

River Grove Elementary  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Tuesday, March 16, 2021 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM  
Virtual

MINUTES

1.0 Call to Order - Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

1.1 Roll Call - Members present: Dan Miller, Angie Hong, Marcy Ost , Annie Beck, Lisa Dochniak, Bre DeCorsey, Jessica Hansen . Also in attendance: Drew Goodson, Ele Anderson, Kyle Knudson.

2.0 Approve Agenda - DeCorsey moved to approve agenda. Seconded by Beck. Roll call vote. All in favor. Agenda approved.

3.0 Approve Minutes: Motion to approve February 16, 2021 and March 5, 2021 by Beck. Second by Dochniak. Roll call vote. All in favor. Minutes approved.

4.0 Community Discussion

4.1 River Grove Community Updates

4.1.1 Board Member Driven Initiatives

4.1.2 Authorizer Comments (if in attendance)

4.2 Community Comments

- Molly Kaliher SpEd Coordinator spoke about the impact that a transition from 4 day to 5 day school week would have on 62 SpEd students at Grove. If we change from a 4 to a 5 day week, the SpEd staff will need to re-write 62 IEP plans. There is no time during the school day for that to happen, so staff would need to do that in their free time. If the board decided to move to a 5-day week, she would like to see staff given additional financial compensation to account for the extra work-load. She also has concerns about impacts vs benefits of transition on students for only seven weeks at the end of the year.
  - Dochniak - why don't the teachers have prep time? Was that a concern last year too?
  - Kaliher - because we have too many kids and not enough staff. Yes. That was also a concern last year. Grove is currently short by one SpEd para. One case manager currently has 60 hours of contact hours per week.
  - Miller - it sounds like we need to resolve the issue of hiring additional staff to provide better support for school next fall.
  - Kaliher - we have had a few new applicants for the open position this week so we're hoping to get another SpEd staff person on board.
  - Goodson - our staff capacity, especially for SpEd services, is a major consideration in whether or not to move to a 5 day week.

5.0 Finance Reports & Actions - Kyle Knudson, TAG

- Grove's budget is up \$106k since the end of February because we finally got our SpEd payment from the state. Prior to that, we were funding SpEd services through our general ed budget.
- Knudson adjusted the working budget to 195 students instead of 205. That creates a negative fund balance of \$198k at the end of the year. This still includes additional compensation for teachers and staff; if that comes out, our losses will be less. PPE grant funds have really saved us this year.
- Grove is not projected to need a line of credit through the end of the year

but we will have a cash balance of only \$105k in June, which will be the lowest we've been in a long time.

- At the end of 2020, U.S. Congress passed legislation to provide additional assistance to schools. The state is also planning to provide new grants. Grove may not qualify for all grants. There is a big emphasis on summer school, also mental health, 4 & 5 yr olds, and partnership with non-formal education organizations. Much of the support for young kids is targeted to at-risk and high-need populations.
- The \$1.9 trillion stimulus package includes more funds for schools also with emphasis on similar programs. The funding probably won't be available until July but some can be used retroactively for previous expenses.
- Hong - will any of these grants help to offset our projected deficit? Or will it just help to provide additional services?
- Knudson - maybe, but Grove hasn't spent a lot yet on the types of services that these grants will fund.
- Goodson - there are tighter restrictions on how these funds can be spent, compared with previous COVID relief grants.
- Knudson - one charter school he is working with has used the mental health relief funds for after-school tutoring. We may be able to use extra funds to provide more services that ultimately drive higher enrollment. But it won't likely affect our bottom line.

5.1.1 February 2021 Approvals. Motion to approve February 2021 financial packet. Second by Ost. Roll call vote. All members vote yes. Motion approved.

