

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE EVERGREEN COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS February 18, 2016 – 5:30 P.M.

Meeting called to order at 5:37 p.m. by Annie Jonas. After a moment of silence, the Evergreen Mission Statement was read.

Present: President Annie Jonas, Vice-President Michael Follo, Treasurer Mark DeVerges, Susan Mertz, Kevin Kopp, Ron Kelley, Brittany Keeler, Sam McLamb, Murphy Doty, Lynn Player, Stephanie Hellert (via Skype initially, then in person at 6:00 pm), Theresa Showman (arrived 10 minutes late), Lori Hilliard (arrived 15 minutes late)

Absent: Secretary Kelly Stephenson, Fynn Crooks, Brian Davis, Eric Howard

AGENDA:

1. Visitor Recognition

The following visitors were recognized: Laura Branch (in role of Board-Staff liaison), Gordon Simmons, Kathy Norris.

2. Minutes from Last Month

Kelley made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 2016 Board meeting with corrections. Kopp seconded. The motion was adopted, with Hellert and Player in abstention.

3. Program Report

Kathy Norris presented information on the Exceptional Children Program. Her report is attached. A few important takeaways are noted here:

- Federal funding for Evergreen EC program is based on December child count (56). Currently, we are serving 60 students with various cognitive and physical needs, with 7 more EC referrals in process.
- Case load (# of EC students per instructor) does not always reflect amount of time needed to provide EC services!
- EOG proficiency (math, reading, science) for students with IEP's decreased from 2013-14 to 2014-15, both at Evergreen and statewide, but ECCS does still test above state levels. Decline attributed to lack of Extend II testing in 2014-15. This is not the same as accommodations, which are still available.
- Norris underscored the conundrum that EOG's assess End-of-Year proficiency for EC students who are already not working at grade-level. Player also pointed out that these assessments and rubrics do not assess hard work, so are not best way to measure success of EC students or program.
- LEA self-assessment and improvement process (from NC DPI) is new this year. Both Norris and Player noted that this process is VERY time-consuming, paperwork-intensive, and focused on dotting i's and crossing t's. This adds considerably to workload of EC Coordinator and teachers.
- Player pointed out growth in EC program over the 9 years she has been at ECCS. She attributed this to Kathy's leadership, hard work, and concern for EC students and teachers.
- Jonas asked Norris about biggest challenges to successful EC program. Kathy's response: finding TIME to serve students, modify assignments, adapt expeditions, collaborate with teachers, participate in professional development, and complete required state paperwork.

4. Correspondences Received

There were no correspondences received.

5. Celebration of Success

DeVerges expressed his gratitude to Susan and Gordon for their help in getting him up to speed in his new role as Treasurer. Mertz described snow cone and popcorn parties for classes who had 100% participation in Evergreen Fund.

6. Discussion Items

a.) Board Norms

In an effort to cultivate a more positive and productive board culture, board members discussed adopting a set of guidelines to shape the interaction of board members with each other and with the Evergreen community.

Jonas first introduced the concept of group norms and referred to materials that Susan provided in Board packet, including ECCS staff norms that were adapted straight from EL Education staff norms. It is hoped that these can be a conversation starter for this Board.

Doty immediately praised these staff norms, and moved to adopt.

Hellert noted that seeking 70% consensus was one of the example norms in board packet and, in her opinion, a worthy goal for this board to shoot for. She elaborated on the concept of consensus, as opposed to simple majority rule. Benefits: more effective communication, everyone's voice is heard. Challenges: time-consuming (In fact, even the discussion of consensus proved to be very time-consuming...).

Jonas expressed her concern that consensus requires both time (that this board may not have) and training. She was not alone in stating that, while this is a great goal, it may not be practical and could be an obstacle to getting our job done. Our mission already includes statement about "valuing voices of all members of the community." Is this enough?

Referring to Evergreen staff norms, Player noted that the board's job is unique. Are there things we need to include in our norms that might not apply to staff? Mertz pointed out that, while our job may be unique, interacting/relating constructively with each other should be a similar goal.

Kopp reminded everyone that we all signed a board member pledge. He asked if this is really all we need for norms. Hilliard thinks that this could be a great starting point, but may not be specific enough. McClamb asked if norms are same as code of conduct or board pledge? Jonas thinks norms are more process-oriented.

Recognizing that board norms are only a discussion item this month (and not an action item), Hilliard proposed that we table Doty's motion to adopt Evergreen staff norms. Waiting until next month to act on norms gives N&E time to clean up/integrate staff norms and existing board member pledge and bring this back to board for their consideration.

b.) School Report Card

At the January board retreat, board members expressed an interest in the NC School Report Card, and how to interpret the information on the report. The report can be found at www.ncschoolreportcard.org/src and can also be accessed from the Evergreen web site.

