

River Grove Elementary
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, May 31, 2023 6:45PM

1.0 Call to Order: Chair Jessica Hansen called the meeting to order at 6:50pm.

1.1 Roll Call: Board members in attendance - Jessica Hansen, Katie Bruns, Annie Beck, Lisa Dochniak, Greg Beaumont, Angie Hong. Eric Olsen arrived at 7:21pm. Also in attendance - Drew Goodson, Ele Anderson, Bridget Peterson (EdFinMN).

1.2 Mission Statement Hansen read the River Grove mission statement.

1.3 Conflict of Interest Hansen read the conflict of interest statement and asked board members to verbally affirm they have no conflicts of interest. All members indicated no conflict of interest.

2.0 Approve Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda by Bruns. Second by Beck. All in favor. Agenda approved.

3.0 Approve Minutes: Board members noted that there was a misprint on pg 4-5 in the printed version. Members reviewed the online version, which was accurate.

3.1 April 2023 Minutes Approval Motion by Dochniak to approve. Second by Beaumont. All in favor. Minutes approved.

4.0 School Property Update

4.1 MSR Design- Beth Roloff

- Roloff shared photos of the existing Zephyr interior, which is fairly dark and dated. Their plan is to use light colored interior design features to brighten the space. Cleanable, durable, moveable and flexible materials that River Grove can take with us to the new facility in the future. Acoustics are a concern as well to ensure there isn't too much noise spillover between classrooms.
- Planning to keep the existing floor. Most other things will change.
- 7 classrooms on lower level + an entry reception area. 5 classrooms in the upper level. Also outdoor classrooms (3) and outdoor learning spaces (2). Special education spaces (5).
- Installing new accessible lifts to move wheelchairs to the upper level. Stairways will be open.
- Will also include a warming/prep kitchen (no cooking), staff offices, flexible learning areas and consult corners for teachers to meet one on one with students.
- Roloff showed mock-up images of what it might look like inside the building.
- DOWNSTAIRS:
 - Classrooms will have movable tables and chairs so the rooms can be used for other activities on weekends. Classroom walls can be moved to make two small classrooms into one. Some will be glass to bring in natural light.
 - In the theater performance area, the ceiling will remain dark colored to better allow for theater use on weekends. Walls will have reversible panels white/black to be used for school/theater times. White ceiling and walls in other parts of the building.
- UPSTAIRS: One exterior addition will be added to the upper back corner of the building to add more upstairs space. Upstairs will also include quiet, calming rooms for neurodiverse students.
- OUTDOORS:
 - On the outside, they will be adding a new accessible ramp at the south end

entrance. Planting a hedge wall between the school and trail. Railroad tracks and rail car currently located there will be removed. The asphalt pad currently there will also be removed.

- No playground structures will be built on the site. Plan is to walk kids to Pioneer Park. We will also be very near the future Lumberjack Landing Park - north of Zephyr along the river.
- Working with the city planning commission

APPROVALS

- May 17 - Stillwater Heritage Committee approved of exterior design
- May 24 - Stillwater Planning commission approved Interim Use Permit (IUP) for River Grove to operate on site for two years
- June 2 - next Stillwater City Council meeting
- Future approvals needed - demolition permit, MN State Plan review, building permits
- Questions from the school board and community members
 - How many students does the current design plan account for?
 - IUP approved is for 200 students.
 - Is there a minimum sq ft space required for students?
 - State requirement is 20 sq ft per person and the building meets that
 - Who will be responsible for moving materials out of classrooms to make theater space on the weekends? Will Zephyr use our chairs? Will there be limitations on decorating classrooms?
 - That will be worked out between Zephyr, River Grove and Manitou in the lease agreement. Conversation scheduled for next week.
 - The first possible Zephyr event would be the holidays.
 - River Grove is also looking to increase our afterschool programming next year.
 - Where will PhyEd happen?
 - There is no dedicated indoor space. Katie Bruns will be lead in developing outdoor PhEd programming using trails and parks in Stillwater + Warner property
 - Where will kids be eating?
 - In classrooms or outdoors. Have negotiated an agreement with Stillwater Schools to provide food and are also discussing the possibility of having local restaurants cater on occasion. There are approximately 60 spots outdoors that could be used for eating.
 - What about band and orchestra?
 - This will likely become a before or after school program. There isn't really a place to do it during the day without disrupting classes.
 - What is in the front entry space? (south end of building)
 - Front desk, nurse office, staff offices.
 - There will be a new double-door with buzzer entry installed.
 - Goodson is also talking with Manitou about adding cameras and other security features.
 - What about the paved area on the north side of the building?
 - It is owned by the city but Manitou could lease it, repave it, and then use it.
- Goodson and Hansen thanked Roloff for her presentation and for MSR's work with the City of Stillwater.

5.0 Community Discussion

5.1 River Grove Community Updates - none

5.2 Authorizer Comments - not present. Goodson and board have been in frequent conversation with MN Guild and Jim Zacchini in recent weeks.

5.3 Community Comments: Hansen read the school policy regarding public comments.

- There were no community comments. Hansen invited people to send comments to the board via email.

6.0 PTO Report - Steph Leonard

- Tomorrow is Ninja Day!
- PTO will provide 5th graders with a snack pack for their Wolf Ridge trip.
- Fall Fundraiser will be Sept. 29 at Rustic Root Winery.
- Goodson thanked the PTO for their teacher appreciation gifts and recognition two weeks ago. Hansen thanked the PTO also for sharing the kind comments that parents shared about teachers on the River Grove parent page.

