APPROVED

River Valley Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday October 16, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Location
River Valley Charter School Middle School Great Room

MISSION STATEMENT
The mission of the River Valley Charter School is to provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. Students will reach their full potential as scholars and become self-reliant, productive members of society. They will be adept at critical thinking and creative problem solving and will be fully prepared to succeed in future schools, careers and civic life.

Trustees Present
A. Godino, B. MacQuade (remote), C. Getz, C. Whitford, D. Herrera, D. Mitchell, E. Rankin, E. Simone, J. Nickerson, N. Durkee, P. Ganley, T. Murdy

Trustees Absent
A. Ting, E. Bradley, M. Connerton

Guests Present
A. Wetmore, Colleen D'Alfonso, Daniel Dennis & Co., Karen Kuse, Director, Valquiria Marcal, Daniel Dennis & Co.

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

D. Herrera called a meeting of the board of trustees of River Valley Charter School to order on Wednesday Oct 16, 2024 at 7:01 PM.

B. Record Attendance

C. Board Expectations

Board Expectations appear for all Trustees to review at all Board of Trustee meetings.

D. Public Comment

None.

II. FY 24 Audit Review & Vote

A. Audit Review

Daniel Dennis & Co. met with Finance Committee at the October Finance Committee meeting.

Colleen D'Alfonso and Valquiria Marcal presented the audit results for the information of the Board to help with vote. Management is responsible for report and auditors are responsible for opinion on the report. Their report examines compliance and internal control of finances. They found no material concerns. The one finding refers to the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System (MTRS). Out of a sample of five teachers, one was not enrolled. Typically, there are no repercussions from DESE in a situation like this.

Valquiria Marcal walked the board through key ratios used to evaluate the financial health of the school. All ratios were considered low risk. This indicates a good financial year for the school.

JNickerson, does our low 3% grant use compared to state average? CWhitford, this is mainly due to the population make up of the school.

CD'Alfonso suggests corrective action for MTRS enrollment and continue to monitor 20% Excess Carryover Calculation (has been in place for about 12 years). If there is an excess over 20% from tuition revenue alone, the overage needs to be returned to sending districts. Appropriate planning can avoid that, for instance, putting the funds in capital reserve fund. This is tracked in the end of year report and can be found on the DESE website.

JNickerson, who will confirm that corrective action was taken in regards to the finding? CD'Alfonso, it will be reviewed this summer. CWhitford, it was simply an oversight during some turnover of positions within the school.

CWhitford, Pointed out the change in position of 98K. The board approved funds for stipends, funds went to the capital reserve, tuition came in 15K less than expected, over accrued some salary expenses, taxes on stipends that hadn't been estimated. This is why the surplus revenue looks less than previous. Still a good story, money is going into the capital account.

All reports appear in the board packet.

B. Audit Vote

D. Herrera made a motion to accepts results of fiscal year 24 audit.
C. Whitford seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. Mitchell	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
E. Simone	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
M. Connerton	Absent
E. Rankin	Aye
P. Ganley	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
C. Whitford	Aye
E. Bradley	Absent
B. MacQuade	Aye
N. Durkee	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
A. Ting	Absent

III. Review Previous Board Minutes

A. Approve Last Board Meeting Minutes

D. Herrera made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 09-18-24.
D. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Typographical edit.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

N. Durkee	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye

Roll Call

E. Rankin	Aye
E. Simone	Aye
E. Bradley	Absent
P. Ganley	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
C. Whitford	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
A. Ting	Absent
C. Getz	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
M. Connerton	Absent
D. Herrera	Aye
A. Godino	Aye

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Approve Accountability Committee Minutes

B. Approve Executive Committee Minutes

C. Development Committee

D. Approve Committee On Trustees Minutes

E. Vote to Approve Consent Agenda

D. Herrera made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.
D. Mitchell seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

V. Director Update

A. Director's Report

The Director's Report appears in the Board Packet. Time was allowed in the meeting for questions.

DHerrera reported that the Executive Committee reviewed the Community Preservation Act grant and discussed whether more money would go into trying to get the grant than could or would be received. Insurance was also concerned about the open use aspect of the grounds and liability. CGetz, Is the 250K is split among multiple organizations? DMitchell, it might be worth a question to see if the sending districts are a limiting factor and how much the grant could be. It would also be helpful to understand the exact insurance implications of receiving the grant.

KKuse held an exit interview with a family who moved out of state. They had mainly positive things to say about RVCS. They previously had an opportunity to move and had not taken it in order to remain with the school. Their only concern was being stuck with teachers that you don't click with for three years.

MCAS: DHerrera, how are you feeling about them? KKuse, has started reviewing the aggregated data. ESimone, How soon do you think you can circulate that? KKuse, the week before the next Accountability Committee meeting, possibly sooner.

