

River Grove Elementary
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, July 20, 2021 6:00 PM
River Grove Commons
MINUTES

1.0 Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:12pm by Vice Chair Jessica Hansen.

1.1 Secretary Angie Hong read the official oath of office to swear in Katherine Hardie as a new board member and Jessica Hansen as a returning board member.

1.2 Roll Call: Attending members include Katie Bruns, Annie Beck, Jessica Hansen, Lisa Dochniak, Angie Hong, Marcy Ost, Katherine Hardie. Also present: Drew Goodson, Kyle Knudson, and Breana Slivik.

2.0 Approve Agenda

- Hansen requested that the May 20 minutes be added to the agenda for approval. Goodson requested that discussion on the School Storage Policy be removed from the agenda.
- Motion to approve the agenda as amended by Ost. Second by Dochniak. All in favor. Agenda approved.

3.0 Approve Minutes:

- May 20, 2021 Minutes - Hansen noted that a portion of the minutes were missing due to an audio glitch. Motion to approve minutes by Bruns. Second by Beck. All in favor. Minutes approved.
- June 21, 2021 Board Minutes - Dochniak noted that there was an error on item 6.0 Director's Report. The number of enrolled students should read 217, not 2017. Motion to approve the minutes with suggested correction by Hardie. Second by Ost. All in favor. Minutes approved.

4.0 Community Discussion

4.1 River Grove Community Updates

4.1.1 Board Member Driven Initiatives

- Hardie talked about the recent inventory underway by PTO looking at storage needs.
 - o What procedures need to be followed regarding materials that are no longer needed?
 - o If it is something listed as a school asset, we need to track how it is disposed of. Items no longer needed should be offered to members of the school community first (either for free or for sale) before they are sold or given away. We should keep a paper-trail of items that are sold, given away, or otherwise disposed of.
 - o Hardie will talk with teachers to determine materials' needs for the coming year. Will be recruiting volunteers to move and organize classroom furniture and materials, including bookshelves, and dispose of unwanted items.
- Beck suggested that Grove develop a schedule or structure for how often new curriculum is adopted.
 - o Hansen suggested that could be added to the August board agenda for further discussion.
 - o Hardie has been thinking about questions the board should consider related to this topic:
 - Will the same curriculum be used across the school? Or different for different grades?
 - Who is responsible for selecting and approving?

- What level of detail will the board consider related to curriculum?
- Should the school adopt a standard cycle for how often new curriculum is purchased?

Suggestion from Ost – add:

- What is our available budget?
 - What is available to be reused?
- o Goodson - Having a structured cycle will help the board to budget for curriculum
 - o Hansen – we could create a Google doc to track ideas on this topic

4.1.2 Authorizer Comments - the authorizer was not in attendance

4.2 Community Comments

- There were no members of the school community in attendance.
- Hansen reviewed the school board policies related to public comments. These are already approved. We tend to operate informally but should be sure to adhere to the policy if we begin having large groups in attendance.

5.0 Finance Reports & Actions - Kyle Knudson discussed the most recent financial update.

- The current ADM listed on the Department of Education website is 202, which is higher than expected. That could change but would positively affect our budget.
- The board has been projecting a \$195k loss, but the budget currently reflects only a \$55k loss based on current revenue and expenditures. This will likely change once the state makes final adjustments.
- Ost – is there a danger of the state giving us funds now and then correcting the final numbers a year from now?
- Knudson – usually the state corrects their mistakes as soon as they are noticed and then takes the overage out of a future payment or holdback
- TAG is currently completing about 20 audits so it will likely be August or September before we have final numbers.
- Knudson will be meeting with Bell Bank tomorrow to discuss a potential line of credit. It is taking a while to educate staff at the bank about how to work with nonprofits and charter schools since we have no collateral to offer. However, since we are funded by the state, there is realistically very little risk behind this loan.
- Hardie – do we have other options if Bell Bank decides not to offer us a line of credit?
- Knudson - yes

5.1 June 2021 Approvals: Motion to approve June financials by Ost. Second by Bruns. All in favor. Financial report approved.

