



Marine Area Community School • MN District #4254
Board of Directors Regular Meeting
14189 Ostlund Trail North, Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047
June 17, 2017, 9:30AM

Board Meeting Minutes – Approved

Mission

Marine Area Community School will 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.

1.0 Call to Order 9:30 a.m.

1.1 **Roll Call:** Lisa White, Kristina Smitten, Glen Mills, Jon Dettmann, Lisa Dochniak

2.0 Approve Agenda

2.1 Co-chair White moved to approved the agenda. During the discussion Director Dettmann added a discussion on the school's name to the Reports section 5.4; Director Dochniak added a report on the curriculum meeting to Reports 5.5 and a discussion on the Music and Specialists to Old Business 7.4. Director Dettmann seconded the motion, and the agenda was approved unanimously.

3.0 Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

3.1 Board meeting minutes from May 20, 2017, were approved unanimously.

4.0 Community Comment

- 4.1 Grove parent Bre DeCorsey introduced a local company called Flagship Play who could provide playground equipment to the school: www.flagshipplay.com. She also mentioned the Grove Elementary Pancake Breakfast: Saturday July 22, 8:00-11am, Sal's Angus Grill, Withrow, MN. Kids \$5, Adults \$8.
- 4.2 Ele Anderson mentioned the Fireman's Ball in Marine. Grove will sponsor free kids' activities. Also Independence Day float decorating on June 26 at the home of Nicole and John Peatross, then the Grove float will be in the Marine July 4 parade.
- 4.3 Marcia Houtz from the Minnesota Guild, Grove's authorizer, introduced herself.
- 4.4 Drew Goodson, Grove's School Administrator, introduced himself.

5.0 Reports

5.1 Financial Report

5.1.1 **Budget Approval:** Chair Smitten introduced Scott Brown and Kyle Knutson from The Anton Group, Grove's financial advisors. They noted that Grove will need to approve its 2017-18 budget at this meeting (and for each subsequent year by June 30; the fiscal year runs July 1 – June 30).

The budget is based on 165 kids enrolled at Grove. Because Grove is a start-up, there are assumptions built into the budget, partly because of the unique nature of Grove's facilities and unknown maintenance and utilities costs.

Another assumption is 165 Average Daily Membership (ADM). Three things that are important to the enrollment in the budget: 1) enrollment (the number of students enrolled at a given time); 2) ADM, average enrollment throughout the year, roughly calculated by membership days (how many days a student was enrolled) divided by the instructional days (how many days school was in session); 3) pupil units. A full ADM generates approximately \$6200 per student.

Another important number for the budget is free and reduced lunch percentage, which affects the Federal lunch program reimbursements but also affects compensatory revenue. Grove is budgeting approximately 10% free/reduced lunch. (The number is based on

percentages at Marine and Withrow schools.)

Grove is not expecting ELL students at this time.

This is Grove's initial budget; it can and will be revised when exact enrollment, student composition, and expenses are known, perhaps in September or October.

The biggest numbers on the expenses side are salaries and benefits, transportation, and lease costs. Curriculum, equipment, furniture, etc., are a smaller portion of the budget, and many of these costs will be reimbursed by the CSP grant program.

Special education for all schools is 95% funded, so those costs will not affect Grove's budget a great deal.

Chair Smitten thanked The Anton Group for their responsive and generous assistance throughout Grove's start-up phase. She asked about the length of time that Grove has to carry the expenses of the special ed director (Indigo) and special ed teacher before being reimbursed. The Anton Group (TAG) representative responded that those reimbursements can be quite delayed in the first year, perhaps into late fall or early winter, with full cash flow in perhaps January. Charter contractors such as Indigo are familiar with this scenario.

Co-chair White asked about the reimbursement rate of special ed paraprofessionals; TAG responded that it is also at 95%. The required hours specified in IEPs are what drives the numbers and need for special ed teachers and paraprofessionals.

Director Dettmann commented on the expertise of TAG, and noted that our budget of 165 ADM may be exceeded or may not be met, and therefore we need to be careful of addressing the most important needs first. Co-chair White reported initially to MDE an enrollment of 153 based on signed enrollment forms. (There are many outstanding enrollment forms; families are waiting on various pieces of information such as special ed and before and after school care.) This initial enrollment estimate will be updated and resubmitted to MDE.

Chair Smitten asked about the preoperational audit requirements. TAG representatives responded that Grove needs its authorizer's permission to waive the audit; we are waiting to hear. Not doing the audit would save about \$8000 and valuable time.

Community member Sue Logan asked about contracted services. TAG representatives responded that the admin contracted services includes legal fees, authorizer fees, janitorial etc., technology contractors, etc. Instructional contracted services are separate.

