



Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport

Minutes

GOBPT January Monthly Board Meeting

Date and Time

Wednesday January 11, 2023 at 5:15 PM

Location

Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport

375 Howard Avenue

Bridgeport, CT 06605

January finance and governance committee meetings were canceled - all votes and board business was discussed at once in this 1.11.23 board meeting - these minutes stand in lieu of separate sets of committee minutes.

Directors Present

Bob Carlson (remote), Corey Sneed (remote), Eva Vega (remote), Selena Morgan (remote)

Directors Absent

Christopher Mcmillan, Diane Gordon, Tenssie Ramsay

Guests Present

Benjamin Chan (remote), David Zieff (remote), Janay Garrett (remote), John Scalice (remote), Latoya Hubbard (remote), Lauren Perkins (remote), Michael Duffy (remote), Vanessa Ceas (remote)

I. Opening Items

A.

Record Attendance & Begin Recording Meeting (if remote participants are present)

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Bob Carlson called a meeting of the board of directors of Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport to order on Wednesday Jan 11, 2023 at 5:25 PM.

C. Approve December meeting Minutes

Corey Sneed made a motion to approve the minutes from GOBPT December Monthly Board Meeting on 12-13-22.

Selena Morgan seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Governance Committee

A. Vote to approve December Governance Committee Minutes

Corey Sneed made a motion to approve the minutes from GOBPT December Monthly Governance Committee Meeting on 12-12-22.

Bob Carlson seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Introduction of new board member

B. Carlson introduced David Zieff as someone who is interested in joining the board as a new member.

David talked a little bit about a long history of serving on nonprofit boards, supporting hospitals, etc. and is willing and able to help. J. Scalice mentioned a great conversation they had about David's skillset and enthusiasm. J. Scalice specifically noted his financial expertise, particularly as being important as we move forward with the CMO separation process.

C. Executive Director's Report

J. Scalice gave a brief overview of his ED report, which is to include a review of:

1. New Student data profile for parents
2. Seal of Biliteracy update - corrective action
3. State Update in regards to the separation
4. Operations update (L. Hubbard)

Parent Data Report for Middle School Parents Includes:

1. Update on any courses of concern based on an average below 70 for the first trimester
2. Update on absences, inclusive of Percent Indicator, comparative to State Chronic Absence Indicator
3. Update on SBAC Practice Test (End of January) in easy to follow format
4. Update on Behavior Incidents reported through the School Wide Behavior System
5. Specific Actions steps for areas of concern
6. Parent specific information on the following:
 1. PowerSchool and Schoology login information and directions
 2. Paper Tutoring login information and directions
 3. Online assistance (after-after school) login information and directions
 4. After-School permission slip and program reminder

Full Data Profile for High School Parents Includes:

1. Update on any courses of concern based on an average below 70 for the first trimester
2. Update on absences, inclusive of Percent Indicator, comparative to State Chronic Absence Indicator
3. PSAT performance indicator for 10th and 11th grade and SAT indicator for 12th grade
4. Credit accumulation indicator based on grade and CSDE requirements
5. Specific action steps for areas of concern
6. Parent specific information on the following:
 1. PowerSchool and Schoology login information and directions
 2. Paper Tutoring login information and directions
 3. Online assistance (after-after school) login information and directions
 4. After-School permission slip and program reminder

J. Scalice shared that the purpose of the data/parent letters is to provide clear action steps for students and parents in a way that's accessible, easy to decipher, sent electronically and via post; it is also available to students, parents and teachers! It combines multiple indicators in one report to make follow-up and tracking of progress easier, and it'll be updated each trimester to offer significantly more information than report cards at this time.

J. Scalice shared a sample letter, also included in the board materials. J. Scalice walked everyone through the sample letter and explained how it'll enhance academic success for students and families.

Actionable Data

1. Early indicator for parents - provides parents and students with an early indicator of concerns, traditionally done in April
2. Provides data for predictive budgeting for Summer School or Recovery Opportunities; this will give us an idea of teachers and fellows we will need to hire for summer school/recovery opportunities.
3. Communication - Facilitates ongoing communication regarding student performance

The Seal of Biliteracy

The Seal of Biliteracy is a national program CT adopted that provides equity to students who are English language learners. "Part of Great Oaks' Charter is to promote equity and to provide opportunity for students speaking languages other than English upon arrival to school."

