



SIDE BY SIDE
CHARTER SCHOOL

Side by Side Board Meeting
March 1, 2016
(originally scheduled for February 23, 2016)

APPROVED MINUTES

I. Roll Call

A. Members of the board in Attendance: Anne Dichele, Matt Nittoly, Adam Norris, Jimi Napoli, Mary Newbery, Sally Davids, Cathy Cappellieri, Steve Ferguson. Chris Berich, Bill Murphy, Kimberly Grimm

B. Members Absent: Joy DeJaeger, Nicole Shargoury, Larry Cafero, Melanie McGowan (maternity leave)

Member note: Faculty member Cassie Bourgeois will be filling Melanie McGowan's seat for balance of the year starting at next months meeting.

II. Public Session

None

III. Call to Order

A. Anne at 5:30

IV. Review of Minutes

A. Motion from Kim , second from Steve

B. Typo correction in Roll Call

C. Move to accept by Chris, minutes approved

V. New Business

Auditors Review and Report - The audit, performed by DHL&S, is in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards in the US and Government Auditing Standards. Side by Side's accounting policies and practices are in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the US. No significant changes to accounting policies and practices, and no preferable practices were identified. The auditors reviewed required communications for possible illegal acts (none noted), material weaknesses in internal control (none noted), material errors or irregularities including frauds (none noted) and disagreements with management (none noted).

Not a lot of comments on balance sheet, cash is still strong, and fixed assets are pretty consistent with last year as well as liabilities. Income Statements also showed consistency with last year. Overall the auditors are very comfortable in the efficiency of balancing the budget and running our business.

VI Reports

Directors Update

School calendar: **BACKGROUND**

- SBS is provided transportation by Norwalk Public Schools. Our Calendar has always been identical to NPS (except for some minor changes); For many reasons (instructionally and financially it is in our best interest to follow NPS calendar as similarly as possible)
- Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, SBS needs to align with guidelines of the **CES Regional Uniform School Calendar**. Those guidelines include:
 - At least 180 days of actual student school days
 - A common start date within the region before Labor Day
 - Uniform Professional Development days for certified employees
 - 3 uniform vacation periods: December holidays, an April break, and summer vacation.
 - Up to 5 flexible days available for districts to customize for local needs.
- SBS and all schools are looking to increase instructional time, especially before state assessments.

Important Notes regarding SBS calendar

- Continue with same schedule for first days back (teachers/staff have 3 days for preparation/PD prior to students starting; Students begin same day as NPS)
- Eliminate 3 early release PD days (SBS has been using since 2011); This will increase number of full instructional days; PD is much more individualized now; use of interns and additional staff allows for more release time during curriculum and data teams
- Elimination of Columbus Day as a holiday/day off (consistent with CES Uniform Calendar).
- NPS is now scheduling their elementary conferences in December (instead of November) and March to align with trimester progress reports. Therefore, SBS will now utilize NPS conference nights (90 min ED) as our own (this will eliminate additional unnecessary ED days)
- March PD day moved to February; replaced with day before Presidents Day holiday break (Thursday, February 16, 2017 and Thursday, Feb. 15, 2018) (consistent with NPS).
- Friday, Feb. 17, 2017 and Friday, Feb. 16, 2018 designated a holiday for students and teachers. No additional days off following President's Day.

- Early dismissal days at end-of-year reduced from 5 to 2. (last 2 days only)
 - June 9 as tentative last day of school in 2016/17 and June 11 in 2017/18, pending inclement weather cancellations.
 - Calendar is 181/180 days in 2016/17 and is 181/182 days in 2017/18
 - In 2016/17 Good Friday falls within the April break so it is not an additional holiday/day off
 - Yom Kippur falls on a Saturday in 2017 so it is not included as an additional holiday/day off
 - 2 calendar versions drafted (with “Day before Thanksgiving” as ED day or as No School day); 11/23/16 and 11/22/18 is the day before Thanksgiving. This has traditionally been a 2 hour early release day (which it will continue to be in NPS calendar). The days consists of many interruptions and absences (student and staff) due to travelling and early departure requests. We are a regional school w/ families residing in multiple towns and cities
- I. **Technology Grant:** We recently received notice of a grant award in the amount of \$9,905. We applied for this Technology RFP offered through CSDE over the summer to provide school districts with funding specifically meant for hardware replacements for testing. We will be purchasing some new laptops with these funds. The expected availability is next month.
- II. **Facility Update:** *(See Facility Report below)*
- III. **MAP testing for 2016-17:** We have recently been informed that the PCLB Foundation (Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation) will again fund the MAP assessments for all CT Charter Schools in 2016-17.
- IV. **Curriculum and Assessment update: (Mary Newbery)**
- **CT’s new system of accountability; School performance indexes.**

Finance Committee

Statement presented on PTCO monies and account balance. Question arose on how the opening balance was calculated. Linda to investigate. Assurance that ending balance was accurate to date.

