

River Grove Elementary  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Tuesday, November 16, 2021  
River Grove Commons

MINUTES

1.0 Meeting called to order by Board Chair Marcy Ost at 6:03pm.

1.1 Roll Call: Board members present: Katie Bruns, Jessica Hansen, Angie Hong, Marcy Ost, Annie Beck, and Katherine Hardie. Lisa Dochnicak arrived at 6:09pm. Also in attendance Drew Goodson.

1.2 Mission Statement: Ost read the River Grove mission statement.

1.3 Conflict of Interest Roll Call: Ost read the conflict of interest statement. All members affirmed that they have no conflict of interest with items on the agenda.

2.0 Approve Agenda:

- Ost suggested moving items 8.0 and 10.0 up to the top of the agenda. Motion to approve agenda, as amended, by Bruns. Second by Beck. All members vote yes. Agenda approved.

3.0 Approve Minutes from October 12 , 2021:

- Hardie moved to approve minutes. Second by Beck. All members vote yes. Oct. 12 minutes approved.

4.0 Academic Performance Report

4.1 Elly Johnson and Jaime Souza - 1st grade

- Ellie Johnson taught for 5yrs in White Bear School District. Took time off to raise her kids. After enrolling her son at River Grove last year, she joined the River Grove teaching team this year.
- Jaime Souza first year as a classroom teacher, but has been doing non-formal environmental education for more than 15 years, most recently with the St. Croix River Association.
  - Updates from 1<sup>st</sup> grade team on strategies to support students in academic learning.
    - WIN Time (What I Need) – all first graders come together and the kids are grouped by abilities - Below level, on level, above grade level. Johnson, Souza and full time para in the classroom work one-on-one with the groups.
    - 6 of the 7 below-level kids that Johnson is progress-monitoring are at or above their goals currently. For the child who is not, they will explore different learning interventions.
    - Hardie – how do you set the goals for students?
      - First step was to ID reading and non-reading students. For non-readers, they have focused on decoding words.
    - Ost – are the groups pretty even in numbers?
      - No. The on-level is the largest group and there are fewer above and below grade level.
    - Ost – what kind of data are you using?
      - MAP data – fluency, comprehension, speaking and listening, vocabulary. This is probably the least used data point
      - Guided reading levels
      - Observation of students reading out loud

- During the year they are measuring sight words taught.
- Dochniak – what curriculum are you using?
  - Orten-Guillingham for intervention kids
  - Benchmark curriculum for phonics for below level kids, Wonders curriculum for the on-level kids
  - Wonders curriculum and outside resources for advanced kids
- Goal to create interdisciplinary units
  - Trying to tie science and social studies in with reading and math
  - 6 units for science and social studies
- Dochniak – will this interdisciplinary approach continue forward into 2<sup>nd</sup> grade?
  - Johnson hopes so and they are talking with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers about how to do that most effectively
- Goodson – Benchmarks curriculum was purchased for grades K-2, partly funded by Esser funds
- Hansen – River Grove is very lucky to have Johnson and Souza on our teaching team

## 5.0 New Business

### 5.1 Class Size 1st grade, Action Item

- Ost – River Grove is getting many inquiries for enrollment currently and Ele Anderson is giving tours almost every day
- Both 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes are currently using two small spaces in the lower Earth building. There are 37 students total and it is very crowded.
- Currently, we have a cap that would allow up to 22 students for each of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes.
- Should the board consider capping the classrooms at their current capacity to avoid further crowding?
- Goodson – according to our bylaws we have to allow students in if we have capacity. Technically, we could have seven 1<sup>st</sup> graders apply between now and the end of the school year, and we'd have to allow them all in.
- Hardie requested that Goodson talk about our plan for next year. Will these caps need to carry forward to next year too?
  - o Goodson – we could consider rearranging again to better maximize space next year. We will continue to be challenged to find adequate space and will need to further discuss building or remodeling our existing buildings to accommodate additional enrollment.
  - o Currently, we are only considering a cap for this year, not the future.
  - o Hardie – will we reconsider other strategies such as multi-grade classes in the future?
  - o Goodson – potentially, but there are many considerations related to facilities that may change in the next few years.
  - o Beck – it's important to look at enrollment each year too. This year, the numbers worked out to keep classes separated by grade level.
  - o Hardie – would like to see an exploratory committee formed now to begin exploring solutions for next year prior to enrollment in February.
- Ost recommended a temporary cap of 38 students for 1<sup>st</sup> grade for the rest of the year. That would be 20 students for one class and 18 for the other.
- Motion by Beck. Second by Hansen. All members voted yes. Motion passes.