Lisa DeMars asked whether the needs specified in IEPs are known yet; Co-chair White responded that to date we have only very general information – specific hours and needs are not yet known. Chair Smitten added that Indigo will help design our program once the depth and breadth of the need is known. TAG representatives added that MDE understands that, in the first year, special ed needs are not well understood. Also IEP needs may change for students who move to a different school, such as transportation changes. The IEP would need to be updated.

Director Dettmann moved for the budget to be approved; Co-chair White seconded the motion. The 2017-18 budget was approved unanimously.

- 5.1.2 **Fundraising needs:** Chair Smitten noted that she has not been able to find electrical or general contractors who would work pro bono, although some would donate a few hours' worth of work, nor has she located a facilities coordinator.

The two big areas of need are building improvements and technology. Many contractors were approached, and two bids for electrical work were received: Scandia Electric and American Community Builders. The bid for electrical work at Grove is \$22,000, and the general contractor bid is about \$25,000 (\$47,000 total). The bid for installing needed technology infrastructure is about \$74,000. This whole amount is not needed, but fundraising efforts will help mitigate these costs.

Some of the code compliance issues such as 36 emergency lighting exit signs and panic hardware for doors are needed in the next two weeks in order to get the fire inspector out to the site in order to submit lease aid by July 10 (monthly lease payments are about \$17,000 not including utilities). While technology infrastructure costs are included in the budget, code compliance costs are not.

The electrical bid of \$22,000 includes \$2245 (materials) and \$3200 (labor) for the 36 exit signs. The bid also includes ceiling lighting upgrades, which may not require a licensed

electrical contractor.

The technology infrastructure improvements include bringing internet to the site, and connecting the buildings. The E Rate program will reimburse MACS up to \$26,000 after a year.

The founding board sent out an appeal for donations last year to mostly Marine community members without children at the school, and raised approximately \$18,000. Without those donors, the school would not be where it's at now. (Thank you!) Chair Smitten announced that MACS would like to send out a second appeal, and expand the list to Marine, May, and Grove families. She pointed out that enrollment is not based on ability to donate. Chair Smitten suggested that a "founding sponsor" level of donor of above \$2500 be created, commemorating their support in some way at the entrance to the school. She also proposed the idea of writing letters to editors for local papers seeking fundraising support.

Grove parent Lisa DeMars suggested making it clear that overall, the school is in very good shape financially because of the CSP grant and other funding sources. TAG representatives added that the school has over \$500,000 in funding, but this money cannot be used for these code compliance needs.

Director Dettmann asked whether there are any restrictions on the funds raised; TAG representatives answered that legally there are very few restrictions on donated funds, but it is wise to use the money as promised.

Grove parent Stephanie LeGros suggested an online method for donations. Co-chair White noted that we are waiting on checks in order to get a Razoo account, which may take another week at least. Director Dettmann wondered if a bank check might work for Razoo. Ele Anderson suggested investigating other ways to process credit cards.

Director Dochniak suggested there be more than one "founding sponsor" level. She also suggested making the donations specific dollar amounts for tangible items. Drew Goodson suggested "bronze, silver, and gold" levels, and using the phrase "modernizing the facility" and folding the fundraising for playground equipment into this fund drive. Director Dettmann agreed, suggested a self-addressed envelope with the appeal, and suggested acknowledging previous donations. He also suggested back-up fundraising strategies. Chair Smitten mentioned that about a dozen people have volunteered to be on a fundraising committee.

Drew Goodson asked about short-term loans from the community bank. TAG representative also mentioned another source that lends funds equal to 10% of state aid funding, which could be about \$110,000 in the first year, but that money would not be available until October 1.

- 5.1.3 **Grants solicitation:** Johanna Rehorst Grove parent, introduced herself. She has been coordinating a grant-writing effort for building improvements. She and Chair Smitten have found a couple of options such as the Scandia Marine Lions and the Polaris Foundation, but also has met some limitations in terms of Grove's size, newness, geographical scope, etc. These grants would be used for the code compliance needs such as new exit signs. Justin Kaufenberg, also a grove parent and technology advisor, has been working on funding sources as well.
- 5.1.4 **Approve School Administrator to handle business matters:** Co-chair White moved to approve the School Administrator to handle all business matters, including the checking account. The motion was seconded by Director Dochniak. The motion passed unanimously. Co-chair White noted for the record that Drew Goodson is the School Administrator.
- 5.1.5 **Approve check signers:** Director Dettmann moved to add the School Administrator, Board Treasurer, and Board Chair to be authorized check signatories on behalf of Marine Area Community School. The motion was seconded by Co-chair White. Co-chair White noted for the record that Drew Goodson is the School Administrator, Kristina Smitten is the Board Chair, and Jon Dettmann is the Board Treasurer. The motion passed unanimously.

