



## Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport

### Minutes

#### GOBPT April Monthly Finance Committee Meeting

---

**Date and Time**

Monday April 17, 2023 at 1:00 PM

**Location**

Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport

375 Howard Avenue

Bridgeport, CT 06605

---

**Committee Members Present**

Bob Carlson (remote), Corey Sneed (remote), David Zieff (remote), Vanessa Ceas (remote)

**Committee Members Absent**

Eva Vega, Jean Lombardi

**Guests Present**

Benjamin Chan (remote), Janay Garrett (remote), John Scalice (remote), Latoya Hubbard (remote)

---

**I. Opening Items****A. Record Attendance****B. Call the Meeting to Order**

Corey Sneed called a meeting of the Finance Committee Committee of Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport to order on Monday Apr 17, 2023 at 1:00 PM.

### **C. Approve March Finance Meeting Minutes**

Bob Carlson made a motion to approve the minutes from GOBPT March Monthly Finance Committee Meeting on 03-06-23.

Corey Sneed seconded the motion.

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

## **II. Separation - HR, Payroll, Benefits Presentation**

### **A. Presentation of options available to GOBPT**

C. Sneed provided a disclaimer ahead of J. Garrett presenting her HR/payroll/benefits research to note that this is just research at this stage and the school is not moving forward with any of the options presented; he noted that he received an email from M. Duffy over the break with some strong, concrete language about timing of separation (we have not come up with a firm separation), so this research is preliminary and in preparation for that separation. C. Sneed noted that M. Duffy is under the impression that the school has made a decision on separating from the HR/benefits service from the foundation and that we need to all be on the same page.

J. Garrett presented the board with three options and three key decisions concerning Human Resources, HRIS, payroll, benefits brokerage, etc. J. Garrett noted that she shared a google drive folder full of proposals from providers who provide some component of the HR lifecycle and created a chart to compare services and prices. Today's presentation was simply a synopsis/summarization of that research and her recommendation on how to move forward.

1) PEO - complete and comprehensive service, competitive medical, time saving, though the school may not need everything the PEO has to offer

2) PEO + Broker (like Austin & Co.) - this option helps the school to define what is actually needed, assist the school in defining what is needed in the future and facilitate this conversation on our behalf, though there would be added costs to this option given we keep the brokerage relationship

3) Combination of providers - most closely aligned with what the school is currently utilizing (a mixture of services), most time consuming and requires the most personnel for central office; if we keep existing relationships, this is least disruptive to status quo

J. Garrett shared she's been meeting weekly with J. Lombardi about the transition, and there are decisions now to be made by the board concerning the separation and Human Resources. Janay presented the board with three key decisions that have to be made:

1) Offboarding HR Service (decision to move forward ) 2) Selecting providers (payroll, tech, brokerage) 3) Medical Benefits selection

J. Garrett flagged that this final decision, on medical benefits selection, comes from feedback from employees on the strength of our current offerings, wanting to be more competitive in the market in terms of hiring and retaining new staff, etc. J. Garrett shared she's open for questions, and she also invited V. Ceas to the meeting in case she could address any detailed questions about HR systems, processes, etc.

C. Sneed asked, based on the three options, he assumes the most turn-key and cost effective is the first one, the PEO doing everything. J. Garrett affirmed, that yes, the PEO, option 1 is ideal. C. Sneed envisioned someone at the school level in charge of monitoring the PEO relationship, however that's determined at the school level. It would free up time for the person at the school level, wouldn't be so difficult transitioning off a management entity, this would be the most seamless way to go, with less frequency of issues.

C. Sneed asked about the medical concerns from employees. J. Garrett and L. Hubbard shared that participants on the plan have trouble finding primary care doctors/providers, particularly around mental health services and options for therapy, some issues with Rx costs and access, comprehensive support for employee + family care, and coverages in general (high out of pocket costs to employees).

