

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday December 22, 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](tel:+13126266799),87944697628#

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+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 879 4469 7628

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Trustees Present

A. Errichetti (remote), A. Mendelson (remote), D. Ford (remote), D. Fuller (remote), D. Janes (remote), M. Landon (remote), R. Martin (remote), T. Maxey (remote)

Trustees Absent

L. Doherty, M. Freeman, R. Sela, X. Delobato

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 Thursday Dec 22, 2022 at 4:33 PM.

C. Approve minutes

D. Fuller made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 11-21-22.

R. Martin seconded the motion.

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

II. Board Chair Report

A. Board Chair Updates

Ann informs the Board that the Executive Director contract is signed and completed.

Ann also congratulates Rachel and her team for being named as part of the STEM grant with STCC and West Springfield High School.

III. Academic Achievement Committee

A. Academic Achievement Committee Report

Rachel updates the Board about our current academic data. We have known that we have a lot of work to do to get our students back on track post-pandemic. We have a goal to double achievement this year. We know what things have to be in place for learning to occur and we are refocusing on these i.e. hw, attendance, etc. We are starting to look at these things in smaller chunks (6 weeks at a time). We have made goals for each grade and they are as follows:

5th Grade: Kids were not earning the weekly incentive (i.e. Rockstar Monday). Teachers will focus on the top ten students who had low incentive earnings and high referrals over the next six weeks and try to help them earn more incentives. We will follow these students and see how they progress.

6th Grade: Homework completion was really low. 6th graders need to read for homework to be able to participate in the lesson the next day. They are going to work to get to 75% homework completion over the next six weeks.

7th Grade: Their chronic absenteeism was the highest in the school (even though academically their grade was doing the best). They looked at the number of students who have been chronically absent and they are focusing on the top ten students who they want to get into school more over the next six weeks and employing strategies to do that.

8th grade: Kids are missing the most class in this grade. They are referred and asked to leave the class the most in 8th grade. It was determined, through data, that kids missed approximately 8100 minutes this year collectively because they were being asked to leave class due to referrals. This happened most between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. (this is math classes and some ELA classes). They are going to work on reducing this number over the next six weeks. We have leveraged our resources to make sure we have staff in the hallways at that time and we are focusing on keeping 8th graders in class more, especially during this time.

As we are trying to rebuild the culture of academics in our school we are encouraging our team to "sweat the small stuff" and refocus on what made us strong pre-pandemic.

We spoke previously about our PD day on 11/8 and we have followed up on this in our weekly development sessions, individual coaching, etc. We have another PD coming up on 1/6 and we will re-visit the data we analyzed on 11/8 and we are looking forward to seeing what progress has been made.

Ann mentions that we are using data to inform instruction and revisiting it regularly and that is a good thing.

Aaron asks if most new teachers are on board with what we're doing and asking?

Rachel says yes. Folks are really excited. The issue with staff is not that they are not bought in but rather that we have a big capacity issue which we have spoken about previously. For Rachel, it's making sure that leaders can manage their own expectations related to staff and getting back to where we were. We need to continue to celebrate small successes. We currently have one position open.

Denise asks if we expect to have more turnover of existing staff?

Rachel says no, we may need to lose people moving forward but we hope they will step up to the plate and get on board or recognize that this is not a good fit for them. We don't want to lose people at this time in the year.

We will have to add an entire grade for next year (10th). Shannon has already posted the vacancies that we know of for SY 2023-2024.

IV. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Report

Denise updates the Board about this month's financials:

Cash is tight at month's end - we will probably remain this way into next fiscal year. We are watching this very carefully.

Ann asks about our monthly cash needs - are they roughly 1 million?

Yes and we also have our line of credit if necessary.

Dale asks if there is something that is not critical that we had planned to spend this year that can be pushed to next year?

Denise says when we go through the capital budget, you'll see that most of the projects we planned on this year have been completed and we are discussing what we may be able to hold off on.

B. Capital Plan Update

Denise shares the capital plan budget with the Board. Many of the projects for this year have been completed through grants.

