

River Grove
Regular Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, October 12, 2023 5:00 PM
MINUTES

- 1.0 Call to Order: Board chair Katie Bruns called the meeting to order at 5:00pm
- 1.1 Roll Call: Board members in attendance: Eric Olsen, Lisa Dochniak, Sarah Godsave, Angie Hong, Katie Bruns, Breena Slivik. Also in attendance: Drew Goodson, Jessica Hansen, Madison Boesel.

Our mission is to 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.

Please state now if *any members disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts.*

- 2.0 Approve Agenda: Motion to approve agenda by Dochiak. Second by Slivik. All in favor. Agenda approved.
- 3.0 Approve Sept. 25 Special Meeting minutes: Motion to approve by Olsen. Second by Dochniak. All in favor. Minutes approved.
- 4.0 River Grove Community Updates
 - 4.1 Authorizer Comments. No one from Minnesota Guild was in attendance. Bruns spoke with Jim Zacchini this week and he wished us well.
 - 4.2 Accept written community comments. The board promised to respond to community questions during the meeting or by email after the meeting.
- 5.0 Finance Reports & Actions: River Grove transitioned to a new financial advisor - Esterbrooks - in August so we haven't received a financial report since the June meeting. Goodson asked if the board would prefer to get monthly reports for July - October, or just get the most up to date financial report as of October at the next meeting.
 - 5.1 June 2023 Financials - Esterbrooks presented administration with a preliminary report for June.
 - 5.2 Audit update - Easterbooks working on interviewing staff and board members.
- 6.0 Curriculum and Fieldsite Updates: Marcy Wirth and Lisa McGuire
 - 6.1 1st grade: Wirth is one of the first grade teachers and showed the board the contents of the learning kits that kids got at the beginning of the school year. Includes a journal where kids are recording nature observations with drawings and writing. Parent volunteers have done guest lessons on mushrooms, flower pressing. Today they looked for leaves and are learning about plant biology. She co-teaches with Celia Hansen.

Other learning activities:

- Visits from Wild Rivers Conservancy
- Live raptor show
- Rocks, plants, birds

Wirth spoke about her love of teaching in the outdoors. The Manitou field site has been a great location and the class tents have worked very well. The most important thing is holistic social - emotional - academic learning. Staff always put students first and provide quality education. Many positive things are happening at the school. Integrating

nature with teaching to state standards. In 40 years of teaching, she's never experienced such a sense of pioneer teaching.

The board thanked Wirth for her work and presentation. Jessica Hansen noted that River Grove is a teacher-powered school and empowers teachers to create meaningful curriculum.

- 6.2 5th grade/ SPED - Lisa McGuire serves as a Special Education teacher in 5th grade and occasionally with 4th graders. She's been teaching for years but this is her first time working in outdoor education. Kids get to experience multiple modes of learning, including kinesthetic. Teachers spend a lot of time designing curriculum to align with Minnesota State standards. Classes follow a daily regular schedule that includes direct instruction for reading, writing, math, social studies and science, as well as social-emotional learning. Teaching team has found creative ways to meet service minutes and needs of students with IEPs as well. River Grove provides all the same support as other public schools, but in a very unique setting. Teachers and staff care deeply about students and helping them to thrive. Helping kids to succeed in the long term, as they advance to middle and high school. River Grove has been the best teaching experience of her career.

McGuire shared example teaching tools:

- Books: Birds of the Northwoods, Audubon Backyard bird watchers; Minnesota trees; Nature in the Twin Cities
- Jeffers Journal
- Teaching units on lake plants, megawords (language arts, spelling)
- Binoculars

The board thanked McGuire for her work and presentation. Hansen noted what a great teaching team we have at River Grove.

Hansen shared a slide presentation with photos from recent programming at River Grove.

- 6.3 Stillwater Library Connection: Megan Ondracek will be a school librarian for River Grove. The school will be partnering with Stillwater Library and kids might start visiting in October.
- 7.0 PTO Report: No update. The PTO will meet on October 23. The nature BINGO event last weekend went well.
- 8.0 Director Update: Drew Goodson
- Current enrollment is 126 students. Goodson expects that we will be able to regain enrollment once we have a building.
 - River Grove received a grant to support library services, as well as reading and math specialist support. Megan Ondracek is beginning a new position as school librarian and providing intervention and teaching support for 2nd grade.
 - Wild Rivers of the St. Croix and Namekagon has been visiting River Grove once a week to do special programming with the classes. They offer a wide variety of teaching units on different topics. Bogs. Rocks. Pond mucking.
 - Classes have been going on numerous field trips to different locations in the area, including apple orchards, zoo, Wildlife Science Center, Carpenter Nature Center. Field trips will continue throughout the winter and are a core component of our place-based teaching model.
 - Construction continues on the Manitou Education and Arts Center in Stillwater.

- Manitou has entered into a purchase agreement on the Wilder Forest property. The sale has not yet closed.
- Goodson recommends that River Grove begin using indoor classroom spaces at the Stillwater Evangelical Free Church, beginning Monday, Oct. 16 until our future school building becomes available to us. Goal is to ensure consistent drop-off and pick-up location for families. Programming, arrival and dismissal will take place at this site. However, students will also have opportunities to get outside and use the church playground, field, trails, and the nearby Brown's Creek State Trail. Students will also continue to enjoy field trips and potential visits to the field site. Want to ensure kids and teachers stay warm in the chilly mornings.
- Motion by Olsen to approve Goodson's recommendation to begin using the indoor classroom space at the church, beginning Monday, Oct. 16 until the future school building is ready. Second by Hong. All in favor. Motion approved.

9.0 Old Business

- 9.1 Workshop conversation: Bruns suggested a board workshop in January to resume strategic planning and discuss long-term planning.
- Slivik suggested creating new committees in January to carry forward business and planning goals.
 - Dochniak also noted that the board should work on updating the River Grove mission statement.
- 9.2 Board Meeting Calendar: Bruns and Goodson recommended that the board meet on the third Thursday of the month for the remainder of the school year, except for March, which will be March 14 due to spring break.

10.0 New Business

- 10.1 Board Elections: Madison Boesel was the only candidate for this round of school board elections. Bruns spoke highly of Boesel's teaching and work at River Grove. Bruns asked for a board vote to confirm Boesel as a new River Grove board member. All in favor. Boesel will serve a three year term.
- 10.2 Board Officer Election: Board positions run for one year.
- Hong nominated Eric Olsen to continue serving as board treasurer. Second by Dochniak. All in favor.
 - Dochniak nominated Angie Hong to continue serving as board secretary. Second by Godsave. All in favor.
 - Slivik nominated Lisa Dochniak to continue serving as vice chair. Second by Olsen. All in favor.
 - Hong nominated Bruns to continue serving as board chair. Second by Dochniak. all in favor.

11.0 Next Board of Directors Meeting (s):

- 11.1 Regular Board Meeting: Nov. 16th at 5pm

12.0 Adjournment: Bruns adjourned the meeting at 6:14pm.