5.1.2 Staff Stipend Goals

5.1.3 Bell Bank Letter of Credit for Annual State of MN Holdback Coverage

## 6.0 Director's Report - Drew Goodson

- Grove's working budget has changed from 205 students at the beginning of the year to 195 now.
- New enrollment applications:
  - 57 total applications for kindergarten; 35 enrolled; 5 pending (due Friday); 7 waiting (may be invited if the 5 decline); 10 declined.
  - Wait list for other grades: 9 (1st), 9 (2nd), 7 (3rd), 6 (4th), 2(5th), 5 (6th)
- One of the new paras, Mr Derek, is an architect and will provide some ideas for remodeling to create an additional classroom for next year.
- Job applications for next year have been posted. There have already been 9 applications for a new classroom teacher for next year. Teachers are being asked to provide their intent to return by March 26. Teacher retention is down statewide and Grove may have additional staff positions open for next school year.
- Teacher evaluations: This has been a challenging year. Goodson would like to provide an option for teachers to do self reflection instead of a traditional evaluation. New teachers will be encouraged to do a traditional evaluation.

## 2021-22 Staff Recruitment Timeline

Date	Tasks
March 2	Staff Intent to Return for Next Year Distributed
I March  2	Job Application Window Opens for Potential Openings <i>Indeed, MACS Board, EdPost Facebook, Website,</i>
March 26	Intent to Return Due
Week of April 5	Contract Renewals Issued
April 9	Job Application Window Closes (1st Round)
April 12	Interview Committee Reviews Applications
April 14,15,16	Interviews Set Up
April 16	Contract Renewals Due
Week of April 19	Job Offers Issued

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- Grove still has an opening for band and orchestra instruction for next year.
- 25 distance learning students would like to return to campus. To accommodate, our two distance learning teachers- Diedrich and Beck - will move to a hybrid teaching model for the rest of the year.
- Teacher conferences are next week.
- Governor Walz is emphasizing summer school as a way to mitigate learning loss from the past year. Grove has formed a teaching team to develop a two-week program for this summer.
- Grove is still required to conduct MCA testing - no waiver or exemption has been granted. Goodson is hopeful we will do well compared with some of the district schools.
- Hong - who mandates the testing?
- Goodson - ultimately, the state but if they provide an exemption, the US Dept of Education will pull funding for schools.

### 6.1.1 PTO Report - Breena Slivik

- \$3765 have been raised so far for the Read-a-Thon. Books for Africa also goes through the end of March.
- The next PTO meeting is Thursday. One question to decide is whether teachers can go through the donated books and select some for classroom use. Another conversation will be how to spend spring funds.
- Plant sale with Gerten's will begin in April with a delivery / pick up day in mid May.
- PTO elections will be held in May. Any parent or staff at River Grove can run. Positions are technically two years.
- Other potential projects: spring trail clean-up; planting gardens in front of classrooms; moving storage materials out of classrooms into sheds.

## 7.0 Old Business

### 7.1 May Township Conditional Use Permit Updates

- Grove received approval to add an additional 25 students for the coming school year. We still need to resolve questions related to the access road before getting approval to grow to 325 students.
- Grove received a significant bill from May Twp. of \$9k for expenses related to the CUP amendment process. Grove will be talking with a May Twp supervisor to discuss and may dispute portions of the charges. Some of the expenses were not requested or approved by Grove or May Twp board members.

### 7.2 2021-2022 Class Size and Sections for Grades 1-6 - Goodson

- There are strong waiting lists for most grades. At this point, we won't be able to get all classes to a board-approved capacity due to the CUP restrictions but we will hopefully be in a strong position for next year.
- There are three possible scenarios:

Possible Scenarios for Invitations:	
A)	5 in grades 1,2,3 and 3 in 4,5,6 = 23 (2 in 5th)
B)	4 students per grade (but only 2 applications in 5th) = 22
C)	3 students per grade (2 in 5th) = 17

Total in Grades Would Be:				
	Returning	If A	If B	If C
K	N/A	40	40	40
1	29	35	33	32
2	31	36	35	34
3	30	35	34	33
4	37	40	41	40
5	21	23	23	23
6	13	16	17	16
TOTAL	161	225	223	218

- Goodson and Anderson are recommending that the board approve Option A.
  - Option A keeps siblings of already enrolled students together. Options B and C would not.
  - If numerous families turn down their enrollment invitations, Goodson and Anderson may come back to the board later in the spring with a request to add more students in one or more grades .
- Hong motion to move forward with Option A for offering additional enrollment invitations to students in grades 1-6. Second by Beck. Roll call vote. All members voting yes. Motion approved.

