

River Grove Elementary
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, February 15, 2022 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
Via Zoom

MINUTES

1.0 Call to Order - The Meeting was called to order at 6pm by Board Chair Marcy Ost.

1.1 Roll Call - Board members in attendance: Marcy Ost, Angie Hong, Annie Beck, Katie Bruns, Lisa Dochniak, Jessica Hansen, Katerine Hardie. Also in attendance: Drew Goodson, Ele Anderson, Kyle Knudson, Joseph Sovine, and Bridget Peterson (TAG), Breena Slivik and Steph Leonard (PTO).

1.2 Mission Statement - Hansen read the River Grove mission statement.

1.3 Conflict of Interest - Hansen read the Conflict of Interest statement and asked board members to affirm that they have no conflicts of interest with the topics to be discussed tonight. All members verbally affirmed that they have no conflicts of interest.

2.0 Approve Agenda - Ost requested to remove 10.2 from the agenda and that someone volunteer to develop a records retention policy. Hardie volunteered. Motion by Beck. Second by Hardie.

3.0 Approve Minutes

3.1 December 2021 Minutes Approval - Hardie questioned if the minimum fund balance at the end of 5 years should be corrected to say 5% instead of 10%. Goodson and Knudson noted that 10% is indeed correct and no correction is needed. Motion by Bruns to approve the December minutes. Second by Dochniak. All in favor. December minutes approved.

3.2 January 2022 Minutes Approval - Hardie motion to approve the minutes. Second by Beck. January minutes approved.

4.0 Community Discussion

4.1 River Grove Community Updates

4.1.1 Board Member Driven Initiatives - none

4.1.2 Authorizer Comments - authorizer was not present

4.2 Community Comments - no community members were present.

5.0 Finance Report & Actions

5.1 TAG Staff Introductions - There has been staff turn-over at TAG and Bridget Peterson will be our new liaison. She has experience as a school district auditor and working with other nonprofit organizations.

5.2 January 2022 Financial Packet - Knudson reviewed the January financial packet. The school is at a healthy place from a cash standpoint. If everything progresses as planned, we'll be adding \$30k to the balance by the end of the year = \$350,780 total. The board can take that into account when discussing additional financial compensation for teachers, as well as working toward having a 10% fund balance at the end of our first five years.

- Hong - what will our current fund balance be at the end of this year (which is the end of 5 years)?
- Knudson - it will be around 6.6%
- Goodson - we were at a 12% balance two years ago but have had numerous, catastrophic expenses over the past two years due to covid. The Guild has suggested that 5% fund balance would be a good realistic goal. The 10% is a board-set policy and we will need to develop a corrective action plan for how to address the fact that we are not meeting our 10% goal.
- Knudson - the state has a record budget surplus and could potentially be giving additional funds to schools. It won't be a lot but could help.
- Goodson - traditionally, River Grove has offered a 2% salary increase to teachers each year. He would like to offer teachers a larger increase, more like 5-7% to keep up with inflation.
- Hardie - Eric Olson, a River Grove parent, has joined the financial committee.
- Motion to approve the Jan 2022 financial report by Hong. Second by Dochniak. All in favor. Jan. 2022 financial report approved.

5.3 Treasurer's Report - the finance committee met yesterday morning. There is a goal to be within 2% of our budget and actuals. We will need to approve a revised budget in April or June. We will begin developing our 2022-23 budget in March. There will be a new column in our financial packet to note how much of each of our grants has been spent. U.S. Bank has offered a line of credit with very unfavorable terms. The other remaining option is to work with Propel again. Theirs is a true loan and comes with a high interest rate. Currently, the school's financial situation is much better than at the beginning of the year, and as such, Goodson and the financial committee are recommending against getting a line of credit at this time. The committee has not yet developed a staff compensation proposal. This will hopefully be coming in March. Hardie asked if there are any requests from the board for additional board training?

- Bruns said she was not aware that teachers were being asked to participate in a committee to develop a potential compensation plan.
- Hardie - compensation would necessarily mean financial compensation only; it could also be requests for additional time off.
- Goodson - the teachers have provided input for next year's calendar
- Hardie would like to see a specific proposal brought forward to the budget committee if there are requests for additional financial compensation for teachers.