Director's Goals: there is a separate metric to track progress.

Goal 1 discussion:

DMitchell: am I to take that leadership rolls don't have job descriptions? KKuse: Yes, it was something immediately asked for upon arrival. ESimone: In fairness, the roles have been changed and restructured in the past year.

Goal 2 discussion:

AGodino, does this refer to collaboration between educators? DHerrera, this is more to equalize experiences between classrooms. Classrooms should have comparable experiences.

DMitchell, do you anticipate the teachers will collectively figure out what these standards will be or will it be management? DHerrera, it would really be management, while meetings do happen with teachers and leadership.

NDurkee, are you considering revisiting early release Wednesdays. KKuse, it is something I'm thinking about.

Goal 3 discussion:

KKuse, there is some work to be done in order to reinforce the authentic Montessori experience.

JNickerson: Are we more/less Montessori than other schools you have been in when you walked in the door? KKuse: There are certain characteristics that are indicative of the authentic experience. There were some things that struck her compared to others. However, RVCS is more Montessori that many other public programs, but not as Montessori as private schools.

JNickerson, is there a tracking method for how Montessori a school is? KKuse, yes, and RVCS has hired National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector to do audits. We aren't doing everything that this audit tells us to do.

AGodino, two things seem very fragile as he looks into public Montessori: curriculum and uninterrupted work cycle.

Metrics: DHerrera presented the metrics that will be used to measure the progress toward goals.

Midyear Director's Review: last year's was two-part. The Board filled out a survey regarding goals. This didn't provide useful data. Another survey was sent team leads looking for faculty input. The survey had a good success rate. Would like to continue that survey, while opening it to a broader group.

DHerrera would like to hear from the group as to how they would like to provide feedback.

DMitchell, this is happening concurrent to hiring the new director? DHerrera, yes.
KKuse, I would like all staff/faculty to have the chance to give feedback.

DH: Would like to hear from faculty member? BMacQuade, it would be nice to have an open dialogue part as you can't get everything from a survey.

DHerrera, the Executive Committee is considering an open ended portion for the Board. DMitchell, the way he's done it at the community college level is a 360 review done by a subcommittee, considering different components. The process is intensive as most is done as interviews. This seems like it is an odd year to do it, but perhaps we could prototype it.

DHerrera, would the team leads be the people to talk to? BMacQuade, best sample is a random sample. Team leads doesn't take into consideration all the levels. DHerrera, Board on track is really helpful with anonymity.

AGodino: What is the goal of the review? DHerrera: what are we asking of the director? The Board should be asking where are you with your goals. AGodino: Many of these goals are things that faculty will have insight on.

VI. Board Business

A. Board Business Topics

B. Facility of Use Policy: Vote

DHerrera highlighted the changes to the policy.
D. Herrera made a motion to Approve as is.
D. Mitchell seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

A. Ting	Absent
T. Murdy	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
E. Simone	Aye
N. Durkee	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
M. Connerton	Absent
E. Rankin	Aye
C. Whitford	Aye
E. Bradley	Absent
P. Ganley	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
C. Getz	Aye

C. Board Education

This month's board education

CWHitford discussed Actuals vs Budget, Balance sheet.

VII. Executive Committee Update

A. Executive Committee

Next meeting focus will be reviewing the committee discussion.

Review bylaw discussion.

Continue discussing the 360 review.

VIII. Finance Update

A. Finance

Nothing further to add after the audit report and the board education section.

IX. Accountability Update

A. Accountability

Next meeting will focus on MCAS data.

Wrapping up discussion of the Family/Caregiver survey.

X. CoT Update

A. Committee on Trustees

Looking for updated committee descriptions, bylaw changes.

Board health: How do we look at this? There is a section in Board on Track.

Mission statement: Are the 2nd and 3rd redundant? Brought in others to discuss this. DHererra, we don't have to get approval from DESE to change it. But was advised it is not a great time to change it while we have an interim director, even though it is a simple change. Recommendation is not to change it now, look at it in the next fiscal year.

Bylaw: Change secretary to clerk, inclusive language. Will get to group after first attempts have been made.

XI. Development Update

A. Development Committee Update

Annual Fund is in the works: the theme is Charting the Course for the next 25 years. Class captains for each classrooms are being sought to help disseminate and personalize the information.

Two parents are writing the Annual Fund letter. Jen and Mark Tramontana will be writing it. Both are very invested in the school with the four kids in/having gone through the school. Letter of celebration with modest asks that have themed river names.

Read-a-Thon: wants to line up sponsors. DHerrera, how will the sponsors be vetted? ERankin, this is something to be considered and discussed.

DEI in development: there has to be participation for all.

DHerrera, when is the letter to hit mailboxes? KKuse, before thanksgiving,

XII. Closing Items

A. Public Comment

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:03 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Herrera

C. Meeting Survey Link