Drew Goodson asked about the current ability to purchase needed items. Chair Smitten responded that we will be waiting for checks from the bank, and then those purchases will need to be CSP reimbursable. TAG representatives added that currently, there are no

CSP funds in our account, only the funds that have been donated by community members. Director Dettmann noted that that account is Grove's fiscal agent, the Marine School Association's, account. The money will need to be moved.

- 5.1.6 Approve Identified Official with Authority:** TAG representatives explained that this is a term used by the Minn Dept of Ed to define a person at the school level who is annually authorized to grant MDE user access, and is the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) coordinator.

Co-chair White moved to approve the School Administrator as the Identified Official with Authority. She noted for the record that Drew Goodson is the School Administrator. Director Dettmann seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

- 5.1.7 Enrollment update:** Co-chair White reported that enrollment applications have slowed down. Lisa DeMars suggested that some parents are waiting on before/after school care. The name of a possible provider was suggested by Michelle Cauley: Active Solutions.

Current enrollment is:

K: 21 officially enrolled, waiting on 1 signed enrollment form
1: 24 officially enrolled, waiting on 1 signed enrollment form, 5 on waitlist
2: 25 officially enrolled, waiting on 0 signed enrollment forms, 10 on waitlist
3: 40 officially enrolled, waiting on 7 signed enrollment forms
4: 21 officially enrolled, waiting on 4 signed enrollment forms
5: 20 officially enrolled, waiting on 2 signed enrollment forms
6: 12 officially enrolled, waiting on 2 signed enrollment forms

- 5.2 Staff Hiring:** The second 3rd grade teacher and special ed positions have been posted. Interviews for the 3rd grade teacher position are scheduled with the teaching team. The interviews for the special ed position will be scheduled soon.

Chair Smitten asked Jim Martin of Booth Law Group to review the contracts with the teachers and administrator, which should take no more than two hours.

5.3 Facility Status

- 5.3.1 Update on electrical and general contractor work needed:** See 5.1.2 Fundraising.

- 5.3.2 Safety Plan:** Director Mills is updating the safety plan that Wilder provided. The plan needs a calendar, who has 24 hour keys, and Director Mills will be touring the facility. The plan will need to be submitted to the fire inspector and for lease aid. Chair Smitten asked if Director Mills could meet with Drew Goodson and the current caretaker of the buildings (Michael Herr) who lives on site and would be a good person to keep the 24-hour keys. The local fire department will tour the buildings in September to familiarize themselves with the buildings. Addresses of the buildings may need to be updated for EMS services.

- 5.4 School Name:** Director Dettmann announced that Grove was contacted by Groves Academy, a St Louis Park private K-12 school. They are objecting to MACS's use of "Grove Elementary." MACS responded, saying there is no confusion or infringement due to the prevalence of the word "Grove" in schools' names throughout the region and the country, including six "Grove Elementary" schools in the country. Groves Academy's attorney responded, saying they have sought trademark protection and would be filing a federal trademark lawsuit and a court injunction stopping MACS from using "Grove Elementary." Director Dettmann suggested that they would probably use our case as a strategic and legal example in their trademark enforcement.

Options include fighting in court, which may be expensive, distracting, and the outcome is uncertain. Or, MACS can ask UltraCreative (original design firm for name/branding/logo) to come up with branding that would further define and distinguish the name of MACS's school (or come up with a totally new name).

Director Dettmann suggested that while this is something we need to resolve, the specific name of the school is not among the current top priorities, and we should work with Groves Academy to see if there are adjustments to our name that they would find acceptable, and iron out an

appropriate timeline for resolution.

Co-chair White agreed that the option of altering the name, with preserving as much of the current brand as possible, may be the best because of our current priorities. Director Mills wondered if we could just add a differentiating word would be enough; Director Dettmann said he would propose this option to Groves Academy.

Chair Smitten noted that the location of the school on Wilder Forest property may help with the name. This property was once Morgan May's farm, which was possibly named "Emerald Grove." She agreed that working with Groves Academy in modifying the name is the school's first preference because of the time and money involved. Director Dochniak echoed this opinion and noted the historical significance of the name "Emerald Grove."

