

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday March 28, 2024 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#)

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Trustees Present

A. Errichetti, A. Martínez, A. Mendelson, D. Ford, L. Doherty (remote), M. Freeman (remote), R. Sela, T. Maxey (remote)

Trustees Absent

D. Fuller, M. Landon, R. Martin, X. Delobato

Guests Present

N. Gauthier, R. Romano

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 Mar 28, 2024 at 4:32 PM.

C. Approve minutes

A. Mendelson made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 02-29-24.

D. Ford seconded the motion.

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

II. Board Chair Report

A. Board Chair Updates

Ann asks Board members who have not replied to the Board Retreat survey to do so ASAP.

Ann introduces our guest Andrea Hicks, Chair of Education Department at the Elms. She has been at the Elms for 9 days and previously was at Baypath. She has a background in Education as a principal and educator (Holyoke and Springfield).

Ann Marie Martínez is also here who is just waiting on official DESE approval.

III. CEO Report

A. Advocacy Update

Rachel shares an advocacy update with the Board.

Representative Gonzalez visited the school on Tuesday, March 19th. He is an advocate of charter schools and our ask when he came this year was for a \$100 increase in Facilities Per Pupil (FPP) funding. The visit was very successful and he agreed to support it again.

Additionally, there was an Early College Advocacy day at the state house last week. There is a current proposed bill that addresses funding for early college high schools as well as additional support from DESE related to credits transferring, etc. This bill has support from both sides and is very exciting for the future of Early College. All this to say, funding is an issue for us. We are able to sustain it for the next 5-7 years but there are expenses that we haven't budgeted for as we don't know everything that will come up or we will need (i.e. logistics when our 11th and 12th graders are on the STCC campus full time, etc.)

Ann asks why early college programs are all partnered with state schools?

Rachel says this is probably due to the MA Transfer Agreement and the ease of transferring credits.

Aaron asks if there is any chance we could be reimbursed by state colleges?

Rachel says they get reimbursed directly for the credit from the state. Our program is budget neutral or a loss to them so they probably won't reimburse us at this point - there may be potential in the future.

Michael says a number of colleges like Westfield State are looking at different options right now. Many summer programs are fully subsidized. The key issue comes down to the issuing of credit - which would have to be paid for in some way. There are a lot of moving parts right now.

Rebecca asks where is the Barr Foundation on the Early College movement?

Rachel says she just spoke with them today, we are currently in the 2nd year of a 2 year grant. We are on track to meeting all our goals we set through this grant except a deep dive into career exploration and work-based learning. Rachel will be applying for a 3 year \$300,000 grant with American Student Assistance (ASA) that is all about work-based learning. It is very competitive.

The Board discusses what work-based learning comprises/looks like.

Rachel sees this aligned with development and overall organizational advancement. Rachel is thinking about building capacity for this within the organization.

B. Development Update

Rachel shares a draft of the Spring Appeal. We also emailed out our current donor list for Board members to look and see who they might send the Spring Appeal letter to donors personally as well as think about who is in their network that could be added to the donor list. We are trying to get our donor base ready for a future capital campaign.

Terry asks about databases?

Rachel says we are currently using DonorSnap. She anticipates at some point we will need to upgrade our software.

Andrea asks if there is a dollar amount that Board members need to donate annually?

Rachel says no but we do like to be able to report that 100% of our Board members have donated in the past year.

IV. Academic Achievement Committee

A. Data Updates

Rebecca informs the Board that we looked more at the big picture this past month. Rebecca frames how the committee meetings have been running this year - bringing guest speakers from leadership positions to report to the Board. This has been mutually beneficial.

This month we looked at special education students and students with disabilities (SWD) and their test scores. This group of students is the one subgroup that is currently showing progress in terms of academic recovery post pandemic. We dug into this data to see what is being done with these students to get these results. The committee also gained some general education related to special education students in MA. The website included in the agenda is a great resource to review.

Ann adds that she was surprised that a large number of students at our schools are high needs. 25% of those students are on IEPs.

Rebecca says that it is important to note that just because a student is high needs or has a IEP it does not mean they can't be successful in a early college model. Individualized education plans (IEPs) can all look different and can mean a variety of things.

Aaron asks if we ever challenge IEPs?

Rebecca says that in urban school districts there is an overidentification of students that are high needs but there is also a lack of identifying learning disabilities early on. These two things exist in tandem. We can have students reevaluated when they come to us if we feel it is necessary but it is a process.

Rachel adds it isn't the school's or the parent's decisions unilaterally - it is the team's decision. An IEP is a legal document. Whether you have an IEP or not, at Veritas, we are providing robust supports for all students. The only times we push back hard is when students perform well on standardized tests and the team agrees that they no longer

need the services or when a student is getting a lot of pull out services and not being included in the general education population - this is a myth that is often believed by parents and guardians.

Rebecca says that research shows that inclusion is the thing that helps students with learning disabilities progress.

Rachel says that now at the high school level we are teaching students what is in their IEP and how to advocate for themselves and get the services they need as the IEP follows them to college. She continues that there needs to be more communication between Veritas and the district to ensure students who need specific services are placed in the appropriate programs.

V. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Report

Denise updates the Board on the monthly finances.

Balance sheet and liquidity: it is still very challenging but it is stable. The way that Lynne can now request grant monies in a more efficient way, it has provided some relief. When this is delayed we have still been borrowing on the line of credit but paying it back immediately.

Change in Net Position: We are down to 589 students. We will continue to over enroll for next year to accommodate the expected attrition.

Expenses: They are controlled. Lynne and Rachel will decide next month if we will remove the contingency from the budget. We are currently outfitting the technology lab at the high school with help from a grant from STCC.

B. FY25 Budget Preliminary Review

We will come back in April with a final draft and we expect to vote in May.

Revenue is a solid figure - we know DESE tuition reimbursement rate and the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) increase (4.58%). Private funding - we have secured \$300,000 with Barr and Rachel is looking for the additional \$200,000. Rachel mentions we were on a payment schedule with Barr and the money will hit the books for FY24 not FY25.

Ann asks about enrollment?

Rachel says the plan is to fill 700 seats next year. 5th grade enrollment is trending well for next year. We offered 95 seats and 77 accepted. 70 families attended our Accepted Students Day. We need to begin the year with all seats full and a waiting list.

Aaron asks the 20% of students coming here to the High School that are not from our middle school - where are they coming from?

Rachel says a lot from Springfield Prep but also other district schools.

Expenses: We've managed to cut 1% in administrative costs and 2% in instructional costs. Good expense control - it is becoming part of the culture.

Staffing: Overall we've reduced 5 positions but most staff are transitioning to open positions as we grow out the high school.

The Board will vote on the FY25 and Capital budget in May.

VI. Governance Report

A. Trustee Terms Ending & Officer Roles

Rachel updates the Board that we began looking at trustee terms ending and officer roles for the annual planning meeting in June.

Our thorniest issue is the new Treasurer role - Denise has been in this role for four years. We need to figure this one out.

Nikki will check on dates of terms ending before the next meeting.

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 6:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Errichetti

Documents used during the meeting

- Donor List - Most Recent Donation March 2024.xlsx
- Financial Reports to the Board - March.pdf
- FY25 Budget - draft - March.pdf
- Trustee Terms and Officer Roles 2024 - March Meeting.docx