## 6.0 Community Discussion

### 6.1 River Grove Community Updates:

#### 6.1.1 Board Member Driven Initiatives

### 6.1.2 Authorizer Comments: not in attendance

### 6.2 Community Comments - none

## 7.0 Finance Reports & Actions

### 7.1 Treasurer's Report (Hardie)

- River Grove has been pursuing getting a line of credit to cover gaps if there are delays in state funding.
  - Old National and US Bank would offer a traditional line of credit that is only there if we need it.
  - Propel – is more like a traditional loan. We would pay interest in it but might not need it. Goodson, Hardie and TAG staff are continuing to talk with Propel to see if they might offer us a line of credit instead of a loan.
- Working budget / budget projection will be presented to the board tonight. It has changed significantly from the originally approved budget. The board won't approve a revised budget until the spring. We may want to look at ways to better estimate our preliminary budget so that there aren't as many changes between Sept. and November
- TAG and the financial committee will be bringing us a five-year financial plan to consider approving as part of the reauthorization process.
- Hardie shared River Grove's Fund Balance Policy (established in 2018) for the board to review. The current policy sets a goal of 10% minimum fund balance at the end of our 5<sup>th</sup> year of operation. We were at 10% in year 3 but have dipped to 6% now due to expenses related to COVID. Once we get back to 10%, we may also want to consider setting an even higher goal of 20% for the future.

### 7.2 TAG Review of Monthly Financials

- Joseph Solvine reviewed River Grove's financial packet
- Current fund balance is \$393,861
- We had higher than expected costs for repairs and maintenance due to bus repairs needed. Costs for SpEd instructional supplies were also higher than planned but those will be reimbursed by the state.
- Hong – why were parents paid for lunches? Was it families that pre-paid and left?
  - yes

### 7.3 October 2021 Financial Packet Approvals

- Motion to approve financial packet by Dochniak. Second by Bruns. All members voting yes. Financial packet approved.

### 7.4 Audit Update

- Audit is complete and was received yesterday. It will be presented to the board at the December meeting. There were two findings that the auditors will talk about at that meeting.

## 8.0 Director's Report

- We are now up to 209 students.
- Goodson and TAG worked together to adjust the current budget to account for new revenue and enrollment changes.
- COVID update:
  - Minnesota is currently the worst in the nation for COVID numbers
  - We are currently at 451/100k positivity rate
  - 1 staff and 1 student so far have been on campus while COVID positive. Others have been home on quarantine due to off campus exposure
  - The state is steadfast in its goal to keep kids in school and avoid distance learning
  - Mask wearing has prevented 50-60 students at River Grove from having to go on quarantine due to COVID exposure.

- o Vaccines are now available for children ages 5-12
- Enrollment opens on Dec. 6. We are getting many calls and requests for tours from families hoping to enroll next year.

- Staffing
  - River Grove is still in need of additional special ed paras, substitute teachers, and substitute bus drivers. Interview underway to hire weekend janitorial staff. One new para was just hired
- Learning program
  - Parent-teacher conferences just got done
  - Experience Fridays have been going really well and are popular with parents and kids
  - DIBELS progress monitoring helps to identify kids in need of extra support early on
    - Is this a measure used for World's Best Workforce?
    - No – those are based on MCA scores. DIBELS is more of an early intervention tool
- Campus events
  - Full school will be going to see Annie at the Children's Theater
  - Some classes have gone on field trips to the St. Croix River, pumpkin patches, and Fawndarosa
  - Food Drive just kicked off this week – it has also been an opportunity to talk with the kids about nutrition and needs vs wants
  - Planning a winter event – candle lit walks with poetry. Stay tuned.

#### 8.1 Survey Results

- Goodson walked through results of the recent parent survey
- Generally good results – 97% of parents rated 4 or 5 stars for overall satisfaction with River Grove
- Scores related to curriculum are slightly lower. This is a topic the teaching staff can discuss. How to ensure parents know what their kids are learning about each year and that the curriculum challenges kids appropriately.
- Also some concerns about communication with the special education program
- The lunch service also got lower scores compared with other aspects of the school.
- People reported being satisfied with bussing. River Grove provides our own busses at our cost.
- 98% of parents said they're very likely or likely to recommend River Grove to other families.
- Hardie – what are next steps?
  - Goodson – info will be shared with the teachers, with a particular focus on better communication about curriculum and more rigorous instruction. We may need to request additional feedback from families in order to adjust our lunch program. It is important to tell parents what we are doing in response to their feedback.
- Hong – the teachers are doing some really good work with curriculum and evaluation. It could help to package that all and put it on our website so that parents can easily see what's happening at every grade level.
- Hansen – we've begun having regular board updates from teachers about learning programs and interventions. We could begin packaging those to better share with the parents.
- Hong – some people said they wanted to know better what the board is talking about, so that goes hand in hand with better sharing info about curriculum with parents
- Hardie – it would be nice to be able to tell parents what curriculum we are using for every grade level
- Beck – yes and the teachers began doing that this summer.
- Dochniak – Custom Education Solutions free workshop coming up on December 7 – Road Map to evaluating literacy. She is considering taking the workshop herself. There

are consultants that could help River Grove staff to put our curriculum on paper.

- o Hardie – maybe Dochniak and Beck could talk more about that?

## 8.2 Contract Renewal Update

- Goodson shared an update with the board via email on where we are at in data gathering for contract renewal and World's Best Workforce.
- The 5yr report for contract renewal is currently 80% complete. Request for board to provide our feedback by Thanksgiving
- Goodson will present it to the board in December and submit to the MN Guild by Dec. 31

Jessica Hansen left the meeting at 7:30pm.

