

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Monday November 21, 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/j/87944697628?pwd=RE43LzRVRWhpVC9iOTBwZEZ4YS9NZz09>

Trustees Present

A. Errichetti (remote), A. Mendelson (remote), D. Ford (remote), D. Fuller (remote), D. Janes (remote), M. Freeman (remote), M. Landon (remote), R. Martin (remote), R. Sela (remote), X. Delobato (remote)

Trustees Absent

L. Doherty, T. Maxey

Guests Present

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

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

A. Errichetti called a meeting of the board of trustees of Veritas Preparatory Charter School to order on Monday Nov 21, 2022 at 4:34 PM.

C. Approve minutes

A. Mendelson made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 10-27-22.

D. Fuller seconded the motion.

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

II. Board Chair Report

A. ED Contract

D. Janes made a motion to approve the Executive Director's contract, job description and general release as submitted.

R. Martin seconded the motion.

Ann presents the ED contract to the Board as well as the supporting documentation (job description and release).

Ann informs the Board that it was not a contentious process and Rachel is appreciative of the Board initiating the process.

Ann explains that the two things that were important to Rachel were:

1.) Unused vacation days

2.) Money for Professional Development.

The executive committee met prior to this meeting and decided to recommend the contract to the full Board.

Denise helped to organize the final job description that is presented here. Rachel updated a previous version that she had a while back.

Michael Freeman asks whether or not the categories on the job description are weighted in any particular way (a certain percentage of time or her job spent in certain categories)?

Ann says no.

The Board moves onto reviewing the contract. The contract will be back dated to 7/1/2022. This contract will expire 6/30/2025.

Ann calls the Boards attention to Item 3.1. Rachel will give six months prior notice if she is not returning. If this does not happen, an automatic one year renewal will happen. The Board will need to review the contract in December of 2024 and decide if they need to amend it in any way.

Item 5.8 - provision for payment of unused vacation days - she can be paid for a max of 25 unused vacation days. The committee discusses the pros and cons of this item.

Item 5.11 - Rachel has not previously had anything that covers professional development for her, so this was added.

Section 6 - Termination. This section is discussed by the Board.

The remainder of the contract is reviewed with no concerns or questions.

Finally, the general release is reviewed by the Board. This is the document she would sign if she was terminated.

Matt had questioned this in the executive committee but landed on it being a good thing as when termination does happen, this can prevent it from becoming contentious.

Dale thinks that even though these documents will become public record, he views them as specific to Rachel. The caveat here needs to be that this can change in the future and may not pertain to any/all future EDs.

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

III. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Report

Denise informs the Board about the monthly financials. We are still seeing some deficits in several areas i.e. expenses/supplies. Some of this has to do with underestimating facility costs.

We have the beginning of an issue with the high school lease based on an assessment done by the city of Springfield before the renovations were completed, we are looking to resolve this situation.

Denise also talks to the Board about a potential budget revision. We do have a contingency that would cover the deficit but that is not what we want to do. We are hoping to cover the deficit in other ways i.e. ESSER funds.

Rachel says this is concerning but we want to be proactive and pull the ESSER funds in and that will allow us to still end with a surplus. The bigger issue here is longer term, if these are the facility costs, we underestimated them in our longer term projections. We will need to re-do our projections, We will need to approve a new budget if the variances in certain line items are more than 10% and we know they will be.

Dale asks how much of the projections not matching are due to "environmental" issues?

Rachel says we should have anticipated the taxes increasing more than we did - we may need to file an abatement if they continue to rise. Additionally, the cost of doing business is high right now. We are contracting a lot with employees because of the staffing issues and that is expensive.

Denise adds that things like furniture and utility costs at the high school are definitely higher due to environmental factors. It's a combination of several things.

Dale asks if we owned the building or if Friends owned the building, would there be property tax?

Rachel says no. This is definitely part of the conversation we are beginning with our attorney and the city.

Rebecca asks why this didn't happen at Pine Street?

Rachel says:

- 1.) There was an abatement in process, so the taxes actually went down. Also, there was no major construction here. Then we bought the building five years later.
- 2.) The city was less involved in the Pine Street project - they since have become much more hands on with charter school projects.

Denise says in January we will look at revising the budget at the Board level with projections.

IV. Academic Achievement Committee

A. Academic Achievement Committee Report

Rebecca updates the committee about academic achievement.

Attendance: We are re-committed to the importance of attendance which was significantly impacted by the pandemic. Data is being tracked more proactively and we are engaging in ways to improve this such as attendance campaigns with families.

The approach to professional development has changed this year. A return to basics or back to what was being done pre-pandemic like deep diving into individual students' academic data and tracking that. Recommitting to these practices will lead to achieving our goal this year which is to double student achievement.

The committee also discussed some ELA ANet data for grades 5-8. 7th grade data is a bright spot whereas 8th grade needs the most support. 8th grade was most impacted by the pandemic and has also had the most teacher turnover this year.

Homework: We are also recommitting to the importance of homework and we are seeing a correlation with homework completion and higher academic achievement.

Rachel also mentions that only 20% of our teaching staff was with us pre-pandemic. We also have many new leaders. We are in a period of rebuilding.

V. Executive Director Report

A. Rebuilding Post-Pandemic

1.) We had a great PD day on 11/8. We focused on individual student data and did a deep dive into individual students and our plans for accelerating learning.

2.) We are rebuilding in a time where staffing shortages are making things very difficult. We know we will see increases in student achievement this year because we are very focused on accelerating learning in specific ways.

B. High School Update

1.) Things with the High School are going great. We have had two College and Career Advisory Board meetings to date and they have been very successful. We are hoping to continue to build this group out.

2.) We just completed a writing readiness assignment and have determined 50% of our class is eligible for the college course. We are happy with this but looking to continue to increase eligibility. On Friday, they also had their first Student Led Conferences (SLCs) where the students led their own conference and talked to their parents about their GPAs, how they can improve their habits to improve their work, etc.

In preparation for the SLCs, we needed to get student grades. Student grades are managed through our learning management system, PowerSchool, and it has been a

huge challenge. This has been time consuming and uncovered some gaps we may have internally.

3.) There was an opportunity that came up recently from DESE related to STEM. It is one which a high school partners with a STEM employer and offers work based learning experiences for students. This program would align early college with work based learning opportunities for students. We went to STCC since we already have a partnership with them and they had already partnered with West Springfield High School who already have a program running. Rachel made a pitch to to STCC, because you can have more than one high school partner, and they agreed for us to join them on the grant. STCC put in a letter of intent and we were named as a partner. The first year is just a planning grant and it will give us a chance to determine whether or not this a good fit for us.

C. Community Tours/School Visits

A community tours spreadsheet is attached to the packet and we wanted to remind the Board that you are welcome to join. If there is anyone you would like to share the school with or you just want to visit yourself, these tours are a great time to come. You can also contact Nikki to schedule a time to walk the school with Rachel at your convenience.

The Board discusses meeting in person moving forward.

Rebecca suggests having regular zoom meetings but also having four times per year (quarterly) that we meet in person. This allows for the "best of both worlds".

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 6:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Errichetti

Documents used during the meeting

- VCPS Executive Director Employment Contract PROPOSED FINAL rev.11.14.22.docx
- RR_Employment_Agreement_Exhibit_B_PROPOSED_FINAL.docx
- Job Description 11102022 revised (1).docx
- Financial Reports to the Board November.pdf

- Veritas Calendar of Community Tours 2022-23.docx