Profit and Loss statement

Notes on

4300 H Facilities grant is backed out at bottom, used complete this year.

6590B Business Insurance increase from Work Comp audit

Balance Sheet

No considerable change from previous month

PTCO Update

Discussion on of survey. Largest response was difficulty based on time of meeting, consideration to change.

Possible fundraising bingo, movie night, community involvement.

Facilities Committee (offered by Matt)

- Recently sent a letter and spoke with Bob Duff and NECSN regarding our interest in school facility construction money from the state to help fund a new Upper School building. We also discussed these plans briefly at the January Board meeting regarding the possibility of looking into replacing the Upper School with another modular building (in hopes that 2 stories is a possibility).
- In February I met with Craig Drezek to get some additional information regarding Charter School funding assistance for new facility;
- Craig is the Executive Director of Highville Charter in new Haven, who recently led his school through the process of buying a new building for \$11-15 million in New Haven. (They were formerly renting space in Hamden; they house approximately 360 students).
- Highville recently moved to a new facility at 1 Science Park in New Haven; It is a 3 floor space totaling 120K sq ft.; They paid approximately \$13million for the building (although I am not certain of the exact amount)
- Highville was unable to get any state assistance via any requests for "school construction" funds for public schools that are requested through the state government's Education Committee. They informed by CSDE that Charters are not eligible for this money.
- I spoke with Rob Kelly at CSDE to confirm this. Rob explained that state law does not allow LEA's access to school construction money; Only RESCs or Districts are eligible. Therefore, "Charter Schools are not eligible."
- Craig and Rob both told of similar instances where "temporary exceptions" were made to this law based on overwhelming support from legislators to allow for charters to get this financial assistance. This occurred most recently when Amistad School (Achievement First) was awarded \$35mil via school construction bonding from the state government. Based on the information I was provided, it is my interpretation that AF Schools are able to spend a very large amount of money on lobbyists to help make this happen. It was an 11th hour deal that created a 1-time loophole for them to get this money. The law has not been changed permanently.
- According to Craig and Highville, NOT getting state assistance via this manner was the best thing that could have happened to them. Instead, by looking for ways to borrow money, they were provided much more control with regards to constructing how they wanted and using who they wanted (i.e. no need for prevailing wage, bidding process, etc.)

- Highville had \$500K of their own money to start with. In addition, they were awarded the max \$850K from the state via the “Charter Facility Grant” (same one that we received \$400k+ for building projects). Their approved application for this grant award was for the sole project of constructing a new building.
- Highville used a professional Grant Writer from CREC to help with their RFP application to secure the full amount of \$850K.
- Highville had approx. \$1.3 mil and sought the remaining funding (approx. \$10 mil more) via loans from local banks. It was a long-lasting ongoing process to go from bank to bank. The first approved loan they received was for \$750K. They took each new approval letter they received from one institution to the next seeing if the amount promised could be increased. They eventually were able to find a bank that would award a loan of \$4mil.
- Highville used a source called “Funding the Gap” (<http://www.fundingthegap.com/>) . Funding the Gap (FTG) is a capital advisory and real estate firm. They find lending sources and capitol providers throughout the US specifically for charter school financing. In short, FTG was eventually able to get Highville a 30yr mortgage at 6%. Highville was previously paying almost \$40K/month for a lease on their prior facility. They now use this revenue to pay down this loan.

Lastly, it is my understanding that CT Charters should soon be issued another RFP for the Facilities and Debt repayment grant. (I am anticipating this in March). However, given the condition of the state’s budget, any award from this grant, and the actual bonding commission approval of funds could be years. However, I still feel we should prepare as best we can to submit an application seeking the max \$850 to go towards a new facility. I will try to get additional information regarding the individual who assisted Highville with their application.

MODULARS:

I have spoken to representatives from M-Space Holdings and Vanguard Modular Buildings (both companies that construct modular schools and offices (each claim to specialize in Charter School facilities)).

- I met with M-Space and took them on tour of current facility and to discuss needs; Vanguard is in the process of reviewing information we provided.
- M-Space gave us a VERY preliminary drawing and estimate for a 60’x60’ (3600 sq foot) building to replace existing. New model would have 3 classrooms, similar to current.
- One floor limits us based on setbacks. Could only move out into parking lot area. There are also high limitations as per DOT

Fundraising

Secured Norwalk Inn for April 29th, Friday night. 7-11pm

Donations for the auction plus adding guests to invite list responsibility of each board member.

Save the date going out shortly

Please email names and address to add to list.
Need a gala meeting scheduled.

Motion to adjourn by Mary, second by Chris

VIII. Set agenda for 3/22 meeting at 5:15pm

Roll Call

Public Session

Call to Order

Review of Minutes

New Business, school calendar, board seats

Reports

Directors Update

PTCO Update

Finance Committee

Facilities Committee

Fundraising Committee

Executive Session

Set Agenda for Following Meeting.