

ECCS BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING MINUTES
May 16, 2013 - 5:30 P.M. Annual Meeting in Gym

Mission: Evergreen Community Charter School is a learning community committed to the pursuit of excellence in the holistic education of mind, body, and spirit. We prepare students for successful lifelong learning, environmental responsibility, and service. We value the voice of every member of our community.

AGENDA: ANNUAL MEETING

(Spring Arts Festival began at 5:00. Annual Meeting began at 5:30)

- 1) Moment of Silence
- 2) Reading of Mission Statement
- 3) Welcome & Announcements
- 4) Milestones
- 5) Finance Report
- 6) Gym Renovation Update
- 7) Board of Directors Nomination & Vote
- 8) Special Recognition
 - a) Departing Board members
 - b) Departing staff
 - c) Longevity awards
 - d) Teachers of the Year

(Final performance of Spring Arts Festival continues after the conclusion of the Annual Meeting)

5:30-5:35 **Welcome** – Dan Leroy, Board Chair

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5:35-5:40 **Milestones of this past school year** - Susan Gottfried, Executive Director

August –

- Official unveiling of the Climbing Wall and Outdoor Classroom
- Asheville Transit started providing bus service to Evergreen

September –

- notified of our Honor School of Excellence status for the third year in a row

October –

- Received the Sustainable Business Award in the Education Category from the US Green Building Council in Charlotte.

November –

- “Nothin”

December –

- Science Fair with 8th grade projects that far surpassed the quality that we’ve seen before

January –

- Our good-natured and fun spirited staff, were Jailed for the Gym and raised \$5000 in bail money for the More than Just a gym Campaign.

February –

- Science Olympiad won first place for the sixth year in a row.
- Charter School spelling contest- Middle school team one, elementary 2nd

March –

- Welcomed new staff kid: Jack Hartnett.
- Set new record for Grandparents Day attendance – well over 200 grandparents and special friends

April –

- Hosted our 2nd EL Site seminar. Our teachers presented workshops and opened their classrooms for educators from all over the country as far as Arizona, Connecticut, New York and Hawaii.
- Welcomed another new staff kid –Alton Player

May –

- launched our new Peer Mediators program

5:40-5:55 Finance Report

Jamie Kilbourne, Board Treasurer: Kilbourne presented the financial report. He said the current finances are good, but we need to think ahead. He explained that there will be more cuts from the State for the upcoming school year. He explained that we don't want to cut faculty and we don't want to use contingency. We need to seek alternative revenue sources and may have to increase class size.

5:55-6:00 Upcoming Parent Forums

Dan Leroy, Board Chair: Dan expressed that we are all in this together and we will be having parent forums to discuss it.

May 29 and June 3 5:30-7pm

need to know if you need child care

Questions for Forums (slips of paper on chairs)

6:00-6:05 Gym Renovation & Campaign update

Eleanor Ashton: Ashton talked about Evergreen's first move onto this current campus and how it was a big deal and a big step. She compared it to the current upcoming gym renovation. She recapped why it is so important to renovate and explained that it will be revenue generating in the future.

6:05-6:10 Board of Directors Nomination & Vote – Ingrid Bolick

(vote on one at a time) **The following candidates were presented by the nominating and evaluating committee to the community: All were in favor; no abstentions.**

Kelly Stephenson

Lori Hilliard

Ron Kelly

Ira Starr

6:10-6:30 **Special Recognitions**

Departing Board members

Ingrid Bolick
Jennifer Harsch
Diane Silver
Judith Pohl-Zaretsky

Departing staff

Jo Motzko
Sarah Hartnett
Sabbaticals –

Terry Deal, Mike Sule, Treasure Smith, Karen Lechner

Teacher licensure

Toerin Kintner – Finished 3 year initial licensure

Longevity awards

5 YEARS:

Kellie Wilson
James Wilson
Tonya Reese
Simone Randazzo
Joy Neily
Kriya Lenzion
Karen Lechner
Sarah Hartnett
Cameron Brantley

10 YEARS:

Mike Sule
Jo Motzko
Eben Heasley
Cathe Bradshaw

Teachers of the Year

TOY – Chris Weaver

Support Teacher of the Year – Mary Ann Athens

6:30 Final musical performance – 1st&4th, Community Chorus; The board moved to the lunch room for the rest of the meeting.