L. Hubbard shared it could be related to the benefits selection made and perhaps some additional education moving forward might help address this (e.g. which benefits options they can select, with in depth knowledge of coverages), however, there has been a trend of staff comparing what we offer year over year compared to other sources or schools, etc.

C. Sneed discussed the variations in offerings that could be given to the school that are directly tied to scale (e.g. number of employees, claims history, customized offerings, and/or large group sizes).

C. Sneed noted that foundation might consider a PEO in order to get the type of customization we need, to make us competitive to other group settings/school groups. C. Sneed explored the pathway of a self-insured model of health coverages (HRA arrangement), you can offer a robust and customized plan for all participants, with low co-pays, etc. however, the finance responsibility would fall on the school to pay those claims and differences in those claims. From a budget perspective, C. Sneed noted we couldn't afford that pathway. C. Sneed stated that we need something that's turnkey off the shelf but delivers something a little more than off the shelf because of the liability of covering insurance claims could clean out the school's reserves in a matter of months.

C. Sneed noted that from the research done, the PEO would offer us a more robust offering for lower cost based on what we are currently utilizing.

V. Ceas noted she cannot say that going with a PEO would offer us a better plan. In previous years, the foundation got PEO medical offerings at a good rate. Now, after COVID she's seeing that with renewals (Austin & Co.) for the first time ever, we are seeing a 2% increase, last year it was over 5%; V. Ceas asked Austin & Co. to give us competitive quotes as well to compare plan designs to see if it's better for employees, however GOBPT, GOF, GONYC have all decided on different percentages we would cover as an entity based on our employees (what can the school afford towards the plans). V. Ceas noted we've worked in reverse as well (what have we budgeted, and what can we make work within this budget); for example, we can offer really great plans, but employees may be paying 30% more than what they are paying now. The question is, V. Ceas posed, is it worth it?

C. Sneed shared that yes, a deeper conversation with our current broker needs to happen - giving an overview of changes in participant cost sharing (deductible, coinsurance, etc.), Tier I-III RX programs, etc. A robust offering, would be for Austin & Co. to look into coverage(s) and plan providers, so a decision is not just based on price and is a more comprehensive offering for our employees. C. Sneed is curious if Austin & Co. our current broker, is getting that granular about the offers themselves outside of just how much is being paid.

J. Garrett asked the board if they reviewed the cost comparisons and proposals she sent over.

C. Sneed asked if it was a cost comparison matrix.

J. Garrett clarified that she sent over a few documents, including a folder of quotes, a decision matrix weighing the various factors that are priorities of the board and school, as well as an excel spreadsheet with hard costs. She noted that a pricing matrix is not ideal because it's comparing apples to oranges, given some of the quotes are for HR software/tech, and some are comprehensive for the whole HR lifecycle.

B. Carlson could not open the document - J. Garrett resent all documents related to HR services and pricing to the board/committee again for future discussion.

D. Zieff expressed concerned about not being clear on the upcoming budget and changing a major process for the school (HR) at a bad time, despite feeling as though we don't have much of a choice. D. Zieff is trying to understand the timeline suggested versus what is realistic for the school. D. Zieff was mostly concerned about disruption to teachers, staff, employees, etc. and he asked if there was a concrete timeline.

C. Sneed noted that no, there was no concrete timetable set based on all of the concerns he expressed and that everyone is comfortable with current coverages. C. Sneed noted that once we are clear on a timeline, the research helps us figure out what we are walking into. As a new client, the pricing and plans can change year to year, etc.

B. Carlson wanted to know what the foundation pays for HR services; J. Garrett let the board know that all current pricing, including invoices are all listed on the excel spreadsheet.

C. Sneed noted we should continue to reassure employees that we are working on addressing any obstacles as it relates to health insurance. C. Sneed also described hurdles with making sense of health care coverages - down to group size and unions.

Lastly, he noted that the option we do move forward with, regardless of what it's driven by, has to offer us scale in order to improve benefit options for the school. This is essential also, so that we do not have to switch coverages year in and year out, but instead, have coverage options that employees become familiar with moving forward and keep people happy.

