

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday February 24, 2022 at 4:30 PM

Location

Join Zoom Meeting <https://vpcs-org.zoom.us/j/87944697628?pwd=RE43LzRVRWhpVC9iOTBwZEZ4YS9NZz09>

Meeting ID: 879 4469 7628

Passcode: 912934

One tap mobile [+13126266799,,87944697628#](tel:+13126266799,,87944697628#)

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 879 4469 7628

Find your local number: <https://vpcs-org.zoom.us/u/k8aG053ZG>

Trustees Present

A. Errichetti (remote), A. Mendelson (remote), D. Ford (remote), D. Fuller (remote), D. Janes (remote), R. Martin (remote), R. Sela (remote), T. Maxey (remote), X. Delobato (remote)

Trustees Absent

J. Crowell, L. Doherty, M. Landon, T. Gabinetti

Guests Present

N. Gauthier (remote), R. Romano (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

D. Janes called a meeting of the board of trustees of Veritas Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday Feb 24, 2022 at 4:34 PM.

C. Approve minutes

D. Ford made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 01-27-22.

A. Mendelson seconded the motion.

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

II. Executive Director Report

A. Amendment Request: Shorten School Year to 180 days

D. Ford made a motion to approve an amendment that would shorten the school year by five days.

A. Mendelson seconded the motion.

Rachel requests the approval of an amendment to shorten the school year. The district prompted this request by sending an email about a process to do this because several schools in the district are. Rachel shared it with the team and they agreed that it would be a positive move. We have a longer year than the rest of the district already. Our closing date would be around June 17th.

We have historically had a longer year for certain students to receive the supports they need but now we will be implementing these supports in other ways (i.e. February break intervention programs, summer school, etc.).

Dale noted that a compensation study should be done to make sure we are paying people what they should be paid.

Rachel noted we have already started addressing this issue and next year teachers will be getting a compensation increase and starting salaries will be a bit higher. Finance committee will be looking at that in the budget for next year, next month.

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

B. Veritas Prep Holyoke - update

Rachel provides an update about Veritas Prep Holyoke. We made the decision in collaboration with the Friends of VPCS group to exit at the end of this year. It is a bittersweet decision but it is the right choice for us. The district is moving in a strategic direction that doesn't align with our vision which does not make our partnership viable long term. Exiting in June allows her and the leadership team to focus on the exciting things on the horizon for Veritas like the new High School.

Denise asks monetarily are we breaking the contract or are they?

Rachel says we are breaking it. We have met with our attorney and we didn't have a contractual out. Our strategy was to go and have a conversation with Anthony (HPS Superintendent) where he allowed for the exit in June and there is no monetary penalty. We are working on seeing that in writing now.

Dale says we, as a Board, allowed Friends of VPCS to oversee the Holyoke school. Obviously, the Board has an interest in this and Dale wants the Board to know that Rachel has talked with many constituents who helped encourage her to come to this difficult decision.

Rachel emphasizes that from now through June we have an obligation to continue to manage the school to the best of our ability. Many members of our leadership team has been consumed with helping manage Holyoke. Rachel doesn't want anyone here to worry that things are being dropped or forgotten, they will all be completed when they need to be. Lynne Mills, especially, has been helping to cover many of the daily operational duties in Holyoke and she's still working extremely hard and will get done what she needs to related to all her other job responsibilities.

Denise asks if we will have people return to Springfield from Holyoke?

Rachel says yes, we have positions for those of our staff members who went to Holyoke and want to come back to Springfield. We do hope that many of the teachers stay to support the Holyoke system.

Dale mentions that the Board would be happy to support long or short term support for Lynne.

Rachel says we are hiring a Business Manager to support her and we have also talked about training a successor for her.

C. High School Updates

Rachel mentions that we applied to be a part of the PVIAC League for High School Athletics and we have been approved. We officially have approval to start our athletics program for the High School.

The facility is coming along and looking great.

We have made some additional hires for the founding team and are going through the process to hire a founding principal.

Aaron asks if there is any way to have interim co-principals?

Rachel says we are exploring different scenarios, some similar to that.

Finally, the amendment to the lease has been drafted and is under review.

Currently, we are at 79% of our Veritas middle schoolers who will be attending the high school, which is great. We also still have "maybes" that we are working with. We can probably enroll approximately 15-20 more students and we are still having our lottery in March.

