



River Grove: A Marine Area Community School  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, April 29, 2020 – 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM  
Via Zoom Online Meeting

### Minutes

Mission - Marine Area Community School will utilize the natural resources, history, arts, and civic stewardship of the community as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, art, and other curriculum subjects. The place-based learning environment will be student-centered, designed by teachers, and reinforced and supported by the local community.

#### 1.0 Call to Order

1.1 Roll Call: Members Jackie Henschen, Bre DeCorsey, Marcy Ost, Dan Miller, Lisa Dochniak, Angie Hong, and Jessica Hansen were present. School Director Drew Goodson was also present.

#### 2.0 Approve Agenda

2.1 Motion by Hong, second by DeCorsey. Roll call vote: approved unanimously.

#### 3.0 Approve Minutes February 2020 & March 2020

3.1 Motion to approve both sets of meeting minutes with the correction of a date in the March minutes. Motion by Ost, second by Henschen. Roll call vote: approved unanimously.

#### 4.0 Community Comment

##### 4.1 River Grove Community Updates

##### 4.1.1 Board Member Driven Initiatives

4.1.1.1 Elected Officials Visits (Washington County & Local Officials, State Legislators). Member Hong set up a tour with local elected officials with Washington County Commissioner Fran Miron, Representative (District 39A) Bob Dettmer, Senator Karin Housley, and Stillwater Township Supervisor Sheila-Marie Untiedt. Because of the school closures, tours with other elected officials were postponed. Chair Miller mentioned that Rep. Dettmer now sends helpful information to the school.

##### 4.2 Citizen Comments -- None

#### 5.0 Authorizer Comments (if in attendance) – Not in attendance

#### 6.0 Reports and Discussion

##### 6.1 Director's Report:

6.1.1 Distance Learning Update: We held our first Virtual PRIDE Assembly to facilitate Community Connections; our Virtual PJ Party will be rescheduled because the Minnesota Governor declared May 1 as a non-contact, non-distance-learning day. In order to increase student contact virtually, we will be creating online clubs, having more online assemblies, and we are planning a 6th grade graduation event/parade; the PTO and board are working on Teacher Appreciation Week and staff appreciation gifts. Goodson recognized all the teachers and staff who have stepped up during this distance learning time, and stated he has heard many positive things from parents about the teachers who have gone out of their way to connect with the students. May 4 will be a planning day for teachers to discuss the rest of this year and

start thinking about next year.

River Grove received an EdVisions Collaborations grant of \$2000 for curriculum development with LevelUp Academy, a project-based charter school in White Bear Lake. Also we are partnering with EdVisions on leadership training/coaching and developing our student-centered approach.

Chair Miller noted that at this point it is unclear what next year will look like, whether we will be continuing with distance learning, and that we need to stay on top of things to be ready for what the guidelines are. Member Dochniak noted that we will need to think creatively and consider what is reasonable both for the families and the teaching staff.

- 6.1.2 Student Recruitment/Marketing: Current enrollment is 192 students. Enrollment projections for next year continue to look strong. We are still waiting to hear from some current families – have been contacting them so we can get a clearer idea of enrollment. For next year, Jody Dick will be the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher with Adam Johnson going to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

The marketing committee held a meeting to discuss ways to connect with our community and families during this time. We held a “Front Line Friday” activity in which the school partnered with the General Store in Marine to deliver meals to the Tier 1 and Tier 2 families enrolled in the childcare that is ongoing at the school. We reposted a video to Facebook and Instagram. We are planning a virtual kindergarten orientation.

- 6.1.3 Staff Additions/Teacher Grade Changes: Renee Anderson will be retiring, Jody Dick will be moving to 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Adam Johnson will be moving to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Sydney Fuerst has been hired for kindergarten, and the new 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher has been hired but not announced. A formal announcement with all the changes is forthcoming.

