

**River Grove Elementary  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Tuesday, September 14, 2021  
MINUTES**

1.0 Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 6:04pm by Chair Marcy Ost.

1.1 Roll Call: Board members in attendance: Marcy Ost, Kathrine Hardie, Annie Beck, Katie Bruns, Lisa Dochniak, Angie Hong. Also in attendance: Drew Goodson, Ele Anderson, Joseph Sovine (TAG), Gloria Kibbel (MN Guild), Breena Slivik (PTO).

2.0 Approve Agenda

- Goodson requested to remove item 9.1 – recruitment timeline from the agenda
- Hardie requested to add a conversation about a board workshop planned for the fall – added as item 8.3.
- Motion to approve agenda by Beck. Second by Hardie. All members voting yes. Agenda approved with suggested changes.

3.0 Approve Minutes

3.1 Approve August 10, 2021 Minutes

- Motion to approve minutes by Dochniak. Second by Beck. All members voting yes. Minutes approved.

3.2 Approve August 30, 2021 Special Meeting Minutes

- Motion to approve by Bruns. Second by Hardie. All members voting yes. Minutes approved.

4.0 Community Discussion

4.1 River Grove Community Updates

4.1.1 Board Member Driven Initiatives

- Hardie spoke about the recent volunteer-led effort to organize supplies. Still need to work on the leveled reading rooms. Will be looking for volunteers in a few weeks once folks get settled into the new school year. Books will be organized by F & P.

4.1.2 Authorizer Comments: Kibbel spoke about the contract renewal process that needs to happen now that we are completing our fifth year. It is a year-long process. One of the responsibilities starting in March and April will be to develop new performance goals. Written into statutes – the number one reason we exist is to improve student achievement. There is room to be creative in how we craft our goals.

- The expectation is that the MN Guild will look back at what we've accomplished over the past four years and make us look as good as possible. Future contracts could be 1-5 years long.
- In order to get a 5yr contract we need to show adequate progress in terms of governance, operations, finances, and academic achievement. 1 year contracts are only given out to schools that are struggling.
- Hardie – Are we only looking at goals laid out in our founding charter?
  - Answer: We go through those goals first but then add on additional things that we've achieved above and beyond.
- The report is due Dec 31.
- Goodson – staff met with Kibbel today to discuss what the renewal process will look like. He will be providing updates at upcoming board meetings.
- Beck – What is our role as a board?

- o Answer: Some schools create a committee with board members and staff. At other schools, the director prepares the report for the board to approve.
- o Hardie – is this a question we should discuss at our fall board workshop?
- o Goodson – the goal setting will happen in the spring.
- o Hong – so we are currently reporting out on what we’ve accomplished over the past four years (by Dec. 31) and then strategic planning and setting goals for the next five years in the spring?
- o Goodson: there are also overarching goals set by the state (ie World’s Best Work Force) that we need to incorporate. Our current goals were developed by the founding board in partnership with our school authorizer. They are very generic and don’t necessarily relate to our school and what makes us unique.
- o Kibbel: Our second round of goals need to be much more unique and directly related to what we do. River Grove is doing great and much better than most charter schools. “I wish all of our schools were doing as well as you.”

#### 4.2 Community Comments - none

#### 5.0 Finance Reports & Actions: Joseph Sovine from TAG (The Anton Group)

- Our current ADM has dropped to 205 but the state has still been paying us at an ADM of 223. Funds will be adjusted and dropping soon.
- Most of the revenue we have received so far this year is from the state general and special ed funds. Federal funds will be arriving later in the year.
- Spending for supplies and curriculum are higher at the beginning of the year
- Hardie – how long have we been operating at a different ADM rate than what the state is paying? Will we have to return funds?
  - o Sovine – no, but we will see lower payments in future months
- Hardie – commended Goodson and Sovine for good financial planning and maintaining a \$150k buffer in our budget, which will prevent the drop in student enrollment from affecting us as much as it could have.
- Ost – how has the audit been going?
  - o Sovine – it is nearly complete. There are 2-3 potential findings
  - o Ost – these are related to invoices. In one case, the provider gave us a packing slip instead of an invoice. In another, the invoice wasn’t provided in time. The requirement is to pay off invoices and provide paperwork within 30 days of receipt. The auditor will require us to update our protocol to ensure that problems like this don’t happen in the future.
  - o Hardie – who drafts the response to audit findings? TAG or the school?
  - o Sovine – usually the school with input from TAG
  - o Goodson – there isn’t a systematic problem; these are mostly just flukes.
  - o Dochniak – three out of thousands of invoices doesn’t sound like a huge problem.
  - o Goodson – they look at a sample of 25 invoices and extrapolate out. So this is 3 out of 25. However, he still doesn’t think there is a systematic problem
  - o Kibbel – as far as the MN Guild is concerned, this isn’t a big deal. These are not material findings.
- Sovine reviewed the last page of the supplemental packet.

5.1 August 2021 Approvals: Motion to approve by Beck. Second by Hong. All members voting yes. Financial report approved.

## 5.2 Audit Update – already discussed above

### 6.0 Director's Report - Goodson

- Ost – we lost a number of students related to COVID protocols. Some families left because they did not feel mask protocols were stringent enough. Some left because they did not want their kids to wear masks.
- Goodson - The school will be contracting with former Board Chair Dan Miller, at a rate of \$1 per year, to continue working with May Twp. on our CUP and explore potential new partnerships for our school.
- The school may need to consider raising our pay for bus drivers and paras to remain competitive. The district is offering large signing bonuses for drivers and schools across the country are struggling to hire enough drivers.
- Experience Friday's have been going well so far.