AGENDA: REGULAR BOARD MEETING – 6:45

ECCS BOARD OF DIRECTORS - BOARD MINUTES

Present: Harsch, Bolick, Heasley, Doty, Leroy, Jonas, Branch, Miller, Ryman, Miles, Silver, Gottfried, Kilbourne, Slate, Pohl-Zaretsky, Howard

Absent: Anna Marie Smith,

Visitors: Chris Weaver, Laura Simmons, Ona Armstrong, Robin Elliot, Gordon Simmons, Cameron Brantley, Kelly Stephenson, Mary Ann & Clay Athens, Ron Kelly, Eleanor Ashton, Don and Tracy Diefenbach, Jo Smith, Ira Starr, Theresa Showman

May 16, 2013 – 6:45 P.M. in Lunch Room

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AGENDA:

1. Visitor Recognition
2. Approve Minutes from last month:
 - a. Jennifer made changes to minutes after closed session. Should read: **Gottfried moved to go into closed session to prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged and confidential; Kilbourne seconded; all in favor; 8:06pm. Kilbourne motioned to approve Pohl-Zaretsky as vice-chair of Grievance committee and Slate as member; Branch seconded; all in favor. Stu Ryman motioned to approve closed minutes from March 2013; Gottfried seconded; Doty abstained; the rest in favor.**

Motion – Aaron

Second – Annie

All in favor; Heasley abstain

3. Correspondences Received:

All board members have received and read the letters that were submitted

- a. Budget

a. In-person presentations, Chris Weaver, Laura Simmons

b. Board Staff Liaison Report

Laura Simmons – her son went to Rainbow Mountain before some mothers branched out to form a new school (Evergreen); Arie started here and she has been part of Evergreen for 14 years; A priority of hers has to be to raise the salary of associate teachers; increasing the class size drives a stake in heart of what is Evergreen; it is like a frog in boiling water; a clear majority agree.

Chris – his letter speaks to class size; he has concern and grief thinking of the prospect of raising class size to meet budget shortfall; he has been functioning in a bubble as a teacher / team leader; he understands that there are no easy answers; but, purpose of his letter is to draw attention to something he fears has been lost track of – learner centered teaching requires meaningful interaction with adults (teachers); Evergreen's ratios are based on the commitment to certain outcomes and not just control of a large group of kids; kids need a lot more attention than they typically get at school; there is a long tradition of this type of education and that is why Evergreen teachers are here; the strong reaction from teachers is from their strong held belief that being there for each child is important; larger class sizes will interfere with this; he is making his presentation to petition board to not raise class sizes by even one student

- b. Process

Next topic was centered on comments related to process = no one present

c. Staffing

a. In-person presentation, Ona Armstrong

Ona – she is speaking for the support teacher of the year and for the art program; Mary Ann is spending in excess of her contracted 29 hours per week to teach each child she teaches; Ona reads her letter aloud; Ona has suggestions for modifications that she won't share publically; but, she is willing to defer her own salary increase to cover the cost of raising Mary Ann's salary

4. Discussion Items

a. Board member attendance: definition of "presence" (N&E):

Chair declares "present" to include teleconference / video conference

Review at later meeting if the process doesn't work

Judith – worried that Board meetings will devolve to tele-meeting

Diane – recommends setting a limit on how many times an individual can participate by teleconference or video

Jamie – Roberts rules (11th edition) discusses teleconferencing and discusses loss of physical presence; Jamie has experience with teleconferencing interaction in finance committee – it has worked well; he thinks it is a powerful tool for those who are out of town