- 6.1.4 PTO Report: Katherine Hardie, PTO Co-chair, stated that the PTO still has \$5000 earmarked for the school. The Read-a-Thon raised \$4700 (so far), not counting a few additional donations yet to be counted, so the goal of \$5K may have been reached. Winners will be announced soon via email; winners will get Scholastic books. The Widjiwagan pancake breakfast fundraiser had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, but there’s \$1000 in reserve that can be used for next year’s 6<sup>th</sup> grade Widji trip. Staff and teacher appreciation gifts and events are in planning. The goal is to have online recognition every day, with Thursday being a gift basket delivery day for teachers. Bre DeCorsey will be putting together a video for the teachers with comments and photos from the students. Field Day in May has been cancelled, as was the spring fundraiser. There may be an event this summer. Member Hong suggested a “medallion hunt” or scavenger hunt. Parent Echo Starr suggested a virtual 5K run and said there’s many ideas on the internet.

## 6.2 Board Member Reports

- 6.2.1 Financial Report: Member Ost reported that the finance committee met to discuss 2020-21 financials. Upcoming expenses include reconfiguration of some of our spaces, and two new teachers. The marketing committee has met to find ways to reach new students and provide a welcoming experience for current families. Expenses are being watched carefully and cut where possible, such as garbage collection (not needed during the school closure), thermostat adjustments. The emergency and essential worker childcare that we are providing in association with the YMCA of Forest Lake is an ongoing expense, and there are a few additional expenses associated with contract employees who are doing more due to the distance learning. Therefore, the school applied for a PPP loan. We are looking at once again participating in the national school lunch program. Our kitchen manager, Sandi Bonarski, is experienced in the paperwork with the program, which will be a big help. We may be able to save \$1000 per month. Fundraising is a major revenue stream, which has been temporarily lost due to the pandemic. The Board will be looking at ways to recoup some of the funds. Another upcoming expense will be the May Township Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and legal fees associated with that.

Kyle Knudson of the TAG group noted that there are many questions in Minnesota schools about what summer school and extended learning for special ed may look like, as well

as questions about next year, and few answers. The current funding that charter schools receive will not change as a result of the school closures – we will still receive lease aid, special ed revenue, with no delay in payments. However, next year the legislature may change funding for next year, so it is important to be conservative with the budget for next year. He also reported that all teachers and staff are still paid during this school closure time, but the governor’s executive order doesn’t prevent budget-based layoffs. By executive order, special ed staff are able to do general ed work, and contract workers are still able to be paid if they can show they are continuing to work and haven’t furloughed or terminated workers. The lease aid application is underway; board members will be sent conflict of interest forms.

6.2.1.1 February 2020, March 2020 Approvals: Chair Miller asked for a motion to approve both sets of financial reports. Motion by Dochniak; second by Henschen. Roll call vote; approved unanimously.

## 6.2.2 Operations & Facilities Report

6.2.2.1 May Township CUP Amendment Update & Costs: The River Grove board has been having ongoing discussions with May Township regarding the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) amendment. Three areas have emerged from discussion with River Grove advisors, including Kou Vang, attorneys, civil engineers, May Township, and planners: 1) Traffic analysis; 2) Site plan (civil engineering RFP); 3) analysis of the septic system.

The costs associated with these requirements is estimated to be \$33,300. Attorney fees, if required, are not included in the estimate. The estimate for JB Vang of \$20,000 is for the site plan management; \$2000 for civil engineering services; \$4000 for a traffic study; \$4800 for the septic analysis; \$1500 for architectural services; and \$1000 for misc.

Chair Miller requested a motion to approve moving ahead with the site plan management/CUP study requirements. Member Hong asked when we might know if how the traffic study could be done and what May Township would be comfortable with. Chair Miller acknowledged that we don’t know exactly, but we need to move ahead with our conversations and studies because of the CUP’s impact on future growth. Chair Miller reiterated that the school wants to be a good neighbor to residents. Member Hansen asked when the studies might be done. Chair Miller answered all can be done quickly, with the possible exception of the traffic study. We had hoped to have the traffic study done by the end of March but the pandemic has delayed it. Director Goodson said that most of the work can be done in 2-3 weeks, but there may need to be another conversation with May Township planners regarding the traffic study. The May Township Planning Commission meets on the last Thursday of each month. Goodson added that the costs associated with the site plan management are included in the 2020-21 budget. Motion by DeCorsey; second by Dochniak. Roll call vote; approved unanimously.

