

River Grove
Board of Directors Meeting
Yogurt Surf Shop in Marine on St. Croix
Monday, July 17, 2023 5:00 PM

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: Board Chair Katie Bruns called the meeting to order at 5:14pm.

1.1 Roll Call: Board members in attendance: Katie Bruns, Lisa Dochniak, Annie Beck, Eric Olsen, Angie Hong, Breena Slivik. Absent: Greg Beaumont. Also in attendance: Ele Anderson, Jessica Hansen, and Drew Goodson.

1.2 Mission Statement: Bruns read the River Grove mission statement.

1.3 Conflict of Interest Statement: Jessica Hansen read the conflict of interest statement and asked board members to verbally affirm that they have no conflict of interest with the topics on the agenda. All members confirmed they have no conflicts of interest.

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

3.0 Approve Minutes: June 2023 Board Minutes: Motion to approve the minutes by Beck. Second by Beaumont. All in favor. Minutes approved.

4.0 Community Discussion

4.1 Authorizer Comments: Minnesota Guild was not in attendance. Jim Zacchini sent a note to Drew Goodson earlier this week to express support for River Grove in its time of transition. The Guild will be holding a couple of meetings this summer and a networking event in the fall that board members can attend if interested. Bruns and Hansen will be attending the August meeting for school directors.

4.2 Community Comments: There were no community comments.

5.0 Finance Reports & Actions: Drew Goodson

- There was no member from TAG/EdFinancial in attendance and no June financial report to approve. Goodson recommended that we change accounting firms for the coming year. He has concerns with our financial reporting and accuracy. As an example, our current firm projected a \$200k surplus in February, which then became a \$50k deficit in April. A neighboring charter school that works with the firm has had similar experiences. It makes it hard to plan and budget without accurate financial projections. Another big issue is making sure we can access employee retention credits. He would like to transfer our account to Bergan. They are more expensive (\$8k more) but he's confident they'd help us to access the employee retention credit, which translates to more than \$100k in revenue. (Note this is a one-time revenue, not recurring.)

- Questions:
 - Anderson - what are the downsides?
 - It would require a bit of work to transfer to a new system and get to know the new staff reps.
 - Hong - would Bergen have a local rep attend our meetings?
 - The contract would include 36hrs of support per year, which could be used for board meetings, finance meetings or other in-person support.
 - Bruns - is this a change the board would need to approve?
 - Would be good to have board approval. It is our biggest contract.
 - Hansen - do we need to change this in our annual designations?
 - Hong - is there any risk we'll switch to Bregan and still miss out on the employee retention funds?
 - Yes - but it would be good to have a firm that will pursue possible funds for us, especially when other schools have been able to access them. It's also important for us to be able to trust that we're getting sound financial advice and not missing opportunities.
 - Bruns - would like to have the contract available for board members to review before we vote.
 - Dochniak - are the contract terms and staff hours similar to what we've had with TAG?
 - Mostly, yes.
 - Goodson - there is a 90-day out for our current contract.
 - Olson motioned that the board authorize a change in financial advisor, based on recommendations from Goodson and the financial committee, for an up to \$70k contract in 2023-24. Slivik second. All in favor. Motion approved.

6.0 Director's Report: Goodson

6.1 Move Out Update: Ms. Sandi led the move-out and did a great job. Wilder Foundation was very happy with the condition that we left the buildings in and no additional charges were levied. Sentence to Serve crew also came out to help. Hansen gave a shout out to Annie, Sandi, Drew, Ele and Katie for all the extra work they've done over the summer to get through the transition.

6.2 Enrollment Update: Projecting 168 students with some pending invitations. Several families are waiting to commit.

6.2.1 Marketing Update: Ele Anderson has developed numerous new marketing materials to advertise our new location, field site, and programs. She was at Lumberjack Days over the weekend, along with staff and volunteers, and talked with many prospective families. She's also developed a lot of new marketing materials for social media. Hansen said she knows of numerous new families planning to enroll. There was a tremendous reaction from families at Lumberjack Days and people are really excited. The event seemed to create a lot of buzz.

6.3 Staffing Update: Four new staff members hired

- Celia Hansen will be teaching 1st grade. She's a new grad from the Stillwater area and has experience working with SpEd.
- Sherry Larson will be teaching 2nd grade, currently a naturalist at William O'Brien State Park and has experience working with SpEd students.
- Marcy Wirth will be teaching kindergarten. Has been at River Grove since 2017.

- Jessica Hansen will be the new director of staff and student services.
- Need to hire one more teacher for the coming year.

6.4 Academic Planning for SY24:

- Instead of sending out emails about field trips every week, the school will just use a blanket field trip form and charge a once per semester fee so that parents don't have to keep signing up and paying over and over. There will still be scholarships for kids that need them.

6.4.1 5th Grade Trip Update

- The kids will be going to Door County and staying in yurts at a camp with kayaking, high ropes, team-building and other activities. They'll be going the second week of school, M-Th. \$185 per kid. Katie Bruns will be going.

7.0 PTO Report: There was no PTO member in attendance.

8.0 Old Business

8.1 School Property Update:

- Interior demolition of Stillwater site is complete.
- A large tent was set up to be used for outdoor learning in the coming year
- Will provide learning backpacks and might also get reflective vests for kids to wear when they're in Stillwater to increase visibility when they're walking around downtown and at local parks.
- Will be sending out an email and package to parents in the next couple of weeks with info about all of these details.
- Plan to start the school year with field site visits to maximize use of the outdoors during good weather.

9.0 New Business

9.1 Annual Designations: Goodson read the annual designations and asked the board to approve the list. This year's list includes:

- Individual with authorized authority - Drew Goodson
- Bell, Propel and Bremer Bank
- Investments
- Other association banks and processing - PayPal
- Authorized bank signers - Drew Goodson, Katie Bruns, Eric Olsen
- Special ed licensing - Judith Nagel
- Title 1 and 2 representative - Drew Goodson
- Authorized to make financial decisions - EdFinancial and BerganKDV

Motion to approve recommended designations by Dochniak. Second by Slivik. All in favor. Approved.

9.2 Board Calendar: Proposal for the board to meet on the third Monday of the month at 5pm, except for September when the board will meet on Sept. 25.

9.2 Class Section Capacity

- Previously, the board voted to have one section for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. Currently, we have 27, 21 and 27 students enrolled for those grades. Would the board like to vote on a cap for those grades?
 - Beck spoke about the challenge in teaching larger classes and how it

varies based on the dynamics of each year's kids are like. Also space limitations

- Recommendation to cap 3rd and 5th at 27, with the possibility to increase to 29 with the agreed upon approval of the teacher, the parent and administration. Cap 4th grade at 22, with the ability to go to 25 with the agreed upon approval of the teacher, the parent and administration.
- Motion by Beck. Second by Dochniak. All in favor. Motion approved.

10.0 Next Board of Directors Meeting (s): Monday, Aug. 21 at 5pm.

10.1 Regular Board Meeting: Third Monday of each month at 5pm.

11.0 Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:07pm.