Dan – summary – don't want to abuse, available for those who can't attend, re-evaluate after 6 months, only one person per meeting

b. Staff Input Survey – once-around talking circle:

Dan – 45 pages of information to summarize the results of the survey

Will use the talking stick to allow comment from Board members and anyone else that reviewed on the input from staff

Stu – thanks for the input; thought that the suggestions were disconnected from the reality of the situation; thought some of the questions were framed in a manner to solicit desired answers

Tyson – feels torn; compare to other Charter Schools – other don't pay the level of retirement as we do; we are trying to pay on state scale while maintaining our uniqueness; a lot of great ideas; thinks we should use some of our contingency to support our teachers

Gordon – appreciates the efforts and thought; wants us to identify the school we want to be; then figure how to raise the funds we need to be the school we want to be; board needs to continue to meet with staff to evaluate who we want to be

Laura Branch – glad to see the staff talk about these issues; often staff don't talk; we have amazing folks; looking to those folks for ideas

Annie – felt the powerful sense of vision and caring for education that the teachers share; wasn't just a pushback; staff want to be part of the solution; once the staff understand the severity of the

situation they may have some good suggestions; torn; sees numbers that concern her about the ability of Evergreen to sustain

Aaron – as new community member he is coming in fresh; he sees this board unlike any other board; the type of board should not be taken lightly; lots of different viewpoints; the finance committee is tasked with coming up a solution based on numbers; after reading the comments he understands that this is a passionate issue; how do we find a solution?; we are going into the second year of this issue; seems like we are a year late in addressing it; this may be the new normal

Judith – very powerful to read about the process that went on with staff; struck by how little we do that; good to hear about issues that we usually don't hear about; input from staff on this and mission statement was good and powerful; scared that we are losing the qualitative nature of who we are; doesn't think that we should be making decisions based on numbers; rather, we need to focus on heart and spirit and then decide how to spend the money we have

Robin Elliot – concerned that we may lose track of who we are; but excited about the ideas that are coming out and what we will become; needs clarification on shortfall - \$200,000 or is it \$114,000? What is the shortfall (Dan – we will talk about that when we discuss the budget options). Slow down the decision-making. If we increase class size, we can't go back for 9 years.

Ira – we are going through maturing process / growing pains; finance committee needs to communicate needs better; excited about the future; no doubt this hole can be filled

Ingrid – concerned that the children won't get the same education; balanced against the budget; seems like a quick decision; what is staff willing to give?

Eleanor – agrees with those who say take a year to come up out of the box innovative ideas

Don Diefenbach – recognized for his letter; the class sizes are larger than state... etc., that has not been communicated; at the annual meeting the line item dealing with staff was not considered; works in higher education and faces the same financial situations; when teachers leave – what are terms for those coming in? – are there opportunities to combine teaching positions?; increasing class sizes should be a last resort

Tracy Diefenbach – Three year parent at Evergreen; anticipates 11 more years; thanks the staff; if class sizes are increased they won't be decreased; from a parent perspective this seems rush; lots of really smart parents who want to be involved in any way they can; decision seems rushed; parents have a lot to contribute to a solution; wait a year

Murph – appreciates the staff input; not scared about the future; this could be a defining moment; it is not an accident that this is a successful school; not worried at all

Diane – thanks for the efforts; feels like she has been educated; things she did not fully understand; this crisis has brought to light items that need to be addressed: teacher work load is too much; but Chris' statement that it is not about work load rather it is about the type of teaching; need to define what we want to be; looking at the national political financial situation – wants us to be better (so, wait a year); gym expenditures have gotten interwoven with budget issues; concerned with us vs. them; wait a year and keep a sense of urgency

Eben – can't understand how the gym and raising class sizes are not intermingled; if we raise class sizes and do the gym that is a slap in the face; thinks we are saying that we are willing to pull from contingency for the gym but not to support teachers; teachers need a year to prepare if we are going to raise class sizes; if we don't raise class sizes but we proceed with the gym as approved we pull our contingency too low; both should be put off; safe and dry now; revisit in a year