J. Scalice gave an overview of what The Seal of Biliteracy does for students

1. Promotes opportunities for students to demonstrate fluency in English and a second language for recognition
2. Provides Equity for Students
3. Informs Universities and Colleagues of a students language skills against testing and rigorous requirements
4. Students completing receive distinction on their Diploma
5. CT State colleges currently award 9 credits to students who earn this distinction at no cost to students

Great Oaks Students earning distinction as of 1/9/23 - 13 students who have passed the benchmarks to receive the seal of biliteracy! J. Scalice named them to recognize their work. We anticipate 25-30 students this year to be eligible for the Seal of Biliteracy.

B. Carlson asked if this was the first year and J. Scalice noted yes, this is the first year GOBPT is doing it. J. Scalice noted we were made aware of The Seal of Biliteracy last year during state visit; we have 4 ESL teachers for our 106 student population; the discussion of The Seal of Biliteracy came up in conversation as something we should pursue, after seeing our progress/commitment towards equity for English language learners.

J. Scalice and M. Duffy shared an update on the CSDE Initial Notification of Separation with Rob Kelley from CSDE; Initial notification of separation 12/23/22

1. Involvement from CSDE and State Board focuses on sustainability of the school for the long term

2. 3-5 year projection of finances; and
3. Information regarding plan of action, details of off-boarding, plans for assumption of responsibility by the school
4. Timeline and scope would be needed by April for summer vote for September recognition

M. Duffy noted that the April timeframe helps to define conversations between us to have something specific to drive towards. M. Duffy noted our financial strength is in a good place and focusing on enrollment will bode well for continued fiscal strength.

Staff Notification - Tuesday January 17th. 2023

Parent Notification - Wednesday, January 18th, 2023

Letters will be circulated to the Thursday, January 12th, 2023.

D. Director of Operations Report

Facilities Updates

- Boiler Installation - complete
- 2nd Floor Remediation - Not complete
 - Gary Flocco (Cherry Street Partners) notified by CORE construction company on December 23rd, that they would not be completing the work.
 - Great Oaks BPT informed upon return from Holiday break that Gary would be hiring own contractor's complete the work
 - On Friday January 6th walkthrough done by KBE General Contractors and Steel Elite Construction, and they determined given the time needed to fabricate the steel they requested to complete the work the weekend of February break (Friday February 17th- Monday, February 20th).
 - Steels Elite Construction will be contracted through KBE general Contractors to do the steel fabrication and KBE contractors have been contracted by Gary to complete the work
 - Gary mentioned there is a possibility that a permit might be needed, and said he would be in contact with the city on Monday to confirm

C. Sneed asked if we should request for the permit to be pulled/inspection report to be done and for the structural engineer to walk through with them as well.

Certification Update

- 75% certified (increase since last meeting) - high number compared to previous year as of January

- 9% pending certification (approved, waiting for licenses to be applied)
- 16% pending review/missing credentials

C. Sneed asked about the process for managing the pipeline for credentialing for teachers - concerned about it being a moving target based and to ensure nothing falls through the cracks.

L. Hubbard reviewed the internal process for hiring and onboarding teachers who are either already certified or certifiable, including an initial review of transcripts/or credentials ahead of the job offer, initiating the credentialing process once someone is hired, weekly check-ins with teachers/staff and/or the state with updates, and following up weekly on any applications that need to be submitted. It is also written into the offer letter as terms and conditions of employment, should someone not ultimately be certifiable.

L. Hubbard also noted the timeline of the state can be 8-12 weeks (the shortest window of time is 2 weeks), but it also depends on the type of certification to be requested, as some certifications are more complicated than others.

L. Hubbard shared that the work is really in the follow-up process both between the staff and the state, as well as other materials (e.g. transcripts from universities).