5.2 Staff Stipend Goals

- Goodson suggested revisiting this topic in October or November once we are certain of enrollment numbers. We may lose children to homeschool again this year, depending on how things go related to COVID.

6.0 Director's Report

- We have two new enrollments since last board meeting. We still have ample room for more 6th grade students.
- Thank you to the Peatross Family for hosting the float building for the Marine 4th of July parade.
- A new band/orchestra director was just hired. Goodson is talking with him/her about the possibility of a band camp for incoming 4th-6th grade students this summer.
- We are still looking to hire a part-time bus driver
- We have a new liaison with Edvisions
- Summer School will start next week.
- There will be a new family meet-up for incoming kindergarteners on Thursday.

6.1 CUP Update

- Washington County has contacted Wilder to conduct an inspection of the septic system
- This spring, Grove committed to fund a portion of road maintenance and improvement needed to continue operating the school. Currently, the township is waiting to determine maintenance needs, depending on what might happen related to the county purchase of land on Square Lake.
- Hardie – what happens if road questions are not figured out prior to the beginning of the school year?
- Ost – we were approved for enrollment up to 225 students this year, so there shouldn't be any concerns this year. Perhaps we should reach out to John Adams and get something in writing just to be certain.

6.2 Marketing Update - staff and PTO members continue to attend local community events

COVID safety considerations for the coming school year:

- Minnesota Dept of Ed has not provided any guidance to schools yet. The Safe Learning Plan expired at the end of the school year. There was new guidance created for summer school. All of the summer guidance is phrased as recommendations instead of requirements.
- We will need to be able to react quickly once MDE provides guidance.
- Goodson would like to ensure that we engage the school community in conversations, especially if we end up having to make decisions as a board instead of following state requirements.
- Hardie – perhaps we should consider sending out a survey to gauge the opinions of parents.
- Ost – we sent a lot of surveys last year and it can be a slippery slope. We also have to consider financial concerns, state rules, and other factors in addition to parent opinions.
- Hong – is concerned that survey results might suggest a different course than is recommended or required by the state
- Goodson – wants to make sure that people are able to have their voices heard. Is not certain if a survey is the best solution.
- Ost – can Ele send out an email and encourage people to contact the board via email with their opinions and concerns
- Hong – if we get a large number of emails, we can consider holding an in-person meeting to discuss the topic further
- Ost – can we wait to see if we get additional guidance from Minnesota Assoc. of Charter Schools or MDE before we send out an email to parents
- Hong – we need to make sure parents understand that we may not have the authority to make decisions related to masks and other COVID safety measures if the state issues a directive.
- Suggestion to move the August board meeting to Tuesday, Aug. 10 to be sure we can make decisions related to COVID safety early enough to plan before the new school year begins

- Goodson – so we'll plan to send an email and include board member emails so that people can contact us with concerns prior to Aug. 10 and encourage them to attend the Aug. 10 meeting and speak up during the community comments period. Board anticipates making a decision at the Aug. 10 meeting.
- Hardie – are there any other topics we need to decide other than whether or not students and teachers need to wear masks?
- Goodson – we also needed to decide whether or not to offer distance learning. It was already decided in March 2021 that we would not offer distance learning this coming year.
- Goodson – procedures related to quarantine will continue to follow the decision tree based on guidance from MDE and MDH. Masks are still required on busses by the state.
- Hansen – can we all agree that we will operate fully in-person, 5 days a week, throughout the year, and will not change learning models midway through the year?
- Goodson – the only possibility anything would change is if we had large numbers of classes all out on quarantine at the same time.