Theresa – refers to the bar graphs; section 1 q 3 – look at distribution; q 2 page 4 – the changes won't increase the ability to serve students; storage, furniture, more help don't fix the problem; not everyone feels us vs. them but they do feel rushed

Stuart – immensely positive about the future; raising class sizes is going to raise the intensity / awareness by staff; thinks the board is well balanced; he feels that we should wait a year

Ona – offers to have people visit her class; how would she would solve the budget – take a major cut in her retirement if she could; as associates leave she would accept a 29 hour associate

Laura Simmons – again points out that she is not a person motivated by money; there are a million solutions out there and we need to do whatever to avoid increase in class sizes

Chris – leading the staff input process was a difficult task; awkward to lead the process; need a good process; understands the board members are all volunteers – can understand that it can be overwhelming; if the process is excellent and the design is good then can come to good solution without wasting everyone's time

Jamie – the finance committee is full of cold hard decisions; he loves this school; this discussion is nothing about the gym; Raleigh is sending less money; this year didn't know real numbers until February; this is not an emergency, rather this is a new reality; the state pays for one teacher – that is not the Evergreen model; benefits go up 5% a year, revenue goes up 1% per year; thanks Susan for trying to shelter the staff from the hard decisions; not the staff's decision to make – it is the board's decision; please contribute any ideas; appreciates the care and effort the staff took to understand the problems and thinks they can contribute to the solution

Susan – Refers to book Organizing Genius; great teams; we have a great team; need to hold space for the team to do good work; part of Susan's job (leader) is to deflect outside negative influences; hopes and anticipates we can find a solution that works best for kids.

Dan – two presentations will be made to set the context of the upcoming decisions

Dan – reminds the group that we are not voting on a budget tonight. Rather, we will be providing direction to finance committee on how to build the budget.

Special Presentation -

Ron – slide presentation: Is It a Problem or an Opportunity. A: a little of both; We have demonstrated that we have the ability as an organization to raise money; expects that we can raise \$94,000 in the next year; assuming only half successful we will still raise enough to buy us year;

Possible Sources:

Unrestricted Grants

Legislative Opportunities – Charter friendly

Supplemental Evergreen Programs – home school consultancy, online classes, expand ever after, expand summer camp, rent gym,

New Development Strategies

Recommendations: don't raise class sizes for at least one year; investigate new opportunities; form a task force; raise classes if none of these opportunities work out

c. Draft Budget proposals; board guidance needed:

Susan – in the board packet three draft budgets presented – none are balanced

Scenario 1 - no new students, 4% raises, no tutor, EC associate = - \$114,000

Scenario 2 - = one new student, 4% raises, additional PAL staff = - \$64,000

Scenario 3 = two new students, 4% raises, additional PAL, EC, associates = - \$2,000

The original \$200,000 deficit was an early draft before individual teacher salaries were calculated.

Need direction from Board on:

Bonuses and Raises

If from contingency – how much this year? Next year?

Increase class size

If so by how many and when

Diane – need to consider the issues brought forward regarding associate teachers; living wage?

Social justice?

Jamie – last year we raised all of our wages to the living wage standard. We are not talking about living wage we are talking about fair wage.

Tyson – those who are less than full time we should consider adding benefits

Dan – are folks suggesting that we add additional expenses and dip into contingency?

Diane – yes, suggesting increase salary and dip into contingency; add those items and take more out of contingency

Aaron – finance committee role is to submit a budget based on where we are right now; we are empathetic regarding teacher's compensation; added staff along with adding students was to decrease the impact to teachers in the short term

Tyson – need to consider how we can increase teacher's compensation

Stu – at some point we need to cut off evaluation of options and give clear direction to Susan and finance

Diane – in favor of taking monies out of contingency for one year

Aaron – in favor of taking money out of contingency for one year

Kelly Stephenson – as a new board member she needs more information

Ira – trying to create a zero based budget without knowing what the revenue will be is very difficult

Jamie – The finance committee needs direction from the Board on scenario 1, 2 or 3. The finance committee is divided on which option to develop.

