

River Grove Elementary
Board of Directors Meeting
Monday, October 24, 2022 at 5pm
6pm Community Presentation/Q&A
Minutes

1.0 Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 5:03pm by Chair Jessica Hansen.

1.1 Roll Call: Jessica Hansen, Lisa Dochniak, Angie Hong, Annie Beck, Greg Beaumont, Eric Olsen. Also attending: Drew Goodson, Shirley Volk, Ele Anderson, Steph Leonard (PTO), Bridget Peterson (TAG). Katie Bruns was absent.

1.2 Mission Statement: Dochniak read the school's mission statement.

1.3 Conflict of Interest: Dochniak read the school's conflict of interest statement and asked all members to verbally confirm that they have no conflict of interest. All members affirmed no conflict of interest.

2.0 Approve Agenda: Motion to approve agenda by Beck. Second by Dochniak. All members voted yes.

3.0 Approve Minutes

3.1 September 2022 Minutes Approval: Motion to approve minutes by Dochniak. Second by Olsen. All members voted yes.

4.0 Finance Report & Actions

4.1 September 2022 Financial Packet

- Bridget Peterson reviewed the September financial report.
 - Our current enrollment is 218 students
 - Our cash flow is up by \$93k since last month due to the state providing River Grove with a portion of its "hold-back" funding. The state still owes the school roughly \$200k.
- Motion from Olsen to approve the September financial report. Second by Dochniak. All members voted yes.

4.2 Manitou Fund Donation

- Manitou has given River Grove a new donation of \$125,000 for school year expenses.
 - Beck - have we discussed how those additional funds will be used? Last year, we discussed potential staff pay increases.
 - Goodson - we have a number of unexpected expenses this year, so we'll need to look at our overall budget and cash flow moving forward.
 - Hong - this is a really big donation and we should be celebrating.

5.0 Director's Report

5.1 School Events

- There have been many field trips for students.
 - Dochniak - does the school have a standard fee for field trips?
 - Beck - bussing is the biggest cost. \$11 per student no matter where they go. They try to offer scholarships, if needed.
 - Ele Anderson - the school tried to create a uniform fee structure but that doesn't work since everyone goes to different places, some get canceled, etc.

5.2 Enrollment - our current enrollment is 221 and Ele is offering open positions to students on the waiting list.

5.3 Staffing - River Grove has hired a new SpEd teacher since the last board meeting and also a few SpEd paras. There are still 1-2 open positions.

5.4 Bus Update - we are still looking for a new bus driver for the blue bus.

- Hong - when will we discuss whether or not to combine routes? Families in her

neighborhood are carpooling but it is challenging.

- Goodson - there are a lot of considerations. Already the red bus is very full with so many kids riding to Millbrook or Bayport. Adding more stops would increase the ride time length for everyone as well.

5.5 Zephyr Partnership - River Grove is waiting to see if school-based programming will be continuing. The Zephyr has offered a public commitment to continue school programming this year.

- Hong - is it possible to contract independently with Calyssa and Reed if the Zephyr is not able to provide programming support for our end-of-the-year musical? Or could we work with Ashland Productions?
- Goodson - those are possibilities

6.0 Academic Update

6.1 Manitou Fund Sponsored Teacher Training at Warner

- Beck talked about the teacher training that was sponsored by Manitou in September. It took place at the former Warner Nature Center property and was led by Hamline University.

6.2 School-wide Assessments - Shirley Volk

- MCAs are statewide tests for 3rd - 8th grade that happen in the spring and these scores are shared publicly. They don't offer very much detail, in terms of helping teachers to tailor their teaching for student's needs.
- NWEA growth exams are used with all students at River Grove three times a year and helps to measure students' growth and progress during the year. First round of NWEA for the 2022-23 school year is now completed.
- DIBBLES is used to assess reading fluency for kids aged K-4th

7.0 Old Business

7.1 Board Retreat - the board had hoped to have a board retreat but has been busy with property concerns.

8.0 New Business

8.1 Ad Hoc Board Committees: Communication and Facilities

- Communications - Drew, Jessica, Angie, and Greg
- Facilities - Drew, Shirley, Dan, Jessica, Eric, Katie
- Questions:
 - Beck - would like to join the facilities committee
 - Dochniak - where can she provide help?
 - Hansen - these are short term committees and more might be added in the future. Let's plan to alternate who is on the committees.
 - Goodson - to clarify, these committees will not take any official actions and will not approve any contractual agreements.
- Motion by Dochniak to approve the committee membership as listed above until the next board meeting. Second by Beaumont. All members voting yes.

9.0 PTO Report - Steph Leonard

9.1 Fall Fundraiser - Estimated to have raised \$13,275. With about \$3000 in expenses, this will result in a net revenue of \$10k for the school.

9.2 Future Events - would like to work with Rustic Roots next year as well and hold the event earlier in the fall to have more daylight. It was much easier to line up food trucks there and the event went really well.

- Next Monday, the PTO is planning a Halloween hike with trick-o-treat tables. Costumes required for parent volunteers.
- Let the PTO know about campus clean-up and facilities needs. There is also a Scout group looking for volunteer opportunities.

9.3 Website/Media - RiverGroveCommunity.org is a new stand alone website for the PTO that is separate from the River Grove school website.