There is still furniture needed for the HS that we need to purchase as well as the renovation for the lower parking lot at the middle school. This amounts to approximately \$60,000.

Nest year, we have planned approx. 1 million more in Capex - \$300,000 for furniture for the HS and that would be a cash outlay for us. Then, there are the windows for the middle school which is a project we may be able to push off until next year. Other than that. there are smaller renovations which we hope to cover with grants.

Ann asks if most of the capital expenditures are already captured in this budget?

Denise says yes. There are some unknowns but generally we have covered everything and expenses are stabilizing ad we should not be off budget for the rest of the year.

V. Governance Committee

A. Governance Committee Report

David shares the current goals of the committee for FY23 - we are still fine tuning these.

We have settled on two goals (add goals).

- 1. Build our committee and the Board's capacity around Veritas Prep's early college and career focused high school and create a strategy for how we can build employer partnerships related to this coursework and these experiences that will inform our recruitment strategy.**
- 2. Assessing and developing the governance capacity for VPCS based around the vision for our high school and the strengths and weaknesses of our current Board to fulfill those goals.**
 1. Review common criteria for charter school performance (where are we? where can we improve?)
 2. Accountability process
 3. Execution of our accountability plan
 4. Skills based survey for trustees

Rachel mentioned that a lot of our discussion was around developing our high school and the role of the committee to determine what we need moving forward and being strategic about the recruitment of new trustees and making sure that this aligns with our goals for the HS and our early college program.

Rachel also mentions that we have some new pipelines for trustees through our College Career and Advisory Board (CCAB) as well as through the conversations and partnerships we are creating as a result of our new high school (i.e. early college partners, etc.). That said, when great prospects arise, outside of these new partnerships, we are still willing to explore these as well.

VI. Executive Director Report

A. Updates

In terms of staff recruitment and retention, as we are doing long range projections, we do realize that we will have some positions that we will need to cut as ESSER funds run out.

Matt says if we are delivering a premium product and exceptional outcomes we could make the case that we should provide a premium salary to retain our staff.

Rachel thinks this would help us attract and retain people. One of the reasons we get fewer candidates is because Veritas can be a little intimidating because we have high expectations but also because our salary is lower. Maybe this accelerates our need to close our fundraising gap.

Denise asks what should an experienced teacher that's really good be making?

In 2025, based on the empowerment zones new salary scale, a teacher who has worked for 12 years would make \$90,000 and our teachers are capped at \$75,000.

Aaron's philosophy has always been that if we are the best we should pay the best.

Dale believes faculty compensation should never be a barrier to hiring the best people we can find and if other things have to suffer than they have to suffer. We don't have to lead the mark but we have to be at the mark.

Rachel agrees but some of the other things that people cherish is the experience they have, the communication from leadership, the atmosphere, etc. It is worth talking to our teachers and finding out what really is the lever.

Matt says if you quantify all the soft costs of retraining and rehiring, etc. it may make sense. Good teachers also feeds directly into high academic achievement.

Denise adds this could be a whole compensation package, so salary, bonuses, educational reimbursements, etc.

Rachel says we are at a decent place with our longer term projections, we still have some things to learn about what it is to run an early college program but we will be more informed about this in the next few months and then we can look at what this might look like.

Rachel also mentioned the early college designation application which we are currently working on. We have our first early college classes starting 1/5 and we have 40% of the students in 9th grade participating in this. We would like to grow this number but we are happy with where it is now.

Finally, Rachel catches the Board up on the Carando lease situation that she mentioned at the last Board meeting. She recently met with our lawyer and we landed on that we should file an abatement. When the next tax bill is due, the abatement needs to be filed (by February 1st). The abatement must be based on the value of the building. We must look at what we budgeted for as well as what the increase will look like so we can see what the difference will be.

Denise asked what the building was appraised for?

Rachel says around 9 million.

Dale asks if our construction manager has a mortgage with the building?

Rachel says yes.

So Dale says, the mortgage would still exist.

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 5:29 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Errichetti

Documents used during the meeting

- Financial Reports to the Board December.pdf
- VPCS_Capital_Budget Board December.pdf
- Proposed Governance Committee Goals FY2023.docx