C. Sneed wanted to ensure there's a clear process in place to manage the expectations of teachers needing to submit information, follow-ups and checkins with the state, etc.; he suggested it can be scaled up and scaled back depending on the efficiency of the process, but wants to get ahead of and proactive about how credentialing is addressed

L. Hubbard added more details about the process/ways we support the process, which includes weekly calendared check-ins, removing barriers to staff towards being certified (paying for testing, covering tuition for courses, etc.) and recently updating our recruitment and onboarding process to include initiating application for credentialing much sooner and receiving transcripts during the hiring/onboarding process.

D. Zieff asked about how long someone who is hired uncertified stay in a provisional status.

L. Hubbard shared that we want to give teachers hired who are not credentialed, have time to allow the state to respond, if the state responds and indicates that a person cannot be certified, it's a termination - L. Hubbard and J. Scalice have had to let teachers go because there was no pathway to get them certified.

L. Hubbard informed the board that the state will make a cert. retroactive that they've approved, according to the application deadline (e.g. applied in September, approved in January, that cert. dates back to September).

D. Zieff asked if the retroactive certs. impact our finances.

L. Hubbard shared yes, if we can show a teacher is certified in September rather than January or February than we can use state funds based on the date of September rather than end of year, or 1/2 a year funding.

C. Sneed noted that if we do not have an organized process it can complicate budget, and it starts to become a systemic issue.

C. Sneed suggested assigning a point person responsible for all things credentialing, because as we maintain full enrollment, Latoya and John will have a lot more responsibilities within the school.

B. Chan shared that while the state looks at compliance, the auditors look at non-certified salaries and deducts those salaries from Gen Ed. While state is helpful on compliance, he notes it's still about dollars and cents in this regard.

L. Hubbard also noted that the state timeline impacts this conversation deeply as well - state staffing, backlog, etc. sharing that part of our job in regards to monthly check-ins with the state, that we don't end up in this lengthy process for approval.

C. Sneed feels it's a process of managing the state to stay in compliance and ensure dollars are allocated appropriately. He shared that one of the hats he wears is of risk management and he's asking "what could be a problem," in the future.

E. Vega asked about the application process for certification, suggesting we ensure the first application submitted to the state is the right one based on what they're eligible for; E. Vega also asked if during the HR cycle if candidates can get regular reminders for their certification expectations.

L. Hubbard said she'd update the board on progress

L. Hubbard shared that it's enrollment season!

Targets reflect 667 for total enrollment based on average attrition. She shared a chart with open seats

New class of 6th graders :100

7th grade: 12

8th: 1

9th: 7

10th: -13

Application launch - Saturday, January 14th

Lottery Date- Friday, April 7th

Initial Marketing Efforts

- Postcard mailing - using zip code enrollment trends and city demographics
- Refer a friend or family member incentives - anyone who completes the application process, we offer things such as free uniforms, raffled gift cards, etc.
- Yard signs - very popular; we had a billboard years ago, but only a small percentage of families saw the billboard. Now, we use yard signs and we've gotten a lot of responses to those signs.
- Radio Ads
- Social Media Marketing

6th grade we watch closely because of the large number of students needed for enrollment. D. Zieff asked L. Hubbard about her success with large enrollment numbers (e.g. 6th grade at 100)

L. Hubbard shared that Year-over-year we've been pretty successful with enrollment and last year we were over enrolled by 4 students; she noted that sometimes we have to adjust the numbers so if for some reason we see we aren't trending to hit that 100 then we may have to move numbers around in other grades. Of course that gets more difficult to do as we move closer to October 1 date, because it might require staffing changes as well, but for now she feels confident!

The rest of the board shared that L. Hubbard and the team have a great record of success when it comes to enrollment.

III. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Updates

B. Chan shared that the EFS was filed, everything went smoothly and the auditor filed their AUP. Since a large part of the funding comes from federal government in ESSER funds and Title, we exceed the 750,000 limit, we have to file through federal clearing house and that was done as well.

