



Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport

Minutes

GOBPT March Monthly Board Meeting

Date and Time

Wednesday March 8, 2023 at 5:15 PM

Location

Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport
375 Howard Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605

Directors Present

Bea Bagley (remote), Bob Carlson (remote), Christopher Mcmillan (remote), Corey Sneed (remote), David Zieff (remote), Tenssie Ramsay (remote)

Directors Absent

Diane Gordon, Eva Vega, Selena Morgan

Guests Present

Benjamin Chan (remote), Janay Garrett (remote), Jean Lombardi (remote), John Scalice (remote), Latoya Hubbard (remote), Matthew George (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 Mar 8, 2023 at 5:17 PM.

C. Approve February meeting Minutes

Corey Sneed made a motion to approve the minutes from GOBPT February Monthly Board Meeting on 02-08-23.

Christopher Mcmillan seconded the motion.

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

II. Governance Committee

A. Matthew George- Introduction & Overview of Executive Summary

J. Scalice gave a brief introduction to Dr. M. George, a candidate for the consultant role to manage the separation from the foundation. J. Scalice shared that M. George did extensive research on our school and has a phenomenal background managing similar projects and processes.

M. George shared a high level snapshot of his background and expertise from CT, Bridgeport/Hartford to New Orleans and to California. M. George has managed and lead school districts, founded his own charter school, and lead his own charter school through a separation from their CMO (a private university) in Stockton, CA. The university was not as familiar with the functions of public schools because finance, HR, etc. at a private university is vastly different than public school finance and operations. They were incredibly successful in the transition, 10 years of strong audits, no claims against the school as it related to HR in those 10 years, etc.

M. George has presented three pathways to manage the proposal 1) all services in-school 2) a hybrid model of in-school/outsourced services, 3) most services outsourced with a timeline that aims for the start of the academic year SY/FY 23-24.

M. George noted that he has multiple pathways, but expects to land on the best options/expects to adjust plans once he has an opportunity to sit down and be in conversation with J. Scalice and the school leadership team.

D. Zieff asked what M. George what he feels may be the greatest challenge in this transition; M. George suggested that the biggest hurdle in these transitions is always to ensure there is no interruption of curriculum, instruction, teaching & learning, as it relates to the impact on program and student learning.

M. George also said charter school law versus public school law are live and changing so we need to keep a close eye on those laws, and any outsourced services need to be well versed in public and charter school law. So, the second biggest hurdle is finding and

hiring the right people. M. George feels confident that none of these hurdles are insurmountable and it can be done by him in collaboration/conjunction with the school.

C. Sneed and B. Carlson inquired about process around proposal and how long M. George anticipates staying with the school, given his proposal is not just planning but implementation. M. George offered that he'd prefer to stay on board for up to 6 months after implementation/completion of the CMO separation to ensure stress tests, hiring, etc. are thorough and working.

C. Sneed noted they're looking for a non-biased, concrete and clear evaluation and recommendation, even if that's inclusive of "this is not feasible," because the board is most interested in the acting in the best interest of the school.

M. George said that he's learned over time that the best approach is to tell the board everything, so the board and school leadership can make concrete decisions (based on complete and clear evaluations/proposals) and not be distracted or derailed by back office functions.

B. Executive Director's Report

J. Scalice will give a report on:

Recent Walkthrough of the school
School Highlight- Rosetta Stone

Then and Now ELA

September recommendations

- Begin moving towards focused small group instruction and station learning
- Create deeper focus on "intentional learning"
- Clarity of students focus in small groups and stations

March walkthrough

- Clearly defined practices of stations evident in all classrooms visited
- shift to more student responsibility is evident
- There is a clear purpose and focus around what is expected at each station

Then and Now Math

September recommendations

- Define roles of Fellows and Teachers during math instruction
- Create opportunities for deeper learning

- Use questioning to deepen critical thinking skills

March walkthrough

- Teachers and fellows had specific groups of students on which they were focused
- The separation of roles has allowed more opportunities for deeper learning and understanding
- Some evidence of higher order thinking and application and increased student focus
 - There was one classroom where teacher wasn't following the curriculum at all, which will be addressed with that teacher

"Excellent firms don't believe in excellence, only constant improvement" -
Tom Peters

Next steps all classrooms

- Differentiation - continue to develop tasks that meet the needs of the varied learners in the class to engage students more effectively so they can get to the same standard
- Questioning- Continue to develop in the moment questions to Check for understanding that allows more opportunities for students to work independently
- Task Development- Continue to develop tasks that dive deep into the standards complex understandings with real world applications

