



**Side by Side Board Meeting
September 25, 2018**

APPROVED MINUTES

I. Roll Call

- A.** Members of the board in Attendance: Anne Dichele (via phone), Matt Nittoly, Adam Norris, Nell Conroy, Peter Hadley, Steve Ferguson, Jennifer Healy, Kim Mendola, Jessica Garnett, Kristie Guevremont, and Stephen Stone
- B. Members Absent:** Larry Cafero, Sally Davids, Josh Dichele
- C. Members of the Public in Attendance:** Kimberly Grimm

II. Public Session

Kimberly Grimm reporting on behalf of Building Committee

III. Call to Order

- A.** Adam called to order at 5:34 pm

IV. Review of Minutes

- A.** Review minutes from previous meeting on June 13, 2018.
- B.** There were no changes to the minutes.
- C.** Peter moved to approve minutes, Jen seconded, and minutes were approved.

V. Building Update

Kim Grimm presented the new building construction update. 99.5% of the construction is completed. There was an Open House, Grand Opening, and Dedication Ceremony held before the beginning of the school year. The last step is finalizing minor things, one being the official close-out of the project with the CT Department of School Construction Grants. The Building Committee is in the process of gathering information and final numbers in order to go initiate this process.

The total project came to approx. \$4,328,000. The project overall started with money from the state with the task of building just a building. In the end, we feel it is not just a building, but more of a campus. There were improvements made throughout the grounds and connecting to the Lower School to benefit the long-term effects on Side By Side. There were new stairs, a handicap ramp, updating the Lower School lobby in order for the whole school to benefit from this project.

The state was also unfamiliar with the grant since there is always a contribution required and charter schools are exempt from general school construction money. No one is really sure how the process

of closing will go. There is a good working relationship with the state, so we are not anticipating any problems. It is unfamiliar territory for all parties.

Matt Nittoly is back to helping run the day-to-day business of the school. Anne and the board greatly appreciate Kim and Matt's work over the past year. It was incredible that they spent so much time and they also came in on budget.

There is 1.3 million outstanding on a loan that is currently carrying a balance. The majority of the final expenses are submitted and some small expenses need to be finalized. The contract with AVT is closed, however, there is still a retainer that has not been paid 100% due to timing. There is a small issue with the front doors, but it is being looked at.

Father Lenox has been helpful in everything. Larry and Father Lenox attended the Zoning Meeting and the Variance was approved.

VI. New Business

1. Set Meeting Dates for the Year
 - a. Board of Director Meetings will be on the fourth Tuesday of every month.
 - b. The exceptions to this will be December 18, due to the holidays, and the June meeting.
 - c. Matt will send calendar invites to all board members for each subsequent meeting.
2. Officer Elections (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer)
 - a. Anne moved to begin elections and Adam will run reelection since he is the standing Vice Chair.
 - b. Adam asks for nominations, but also suggests that it is more of a voluntary role. Nell says that we should consider nominating the people not in attendance. Larry tries his best to attend every meeting, especially during elections, but will remain as a community member.
 - c. Anne will stay as Chair as well as Adam remaining the Vice Chair.
 - d. Kristie will be the Secretary. The responsibilities include: sending minutes, meeting reminders, setting the agenda, and making sure it goes out to everyone. The most important is to make sure the approved minutes from the previous meeting are updated with any changes and e-mailed to Matt the next day.
 - e. The Treasurer will review the financial records on a regular basis and use best efforts to assume full and accurate account. He or she will also get a balance sheet from the finance committee, report on operations, and give it to the board to look at each month. The Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair have to be two different people.
 - f. Steve Ferguson will be Treasurer and Adam will be the Finance Committee Chair since both are on the Finance Committee. Peter seconds this. Steve Ferguson and Adam will work together to present monthly financials. They will follow-up with Linda about signatory responsibilities of the Treasurer since it is not specified in the by-laws.
 - g. Finance Committee- Adam will remain the chair as well as Kim Grimm and Steve Ferguson continue as members. Matt sent a request for any parent interested in becoming involved, but there was no response.
 - h. Executive Committee: Chair (Anne), Vice Chair (Adam), Secretary (Kristie), and Treasurer (Steve Ferguson)
 - i. Evaluation Committee: consists of the Chair and community board member. Larry currently holds this position, but we will ask him before it is final.
 - j. Fundraising Committee: There are two board members, Josh and Anne, that will continue from last year. They contacted Brewport for the November Fundraiser and willing to work on it again this year. Kim Mendola and Jennifer Healy volunteer to take these positions
 - k. PTCO: Jennifer Healy will continue to give updates.