6.0 Director's Report

- Enrollment:
 - We currently have 209 students but are being paid at 220 students, which was the number submitted to the state at the beginning of the year. So, there will be budget adjustments.
 - There are 64 kindergarten applications for next year. 35/40 offered spots have been accepted so far. There's been a record number of applications.
 - 90 total applications for all grade levels.
 - Intent to return - 98% retention rate for current students.
- Facilities and operations:
 - Red route is back in the morning and they've just hired a new driver who will hopefully be done training and working by mid-March.

- Several classroom para and substitute positions are posted.
- The school is asking current teachers about their intent to return.
- Learning program - Beck
 - Each classroom has chosen a city in the area, researched the city, and then planned an event related to the olympics.
 - There have been team-building challenges, snow sculpting competitions, etc.
 - Beck has continued to meet with EdVisions and is also talking with the farm about learning opportunities for the spring. Hong mentioned that she has numerous giant pumpkin seeds for kids to grow on the farm.
- Barr program - Bruns
 - We received a two-year grant to begin the program, but the school may need to devote additional funds to keep it going in the future.
 - Barr activities are centered around team-building, as well as training staff on how to deal with serious social-emotional issues with students.
 - Barr says that River Grove staff have been operating very efficient meetings.
 - River Grove received two scholarships to the Barr conference in the spring. Four teachers will be attending - Maddie Boesel, Jessica Hansen, Jo Heide, and Katie Bruns.
 - Hardie - are there metrics to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Barr program?
 - Goodson - yes. And also he has seen far fewer referrals than last year, which is a great indication, given the circumstances with covid.
 - Bruns - they are also working on how to share the program with families at open houses.
 - Hardie - it sounds like something that the parents would be very excited to learn about.
 - Hong - especially with increased concern about student's mental health in the wake of covid, it's nice to know that our school has a strong program to support our kids.

6.1 Contract Renewal - update and next steps

- Goodson submitted our 5-year report to MN Guild and we are waiting for feedback from them.
- Hong will be helping to facilitate a workshop with teachers next Monday to gain input on the reauthorization goals.

COVID response

- There have been 30 kids home on quarantine, and 7 active cases on campus since the beginning of the year. Two staff have been on quarantine in the past month.
- Last week, River Grove had to put one class on quarantine due to a concerning number of positive cases in that class.
- Our current covid rates are 575/100K, which is ten times higher than the rate at which we said we would consider making masks optional.
- The school may consider reducing some of the existing covid-related restrictions related to keeping classes separate.

7.0 PTO Report

- Victorianos was a big success and had to turn off online orders at 6:30pm. We earned \$230.
- Taco Tuesday is coming up on Tuesday, March 15 at Acapulco.

- Read-a-thon is happening, but we may need a boost to get more fundraising.
- The PTO will be recruiting a new teacher rep to the PTO.

8.0 Academic Update - Glory Kibbel from the MN Guild suggested that we should discuss academics and how we are integrating curriculum with our school mission.

- The two first grade classes went to the MN Wildlife Science Center and got to see wolves. The field trip aligned very well with the 1st grade MN State Science standards and River Grove's mission.

9.0 Old Business

9.1 6th Grade - decision for 2022-2023 (action item)

- We are actively pursuing a partnership with Manitou Fund but do not have a firm commitment from them to help fund any new facilities next year.
- Goodson reviewed enrollment trends for 6th grade from the past five years. 6th grade is a capstone year at Grove and offers students a lot of leadership development opportunities. However, many families choose to leave in 6th grade so that their kids start middle school at the same time as other kids in the area.
- From a financial perspective, 18 students are needed to "break even" for a class
- 14 existing students have expressed an interest in returning to River Grove next year and one new student has enrolled for next year. Usually, we pick up 1-3 additional students during the summer.
- Facility considerations - Goodson has received bids for a portable classroom, if that is needed. If we remodel any buildings on site or purchase a portable classroom, we'll need to work with May Twp. to ensure we meet the parameters of our CUP.
- Goodson - proposal to offer 6th grade for 2022-23, even though it will likely fall below the break-even point of 18 students. In future years, we will have two sections going into 6th grade and will easily meet an 18 student minimum.
- Ost - are we still considering the possibility that 6th grade might be canceled for next year and then come back in 23-24?
- Goodson - yes, but we would likely take a PR hit.
- Hong - as a parent of a current 4th grader, it doesn't give her a sense of confidence if 6th grade is canceled for next year and we're just hoping it comes back for the following year.
- Goodson - where we are at, it is financial workable. It would be different if we only had 9-10 kids proposing to return.
- Beck - the kids who stay at Grove for 6th grade really experience a lot of growth and perform better in middle school.
- Goodson - the current number of students for next year's 6th grade is workable. We'll take a financial hit, but just need to accept that reality.
- Hardie - River Grove has financially subsidized 6th grade for years. She is less concerned about the financial impact currently, compared with last month. She is concerned about finding adequate classroom space for all of the kids. She'd like to see us find two new classrooms - one for 6th and one for 1st. We have the potential for additional new students in 1st grade.
- Goodson - there are a lot of things up in the air related to facilities, our land lease, our CUP with May. Twp. but we do need to decide whether or not to do 6th grade now.
- Hong - we made a commitment three years ago to growing our school into two

