

River Grove
Special Board of Directors Meeting
Monday, September 25, 2023 6:00 PM
MINUTES
Approved 10-12-23

1.0 Call to Order Chair Katie Bruns called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

1.1 Roll Call Katie Bruns, Eric Olsen, Lisa Dochniak, Breena Slivik, Angie Hong. Sarah Godsave was absent. Also in attendance: Drew Goodson and Jessica Hansen.

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. No members shared any conflicts of interest.

2.0 Approve Agenda: Motion to approve agenda by Dochniak. Second by Hong. Agenda approved.

3.0 Approve Minutes: September 14, 2023 Board Minutes. Motion to approve by Slivik. Second by Dochniak. Minutes approved.

4.0 Church basement update on potential use: Bruns spoke about the indoor rainy-day learning space available to us through Stillwater Evangelical Free Church.

- The church is located on Manning Ave. River Grove students used the space for the first time today. Because it didn't rain during the school day, the teachers and kids were also able to use the outdoor space at the facility. Administration made the decision to call a rain day last night so teachers had time to gather materials ahead of time. They used carts during the school day.
- Board conversation:
 - Slivik - How difficult of a transition was it for teachers to use the new indoor space today?
 - Most had time to pick up materials from the field site yesterday and were able to clean-up and get out by 4:30pm.
 - Specialist programs started today - music programming was able to happen without problem at the indoor space.
 - Goodson -River Grove is very thankful to the church for providing an indoor space. Pastor Nick has a kindergartener at River Grove. The classrooms are a little small but it works well for use on a temporary basis.
 - Hansen - there are windows in some classrooms and a nice outdoor space as well.
 - Goodson - the church has offered River Grove access this fall whenever we might need it. We may need to stop conducting outdoor field visits by the end of next week (Oct. 6).
 - Slivik - biggest concern is mornings, which are much colder than daytime temps. Parents won't necessarily think of sending their kids to school in snowpants on an October morning when it's 40.
 - Bruns - when temps start to get cold, kids get chilled within 1.5 to 2hrs.
 - Hong - are we still projecting that the Stillwater building will be ready to move into around MEA weekend?
 - We're not sure when construction will be completed. Goodson recommends that we plan on using the church as our home base beginning Oct. 9 until we're able to get into the new building.
 - Dochniak - how was attendance today compared to normal?
 - Goodson - it was pretty good but a couple of families decided to opt out today.

Change can be more challenging for some students than others.

- Goodson - would like to give parents consistency and not vacillate back and forth from day to day. Would like to plan on consistently using the church beginning Oct. 9. If there is a warm day, students could bus up to the nature center from there for shorter visits during the day. Buses are able to take kids to the nature center and other locations but it is an additional cost.
- Dochniak - does the whole school need to go to the nature center in those examples? Or might it just be one or two classes?
- Hong - if we're planning to start using the site on Oct. 9 but won't meet as a board until Oct. 12, should we be taking a vote tonight? And if so, she would like to hear input and feedback from parents and teachers in the room first. She supports the decision to start using the church on Oct. 9 but would like to take an official board vote rather than just doing it.
 - Goodson - to be clear, there will be no cost to River Grove to use the church and no lease or use agreement required.
- Hansen - what do other board members think?
 - Dochniak - likes the idea and it's much better than doing the reverse and having kids get dropped off at the field site and be shivering and cold.
 - Olsen - he visited the space and said it feels welcoming and the staff had done a good job of removing religious references so it felt like a secular space.
 - Goodson - would like to recognize that we are a public school serving a wide variety of people from different backgrounds and religions and meeting in a church basement makes some parents feel uncomfortable.
 - Bruns noted that she has heard from an equal number of parents that support using the church vs continuing to use the field site as long as possible.
 - Slivik - she would like things for parents to be as consistent as possible but would also support having Oct. 9 as our tentative date to begin using the church site full time
 - Bruns - do we need approval from the MN Guild?
 - Goodson - MN Guild provided a letter of support that notes that we are a place-based school that uses a "teaching without walls" philosophy. Our school is different and unique and utilizes our amazing community and assets even though we don't have a building currently.
 - Bruns supports the admin recommendation to begin using the church as a home base beginning Oct. 9.
 - Hong would like to take an official vote but would also like to hear from parents in the room before doing so.

4.1 Discussion on October calendar

4.2 Weather related protocols: How might we adjust our current cold-weather and outdoor policy to make decisions as to when to use the field site vs move kids to the alternate indoor space? Goodson listed some of the components in the current River Grove weather policy.

4.3 Curriculum Update: Jessica Hansen shared a slideshow with images from River Grove's first two weeks of school.

- The 5th graders went to Door County, participated in a navigation and maps course, and also did high ropes.
- Kinder through 4th grade had a visit from Wild Rivers Conservancy and completed a plants course which included a study and building of mini-bogs last week.
- Specialist programming: Art, music, PhyEd and social-emotional learning began this week. Today was music.
- This week River Grove students will also get a visit from Earth Quest, who will be

bringing in live raptors.

5.0 Community Comments:

Community members in attendance asked questions and shared opinions about how long to continue using the field site for programming, when to expect construction to be completed on the Stillwater property, and how to best communicate with families and external partners this fall.

Bruns recommended convening a follow-up board meeting on Monday, Oct. 2 at 6pm, and requested that administration present operational details for how/when River Grove will use the indoor facilities at Stillwater Evangelical Free Church, along with outdoor programming at the field site, until the Stillwater property is ready for students to move in this fall.

6.0 Next Board of Directors Meeting (s):

6.1 Regular Board Meeting: Oct. 12th at 5pm

7.0 Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:52pm.