J. Garrett reiterated in closing, that from an operations perspective, some of the other components of the separation as it relates to HR (e.g. applicant tracking system, payroll provider, HRIS, etc.) are important to move forward with because it's impacting day-to-day operations, even if the board decides not to move forward with separating from the benefits pool.

V. Ceas reiterated she's working with Austin & Co. on renewal and a comparison of other benefit options. C. Sneed reiterated that we are not deviating from the plan to renew with Austin & Co., follow open enrollment in May, with a July 1 benefit start date.

### **III. Financial Overview/Administrative**

#### **A. Current Cash Position**

B. Chan noted that we did get funded for the last quarter, end of March. Bills were paid, payroll is coming up at the end of the week. Current checking account is 1.6M and total of 1.7M if you include all other accounts.

Current Cash Position

Checking: 1.6M

Food Service: \$24,546

Reserve: \$44,260

Total: \$1,713,307

## **IV. Financial Review**

### **A. March Dashboard & Financials**

End of March funds came in and we were at 1.3M. B. Chan reviewed typical dashboard measures, including total cash position, cash burn rate, and target fundraising/capital support goals. B. Chan highlighted the funding that has come from Barr this year \$266,667 and the goal of getting another \$100,000 in the door for the remainder of the year.

In terms of spending, B. Chan walked us through the revenue side of the original budget; he noted that the school has not tapped into the full amount of the ESSER funding.

- ESSER: 1.125M
- USDA School Lunch: we get reimbursed for the meals
- Title funds (401): Do this on an accrued basis, since entitled, we consider we divide it up over 12 months
- Salaries: Underspending here; we are under for admin salary; this is also good practice because of summer payroll, since pay ends end of June.

We did overspend on the facilities, this is where the utilities research will be helpful because half (or more) of the facilities costs were utilities; a small portion of facilities costs were field trips and the rest went to repairs and building maintenance.

C. Sneed noted that continued/enhanced due diligence for the next budget, is needed to reverse the direction we are headed in, but cutting costs or fundraising, bottom line, is what will get us there.

B. Chan noted that yes, fundraising, etc. will help, and that in the future, once we are no longer in a corrective action for the middle school, salaries might be adjusted, and utilities and facilitates we can take a hard look at through an energy audit. Reduce costs, find revenue.

### **B. March Credit Card Statement**

There was an unauthorized purchase, so the school canceled the credit card and received a new one. B. Chan doesn't have access to it, since all the statements and online account were pulled from that credit card, so we cannot access the statement at the moment. We can close out March when we backtrack and access it. No concerns on B. Chan's part as it relates to catching up once we regain online access.

D. Zieff asked about last month's balance, including the reserve. B. Chan noted it's about the same, because the school tapped into it 3 month ago to keep the cash flow going. We do have the availability of funds, in the grants like ESSER, but we are cautious about

drawing those things down. We have been, but we need to reconcile first to be sure we draw down sufficiently and if we don't need it, it'll roll over to next year which will also be needed.

### **C. YTD federal grant cash availability**

## **V. Additional Items**

### **A. Additional Items**

- J. Scalice did the first draft of the FY24 budget.
- B. Chan followed up on the energy use rate conversation, to reiterate the need to check the meters and ensure the school is not being charged for any other apartments in the complex, discover reasonable usage, and ensure we are being reasonably charged. There is no means to compare competitive rates at the moment. L. Hubbard gave an update - she noted that B. Carlson shared a resource with the school, energize, CT (energy efficiency), it's primarily for UI and EnergySource, and although the school doesn't utilize those services, they will still come out and look at the meters, because we are looking to compare providers and save on energy costs. L. Hubbard is waiting to hear from the rep concerning when they can visit the school and complete their assessment.

### **B. Recurring**

C. Sneed asked L. Hubbard and J. Garrett to prepare consent agenda for vendor approvals

## **VI. 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 2:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Bob Carlson