SIDE BY SIDE
CHARTER SCHOOL

Board of Directors Meeting
February 28, 2023
APPROVED Minutes

Present: Colin Konkel, Nell Conroy, Larry Cafero, Adam Norris, Matt Nittoly, Amanda Gormley, Todd Parkin, Britnee Henderson
Absent: Sally Davids, Ewa Derlukiewicz, Kim Grimm

Meeting began at 5:16 PM.

January minutes approved by Nell and Todd.

Special Guest Ian Norris Presentation - Summary

Ian Norris is board member Adam Norris's son. He recently graduated from college and is doing volunteer therapy dog work. Adam is a former Side By Side student who is interested in bringing therapy dogs to SBS.

Ian has a dog who will soon be certified as a therapy dog. A lot of effort goes into the certification process. Ian is the handler for therapy dog work. He works with the Pet Partners organization on a volunteer basis. There would be no cost to the school for any therapy dog arrangement.

There are many positive effects of exposure to therapy dogs related to mood, attentiveness, positive attitude, calmness, and comfort. Board members are interested in literature with more details on the positive effects of therapy dogs in a school environment.

There were many questions about liability that will require further research to understand the implications. There were also questions and concerns about people with allergies and how to be considerate of their needs. More research is required in these areas.

The board would like to know which other schools in the area have implemented a therapy dog program and to speak with staff members at those schools about their experiences to determine whether this is a good fit for Side By Side. Suggested districts are Greenwich and Ridgefield, which may have already done this. We would like to seek input from SBS's social worker and possibly tailor experiences to students most likely to benefit from therapeutic effects.

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We also discussed concerns about time management and determining who is going to see the dog, getting re-focused after spending time with the dog, etc. These items will need to be thought through in more detail.

The board will gather questions and get back to Ian with requests for further information.

Director Update:

I. **Staffing update:**
   (1) Art Long term sub change effective 2/1/23

II. **Teaching & Learning Update:**

Students have completed their mid-year benchmarks and teachers and students are busy working on their core curriculum. In 8th grade, students are studying the classic text "To Kill a Mockingbird," and in 2nd grade, students have been learning about "Landforms" in science. The assistant director continues to meet with teachers individually and in groups to strategize individual and whole class interventions for students' most impacted by distance learning during the pandemic.

All SBS certified teachers are participating in "formal" lesson observations/evaluations this school year in addition to several informal reviews of planning & practice.

III. Side by Side enrollment lottery 2023 (important dates)
- Mon 1/23- online applications available
- Wed 2/22 informational Open House at 10:30am
- Wed 3/15 informational session at 5:15pm
- Mon 4/3 lottery applications due by 4pm
- Wed 4/26 LOTTERY at 5pm

IV. Meeting with St. Joseph's / St. Ladislau's Catholic Church

SBS administration and Board leadership met with representation from the Diocese of Bridgeport regarding the continued arrangement between lessor (St. Joseph's) and lessee (Side by Side). Fr. Edicson Orozco is the new Parish leader and Mr. Pedro Figueroa is the office manager/liaison between the school and church. Arrangements were made for continued communication between all parties.

Matt discussed potential options to fill the open board positions for community members that are part of the charter. He would like to introduce a potential board member at a future meeting. Britnee also has two potential community member candidates she is waiting to hear back on. Adam says we need to get community members to commit to next year. Kim Grimm's and

Ewa's terms are expiring and will need to be re-elected. Matt suggests Britnee to take over one slot and only run elections for one. The board agreed to this suggestion.

Finance committee update:

Overall, we are where we expected to be at this point in the year. Cash is a bit low due to a state payment coming in late, but that should remedy itself shortly. IT consulting has caught up on billing and is a bit lower than budgeted. Waiting on ESSR grants to come in, which should be soon.

Fundraising:

The Booster Thon fun run is scheduled and the contract has been signed. Todd is working with the Booster team to get materials ready for the event and to solicit donations for tee shirt sponsorships.

The building across the street opens March 20th. Amanda Gormley is going to work with the folks over there and get a proposed date for an outdoor fundraising event this spring. Britnee Henderson offered to help arrange food and drink for the event.

Outdoor space:

Matt and Larry met with the new management for the church, but it was a preliminary meeting to get acquainted and help them understand the relationship better. No discussion has taken place for proposing outdoor space changes.

Action items:

- Next official meeting will be on Tuesday, March 28, 2023
- Need to solicit donations for tee shirts for Fun Run (Todd to work with Jess Garnett to reach out to all previous donors)
- Outdoor space committee to research companies that have renovated other play spaces in Norwalk to get some ideas for SBS and an idea of potential costs (no update from last meeting)
- Matt and Larry to meet with parish again re: outdoor space options

Meeting adjourned: Nell and Todd motioned to adjourn at 6:14 PM