3. Power Upgrade (Update from SNEW in August)
 - a. All the work is completed. The existing cabling was replaced, but there were issues that involved a lot of hand digging that was not planned for. There was a minor change order involved and the total came to \$10,068. There was a \$1,800 change in cost due to the labor involved from a compressor and jackhammer.
 - b. This project is completely separate from the new building construction.
 - c. There were two major issues identified: the electrical service needed to be refeed and the electrical service in the Lower School will eventually need to be replaced. The second is a more expensive and elaborate project, estimated to be between \$40,000-\$50,000. There is the possibility that it can be done under a Reconstruction Grant, but there is no general knowledge of when applications would open up. It was not presented as an urgent manner. The consensus is to wait for another round of facility improvement grants for charter schools and write it in as a main project.
4. Fundraising Ideas for the Coming Year
 - a. The two main areas of concern for future fundraising funds are to have a specific plan for funds and that there is no mechanism for determining where the funds will go. In the past it has always been about the new building where it would be 65/35% project of choice and capital budgeting.
 - b. Some funding has been used for field trips. In the past, 50% of the cost of field trips has been covered by the school depending on the grade level. The original thinking behind this was that all students could participate since social studies is a large focus of the mission of the school.
 - c. The teacher and parent board members mentioned that there is a need for new classroom books for the students to take home. The lower school uses the 100 Book Challenge books and many of them need to be replaced due to wear and tear. The program is that all students bring home school books and read between 1-5 books a night, depending on grade level. The general teacher and parent feedback is that the books need to be replaced. Jessica mentioned that public schools have a lot of success with walkathons when it comes to replacing school books.
 - d. The board takes responsibility for two fundraisers during the school year. Usually it is cocktails for a cause and the gala.
 - i. Josh looked into Brewport in Bridgeport because it was inexpensive, they have food, and there is availability for a good sized room. There were a few Friday dates in November open. The board needs to determine what the funds of the fall fundraiser will go to. Anne and Kim will work with Brewport to do a casual and relaxed fundraiser since that is usually how the fall fundraiser is. There will be beer, pizza, and a bar in the event room.
 1. Matt said that is important to tell people a date as soon as possible. A highly possible date is Friday November 16. A Sunday date was mentioned, but the general consensus is that there would not be a lot of parental involvement.
 2. The fall fundraiser funds will be used for replenishing books. Beers for Books was a name mentioned for the fall event.
 - ii. The spring fundraiser will be revamped. Nell discussed possibly having a craft beer and food truck roundup. Steve Ferguson also suggested having a walkathon in addition to the food trucks. The PTCO has free reign to determine another fundraiser as well. The Fundraising Committee will discuss what to do as a new event in the spring.

- e. Peter, board member and music teacher, mentioned that he had an idea for fundraising causes. The Show Choir is looking into performing a musical and would need money to make sets. The Show Choir is going in a more dramatic direction and the current budget is only for sheet music. The students are very excited about the possibility of a larger drama production, however, this would cost money.
 - i. This seemed to be a more narrow fundraising idea, but there needs to be a mechanism for determining where funds are allocated.

REPORTS

Directors Update

I. School Opening:

- **Smooth opening to the new school year; Staff began on Friday, 8/24 and students began on Wed, 8/29**
- **Staffing:** We began the year fully staffed with the exception of 2 paraprofessional positions. Since 9/1 we have hired one new para and lost one para, leaving us with 2 current vacancies. (one position has been offered and the other is still under interview)
- **Enrollment:** Our student enrollment as of Monday, September 24 is 235.
 - ✓ We are currently filling one remaining slot in our fifth grade class, which will bring our total enrollment to the max of 236. I anticipate receiving confirmation paperwork for this student by Wednesday, 9/26.
- **Drop-off/pick-up:** Upon meeting with Norwalk PD in spring 2017 and attending hearings with the parking and traffic authority, the city of Norwalk has granted a permanent one-way on Chestnut Street for the purposes of drop-off and pick up at Side by Side. This will eventually transition to a temporary one-way during the morning and afternoon drop off times similar to Columbus. Time for transition is TBD.
- **PreK Playground/Chestnut site improvements:** *In addition to site improvements via the SCG, the playground was upgraded and a new landscaper hired to maintain the grounds*

