been working with RSF since this will take us past our maturity date, and Amy Bird has been helpful and everything looks good on that front. We're hoping to get our appraisals back soon.

FM I have a question about appraisals. Am I wrong to assume that because the price of everything is so high that our appraisal will come in high?

KK Fingers crossed.

DM I'd like to emphasize how willing and helpful RSF has been. I don't think this will happen with the other banks. When we've had pitfalls; they've been there to help us. I'm not in favor of this refinance.

KK That's why we went with Desert Financial. They used to be Desert Schools and were founded by some teachers. And Amy will continue to work with us if we decide to work on some future projects with them.

DM I like that our interest is supporting Steiner work as well.

KK Yeah, it's a bit of a give and take.

AS Should we take care of the legal invoice?

KK Yes, let's take care of that.

KK moved to approve the invoice for \$2,385.00 from Squire, Patton & Boggs for legal services rendered. AS seconded. The following discussion took place:

DM Our address is incorrect on the invoice.

KK Okay, I will reach out to them and have them change that. I'll make myself a note.

Discussion ensued regarding the cost and the need to approve this invoice.

Unanimous votes in favor: KK, DF, AS, JT, MM, BF, NG, DM. **Motion passes.**

## **CONTINUING BUSINESS/OPEN ISSUES**

### Discussion and Approval of Minutes

KK moved to approve the 02/02/22 Meeting Minutes. MM second. No further discussion. Unanimous Votes in favor: KK, DF, AS, JT, MM, BF, NG, DM. **Motion passes.**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Community Divide**

KK I put these agenda items on as they were received. The first item is Community Divide. NG, would you like to start us off?

NG Sure, it seems like there's been a divide for a long time at our school. We had a contemplation and that was helpful, but I feel like we need to have a conflict resolution. It's important for people to have conversation and having understanding. I would like to have the opportunity to have people park their cars at pick up and come on campus. I think that's a good step to start the conversations and being able to start understanding each other. I think it would start a healing process. I think having sporadic events isn't enough time to have those conversations with people. I think the idea the MK is proposing for Community Workdays and the Knitting is good, but the only way to solve this divide is to allow people to come together to talk. It doesn't have to be mediated or monitored. It's just parents coming to pick up and having conversations.

DM When we started at DMS it was nurturing to see kids playing before their classes. Are they doing that with their teachers and we're not seeing that?

NG I think they're being separated by grade but still playing. I'm not proposing drop off. I know that may be difficult. I'm not proposing walking through the campus. I think we should open the fence to the parking lot and allow people to come on to the grass and have conversations. I have differences with a lot of people, but I'm approachable. I've had many discussions. I think the only way to get through this divide is to get people to come together to talk. If kids can figure this out, I don't know why we can't figure this out. It gives people the opportunity to get out of their car or not.

AS I would love to hear Frank's thoughts on this. I have my own concerns regarding individuals clearing out at a specified time so they're not impeding on staff, and I'd like to see some messaging regarding safety and using the crosswalk. The parking lot already feels unsafe, and I wouldn't want this to add to that problem.

FM My teachers are not for this, and I have to support them. There are no teachers watching kids, so there's a liability issue. I do not support this at this time.

MM I'm theoretically in support, but I do feel like the storm we're in is at the peak. I'm suffering. It's heavy to be in this moment with the community. I don't want my kids to be a part of that. I don't want this on campus so that we can protect our kids. I'm not sure this would be fair for the kids.

DM That's interesting that you're assuming the worst.

MM I don't think I'm assuming the worst. I'm trending toward what I'm digesting from the community right now.

DM Let me rephrase because we've had some good conversations and that's understandable.

BF I want some clarification on the purpose because it seems like you're just asking to put things back to what they were before Covid.

03.02.22 Approved

DM I'd like to hear from MK on this.

MK There were some issues mostly during school hours. They wanted parents to sign in as visitors and keep their kids with them. Then Covid hit and nobody was allowed campus for safety.

DF Previously, you'd park and wait for the kids to come out, and then you'd be largely expected to clear out unless you had a garden day or something. I know we did get some complaints for parents who were hanging out for too long and the kids would go wandering. That is a liability issue, so I understand why that's a concern. When Covid happened, we moved to a drive through pick up to help with exposures. It also helped with timing as well.

MM I don't want to take away the sentiment because we do need to figure this out, but I think going back to DM and my conversation, we are very different when it comes to policy, but we came together to find some common ground. It doesn't always have to be a polarized conversation.

BF I'll admit to liking the system before. I did lose my kids at times like DF, but it was a great time to talk with parents. I'm for it in theory, but if teachers are not okay with this, then I'd want to respect that, and I'd be against it right now.

DF There were issues with kids getting hurt and needing help from office staff, but maybe there's some middle ground here. I think right now I'd lean toward no for right now since the polarization is so extreme right now. And it's a burden on the staff. I'd love to try to make it work.

FM MK, currently, don't you have a monthly meeting? You meet at the front and hang out afterward?

MK It's every other month. We meet at the pick up pad and do a coffee morning.

NG Drop off is tough.

FM Drop off is easier because the kids are going to class to are supervised.

NG People have to work.

FM I don't have a problem with adding it to MK's meetings.

NG I think these are all good ideas. I'm just trying to help people start healing. I know you all have to work, but I am free to stay on campus. So if people need to see a board member, I'm available. I want to foster some sort of solution for people to have open conversations. MK, is changing the PC meeting to 1:30 an option?