sections per grade with a 6th grade, so that is something we just need to find a way to make happen. Things are in limbo with our property but won't remain so forever.

- Hardie asked Goodson if he's talked with May Twp. to be able to raise our enrollment to 250 instead of 225.
- Goodson - he talked with John Adams, who is concerned about our septic. Goodson would prefer to try to stay within our 225 limit and avoid going back to the township for a CUP update.
- Hansen - if we take a \$15k hit to our budget because we decide to continue 6th grade, that means we could have to forgo other expenses such as teacher compensation. If we have to spend \$60k for a portable unit that will add expense as well. There are also space considerations if we have to move into the art or music spaces. She is supportive of 6th grade but wants to make sure we take everything into consideration.
- Ost - is it possible to draw from our line of credit?
- Goodson - possibly.
- Hardie - we won't be able to make a perfect decision now, we just need to decide based on the best info we currently have available.
- Dochniak - what fraction of the day are the 6th graders indoors vs outdoors? How much do we need to invest in the indoor space?
- Goodson - we can do it. Worst case scenario is that the kids are in the downstairs commons.
- Ost - we have options. We probably can't decide on facilities tonight. But we should decide tonight if we are going to offer 6th grade. Does anyone want to make a motion to eliminate 6th grade? No.
- Goodson - the board does need to set a class size limit for 6th grade enrollment next year.
- Hong - we could decide to cap 6th grade at 18, with the assumption that we won't likely get any students above that amount anyway.
- Hansen - she would feel very bad for any teacher that ends up teaching a 6th grade class in the downstairs common.
- Hardie - if our future plans with Manitou fall through, she is willing to make an investment in our current space.
- Hong - she agrees. It will be easier to make decisions in the future once we know if we are staying in our current building space and if we will be developing a partnership with Manitou.
- Beck motion to set the 6th grade enrollment at 18 students. Second by Hansen. All members voting yes. Motion approved.

9.2 Covid Policy - transfer of decision making authority to Administration (action item)

- Ost introduced the idea of transferring decision-making authority to the COVID task force, instead of having it be a board-level decision. She believes that the task force has been doing a very good job.
- Hardie - does Goodson want that responsibility?
- Goodson - yes, he is ok having that authority, but also decisions may need to happen rapidly, especially if we begin making masks optional in the future. For example, classes may need to quarantine or resume mask-wearing if cases go up rapidly.
- Motion by Hardie to transfer decision-making related to COVID, including quarantine and masking to the COVID task force. Second by Dochniak. All members voting yes. Motion approved.

10.0 New Business

10.1 Calendar Approval 2022-2023 (action item)

- Goodson reviewed the proposed school calendar for 2022-23. Our major holidays will be the same as at the Stillwater School District. He outlined the exceptions when we will have additional days off at River Grove. We will have 165 school days. Students will start after Labor Day.
- Hardie - did the group discuss utilizing half days to give teachers time for collaboration?
- Bruns - the teachers said they prefer to have full days off instead of half days.
- Beck - is Stillwater's Wednesday thing just temporary for covid?
- Hardie - Stillwater High School has started half days on Wednesdays to give kids tutoring time to catch up
- Are there any concerns with River Grove ending before Stillwater? Most board members seem to think not.
- Goodson - last year, the school did a staff retreat in July. He would like to do something similar this year. Last year, the teachers had 185 contractual days. This coming year will be 183 or 184.
- Ost - new teachers will have three extra contract days.
- Ost - requested a motion to approve the calendar as is, with the additional of one contract day during the summer. Motion by Dochniak. Second by Hardie. All members voting yes. Motion approved.

~~10.2 Records Retention Policy (action item)~~

11.0 Next Board of Directors Meetings: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 at 6pm. To be determined if it will be in person or via zoom.

12.0 Adjournment: Ost adjourned the meeting at 8:06pm.