

River Grove Elementary
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, April 19, 2022 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
River Grove Commons

AGENDA

1.0 Call to Order – meeting called to order by Chair Marcy Ost at 6:02pm.

1.1 Roll Call: Annie Beck, Lisa Dochniak, Jessica Hansen, Angie Hong, Marcy Ost, Katherine Hardie. Katie Bruns was absent. Also in attendance Drew Goodson, Bridget Peterson (TAG), Breena Slivik (PTO).

1.2 Mission Statement – Ost read the school mission statement

1.3 Conflict of Interest – Ost read the conflict of interest statement. All members indicated no conflict of interest.

2.0 Approve Agenda

- Motion to approve April 2022 agenda by Hardie. Second by Beck. April 2022 Agenda approved.

3.0 Approve Minutes

3.1 March 2022 Minutes Approval

- Motion to approve March 2022 minutes by Beck. Second by Hardie. All members voting yes. March 2022 minutes approved.

4.0 Academic Update – Community Clubs (Emily Talbott)

- Emily shared a proposal developed by her and Jo Heidi to convene Community Clubs on Friday afternoons, once a month. This would be an out-growth of this year's Experience Fridays.
 - There will be 10 rotating clubs that would rotate throughout the year. Sessions would be 2hrs long and would be led by community members.
 - The clubs will feature guest speakers, field trips, and hands-on activities.
 - During this time, teachers would be able to meet and collaborate with one another and SpEd.
- Board questions/comments:
 - Hansen – Emily presented this to the teachers on Monday and they are very excited about the idea. It helps us to better meet our mission of connecting with the community.
 - Goodson – 1-3pm? Yes.
 - This would also take away 18-20hrs of instructional time.
 - Beck – this supports so many of our school's goals so well.
 - Dochniak – does this replace Experience Fridays?
 - It would eliminate one Experience Friday per month but would also enhance that program.
 - Hardie – request to develop a budget and bring back a more detailed proposal at next meeting when the board will be approving its budget for next year.
 - Goodson – wanted to make sure the board understands that this will require planning time and a financial commitment to pay for background checks, para or sub time, etc. This would also be a reduction in instructional time.
 - Hong – she is sensitive to the fact that we are also trying to offer teachers with more pay. Wouldn't want to take on new expenses that prevent that from happening.

- Hardie – does the school provide additional compensation to teachers who take on major projects like this?
- Goodson – not yet but we could.
- Ost – request to continue meeting and discuss an official proposal next month.

5.0 Community Discussion

5.1 River Grove Community Updates

5.1.1 Board Member Driven Initiatives – no updates

5.1.2 Authorizer Comments – not in attendance

5.2 Community Comments

- River Grove is THE BEST.

6.0 Finance Report & Actions – Hardie

6.1 March 2022 Financial Packet - Bridget Peterson (TAG)

- Enrollment is still at 206 kids. Many of the other schools that TAG works with have not met their budget goals and have declining enrollment over the years.
- The only drastic change is that our cash has decreased about 38% due to 3-months rent payment. We are also still awaiting our 10% hold-back from the state.
- We are projected to end the year with a balance of \$216,813, which is slightly better than last year.
- The state legislature is still in session and there is little agreement between the House and Senate budgets. The Governor has suggested that schools should get another 2% budget increase. The state also has surplus COVID money they need to distribute. Sometimes those funds are distributed to schools with high numbers of low-income kids. This is not a year for school funding, but 2% increase will be included in next year's state budget.
- Hardie – Goodson and Peterson are also working to ensure that we use up all of our summer and SpEd grants.

6.2 Treasurer's Report

- The budget committee met yesterday and will be bringing the board a budget to review and approve in May. Do we want to have a special workshop before the meeting?
- Ost – would like to have a special workshop in May and then cancel the June board meeting.
 - Re-schedule board meeting for Monday, May 23 at 6:30pm, with special board financial workshop at 5:15-6:15pm.
- Hardie noted that the short-term budget is still a little stretched, but the long-range forecast is looking better. They are also talking about long-term retention goals for teaching staff and ways to increase teacher pay. We won't be able to increase as much as we need to to account for inflation, however.
- Goodson – right now we are looking at a 4% increase for employee salaries next year (usually it is 2%) but that could increase if more state or federal funds become available. The school is also talking about increasing hourly pay for paras that have been here for several years.

Motion to approve March 2022 Financial packet by Beck. Second by Hong. All members voting yes. Financial packet approved.