7.0 Finance Report & Actions - Bridget Peterson (EdFinMN)

7.1 April 2023 Financial Packet

- We are 83% through the fiscal year. ADM is still at 223 students.
- Need to do a budget amendment because we received more revenue than expected. Expenses are also higher than expected. This was mostly due to donations for specific activities. Fund balance is still projected to be positive. This balance will change once the budget is updated.
- Cash flow has gotten tighter than expected, primarily due to an increase in contracted SpEd services not in the original budget. We'll eventually get the funds to cover those expenses, but there is a 12-18 month lag, so we don't get the money now when we need it. This is common with SpEd programming at other schools too. Need to plan ahead for this time lag in SpEd reimbursements in the future.

7.2 Treasurer's Report

7.2.1 Corporate Borrowing Resolution-Line of Credit - Goodson

- We hired Shirley Volk in the fall to overhaul the school's SpEd program. Volk subsequently left during the winter and the school has had to supplement that support through a contract.
 - The school currently has a 6-7% budget balance, rather than 10% balance, due to COVID-related expenses. The state holds back 10% of annual revenue and gives it to the school the next fall.
 - We are currently in a money cash flow crunch due to the holdback on state reimbursements and additional SpEd expenses. We will balance out eventually once we get reimbursed, but need cash now to pay vendors in a timely manner.
 - River Grove could get a \$50k bridge loan from Propel or Bremer Bank.
 - Goodson asked the board to consider passing a Corporate Borrowing Resolution. He will wait to submit the application until he hears back from Bremmer to know if they will also offer a loan. Would like to compare interest rates for each. Bell Bank, who we work with currently, does not give loans to charter schools. Bremer is potentially interested in working with us as our regular bank as well.
 - This would be a short-term loan that would get paid back in November.
 - There is no prepayment penalty. 7% interest for Propel loan. Hoping to get a better rate from Bremer. If we get a loan from Bremer, we might also move our banking to Bremer.
- Beaumont - could there be any unexpected expenses at the end of our lease?
 - Maybe but hopefully not.

- Motion from Olsen to approve signing Corporate Borrowing Resolution with Propel. Second from Beck. All in favor. Motion approved.
- Motion to approve April Financial report by Olsen. Second by Bruns. All in favor. Motion approved.

7.3 FY24 Budget

7.3.1 Staff Salary Analysis -

- Goodson has talked with Hong, Olsen and Hansen about current staff salaries and potential to change the compensation rates in the future or initiate a grade system that rewards longevity and performance. Goodson has reviewed current staff salaries in comparison with Stillwater and Forest Lake Districts and other charter schools in Minnesota. Our teacher salaries are significantly less than at the district (20%) and close to in-line with other charter schools. However, most other charter schools have some type of step system.
- We will likely have the finance committee develop a recommendation, with limited teacher involvement to avoid any perceived conflict of interest.
- Olsen has created a budget scenario to consider. It would be a short-term loss but would even out over five years.
- Hong expressed her desire to offer the teachers some kind of raise this coming year. We haven't in the past three years due to unexpected expenses but need to this year.

7.3.2 Budget Workshop -

- The board will hold a budget workshop on Sunday, June 4 at 7pm to discuss the 2023-34 budget. The workshop will be held via zoom.

8.0 Director's Report

8.1 Enrollment Update - We have 174 students enrolled for next year. There is a possibility to recruit more students for K, 3rd and 4th grades for next year.

- City of Stillwater planning commission approved an IUP to use the Zephyr property for two years.
 - There were some concerns from neighbors about traffic and safety along Hwy 95 / Main St. River Grove will ask the city to create a slow speed school zone in that area.
 - Neighbors also complained about junk behind the building, currently. That will be cleared up. Manitou will likely lease the parking lot to the north from the city.
- Moving planning is underway. Sandy is in charge of scheduling storage. Goal to be out by June. 15. Our current lease ends on June 30.

8.2 SY24- Tentative Calendar

- Goodson asked the board to approve a tentative calendar tonight, with the knowledge that it might need to be adjusted due to construction.
- First day of school would be Sept. 11. The rest of the calendar mostly mirrors District 834, with a few exceptions where River Grove will have additional days off.
- There is the possibility to use some of the building if components aren't ready by Sept 11 (ex. downstairs only) or have field days at the Warner site for the first couple of weeks.
- Regardless of when construction is done, River Grove will be using the Wilder site as an outdoor field school on a frequent basis.
- Welcome conferences would be held during the first week of September.
- Hansen recommended holding Open House/Welcome conferences at the end of the inservice time, to give teachers ample time to prepare.
- Beck motion to approve the proposed calendar with the addition of Sept 7 and 8 Welcome conferences and Open House on one of those days. Second by Hong. All in

favor. Motion approved.

9.0 Academic Update - Freshwater and Hamline are working on a proposal to Manitou to support River Grove's use of the Wilder property as an outdoor school, concurrent with our use of the Zephyr building. Each class would have designated field days each week. They are also exploring the possibility of offering River Grove teachers additional training, credits and certification.

10.0 Old Business

10.1 Board Committees - Hong worked with Ele Anderson to create transition committees. Staff and board members are signing up for those and will engage parents in the next couple of weeks. Hong will talk to Sandi about mobilizing volunteers to help pack for moving day.

11.0 New Business

11.1 Board Elections - MN Guild recommended holding board elections until the fall. Call for nominations in October and elections in November.

11.2 School Director Evaluation Timeline - A closed session will be held on June 11 to conduct a School Director evaluation. Hansen will send evaluation forms to board members

12.0 Next Board of Directors Meeting: Sunday, June 11 at 7pm.

13.0 Adjournment Meeting adjourned at 9:04pm.