- 5.5 **Curriculum Planning:** Director Dochniak reported that the teaching team had a meeting to discuss curriculum. Core Knowledge curriculum content will be the "umbrella," and not Common Core. She will write a Q&A section for the website explaining the difference, but they also have a website for more information: <https://www.coreknowledge.org/>. The team decided to use the history, geography, arts, and literature from Core Knowledge. For science, the Foss curriculum will be used, and Minnesota history and geography will be added. For literature, workshop models for reading and writing will be used; the teachers already have a lot of experience using workshop models. For math, the curriculum used will enable Grove students to merge seamlessly into Stillwater schools; the specific curriculum has not yet been chosen. The teachers will be asked what essential math resources will be needed for the classroom. Character education will also be a part of the curriculum.

Teachers require daily prep time, during which specialists will be with the students. Music and PE were the top priorities for specialists. The teaching team will teach the art standards, but an artist in residence will be brought in to expand art opportunities.

Chair Smitten noted that additional curriculum development meetings are planned. Education Evolving will be at one of the development days to go over teacher-powered schools. The Minnesota Guild and Indigo will also attend development meetings with the teaching team. Co-chair White noted that they will also discuss community resources and potential field trips to develop the place-based aspect of the curriculum.

6.0 New Business

- 6.1 **Approve 2017/2018 School Calendar:** Co-chair White introduced the Stillwater Area Public Schools' calendar; MACS will follow the same calendar. When the terms professional development, conference prep, and "grading days" are clearer, the calendar will be posted on the website and prep or grading days will be labeled "staff days" or "teacher in-service." There will be separate staff and family calendars.

Conference days will be Nov 3, with a prep day for teachers on Oct 24, and Mar 16 (morning).

Kindergarten will start two days after the rest of the school so that Jessica Hansen can hold individual "meet and greet" conferences with parents and kids in the first two days. This will be in addition to the back to school open houses.

Director Mills moved to approve the 2017-18 calendar, and Co-chair White seconded. The calendar was approved unanimously.

- 6.2 **Summer Calendar – community work days, back to school days, etc.:** Chair Smitten mentioned having additional community clean-up days, on July 15 and August 19 which are the next two board meetings. The Sentence to Serve program may be able to come help clean and move furniture.

August 22 and 24 will be the Back to School Open Houses. There are two days because 1) to accommodate the conditional use permit which limits the number of people allowed to be at Grove at one time, 2) to help accommodate families' schedules. Families will be invited to one or the other depending on last name such as A-L and M-Z, but if they are unable to attend they are welcome at the other meeting. Teachers will report to work starting August 14.

Parent meetings will be scheduled for two weeks after the start of school.

- 6.3 **PTO Meeting June 29, 2017, 6:00 PM at Wilder Forest in the Commons:** Director Dochniak agreed to facilitate the meeting. Drew Goodson will also attend.

- 6.4 **Pancake Breakfast, July 22, 2017, 8:00 AM at Sal's**

7.0 Old Business

7.1 Food Service

7.1.1 Approve direction: Community volunteer Jill Wilson presented the board last month with options for Grove's food service: catered breakfast and lunch vs. making food on premises ("scratch kitchen"). Since then she has done more research, and met with the director of Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) food program, who may be interested in entering a contract with Grove to help Grove with the federal lunch program. MPS may be a good fit for Grove because they work with a lot of local vendors and have a farm-to-table program.

TAG representatives said that the currently approved budget is more conservative than the food service committee numbers based on participation at Marine Elementary, which estimate 115 kids eating lunch at Grove; Kyle from TAG suggested that this number may be high, and we can also assume a 10% loss on food service due to waste, errors in estimating daily participation, and uncollectable accounts. Grove is planning on charging \$3.50 per lunch (similar to what other area charter schools do), additional for breakfast and snack if provided. TAG noted that Federal reimbursement rates for breakfast are better than they are for lunch; Chair Smitten asked whether Grove could participate in the federal program for breakfast (not lunch), and TAG said yes. Code-required kitchen improvements are needed whether we cater or scratch-make lunch.

School Administrator Drew Goodson suggested that catering may be the best option to get started, and Director Mills agreed due to the added variables and requirements of a scratch kitchen.

Chair Smitten asked how long a caterer contract typically is; Drew Goodson responded that in his experience, there is some flexibility and the caterer can change as needed. The TAG representative agreed with this, and noted the possibility of doing a blended program (caterer for hot food, scratch for e.g., salad bar).

TAG representatives noted that, when selecting a caterer, a big consideration is compliance with regulations.

Chair Smitten noted that Grove does not yet need board action to approve a contract, just some consensus to approve direction and post any needed job descriptions (if not provided by the caterer) for certified personnel. Director Mills recommended that we start with a caterer. Director Dochniak voiced interest in starting with a caterer and moving toward a blended program. Co-chair White agreed with starting with a caterer, perhaps moving toward a blended program, then perhaps moving toward a scratch kitchen as able. She also noted that being a part of the federal lunch program opens the door to lots of grant opportunities for food service.