School Highlight: Rosetta Stone. School Spotlight Focused on our HS program

- Significant amount of usage our students have, across multiple languages
- Exploring opportunities - we've been invited to participate in a school focused interview that highlights our best practices
- Our program
 - All Languages - Students can engage in over 20 languages through Rosetta Stone based on personal preference
 - **Self-placed** - students engage in Rosetta Stone based on their pace and comfort with key dates for progress Check-Ins
 - **Credits** - Each "unit" of student equates to .5 Carnegie Units of time based on Rosetta Stone calculations of progress
 - **Grading** - unit completion assigns a percentage easily converted to grading through quizzes and speaking assessments
 - **Community** - with unlimited licenses we have been able to expand this service to members of our staff and identified families

- **Service** - NHS students use this program to support new to country immigrant students and staff members learning English as a Second Language

D. Zieff asked where the concentration of languages rests for students at GOBPT; he also asked how we ensure there are future benefits, that it's not just a one time learning opportunity

- J. Scalice noted that Rosetta Stone requires speaking and writing, so students are using it interactively during their program time but also with each other; students are able to take this as early as 8th grade next year, with the idea that they can continue using it through 11th grade; a lot of colleges they're going through use Rosetta Stone as a part of their language programs; they will be required to take a language in college, so we hope there is a transition there
- Of the 11 language our students are engaging with is Spanish, French and German, we have a high percentage of Portuguese as well. Other languages we see as aligned with student interest in foreign affairs, so we have students taking Arabic, Russian, Chinese, etc. - we do offer all 20 but these seem to be the most frequented languages.

C. Director of Operations Report

Facilities Update

- Remediation work on 2nd floor was completed February 20th, 2023
- Engineer's report received from Centek Engineering
 - The work under this contract has been review and found to be, to the engineer's best knowledge, information and belief, to be completed in general compliance

Enrollment update

- Open house- march 15th and 22nd
- Lottery date- Thursday April 6th

So far we've received 171 application - still fairly low in the 6th grade (27 applications), but it's an area of focus for us. At this time of the year it's not a huge concern of ours, since we have several months before our enrollment deadline which is October 1st.

B. Carlson asked if 7th grade applications were current students applying or new, prospective students

Certification Updates

- 85% certified (10% increase)

- 10% pending certification - matter of the state adding the credentials
- 5% pending review/missing credentials - inclusive of staff hired over the past 60 days

CT school Safety Symposium

L. Hubbard and M. Little, attended an Educational symposium for law enforcement and school administrators on school safety including the psychology and profile behind mass violence

Keynote Speakers

- Dr. Henry Lee - Professor, University of New Haven
- Dr. Peter Langman - Psychologist & Author
- Dr. Leigh Wall - Former Santa Fe Superintendent
- Chris Christopher Vanghele - Plainfield Chief of Police

Building and Organizational Culture of Safety

- Emergency operations plans and staff training
- Leadership and Community Partnerships (Before not during a crisis)
- Situations Awareness - Safety Priority (outside of our typical safety plans, what are other safety concerns that might not be expected and would require going outside of/shifting plans)
- Established and Enforced Policy and Procedure Audits & Drills
- Human Capital - Counseling Behavioral, Security and Culture Team (No School Based SRO, but have a good relationship with BPT SRO)
- Security Camera/Monitoring Systems
- Physical Design and Safety

Physical Design & Safety - GOBPT Considerations

Prior to Events

Note: bolded bullets below reflect plans we do not currently have in place at GOBPT and we want to consider or have been in discussion about as a school team

- Secure Vestibules
- Fencing
- Key Card Entry Access/Alarms
- Camera through the building
- Maintained landscaping/school grounds

- **Electronic Visitors Management Systems - extends check in process prior to visiting school**
- Panic button app

After Event

- **Enhance Security Vestibule at HS with BR glass**
- **Redesign of Front offices more secure vestibules**
- **Bio readers**, access controls, audible notification s& door alarms
- Updated visitors management policy
- **Additional fencing**
- **Metal Detectors each campus**
- **Additional panic buttons** - we have a few throughout the school, but we could use some additional ones
- **Common Door locked inside and out**
- **Immediate HS corridor Modification**

GOBPT - Budget considerations

- General Operations Budget
- School Security Grant - Round 1
- School Security Grant - Round 2
- Additional Grant Opportunities
- Info session former Santa Fe superintendent - how to maintain security costs if/when grant funding is no longer available

B. Carlson asked J. Lombardi if there are any additional efforts the foundation can pitch in to support in securing funds.