7.0 PTO Report - Breena Slivik

- Julie Bartkey has joined PTO board. Emily MacDonald has agreed to be a teacher liaison to the PTO. There are also a few new families joining.
- Planning for fall fundraiser is underway. They are still trying to connect with the Zephyr.
- PTO members will be attending Summer Tuesdays in Stillwater to talk to new prospective families
- New families will be getting T shirts and the PTO is considering buying some school merchandise to sell at events, in addition to offering items for sale online
- Hansen – will the back-to-school nights and open house be outdoors? That could help to alleviate potential COVID concerns
- PTO will be supporting the school music program and providing teacher stipends this year like last year
- There has been some discussion about offering a meet-up for kindergarten parents on the first day of school
- Hardie – are we allowed to have gatherings in the Commons again?
- Beck – will kids be able to eat in the Commons instead of their classrooms?
- Hong – in other words, are we still trying to maintain separation between classrooms in the coming year or returning to business as normal?
- Goodson – would like to talk with Megan Lapos and teachers on July 29 in regards to COVID safety procedures for the coming year. He would like to see the coming year be as normal as possible.
- Hansen – is somewhat concerned about holding a large indoor event a week before the beginning of the school year and potentially having to contact 200-300 people if someone tests positive for COVID
- Goodson – views most of these as school operational decisions. Board should decide whether or not kids wear masks and approve the overall safety procedures but not necessarily discuss every detail in the plan.
- Hardie – thinks the board should also make a decision about whether or not to maintain “bubbles” during the school year or allow kids to mix between grades

8.0 Old Business

8.1 New Student Open House - coming up

8.2 EdVisions Grant/Staff Leadership Team Update

- The group had a retreat at Jackie Henschen's cabin

- They are developing a plan for Fridays, 1-3pm, to have intergrade gatherings to work on large projects throughout the school year
- Explorers, engineers, engaged, empathetic will be themes and they have developed activities to fit within each of these themes
- The project days will be team-led, with teachers getting a planning period periodically while others on the team lead the projects
- The goal is to foster collaboration between teachers and between grade levels
- Goodson – we are also striving to fulfill our place-based mission
- Hardie – if the school decided to maintain bubbles, will the intergrade gatherings happen outside?
- Beck – it will only be two classes gathering, not the whole school
- Hansen – however, most projects will happen outside because we are an outdoor school

9.0 New Business

8.1 Board Officer Nominations and Elections

- Hansen nominated the following slate of officers for the coming year: Marcy Ost – Chair; Jessica Hansen – Vice Chair; Angie Hong – Secretary; Katherine Hardie – Treasurer
 - Motion to approve election of the nominated slate by Beck. Seconded by Bruns. All in favor. The above slate of officers was elected unanimously.

8.2 Board Calendar and Trainings - The board verbally agreed to continue the same calendar for board meetings and trainings in the coming year.

8.3 Annual Designations

- Goodson requests that we remove Security State Bank from the list and include the names of the newly elected board officers.
- Knudson suggested that we add a line for food service.
- Goodson – it should say Payment Spring under “Other”
- Motion to approve the 2021 board designations with recommended changes by Bruns. Second by Dochniak. All in favor. Motion approved.

Other new business: Hardie – suggestion to continue developing our strategic plan and organize a gathering similar to what we did two years ago.

- There is a large amount of coordination required between teachers, board, admin, and families. This should go hand-in-hand with teacher planning happening with EdVisions.
- Hardie – it would be good to clarify the roles of board, teachers, and admin
- Hong – some of that was covered at the board training two years ago, but it would be good to review
- Hong and Hardie will lead that initiative
- Perhaps we could talk about that at the September board meeting and plan to hold a larger workshop with parents, teachers, and other school members in October
- Hong – when we discussed strategic planning two years ago, there were a lot of questions above and beyond curriculum – also whether or not to grow to K-8th, whether to stay at Wilder, how to communicate with families, etc.
- Dochniak – we’re preparing for a large transition this coming school year and it would be good to avoid overwhelming teachers.
- Hansen – there has already been a lot of change proposed through the EdVisions planning process. These topics are important but should maybe wait until later in the fall
- Hardie – this could maybe be a topic at the teacher in-service meeting in August, but with major discussions put off until later in the fall

10.0 Next Board of Directors Meetings:

10.1 Will be Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 6 p.m.

11.0 Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Beck. Second by Ost. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:24pm.