Chair Smitten summarized by saying Grove would seek 3 bids from caterers for formal action at the next board meeting.

Community member Stephanie LeGros noted that \$3.50 per lunch will be an increase for most families, who currently pay \$2.40 per lunch for District 834 lunches.

7.2 Transportation

7.2.1 Approve contract: Grove has received a one-year contract with Minnesota Central Bus Company. Community volunteer Jim Maher did extensive research and evaluation into busing options for Grove. We will likely need 4 buses.

Chair Smitten noted that because District 834 has not been willing to provide transportation at a reasonable start/end time for Grove, and families say transportation is a priority (many charters don't provide busing because of the cost), Grove is committed to providing transportation for 834 families. In addition, families living just on the west side of Norell, which is the boundary for 834, will be provided bus service. We also will likely be able to establish pick-up spots for students living outside of 834 boundaries. Other centralized pick-up spots may help trim bus time. Any student living in 834 boundaries is eligible for transportation.

Busing schedules will be mailed to families the second week in August. Start times for Grove will be between 8:45 and 9:15; Minnesota Central is also the provider for District 834 and they are waiting on more info from MN Central before they can definitively say Grove's start time. Co-chair White added that with a likely seven-hour school day, that puts the end

time between 3:45 and 4:15.

Reimbursement from the state for busing totals about \$40,000, approximately the cost of one bus. Four buses are planned for in our budget. TAG representatives added that busing for charters is regularly expected in Minnesota (not in all states).

The possibility exists that Grove's need would fall to three buses, depending on need. Factors affecting busing include parents who drive their kids to school, and before/after school care. Minnesota Central assumed that 20 percent of the population would not require bus service. After students are enrolled, Grove can ask parents more detailed questions about things like transportation needs to better assess need.

Field trips would cost extra, \$55 per bus per hour with a 3-hour minimum. Co-chair White noted that the PTO at Marine often funded field trip costs.

Chair Smitten asked for a motion to approve the contract with Illinois Central Bus Service, dba Minnesota Central. Director Dettmann asked for a termination clause to be added to the contract, and moved to approve the contract contingent upon an appropriate clause. Co-chair White seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Community member Stephanie LeGros added that for 2018-19, District 834's start times may change, which may affect Grove's busing options. Chair Smitten noted that Grove has planned to participate in the district- and charter-wide discussion about busing for next year in March.

- 7.3 Teacher Powered Ignition Grant Award:** A \$5000 grant was received in order to implement training for our teaching team.
- 7.4 Music and Specialists Discussion:** A committee headed by Director Dochniak has been working on the development of the music program. Director Dochniak stated it is important to have a music program so that students who continue onto Stillwater Schools have that connection, and because music is important to development of children. The goal is to have all students K-6 participate in music instruction twice per week, 30 or 45 minutes each depending on grade level (lower grades with 30 minutes). Having the specialists in would also provide prep time for teachers. Hiring for the general music teacher will follow the fair and open hiring process. Costs are included in the budget. Music will also be a way to integrate community engagement by sharing musical expertise, and annual performances by the students.
- An optional band and orchestra program will also be provided at Grove twice a week. The program could be expanded to fourth graders. Stephanie LeGros, music committee member, has found one person who is able to teach both band and orchestra, and who is available to provide a band camp in August (included in the estimated cost). Chair Smitten noted that this person could be hired as an at-will contractor "musician in residence," similar to how the parent organization for Marine Elementary paid for an "artist in residence." Instrument rental for families would be about \$40/month; there are organizations that provide low-cost rentals. Stephanie said that we need to contact families to get an idea of participation and what instruments.
- Funding for this will need to be established; estimated cost is about \$22,000. One idea is a music festival. Families may be able to contribute toward the cost (with scholarships), and the parent organization may be able to help fund band and orchestra. Drew Goodson noted that this cost is approximately equivalent to four students, and if we don't have the program Grove may lose students. He added that there may be some compromise in the general music budget as long as prep time could be figured out.
- The music committee will meet again with the potential contractor to discuss more details.
- 8.0 Authorizer Comments:** Marcia Houtz from the Minnesota Guild, Grove's authorizer, commented on the collegial nature of the discussion and cooperative nature of the board. She noted that she can see how successful Grove is going to be.
- 9.0 Other**
- 9.1 Next Board of Directors Meeting: July 15, 2017 at 9:30AM at Wilder Forest**
- 10.0 Adjournment:** 1:05 pm