Fiscal policy was updated to include Sped funding process

The state funded us for the 3rd quarter (Jan-March); their argument is that the district had lower/ELL population so it was decreased by 1.5%; we made up for it because we had a higher Sped count than was budgeted, but still we were budgeting against the \$12,147, instead we got \$11,161.

B. Carlson paused to explain the role of the foundation as central office to the school to inform D. Zieff, who is new to the board sessions.

The School will be building it's own central office when the relationship with the foundation as back office changes. B. Chan then introduced L. Perkins as the COO and explained his role as responsible with financials, to close the books, work with the auditors, and all things school finance.

B. Chan noted that school needs require people who are able to take on multiple roles at multiple levels - which is how the foundation back office has operated but also the magic between the school and foundation since many of the school leadership team is also entrepreneurial in this manner.

C. Sneed noted that the transition is going to require a gradual transition particularly from finance.

B. Vote to approve December Finance Committee Minutes

Bob Carlson made a motion to approve the minutes from GOBPT Monthly December Finance Committee Meeting on 12-12-22.

Eva Vega seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Chan reviewed the dashboard, noting that at the end of December there was 1.74M in the Chase account. The state funds the school every 3 months, every quarter so unfortunately at the end of the quarter/cycle cash runs low, then it builds back up. The operating expense we have is probably about 700,000. Rent has already been paid, etc. because this is on a cash basis

B. Chan reviewed the food account, explaining that we are required by the state to have a separate account, revenue from the state, and expenses paid out for buying meals;

We do have a reserve account that's now at 244,000 - we are trying to reach at least one month's operating needs

B. Chan jumped to the Barr grant - funded at the end of this year; still a goal of trying to achieve 100,000 in fundraising.

Title funds are coming from federal government

ESSER funding is like an expense report- we need to submit before we can claim the dollar and draw down. By the February report the ESSER should be cleaned up.

The USDA report did not have the December meal claims, so that's about 30,000 in revenue that'll reduce this target.

Expenses:

Salaries - B. Chan explained that teachers get summer pay and so you want to be under budget in salaries since payment goes out over the summer months;

Payroll and taxes are in line, contracted services (additional tech support), nursing and staff appreciation; school opps was in line (a little extra spending in curriculum).

In facilities we had some extra expenses such as utilities, repair work over the summer, cleaning costs and maintenance (have gone up a bit) - the boiler was not included in this budget.

D. Zieff asked if we are forecasting a deficit, and B. Chan shared that no, we are forecasting a slight surplus.

D. Zieff shared in agreement with C. Sneed on the goal of having at least one month's operating expense in the reserve given our reliance on government funding, in the chance that there's a government shut down of some sort - to have when we need it.

B. Chan noted it's difficult to do because unlike for-profit, CSDE is strict concerning funding reserve and spending. There is no net income that goes into the balance sheet.

D. Zieff emphasized the purpose of fundraising in this regard - the challenge for the team/board is to set a goal of achieving that reserve we are building through private fundraising.

C. Sneed shared that the school is in a strong financial position and thanked school leadership for keeping us on track. Lastly, he shared that we have some renewals coming up with insurance, to go to RFP soon - so he wants to circle on that with the liability insurance, etc. while he knows Austin & Co has a special relationship with the School/foundation he wants to have an outside look.

C. Vendor Approvals

Bob Carlson made a motion to Slate approval of new vendors.

Eva Vega seconded the motion.

- Wonderland of Ice - no quote, selected new vendor for HS/MS trip
- Linked In (\$1300.00 annual) - New Vendor for recruitment/marketing
- AA All American Locksmith, LLC. (\$6,331.00) - we have urgency on locks that need to be changed and other vendors were too costly or had limited parts available

- Straxis Technology/School Mobile (\$3249/yr, \$750.00 implementation fee) - additional vendors were Plego Technologies and Panda Commission at significantly higher costs

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

IV. Foundation Updates

A. Foundation Updates

Foundation is ready to be as fully supportive as possible during this transition; we've already done a little bit of work together which has been energizing; we stand at ready to support and spend our time putting plans together to be sure transition is as smooth as possible.

V. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bob Carlson

To be amended per Governance Committee