#### 6.1 Covid-19 Response:

- 9 students and one staff person are out on precautionary quarantine, awaiting test results. There have been no positive COVID cases so far.
- Moving forward, Grove will be offering COVID testing weekly for staff and students on a voluntary basis. The school is currently waiting for testing kits to arrive. We may look for supplemental funds to purchase kits if we don't get kits soon. Goodson anticipates that our school will become a primary location for testing now that it's getting harder for people to find testing and get results in a timely manner.

#### 6.2 Budget/Enrollment Update

- We have increased our enrollment by 14 students since last year; however, the last-minute departure of several families will affect our budget.
- We do have a contingency fund specifically for emergency situations and we will need to continue tapping into this.
- Goodson reviewed steps for a budget revision timeline:
  - September
    - Reconcile start-up expenses and subtract for staff that will not be taking benefits package offered
    - Freeze discretionary spending
    - Maximize existing federal and state grants
    - Explore private grants and partnerships
      - Scandia-Marine Lions offered to support our Experience Fridays
      - Dan Miller is exploring a potential large foundation partnership
      - Hardie – one role of the board is to fundraise for the school. Please look for potential grant opportunities and share those with Goodson and Hardie.
    - Seek new partners for a line of credit. Bell Bank has not been receptive. Propel has provided a loan in the past and could be an option. There are also a few other options to explore.

- o October
  - Budget revision draft
    - Line by line analysis
    - Final FY21 audited numbers
  - Finalize line of credit
  - Review draft with finance committee
    - Budget scenarios: Budget neutral/positive; strategic cuts; or “as is”
- o November
  - Revised budget will be submitted for approval by the board
- We will not be in statutory operating debt but currently have a budget shortfall of about \$100k

#### 7.0 PTO Report; Breena Slivik

- The PTO will be holding an outdoor fundraising event at the Zephyr in Stillwater on Friday, Oct. 8. They will pre-sell tickets to cut down on congestion and get a better idea of how many people might attend.
  - o Activities will include an online silent auction that begins Oct. 1 and ends that night (items will be picked up from the school office during open hours; gift certificates will be mailed).
    - Hardie – could the PTO send out another request for parents to get donations?
  - o There will also be a raffle with 50/50 cash prize and experience packages as prizes
  - o Carnival games; live kids’ band; craft table; temporary tattoos; pizza from Victoriano’s
    - Anderson – it helps to have someone visit each class to promote the event and raffle tickets
  - o There is an incentive prize for the highest seller for raffle tickets
    - Goodson – is not comfortable holding the event indoors if there is rain, due to rising COVID numbers
  - o The proceeds will support the music program.
    - Beck – this year’s music program is amazing! Two staff from Zephyr come to the school to do theater and music with the kids. The students are super engaged.
- Volunteer Pat has been out to clear downed trees along trails. The PTO will likely plan a buckthorn removal and trail clearing event later in the fall as well.
- PTO may do a food drive

#### 8.0 Old Business

##### 8.1 EdVisions Grant/Staff Leadership Team Update

- Hansen – Grove has been working on an EdVisions grant since summer and working on our place-based and project-based mission. Our first “Project Friday” was last week. Classes are pairing together to work on long-term projects. Her kindergarten class is working with 5<sup>th</sup> grade class and will be developing a pollinator garden.
  - o Hardie – there is a grant available for bee keeping
- Beck – her kids did a nature scavenger hunt and “getting to know you” activities. They have not selected a project yet but will over the next two Fridays.
- Ost – the Lions are also having a peace poster contest for 6<sup>th</sup> graders

##### 8.2 BARR Update

- Bruns – is meeting with teacher groups to discuss student needs. Coaching provided for each teacher. The idea is to get every kid documented to provide a

baseline for their teacher in the coming year. The focus is both academic and behavioral. They meet as a team so that different teachers and staff can offer their varying perspectives on each student.

- “You Time” – each week, teachers do emotional support activities with kids
- Beck – for each student, the conversation starts with their strengths and how to build from those
- Ost – is there a BARR leadership team?
  - The majority of teachers attended training and there are additional training opportunities for the new teachers in the future

### 8.3 Board Workshop

- Ost – we had discussed having a board workshop this fall; however, we have some potential new opportunities coming in the near future that could dramatically change how our strategic planning happens.
- Hansen – teachers have a lot on their plate with new curriculum initiatives and it would be nice to wait a bit to begin strategic planning.
- Goodson – is comfortable pushing conversations later into the fall. We might begin discussions in November once we have our budget set and are able to discuss an upcoming large opportunity.
- Hardie – is comfortable pushing that conversation until November as well. The board conversation should be less about curriculum and more about operations, decision-making, governance, and curriculum process. It is a good time now to discuss how we do the strategic plan. Will we have meetings with parents? What is our general timeline?
- Goodson – we have some good resources from the MN Guild to use and it is timely with the authorization strategic planning process coming up. Would like to set a November date for a special workshop at the next board meeting.
- Hong – it seems logical to use the re-authorization process as a framework for our strategic planning. This fall we’ll be looking at what we’ve accomplished over the past four years and can also review notes from our 2019 strategic planning meetings when we set some new goals for our school. Then, in the spring, we will be in a good place to engage parents and begin setting goals for the next five years.

### 9.0 New Business - none

### 10.0 Next Board of Directors Meetings:

#### 10.1 Regular Board Meeting: Tuesday, October 12, 2021, 6pm

- Beck – will we be meeting outside?
  - We will either meet online or indoors in person, depending on COVID.

### 11.0 Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:37pm by Chair Ost.