## 8.0 New Business

### 8.1 Teacher and Staff Eval Planning

### 8.2 21-22 Staff Contract Timeline Planning

### 8.3 Board Elections (May 2021)

- Dan Miller and Jessica Hansen's positions are up for election. If either of them decide to run for re-election, he will decline to be involved in the balloting process.

#### 8.4 Learning Model Discussion (5 Day vs 4/1) -

- Goodson reviewed the memo sent to board members in advance of the 3-16-21 meeting. The memo includes current updates on COVID, vaccinations, and advantages of a 4 vs 5 day school week.
- There is a strong consensus from teachers wanting to continue with a 4 day school week for the remainder of the year. The biggest reason is to avoid yet another transition in an already stressful year. There are also concerns for the three teachers that will be teaching in hybrid mode for the rest of the year. There will also be operational cost savings of \$6-10k if we remain at 4-days a week.
- The downside of remaining in a 4-day school week is having one less day a week for students to catch up on learning and have social interactions with their peers.
- The school has heard mixed input from parents on the question. It's not obvious which they would prefer.
- Board conversation:
  - Miller: originally preferred 5-days a week; however, he doesn't want to push staff to a breaking point. It would be different if it were January and not mid-March.
  - Dochniak: prefers 5-days a week for students' learning, but she also recognizes the operational challenges of making another transition. Doesn't want to advocate one way. Kids learn best at school and we might lose families if we decide to stay in 4-days a week. Then again, we're having a summer school that might help some kids to catch up. What can we do for staff currently? Can we use some of the mental health support grants coming soon to help them?
  - Beck: Agrees that we should move to 5-day week if it were January but it doesn't seem worth it so close to the end of the year. This is really important for staff retention and mental health. Teachers have been putting in so many extra hours this year. Even when they aren't at school, Fridays are not a day "off." They are always working. She, Diedrich and Dick are extra challenged because they are teaching both in-person and distance students all at the same time. Not sure that there is strong desire from parents to move to a 5-day week.
    - Goodson: Eric McBride did an informal survey of his students and learned that 80% preferred to stay at 4-days a week.
    - Beck: Uses Fridays to prep materials for distance learning students. This is also an opportunity for those kids to come on campus for hikes or to pick up materials. The time is definitely needed.
    - Goodson: would like to see the school use Fridays better so that kids are still learning on those days.
    - Hong: doesn't know if she is representative of other parents or not. She felt very strongly about getting the kids back into school but not as strongly about moving back to 5 days vs 4. She doesn't mind her son having Fridays off but doesn't necessarily want to speak for parents who might not be able to work from home. Her biggest concern is putting more strain on the SpEd staff as Molly Kaliher noted.

- Ost: as a parent, she really prefers 5 days a week for her child. She really appreciated hearing from Molly Kaliher as well and didn't realize there were so many SpEd issues. She realizes there will also be problems with bussing and cleaning if we move back to 5 days. She would like to see Fridays used better for learning as well.
- Hansen: there are a lot of considerations on both sides. She supports remaining in 4 days a week.
- Miller: in talking with other parents, he hasn't heard strong opinions one way or the other.
- Ost: is summer school for sure? Is it only remedial or for everyone?
- Goodson: Yes. Summer school is happening and will be open to everyone. Right now it is only open to 12 students.
- Slivik: As a parent, they've already re-arranged their schedule to accommodate the kids being home on Friday so it doesn't create an additional burden to have them stay in a 4-day week. She also works in a different district where the kids are coming back Fridays but only for a half day, which doesn't seem productive.
- Dochniak: could there be an option for teachers to meet up with students on Fridays if they're having trouble keeping up? Or offer parents ideas on what they could do to make productive use of Fridays.
- Beck motion to remain in a 4 day school week. Second by Hansen. Roll call vote: Beck, Hong, Dochniak, Hansen, Miller, Ost vote yes. DeCorsey votes no. Motion passes.

## 9.0 Next Board of Directors Meetings:

### 9.1 Regular Board Meeting on Tuesday, April 20, 2021

## 10.0 Adjournment- Dan Miller adjourned the meeting at 7:55pm.