School Trip to State Capital

On Feb 23rd, ten Great Oaks students attended the educational/appropriations subcommittee public hearing at the State Capital to share testimony of their great experiences attending GOBPT and the importance of school choice and equal funding. The trip was in partnership with the CT charter association.

III. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Updates

C. Sneed shared an overview of the consent agenda process, to indicate/share that the board will be moving towards a consent agenda today and moving forward for vendor approvals for non-controversial items. Each member of the board needs to be able to review the consent agenda in advance and C. Sneed would ask each board member if they've reviewed the consent agenda and if someone has not, a vote cannot be moved forward on the items listed on the consent agenda.

B. Chan reviewed current cash position at the end of February;

- Cash position was at half a million dollars
- School will be funded through the end of March for the last quarter; waiting for last quarter per pupil payout - that's the one thing outstanding
- Our cashburn is about that amount, so B. Chan is looking into to drawdown funds for expenditures like ESSER II or ESSER III to give some relief to that cash flow
- There is no debt to the school, so that's zeroed out
- At each meeting, we discuss fundraising; need to continue to find support, not just through grants, but/also private partnership and donors, since those tend to be unrestricted funds - need to build up operating reserves of the school; we are at 1 month operating reserves, but the goal would be 3 months, or roughly 1.5 M
- Expenses: based on 661, full enrollment against the charter; it was budgeted on federal funds, we need to be sure we identify all expenses to draw down any remaining balance; all expenses are in line.
- B. Chan reviewed the delta on ESSER funding, at request of B. Carlson. B. Chan noted the budgeted amount - ideally all spending is finalized (there is a plan against it); is a bit trickier with multiyear grants, but said it's a matter of tagging properly, ensuring amounts spent so far, etc.
- D. Zieff asked to review cash balance at the top of the dashboard - he was curious about whether or not the cash balance was similar to Feb 2022 (same time last year). B. Chan noted however, that the state only funds the school quarterly, so there's not a concern; there have been previous years, B. Chan noted, where cash balance was leaner.
- B. Chan highlighted the energy costs - \$200,000 for electricity, but we don't have a frame of reference; current provider is expensive and more than in previous years, but/and also, we anticipate some building work needed soon (Triple next lease)
- C. Sneed asked if NewPower has been contacted to discuss rates. B. Chan said no. C. Sneed said that NewPower should be reached - J. Lombardi noted she could reach out, given L. Perkins would have done so in the past. C. Sneed noted we need an audit of what we are being billed for versus what the board/school signed a contract for - inclusive an exit clause. He noted that it's been a warm winter, but if we end up experiencing another colder winter like prior years, it could be worst. We should find this out sooner than later, what's going on.
- B. Chan noted that the finance committee is working to finalize the 990
 - C. Sneed wants to prepare a single response for J. Bull instead of back and forth via email to wrap up the audit; J. Scalice and L. Hubbard were preparing the narrative for the 990 to be signed and sent in by March 15th.
- B. Chan also indicated they're working on grant tracking
- B. Chan shared that the FEMA/COVID relief dollars came in for past expenses which was 76,000 that will go straight to the bottom line of the school
- C. Sneed transitioned into Consent Agenda for vendor approvals

B.

Consent Agenda

Christopher Mcmillan made a motion to approve new vendors listed on consent agenda.

Tenssie Ramsay seconded the motion.

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

IV. Foundation Updates

A. Foundation Updates

J. Lombardi will be kicking off the insurance renewal next month with Austin & Co. but/and also, the foundation is wanting to know whether the school wants to move out into the market on their own to secure coverage, and/or whether or not they want the board to lead.

C. Sneed noted that our fiduciary due diligence is to go to market and he has a recommendation to compare to Austin & Co particularly as it relates to the premiums. More options available is better for our assessment(s).

D. Zieff & C. Sneed reviewed types of coverages that we may go to market for, what that market is like, how bundling services works and how Austin & Co. as a broker works.

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 6:34 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bob Carlson

Documents used during the meeting

- GO-BPT_FY23_23-02_Reforecast_to_Actual-2.pdf
- 2023-02_GOBPT_Dashboard-2.pdf
- GOBPT_FY23-02_Credit_Card_Transactions-2.pdf
- Approvals for March Board Meeting 2023-3.pdf

To be amended per Governance Committee