Finally, as mentioned last month, we did receive that Early College Planning Grant which will help us to implement our rigorous program model.

D. REMINDER: Massachusetts Charter Public School Association (MCPSA) Advocacy Week

Reminder that the MCPSA will be holding this year's advocacy week the week of March 7th. In addition to signing up for the kick-off Rally on the 7th, we are looking for two Board members to volunteer to join in on our meetings with legislators that week to help promote the need for more funding per pupil for charter schools in Massachusetts. The first meeting is on Monday, March 7th at 11 a.m. with Representative Carlos Gonzalez and the second is on Tuesday, March 8th at 9:30 a.m. with Senator Adam Gomez.

Xiomara volunteered to do one and Dale volunteered to do the other.

III. Executive Director - Annual Performance Review

A. Annual Performance Review

D. Janes made a motion to accept the Executive Director performance review conducted by Ann Errichetti, Vice Chair of the Board for 2021-2022.

A. Mendelson seconded the motion.

Ann led the charge on disseminating, organizing, and analyzing this year's Executive Director evaluation. On February 14, 2022, Ann met with Rachel and Board members Rebecca Sela and Matthew Landon to review and discuss the results of the evaluation.

Ann summarizes that generally the comments were all in the same wheelhouse and extremely positive. Overall, the executive summary highlights Rachel's successes and characterizes her as an exceptional leader highlighting this difficult time in education and the world in general.

Rachel is focused on the high school, talent management, grant funding and sustainable sources as goals moving forward.

Rachel appreciates the process and the time that went into curating the report. The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

IV. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Report

Denise reports that as of January 31st, our cash balances have decreased. It is currently \$1,296,000 and we will be reimbursed for some of this through grants.

Our income statement shows a deficit that is 12,000 higher than last month and that is reflective of student enrollment and additional expenses that are not covered by grants (e.g. hiring/staffing). Next month, Lynne will have a better idea of what the end of year will look like.

In terms of grants, we are allocating the funds appropriately. Primarily, we have ESSER I (done by the end of this fiscal year), II, and III. We also have special requests funds. The attached spreadsheet will help you see where monies are being spent related to grants. Lynne will continue to provide this information to the Board on a quarterly basis.

B. Investment Sub-Committee Update

Denise updated that we had our first meeting on June 8th and Steve Howard from Seeley Howard talked about how we have our investments allocated and we went through each of the investments. We are off to a good start, our portfolio is down about 3% but we recognize that this is in line with how the year has started and this is a long term portfolio and we are looking at it over time. They will keep an eye on when we can tiptoe into more risk assets.

We will continue to meet on a quarterly basis. Everyone is invited to attend.

C. Vote to Approve Increasing Veritas Credit Card Limit

D. Ford made a motion to to increase Veritas' credit card limit from \$25,000 to \$35,000.

R. Martin seconded the motion.

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

V. Academic Achievement Committee

A. Academic Achievement Committee Report

Rebecca updates the Board that the committee spent time at the last meeting reviewing and discussing current 8th grade data as it relates to the design of the high school. Our 8th graders are not where we would like to see them and most of this is a result of the pandemic and remote learning.

Rachel adds that the program we have designed for the high school is challenging and we will do what we need to get them back on track. They will need more and different support in areas we may not have thought were so high on the list as we bring them from the middle to the high school. We are excited that so many of them will be continuing on with us and can have some stability and consistency in terms of school supports and staff.

VI. Governance Committee

A. Governance Committee Report

David reports that we have 6 trustees whose terms are expiring in June and governance committee members followed up with them all.

Out of the 6, Judy will not be continuing. Tony Gabinetti is officially resigning from the Board as well.

In addition, we are firming up new officer positions. Ann will become the new chair but we will be having conversations with others regarding new roles.

Xiomara also mentioned that the governance committee will be completing a skills inventory of current Board members so we can see where we're at and what we are looking for in terms of "skills" and diversity as we recruit new Board members. We also ask the Board for their recommendation for potential Board members.

At the end of the year, we will have 11 trustees remaining and we have capacity for 15 (we can have anywhere from 7-15).

VII. 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 6:16 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Janes

Documents used during the meeting

- Amendment Request - 21-22 EOY Date (1).docx
- BoardOnTrack Summary Rachel Romano 2022 (1).docx
- Financial Reports to the Board Feb.pdf
- Grant Summary Feb.pdf
- VERITAS 02.08.22 Update.pdf