Mertz walked the board through some of the more important parts of the School Report Cards for 2013-14 and 2014-15. Jonas, acknowledging that we should take these numbers with a grain of salt, asked Mertz what we should be paying attention to and how we should react to these numbers. Mertz replied that this is what the public sees, and it is a measure aligned to Common Core. There is value here, but it is not always easy to separate the wheat from the chaff. Board members were encouraged to explore these reports on their own and follow up with Mertz if they had any questions or concerns.

7. Action Items

a.) 2015 School Audit

DeVerges summarized audit results and financial highlights for Board. In short, it was a good year. The 2015 Financial Audit is attached. We received the audit later than usual this year. Acadia was late delivering information to our auditor, Darrell Keller. Susan and Gordon will bring this up with Acadia at their next meeting. Some highlights from that report:

- We received an unqualified opinion, which we always have and no material weaknesses in our internal controls were identified.
- There was a technical change bulletin issued by the Government Accounting Standards Bureau, GASB 68. It refers to how unfunded pension liabilities must be reported in financial statements. It applied to everyone, not just Evergreen or charter schools. This technical change resulted in an adjustment to our opening fund balance of \$933,705. This number represents Evergreen's share of total unfunded pension liability. That calculation was based on many assumptions and it doesn't impact our daily operations or actual liability. We met with our bankers at First Citizen Bank and they haven't fully considered how the adjustment will impact borrowers. At this point they don't believe it will have any impact on us. You can imagine if Evergreen's share is \$933,705 how the change impacts a large school system or government agency.
- The assets and deferred outflows of Evergreen exceeded our liabilities and deferred inflows at the close of the fiscal year by \$1,275,057. (net position). The school's total net position increased by \$249,774.
- Evergreen's debt increased by \$400,343. \$220,299 related to the gym construction and \$180,044 related to net pension liability (GASB 68 mentioned earlier).
- Our reserve fund, or "unallocated reserves" increased to \$670,848.
- Although last year was a very good year from a financial perspective, the savings came with a cost. Because it was reviewing sustainable business models, the Board asked that the 2015-16 budget be managed as "austerity budget" and not typical of how we want to run the school. For two years there were cuts to staffing and student services. As a result, we anticipate there will be a surplus again this year and we will end the year with a reserve fund very close to our established target of \$800,000.

- Susan created a preliminary budget for 2016-17 with an eye toward reinstating and improving some services while still maintaining tight budgetary controls. As noted in the finance committee minutes, the finance committee reviewed that budget at its February meeting. It will be further refined and brought to the board for discussion in March.
- If anyone has a specific question or wants to go into details about the audit, they should contact Gordon.

Finance committee recommends that Board approve the Audit. Based on this recommendation, board approved audit unanimously (with no abstentions) after unanimous straw vote.

b.) Reinvestments

Treasurer Mark Deverges presented information on reinvesting contingency money in safe, secure (short term) fund that would generate passive income (~\$4K). Board was not clear if this can be an action item without Finance committee approval and/or recommendation. Mertz thinks that bylaws allow board to authorize ED to make this short-term investment, pending Finance committee approval. Simmons suggested that, rather than a formal motion, we should just take a straw vote on the concept this month. Finance committee would then come back next month with a specific recommendation for re-investment. Straw vote was conducted and re-investment concept was unanimously supported.

c. School Calendar

Mertz brought 2016-17 school calendar (which was approved by staff on February 17) to board for its approval. Quick summary of highlights followed. One date that stood out is November 8. With Evergreen gym serving as a polling place and student conferences taking place on campus that same day, potential problems include parking, safety concerns. Even though students will be accompanied by parents, board still has concerns and asks that a staff plan be formalized to address safety on this day. Mertz moved to approve calendar, Hilliard seconded. Calendar approved unanimously.

d. New Hire

Mertz made motion to hire Kara Nash as part-time Health teacher, Hilliard seconds. Straw poll (unanimous) followed by unanimous board vote.

d. Establish Board Legislative committee as full committee (no longer a sub-committee).

Motion by Development committee, followed by unanimous straw vote and unanimous board vote to approve.

8. Committee Reports

- Finance—no questions
- Director—no questions
- Board Staff Liaison Report—no report
- Development-- Hilliard asked for clarification about Legislative sub-committee. Development needs to “drop” this sub-committee, then asks Board to establish Legislative committee. Moved to action item (see above).
- Nominating & Evaluating—no questions
- Facilities / Master Plan / Building—no questions
- Grievance—the committee did not meet.
- School Improvement Team—no report
- Executive—no questions
- Diversity—no questions, only admiration!

9. Items for Next Month's Agenda

- Program Update: Academic Support Program & The Learning Center
- Action on re-investment
- Action on Board Norms
- Presentation of initial budget
- Update from Diversity
- Voting Protocols from Executive

10. Reflection

Follo expressed his appreciation for the incredible work done every month by Kelly Stephenson, Board Secretary. He also thanked Stephanie Hellert for her willingness to take on this role next month, when Stephenson will once again not be able to attend.

Meeting adjourned by Jonas at 7:57 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Follo (for Kelly Stephenson)

DRAFT