Gordon – hearing that people may be willing to invest in operations (punting for a year). He cautions against assuming the solution is in fund raising. If it goes that way, the board needs to establish bench marks for fund raising.

Straw poll – finance committee needs to focus on scenario 1

Gordon – how much is the board willing to take out of contingency next year?

Dan – Specifically, for what are we willing to go into contingency to avoid raising class size?; also hold ourselves to existing expenses – don't add things – there are many desirable things to add but let's avoid adding things to the budget

Eleanor – wants assurance that a task force will be set up

Stu – have to tie the task force to bench marks

Murph – it may not be realistic to count on any fund raising monies to come in within one year

Theresa – right now staff and faculty are passionate; concerned that the year will go by too quickly

Susan – the task of raising money needs to be taken away from the teachers and put into the hands of appropriate experienced people

Chris – a two stage lift off; leadership team first and then inviting in the next wave of help

Dan – who is interested in taking leadership on this fund raising issue? A “Super Development Committee”

Susan points out that we really need a strategic plan to guide our decision-making.

Jamie moves – Set up task force to examine increasing revenue and report back to the board at the November 2013 meeting. Ron is chairman of the committee.

Tyson second.

All in favor except as noted.

Stuart opposed

Aaron abstain

Dan – directs discussion back to questions raised by finance committee

Bonuses – no

Raises – state salary scale or 4% raise

Associates pay and benefits – postpone to strategic plan

Question: How much money out of contingency –

Stu – how much will be left in contingency if we spend \$114,000 and we take the gym funds from contingency?

Gordon – approximately \$525,000

General consensus is that we are willing to go \$114,000 into contingency

Stuart – we have agreed to go \$114,000 into contingency?

Gordon – are additional staff cuts ok in order to remove no more than \$114,000 from contingency to meet balanced budget?

Eben – adding staff is an emergency but moving forward on the gym is not an emergency;

Dan – trust the finance committee to bring a balanced budget

Tyson – can we give a cap above \$114,000? Say \$150,000?

Dan – shoot for \$114,000 and don't go above \$150,000.

Stu – will we have bids back from contractors for gym renovation before we vote on the budget?

Gordon – yes; May 29th

Susan – the reason we “punt” the budget issue every year is because we don’t have a strategic plan; very frustrated with our own internal process; really encourage us to do more than the super development plan

Dan – can we put Strategic Plan on the agenda for next month?

5. Action Items

No discussion.

6. Committee Reports

- a. Finance:
No further discussion
- b. Director:
No discussion
- c. Board Staff Liaison Report:
No discussion
- d. Development:
\$25,000 grant received today from the Glass Foundation for windows in the gym
- e. Nominating & Evaluating:
No discussion
- f. Facilities / Master Plan / Building
 - a. Gym Renovation decision-making authority:

Murph – wants everyone to be clear regarding the timeline; bids will come in, evaluated at committee level; contractor recommendation will be brought to the executive committee; wants to mobilize the contractor in June

Aaron – needs to get financing in place before construction starts

Susan – the board authorized the executive committee to sign a contract for full gym renovation up to the amount previously approved amount

- g. Technology Task Force:
no meeting
- h. Grievance:
no meeting
- i. School Improvement Team:
No discussion
- j. Executive:
No discussion
- k. Diversity:
No discussion

7. Personnel or Legal Matters (*closed session*): none

8. Items for next month's agenda

- a. Budget vote
- b. Strategic Plan

9. Reflection:

Dan – thinks the budget decision and the gym decision both reflect hopefulness; we have our work cut out for us

Eleanor – think abundance

Stuart – not all will be happy with the decisions we made this evening

Adjourn 9:15 pm