6.2.2.2 Wilder Forest Lease Extension: Wilder Forest has approached Chair Miller to ask whether we would be interested in extending our lease by 5 years beyond our current lease, which runs thru fall 2022. Wilder attorneys will draft a proposal and send it to River Grove. Staff and board members will discuss language to be added to the lease with clearer expectations of maintenance issues and improvements, especially as our enrollment grows and they get a larger rent from the lease aid. Chair Miller would like to engage attorney Laura Booth to review the initial lease proposal. Ms Booth is already doing pro-bono work on our bylaws. Goodson mentioned that the attorney cost from the previous lease was \$3600. Miller stated that he expected the cost of the lease extension review to be less. Chair Miller requested a motion to approve engaging an attorney to review the Wilder Forest lease extension up to \$3000. Motion by Ost; second by Hong. Roll call vote; approved unanimously.

## 7.0 Old Business

- 7.1 Strategic Plan (update from teacher-board workshop on February 21): Topics included learning program evaluation and the question “do our curriculum and program support our mission and vision?” The teachers had a conversation about developing a theme for project-based learning every year and doing more training for project-based learning. The campus surroundings and how they are used for learning, and how to enhance existing space, were discussed. They also talked about student assessments and incoming kindergarten assessments. The outcome was that teachers should develop a subcommittee(s) over the summer to further develop these topics.

Goodson added that the grant and partnership with LevelUp will help further the project-based learning and curriculum development. A couple of meetings are coming up to further discuss these topics.

Hong added that teachers proposed that students develop a project “portfolio” that could potentially travel with them from grade to grade. This idea might work well in distance learning.

Miller asked if it is possible to write a one-page simplified strategic plan. He noted that in reviewing bylaws of other charter schools, he saw summarized strategic plans. Hong said yes, it would be possible based on the conversations had with teachers and school leaders. Teacher Annie Beck asked to share the strategic planning working documents with EdVisions.

## 8.0 New Business

- 8.1 Line of Credit Approvals - PPP Program/Propel: The current economic uncertainty related to the Covid-19 pandemic makes a loan necessary to support our ongoing operations. With to State of Minnesota budget concerns, an increase in general operating expenses due to distance learning, enrollment uncertainty, reductions in donations, increase in expenses due to critical care worker expense, a reduction in food service income, limited access to other forms of capital, and the anticipation that the School’s share of the CARES act for charter schools will be an immaterial amount based on the School’s Title I allocation the expenses of addition,, Chair Miller proposed that we seek a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, which is a low-interest loan thru the Small Business Administration. Nonprofits are eligible for the PPP loans, and because the PPP money can be used on current fixed debt, the PPP loan would help us maintain our staffing. The max we are able to request is \$255,000 based on 2.5 months of payroll expense. Kyle Knudson from The Anton Group, added that the PPP money can be used on rent and utilities. If we can show that we retained all of our employees at the end of an 8-week period, a portion of the loan is forgiven and we don’t have to pay interest.

Alternatively, Chair Miller proposed another \$100,000 Propel loan. We would not need both the PPP and the additional \$100,000.

Chair Miller asked for a motion to seek a PPP loan for \$255,000. Motion by Hong; second by Ost. Roll call vote; approved unanimously. Chair Miller also asked for a motion to seek a second Propel loan of \$100,000 if the PPP loan is not approved. Motion by Ost; second by Dochniak. Roll call vote; approved unanimously.

- 8.2 Bylaws Updates Discussion: Chair Miller is working with Laura Booth to clarify and review our bylaws, to match them up better with MN statutes and find efficiencies. Ms Booth is doing this work pro-bono.

- 8.2.1 Board Elections Pandemic Delay: Chair Miller has been in contact with our authorizer and other charter school organizations, discussing delaying until September our board elections and annual meeting which are normally scheduled for May. The seats that will be up for election are Members Henschen and Dochniak. In order to do this, our bylaws need to be amended. No board action is needed at this time.

- 9.0 Next Board of Directors Meeting: TENTATIVE Tuesday, May 19, 2020. The date may be changed due to the bylaws work needed.

- 10.0 Adjournment 8:06pm. Motion by Hong, second by Hansen. Roll call vote; approved unanimously.