7.0 Director's Report - Goodson

7.1 Enrollment Update – next year we will be full and we will be at our 225 enrollment limit (based on May Two CUP)

- We need to make some decisions and changes regarding facilities to ensure room for all the classes next year.
- We have had numerous bus maintenance issues this year and we may be exceeding our transportation budget. We are fully staffed with drivers. Ron is continuing to advocate for an additional spare bus.
 - Hardie – could we build it into our bus lease to have a back-up bus?
 - Not really.
 - Ost – the blue bus had to be towed to Eau Claire last week because there are no closer maintenance shops.
 - Dochniak – how full are the busses? Could we buy a back-up van or mini-bus?
- Goodson and Ost submitted draft goals for Charter Renewal to MN Guild
 - Glory from MN Guild said we had “Thoughtful goals that will continue to move students towards academic excellence.”
 - The new goals are less focused on MCA scores and include new components like project-based learning goals.
 - Hardie – how would Goal 3 get measured? (50% of total yearly instructional hours would be spent outside)
 - It would vary throughout the year and seasons. It would like be more in some months and less in others.
 - Hardie – how are we currently trending on some of these academic achievement goals?
 - Beck – for examples, would we want to specify that 80% of “continuously enrolled” students will meet reading proficiency on MCA exam in 3rd grade. It doesn't seem reasonable to judge our performance based on how kids do that might have just started at River Grove in 3rd grade.
 - Goodson – this goal comes from the World's Best Workforce. But he is talking to MN Guild on whether this could be more flexible.
 - Dochniak – what is our testing opt out rate for MCAs?
 - Goodson - Usually it has been high but this year it was only about 5 kids.
 - Hardie would like to revise language for Goal 2.
 - Hansen would like to revise language for Goal 5.
 - Ost – these are still draft goals and can be revised.
 - Hardie – what is our current achievement gap between GenEd and SpEd students?
 - Goodson – 23%
 - Hardie – is it achievable to reduce our gap to 10%?
 - Goodson – other schools typically look at closing achievement gap between white and BIPOC students but we don't have a large BIPOC population at River Grove. So, we are looking at the gap between GenEd and SpEd instead.
 - Hardie asked if there are any additional things we need to do for our contract renewal?
 - Goodson – it is a continued conversation between the school and MN Guild.
 - Ost - Glory from MN Guild has suggested we are on pace to get a 5-year

contract renewal. We got the report back for our first 5 years. They requested a few minor tweaks to website, etc.

- There are numerous field trips and special activities happening right now.
- On Friday, the students will get to SLIME Drew for achieving their fundraising goal during the February Read-a-Thon.
- Goodson would like to hire a second administrative position for next year. This would likely be a 0.8FTE position split between admin and SpEd roles.
 - Beck – will there be time when the staff can hear and discuss this proposal more?
 - Right now the school has a 0.1FTE SpEd director position but the work load requires closer to 0.4 or 0.5FTE.
 - The position could be Director of Student Services.
- Hardie – the finance committee is budgeting for next year with this new position added in.
- Goodson – we currently have more admin work than one person can handle and a lot of work falls on the shoulders of volunteers when he is out of the office. They have already posted and will be interviewing for the position.
- Hong – do we need to take an official vote to approve this new position? We don't vote on teachers and other positions, but this feels slightly different.
- Ost – the board delegates authority for Goodson to hire staff and we approve the total staffing amounts in the annual budget.

7.2 Lease Discussion

- Dan Miller sent an update on conversations with Manitou and Wilder.
 - There is no update from Manitou. The planned teacher training will be happening in the fall instead of spring.
 - Eric Olson (parent) is a member of the finance committee and has professional experience in property management. He is helping to navigate conversations on lease renewal and septic replacement.
- Hardie – do we want to begin conversations about facilities and land purchase options?
 - Goodson – there will be a subcommittee meeting next Monday to talk about that more.
 - Hardie – we need to discuss all of the options we could pursue: forming an affiliated nonprofit to purchase the land; continuing a long-term lease. Wilder appears to be frustrated with us.
 - Ost – neither Wilder nor River Grove wants to pay for septic upgrades, but Wilder isn't otherwise frustrated with us.
 - Goodson – we are at year 5 as a charter school and could now form an affiliated nonprofit
 - Hong – what are our current options?
 - Goodson – 1) Sign a short-term lease with Wilder; 2) Sign a long-term lease with Wilder; 3) Form an ABC to buy the land; 4) Do nothing and hope that Manitou might come through and offer us a more favorable lease or location.
 - Hardie – have we ever discussed buying the land from Wilder?
 - Goodson – yes. That was our original plan. But it would be pretty aggressive for us to form an ABC and be ready to purchase the land within the next year.
 - Hardie – might Wilder be more willing to work with us if we signal an intention to eventually buy the land?