MK Yeah, maybe.

NG That might be a good place to start.

FM We definitely want a stop time so kids aren't roaming around because then I'm in a liability situation with no one supervising.

MM What about the Farm? Are they closed?

03.02.22 Approved

FM No, they're open. They close in the summer when it's hot.

KK Okay, well, that was a good discussion with some good options. Maybe the Farm would be a good option.

FM The Parent Council meetings have been going well, and I've never moved people off. It's a small group that hangs around before and after, and they help each other out.

MK Yes, those that can stay after and want to, a lot of times they do.

FM I think that's a great start—to invite people to the next meeting and having coffee together in an informal way.

### Public Comment

KK NG, this was yours as well.

NG I'd like to know what your thoughts are about that. And the history behind it.

DF There were time limits on public comment. People weren't respectful of the time, and it made the meetings extended. There were also some awful comments being made.

DM After 6<sup>th</sup> grade I took a break on board meetings, but I do remember they put a limit on public comment.

DF I don't think it was Gregory.

AS I was making public comments when Jimmy Wahbeh was president, and they had a time limit then, so it wasn't Gregory who enacted that. My own thoughts regarding Public Comment is that people need to follow the guidelines and the time limit. We need to have something in place to boot them off the Zoom if necessary, and I'd like it to be at the end of the meeting.

NG So it sounds like you appreciated public comment and the time limit.

AS I didn't mind the time limit as I always sent in other information in a letter to the board. Once I was on the board, we continued to have a time limit, but individuals didn't follow it. We also had people getting up every meeting and saying the exact same thing. We had individuals calling out staff and cursing and yelling at us. So we created some guidelines, but those weren't followed either. Some parents would shout out comments in the middle of the meeting and disturb the whole thing. It just wasn't working out. When we got online, we went to reading public comments, but people still weren't following the guidelines. So there were a lot of reasons behind the decision, but ultimately we decided it wasn't productive, and we do not legally have to have public comment so we suspended it. We felt we had other ways parents could address us through email and suggested they do that.

MM My self-preservation stance is high. If people are not being kind or are being abusive, I would not handle that well. We all have a limit, so I would want to make it very clear that

FM Weren't there rules about language and calling out individuals? JT, what are your thoughts?

JT I support public comment, but people have to follow the rules. The summaries that have been shared are accurate.

03.02.22 Approved

AS Would you like me to circulate the guidelines so we can all review them?

KK Yeah, share that, and we can look at those again and put that on our next agenda to discuss further.

### Board Education

KK So Joan has been speaking to us, and last I heard she was not feeling well and her husband was very ill too.

FM Joan has said that she is feeling better. She did have Covid, but she's doing well now. She said she was willing to speak with us again. And for those who don't know, her husband has sadly passed on.

DM Discussed board education and our previous plan for board members to share their thoughts regarding other topics. I'm happy to take the next meeting and coordinate with Joan if you'd like.

AS The document was made because we previously planned to share our own thoughts and pick our own topics, but when it came time, board members were not ready, so that concerns me. And we did decide that we'd have our board education come from Joan, so we didn't update the board education document.

DM I'd also like us to be working on the book club readings as well. MK, do you have a book for next month?

MK We don't. We just finished the lectures--social and anti-social impulses. We'll discuss that tomorrow and find a new book to read. We have a community member with a book coming out, so we may read that.

KK Any other discussion? Do we want to ask her to come to our March 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting?

NG I love hearing from Joan.

AS I do too. Typically, we had her coming to our first meeting of the month since we don't have budget and finance at those meetings.

NG I'm concerned about asking her to come if she's not yet feeling well.

AS I think a soft ask would be fine. Check in and see how she's doing and ask if she's still interested to come to our meetings and share her thoughts with us. And I vote Danielle do it, since she's unmuted.

KK DM, would you be willing to contact her?

DM Sure, I'll do that.

### **PROPOSED MOTION/EXECUTIVE SESSION**



03.02.22 Approved

KK moved to go into Executive Session for discussion regarding personnel matters and also to invite Frank Mirizio into the session. DM seconded. No further discussion. Vote unanimous in favor: KK, DF, AS, JT, DM, NG, MM, BF. **Motion passes.**

KK explained logistics of executive session.

Executive session began at 8:09pm.

The minutes of the Executive Session are confidential and are maintained separately pursuant to A.R.S. §§ 38-431.01 and 38-431.03.

Executive session ended at 9:10pm.

Regular meeting resumed at 9:12pm.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

KK Our next board meeting is March 2nd at 6:30pm via Zoom, and our townhall is March 22 from 5:30pm - 7:00pm on the patio. I don't believe we've had board members set. I will be there, FM, anyone else who would like to join?

NG I can be there.

DM I can be there if there's space. Do we want Parent Council as well?

KK Yes, if MK is available that would be great.

MK I can be there.

FM Dr. Darian was out of town last time. He is available this time if you'd like him to come.

KK Yes, that would be great.

DM Do we want another teacher there, or do you think Dr. Darian can field questions?

FM He can answer any questions that come up.

KK moved to adjourn the Wednesday, 02.16.22 meeting. DM second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: JT, DF, AS, DM, NG, KK, MM, BF. **Motion passes.**

### **CLOSING VERSE**

BF read the closing verse.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.

Prepared by AS on 02.16.2022.