II. Curriculum/Instruction:

- We always begin the year by looking at our students' performance last year on both school-based assessments and the Smarter Balanced Assessments given to all public school students, grades 3-8, in the state of Connecticut.
- While we continue to outperform both the state and the local district in Mathematics, our reading scores are not as high as we would like and so much of our planning right now is how to adapt our program to improve our outcomes. One way we are doing this is through extensive professional development for K-3 teachers in the area of early literacy. Another way is to tailor instruction to meet the needs of individual learners.
- Another approach we have taken to improve student learning outcomes and their preparedness for the 21st century is by increasing their overall engagement with learning through technology integration. Two platforms in particular will be launched this year to varying degrees in Pre-K through 8th grade. The first platform, Seesaw (<https://web.seesaw.me/>), is a way for teachers, students, and families to collaboratively engage with classroom learning and culture using an app that bridges the divide between home and the classroom. The second, Nearpod (<https://nearpod.com/>), is a way for teachers to teach and foster ethical practices around digital literacy and citizenship, and to

supplement the core curriculum with technology-integrated activities, virtual reality experiences, and lesson extensions. After the teachers participate in an all-day training session using these tools, we will host a parent night so you can also become acquainted with these exciting new ways to enhance our learning community.

- ***Mary Newbery, Assistant Director will be providing a brief presentation to the Board on student performance at the October BOD meeting***

III. Anne asked about the Mayor's Ball and if we are going to write a request. It was determined that there needed to be a plan in place for any proceeds we would receive. The last three years have been about the new building. The mayor came for the ribbon cutting so it could be fresh in the minds of the people. A few ideas about requests were mentioned, like the show choir. It was determined that there needs to be a place to have all stakeholders ideas represented.

- Kristie volunteered to put together a survey for staff and parents. The board will review the results and vote as a board on a new focus area. This is necessary for any future fundraising. Some ideas of what should be included in the survey were: ranking priorities with multiple choice, balancing between general ideas and minute details, asking about the vision of the school.
- This will be a general survey gathering all types of information that will guide the board's future decision. Previous surveys have shown an interest in a bus and participating in sports teams. There is a group that organizes an interscholastic charter school membership that includes sports and competitions, however, there are costs associated with this membership.

PTCO Update

There is no current update because the school year just began. The members are collecting sign-ups and trying to put together International Night.

Families and students loved the Pump It Up night, so members were thinking of doing something similar, like a Sky Zone Night.

As a community school, it is important to keep events like these going, even if they do not make money. These types of events add to the community feel of the school.

Harvest Fair probably out of the realm of the PTCO because the three members would have to run it themselves. Last year, it became the Spring Fling and it was successful. International Night will be the fall event and Spring Fling will be the spring event.

The PTCO will come up with ideas and update at the next board meeting.

Finance Committee

The reports are different than usual because the fiscal year coordinates with the school year (July-June). There is no budget broke down by month, but more of a basic summary and Year to Date. Reports will have a budget broken out for the next board meeting.

The reports are comparing this year to last year. The state expenses have started to accumulate. The report also shows payroll that came in earlier in the year. This is as expected and no surprises. The salaries, health insurance, and maintenance are all known expenses.

The Teacher Salary Schedule is in need of being renewed. It is on a 3 year schedule. The board uses some of NPS information to create the steps as well as looking at the cost of living. The Finance Committee makes sure the Teacher Salary Schedule remains competitive. Linda and the Finance Committee will be working on it.

The two administrators have 3 year contracts that will be expiring on June 30, 2019. There is a need to negotiate new contracts. The work should be done during the year before it expires and is something that needs to be discussed and considered in May. Anne looked at the contracts with Larry, Kim, and anyone from the Finance Committee last year. They will talk with the committee and present to the board. Anne will send copies of the past contracts for the administrators. All goes through the Finance Committee, which then presents it to the board.

Health Insurance renews in December. The renewal rates are in and it was budgeted for a 20% increase. It came in at a 14% increase, which is not the best number, but under budget. The group size and status comes directly from the providers. The school gets a discount for being a Municipal Employees Health Insurance Program (MEHIP). Matt met with the broker and reviewed rates. There was a decision to minimize the amount of change in order to best benefit the staff members. There will be two plans: a HSA and more conventionally structured plan. The school covers a certain portion. The contribution rate is 16% towards the premium cost. The board does not need to approve, but this should equate to a positive variance on the budget report. Adam and Linda will provide more details.

VIII. Set agenda for meeting Tuesday October 23 at 5:30 PM

Roll Call

Public Session

Call to Order

Review of Minutes

New Business

- Matt and Mary Presentation on SBAC Scores/Student Performance
- Survey Results Review

Reports

Directors Update

PTCO Update

Finance Committee

Building Committee

Fundraising Committee

7:05: Move to adjourn, Peter seconded the move. Meeting adjourned.