- Hansen – what does Wilder want?
 - Goodson – they want to sell the land but at a favorable price. If Manitou makes a good offer, Wilder may accept that offer as well. River Grove does have a five-year relationship with Wilder so if we want to purchase the land we can probably work it out. It will require continued conversation with Wilder staff.
 - Hardie and Beck would like to be involved in the continued conversations with Wilder. Hansen is interested as well – may not be able to avoid having a board quorum.

8.0 PTO Report – Breena Slivik

- The kids will slime Drew on Friday. Ms. Basil is the staff member who gets to participate as well.
- Culver’s night next week, 5-7pm on Tuesday, April 26
- All Staff Appreciation week – first week of May (May 2-6)
 - Mon - Coffee; Tue - Sarah’s Tipsie Pies; Wed - Snack bar from River Market; Thu - Appreciation Day; Fri - Lunch from Marine General.
- PTO will pay for kids to do a Ninja Course on their field day in May. They have also purchased swings and slacklines.
- Steph Leonard’s goal for next year is to get more community involvement. Intends to develop and send a letter at the beginning of the year with volunteer opportunities for parents.
 - Hong –There was an online sign-up previously. Will that happen again? Volunteering mostly fell-off the past two years due to COVID.
 - Hansen – for a while the school wasn’t allowing volunteers so people are just getting used to having field trips and being able to volunteer again.
- Hansen - May 6 is Kindergarten Orientation and Round-Up. That would be a great opportunity to get new volunteers signed-up.
- Dochniak – recommends sending a targeted push to different age groups and trying to get new families committed early.
- Ellie Johnson will be the new teacher rep on the PTO.
- Breena will be stepping down from chair but will continue serving on the PTO. Steph will continue as chair.
- PTO is looking at dividing into committees for different projects.

9.0 Old Business

9.1 Contract Renewal - Draft Goals (see above notes in Director’s Report)

9.2 Board Elections – deadline for board nominations is May 4.

9.3 Staff Stipends

- Finance committee is recommending \$20k be allocated toward teacher (\$675) and hourly/part-time (\$150) staff stipends. These amounts would be pro-rated for staff that were here for less than the full school year.
- There was some debate as to whether there be stipends for all staff or just teachers. But the finance committee felt it was important to recognize the extra work of all staff.
- The board request is to approve allocating \$20,000 toward teacher and staff stipends.
- Dochniak motion to approve allocating \$20,000 toward teacher and staff stipends. Second by Hong. All members voting yes. Motion approved.

10.0 New Business

10.1 Policy Project - Member Hardie

10.1.1 New/Updated Policies Discussion

- Hardie shared the newly developed policies, all formatted the same.
 - 201 Development, Adoption, and Implementation of Policies
 - 702 Public Data Requests
 - 701 Records Management, Retention, and Destruction
- At the bottom of each policy is a notation of when the policy was first adopted and when it gets revised.
- MN State Statute requires that we have two readings of the policies before voting to approve. The board can not vote on the policies until next month.
- The board needs to develop a schedule to review all of the policies once every three years.
- Minnesota Association of School Boards developed the standard template that Hardie used to develop each of the policies. All policies contain:
 - Purpose
 - General Statement of Policy
 - Additional info and details
 - References
- Hardie recommends that we follow the schedule set by Minnesota Historical Society for records retention and destruction.
 - Hansen recommended that we remove any non-required data from this policy (ie. BARR data).
 - Ost – most of this is standard across schools other than the BARR data. These are records currently stored at the office.
 - Hardie – records solely used by one person that do not follow the student’s record can be destroyed at any time (ie. teacher notes not included in the student’s record).
 - Beck – what about IEPs?
 - Hardie – there is not much detail related to SpEd records. If it is not the official record – just a copy – it can be destroyed.
- Policies 201 and 702 would replace existing policies. 701 is a new policy.
- Hansen/Ost/Hong – the board remembers passing those policies three years ago.
 - Conversation – should we increase the cost for public data requests to account for actual staff time vs using a \$25 flat fee.
 - Ost – is there anything we need to do for free?
 - Bridget Peterson - no

10.2 Budget Planning (must be passed by 6/30/22)

- Bridget Peterson put together a long-range budget forecast for us to review in advance.

10.3 Mission Statement

10.3.1 Introductory Conversation re: updating and rewording

- Hardie shared several options for a shortened mission statement. Option 4 is more like a motto – “Student-focused, teacher-powered, nature influenced”.
- For the strategic planning update, Hong included the following as our core values: “Place-based, student-centered, teacher-led, community-supported”
- Ost checked with Glory at the MN Guild. We can reword our mission. As long as we are not changing our mission, we don’t need approval from the guild.
- Goodson – timing would be good to reveal our new mission statement at the beginning of the next school year.

11.0 The next Board of Directors Meeting will be on Monday, May 23 at 6:30pm.

12.0 Adjournment – Chair Ost adjourned the meeting at 8:35pm.