- The PTO will be providing teachers with \$200 stipends that they can use for classroom materials without needing to submit reimbursement requests.
- The board express its support and appreciation for the PTO

SHORT BREAK

10.0 Community Discussion: Hansen re-convened the meeting at 6:05pm

10.1 River Grove Property Presentation: Drew Goodson

- Parent advocacy:
 - Parents have been very active in advocacy, writing letters, attending meetings, and door-knocking in May Township. These efforts have been successful in securing support from Senator Housley and many community members.
 - Kevin McCarthy has created a Facebook group for parent advocacy and the group had a meeting last week Monday.
- May Township will be holding two meetings this week on Tuesday, Oct. 25 at 4pm and Thursday, Oct. 27 at 7pm to discuss possible changes to land uses within the Conservancy District.
 - The township remains an important partner for River Grove. They can not influence a land sale. We do hope they support our school.
 - The township does have control over ordinances, zoning, and planning standards, as well as conditional use permits (CUP)
 - Currently, the township has a moratorium on considering any new CUPs within the Conservancy District that expires in November. They could choose to extend this moratorium.
 - The proposed wording for the updated zoning within the Conservancy District would include both elementary school and youth camp as allowable land uses. This proposed wording was created by May Twp staff and will still need to be discussed and approved by the Township Board.
 - The township could loosen or tighten the list of permitted land uses within the district.
 - This also affects River Grove's ability to get a new CUP if we were to move to the Manitou property.
 - Tuesday, Oct. 25 at 4pm will be a May Twp. board workshop for the sole purpose of discussing ordinance updates regarding the May Conservancy zone where River Grove is located.
 - Thursday, Oct. 27 at 7pm will be a public hearing to consider Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan amendments regarding the uses and performance standards within the Conservancy District and updates to the Town's transportation plan/functional classification system.
 - Timeline:
 - It will be February or March before there will be a final decision if MN Catholic Youth Partnership submits a CUP request
 - Manitou would take the lead on securing a CUP for River Grove if we move. This would follow the same timeline.
 - Advocacy efforts:
 - Relationship-building with May Township and Square lake residents
 - Reaching out to public officials
 - Wilder - the River Grove board sent a third letter requesting a meeting with the Wilder Foundation board and they have again declined to meet with us.
 - Warner Property Update
 - Manitou provided River Grove with a \$125,000 donation last week. This totals \$250k that Manitou has donated to our school over the past two years.

- Additionally, Manitou will fund a second teacher training this coming weekend.
- Manitou is taking on the up-front costs for property upgrades, portable classrooms, building and CUP applications needed to provide River Grove with a new campus if we move.

10.2 Community Comments

10.1.2 Authorizer Support Letter and Comments - Angie Hong read a letter of support from Jim Zacchini, the executive director of Minnesota Guild, our charter school authorizer.

10.1.3 Community Member Statements

10.1.4 Submitted Questions and Answers from the School Community

- Andrew Hardie submitted a question online ahead of the meeting:
 - How might this affect enrollment? Will we know ahead of time how many students will be allowed under our CUP with May Township?
 - Goodson - we won't know all of the details before open enrollment begins, but River Grove will not be decreasing in size.
 - Miller - when we previously requested updates to our CUP, we stated that all enrollments would be contingent on an approved CUP
 - Do we have a contract set up for installment of portable classrooms? And do we have a lease agreement established with Wilder?
 - Goodson - No, but we will secure those details once we have more information from May Twp. Our Lease Aid needs to be submitted to the state on July 1, 2023. River Grove aims to have contracts in place for portables by the end of the year, if that is needed.
- Pat McCarthy - is River Grove looking at other potential locations outside of May Township? And/or are we considering locations beyond what is offered by Manitou?
 - Goodson - We have a strong partner in Manitou and it makes sense to continue working with them.
- Angel Samolytz - How does the Minnesota Guild letter affect the Wilder Foundation, if at all?
 - Goodson - it won't likely influence Wilder's decision but Minnesota Guild remains strong in their support of our school
- Nick Ondrocek - Have there been any updates from the Attorney General's office or other legal avenues?
 - Goodson - Our attorney is looking into possible avenues for legal recourse but has not identified any so far.
- Steph Leonard
 - Do we have a signed MOU with Manitou?
 - No
 - At what point in time does it make more sense to move?
 - Perhaps soon, but we need to wait on May Township to hear what decision they make related to allowed land uses within the Conservancy District.
 - Miller - at this point in time, we have to proceed as if we'll be moving
 - Hong - she came into today's meeting wanting to take a vote to commit to moving but realizes that we need to wait to see what May Township decides related to land uses within the Conservancy District. She would like to see the board take a vote at its November meeting.
 - Is the board and administration considering canceling 6th grade next year?
 - Only if there isn't high enough enrollment. But there are two sections going into one, so we will likely have enough students.

- Angie Hong - if we need to purchase portable classrooms and build a new campus, will Manitou pay for those costs up front and then roll the expense into our lease? We have already spent a significant amount of money to build classrooms and upgrade our current buildings at the Wilder property.
 - Goodson. Yes. Manitou will pay those expenses up front and may or may not include them in our future lease payments. River Grove will not need to borrow money or raise funds to pay for those costs.
- Wilder stated that the Minnesota Catholic Youth Partnership would reach out to River Grove about a partnership with us. Have they?
 - Goodson - yes, but they wanted to meet under very specific terms and wouldn't answer questions about the purchase agreement. Our lease with Wilder ends in June and if the Camp hasn't taken ownership of the land by then, we wouldn't be able to work with them.
- Has Wilder given any indication that they would extend their lease with River Grove if the sale with the MN Catholic Youth Partnership falls through?
 - No. In a letter to May Township on Sept. 1, Kelly Urista stated that they would "shutter the property" if the sale falls through.
 - The biggest concern is the failing septic system, which Wilder Foundation does not have money to replace.

11.0 Next Board of Directors Meeting: Monday, Nov. 28, 2022

12.0 Adjournment Beck motion to adjourn the meeting. Dochniak second. All members voted yes. Meeting adjourned at 7:05pm.