## EXCITING NEWS!!!

- We received a \$100k grant from the Manitou Fund to support place-based learning at River Grove. It is a general support grant that can be used for a wide variety of expenses.
- Manitou will be funding a teacher training this spring for River Grove and other area teachers. Focus on environmental science education.
- We will be leasing one bus to Manitou for a tennis program over the weekend for additional revenue
- Hardie – will there be any concerns about holding the summit at River Grove, given our CUP?
  - o Goodson will talk with May Twp to make sure it's ok. If it isn't, the summit can be held at Manitou property (former Warner Nature Center)

Lisa Dochniak left the meeting at 7:44pm.

- Hardie – will this be additional miles on our bus that might cause us to go over our lease?
  - o Goodson – we will actually end up making money on the partnership. Extra funds will be folded back into our transportation program.
- Hong – will news about the grant be shared with families via email this week?
  - o Goodson – he and Ele Anderson are working on an email currently. There may be questions from people in the community since Manitou is a known entity. There are possibilities for a longer-term partnership in the future, but we don't know yet what that may look like.
- Hardie – now that we're able to talk about a potential partnership with Manitou publically, we should make sure parents are involved in the conversation about what that might look like
- Ost – we will definitely be doing that
- Hong – it has been a hard two years with COVID and it is very exciting to get this additional financial support

## 9.0 PTO Report – Breena Slivik

- Marine will have an enchanted forest in downtown again this year. Scandia-Marine Lions is sponsoring this year's event.
- Dec. 1 will be a Chipotle night fundraiser
- PTO is continuing to explore other similar restaurant fundraisers with Sal's and Victoriano's
- Planning a winter event that might include poetry reading and luminaries. There will also be a sledding day with hot cocoa.
- PTO is still looking for a co-chair. Pat McCarthy volunteered to help Breena with some meetings and events.
- Hong – thank you to Breena for continuing to lead the PTO.
- Ost – Ele Anderson has also talked with Marine-Scandia Lions about additional events and

activities they can do in partnership with River Grove.

## 10.0 Old Business

### 10.1 Strategic Plan Timeline - Hardie, Hong

- Ost – would prefer not to have this on the agenda for tonight. Shared an email from Deirdre at the MN Guild that re-states their recommendation that we not pursue creating a strategic plan at this time and instead focus on the reauthorization process.
- Hardie – our school has been in operation for five years but we don't currently have a strategic plan or a recruitment plan.
- Ost – we already have a good strategic outline that was presented at our meeting last month.
- Hardie – we already need to set academic goals for the reauthorization. Our previous strategic planning efforts and community engagement stopped before getting to the point of a complete plan. We should consider revisiting our mission and vision, which were developed back when River Grove was going to be a school located in Marine.
- Hardie shared example strategic goals and reviewed what a strategic planning process might look like. We need to do all of this data gathering for our reauthorization application anyway.
- Hong presented three potential timelines for consideration.
  - Option 1 would accelerate the process to align with reauthorization, kick-off meeting in January, and be done by July
  - Option 2 would begin non-essential planning later in the spring and be done around Oct.
  - Option 3 would push the kickoff meeting back to April and begin everything non-essential in the summer. Planning required for reauthorization would happen during the spring.
- Bruns – concerned with even the third option if teachers need to provide input on academic goals in February. Everyone is stretched so thin.
- Goodson – would support option 3. Jan 18 or Feb. 21 are teacher in-service days that could be used to develop learning program goals for reauthorization goals. He is also worried about engaging in a big strategic planning process now when things might change with new funding and partnerships in the near future.
- Beck – would like to do the process well and without anyone feeling overwhelmed. Would support Option 3.
- Hardie – would like to be as efficient as possible and engage all stakeholders during the reauthorization. Don't want to come back to people again in the summer and ask them to provide similar input as what they already have.
- Hong – strategic goals should be high level enough that they allow room for us to grow and seize opportunities when they come along.
- Goodson – staff, teachers, board chair and MN Guild are not supportive of a strategic planning process that begins in January. It doesn't feel like it will be an authentic process if our key stakeholders aren't willing to engage and don't have the time and energy to do so. Why not support Option 3 timeline?
- Hardie – it doesn't seem like we'd be doing anything very different if we followed Options 1 or 2
- Goodson – is worried that options 1 or 2 might snowball into too much work. Wants to protect staff time during an already stressful year. However, it's important to have teacher and parent input when setting goals for reauthorization.
- Hong – can work with Goodson to refine the Option 3 timeline and bring it back for board review in December. Two board members have already left and she wouldn't want to make any decisions on how to move forward without their input.
- Hardie – would also like to hear back from MN Guild as to their recommendation. Could we also have a timeline/process laid out for how the reauthorization process will happen?
- Goodson – yes.

11.0 Next Board of Directors Meetings:

11.1 Annual Meeting on December 14, 2021

12.0 Adjournment: Chair Ost adjourned the meeting at 8:43pm