

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday October 24, 2024 at 4:30 PM

Location

In Person at the High School: 225 Carando Drive Springfield, MA 01104

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

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 879 4469 7628

Passcode: 912934

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

Trustees Present

A. Errichetti, A. Hickson-Martin, D. Ford, D. Fuller, L. Doherty (remote), M. Landon, R. Martin, R. Sela

Trustees Absent

A. Martínez, A. Mendelson, M. Freeman, T. Maxey, X. Delobato

Guests Present

N. Gauthier, R. Romano

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

A. Errichetti called a meeting of the board of trustees of Veritas Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday Oct 24, 2024 at 4:35 PM.

B. Approve minutes

A. Hickson-Martin made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 09-26-24.

R. Sela seconded the motion.

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

II. Board Chair Report

A. Board Chair Update

Trustee Donation Initiative:

- Ann reminded the committee of the ongoing initiative to have all trustees make their donations by October 31, 2024.

Board Retreat:

- Scheduled for December 12th, from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- Refreshments or snacks will be provided.
- A calendar hold has been sent to all trustees to ensure attendance.

III. CEO Report

A. Monday Message

Monday Message Initiative: Rachel and Nikki inform the Board that the team launched a new weekly communication called the "Monday Message" to streamline and centralize parent updates. This new approach replaces the less effective monthly newsletter, which had low engagement, and provides timely information for parents. The Monday Message has achieved higher open rates, averaging around 86%. Feedback has been positive, although recent engagement was slightly lower than usual.

Collaboration with Matterlab: The communication agency Matterlab was contracted, supported by funding from the Barr Foundation. Their work includes the development of a new website, marketing initiatives, student recruitment collateral, and the creation of a "Gratitude Book." The engagement with Matterlab was extended by three months beyond

the original plan due to the need for additional support and adjustments. The agency has contributed significantly to refining the organization's communication materials and identity.

Gratitude Book Launch: The first edition of the Gratitude Book was released as an annual publication to highlight achievements and share stories. Plans are underway for redesigning it in future years to maintain its relevance. The book serves as a deeper communication piece complementing recruitment and teacher hiring materials.

Website Updates: A new, user-friendly website was launched, with further enhancements planned, including adding student profiles and potentially a blog. The updated site will play a role in various communication efforts, from recruitment to parent engagement. The team acknowledged that these initiatives aim to improve communication consistency, build engagement, and better represent the organization's evolving identity.

B. Springpoint Visits

Rachel highlights one valuable advantage of partnering with the Barr Foundation is having access to Springpoint as a grantee. Springpoint, an organization specializing in school observations and evaluations, conducted an initial assessment of our middle school 18 months ago. This process was recently repeated, and a similar evaluation is scheduled for our high school in March. Springpoint will provide a detailed report with feedback, which we will use to guide our planning for the next academic year. This ongoing collaboration helps us continuously improve and refine our educational strategies.

C. FY25 CEO Goals

Save for next month - December Board Retreat

IV. Academic Achievement

A. High School Leadership Update

Rachel updated the Board on a recent leadership transition at the high school, referencing a matter discussed during the June retreat. The current principal has stepped down from the role and will be transitioning to teaching 9th-grade biology. In the interim, Amy will serve as the acting principal. Rachel acknowledged that transitions can be a sensitive time, and the team is actively engaging with teachers and staff to provide reassurance and support during this period. Despite the changes, the transition process is progressing positively, with efforts focused on maintaining stability and open communication. We will be working with a recruitment firm to run a search for the next principal.

B. Possip Parent Feedback

The meeting discussed feedback gathered through POSSIP surveys, highlighting notable differences between middle and high school responses. The majority of middle school families consistently expressed satisfaction, while a significant portion of high school families reported concerns, with 22-20% expressing dissatisfaction in recent months. The leadership transition was cited as a factor influencing high school feedback, prompting actions to address the issues.

The POSSIP tool enables regular parent feedback collection, identifying trends and actionable insights, such as communication gaps regarding available student support. The team emphasized using the survey feedback to create a feedback loop, responding to trends through initiatives like the Monday Message and a parent education forum. Efforts are underway to improve parent awareness of in-school supports, including tutoring integrated into the school day, and plans for a more comprehensive parent portal are in discussion.

Challenges related to high school students' disrupted educational experiences due to the pandemic were acknowledged, with gaps in learning persisting. Nonetheless, initiatives continue to strengthen engagement and communication with families while responding promptly to concerns.

V. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Report

Financial Update:

- Denise reported to the Board that liquidity remains stable.
- There has been no need for Lynne to advance on the line of credit.

Balance Sheet Update:

- The lease for the van has been added to the balance sheet.

Expense Management:

- Expenses continue to be well controlled and within expected limits.

B. Investment Subcommittee Update

Investment Portfolio and Financial Strategies

Matt updates the Board that the school's investment portfolio is up 9.5% year-to-date. There is discussion about potentially taking a more conservative approach with investments, possibly moving some gains to more liquid assets. The finance committee is considering long-term strategies for using investment funds, such as supporting teacher compensation or facility purchases. The school recognizes the need to maintain liquidity for financial flexibility and future opportunities. The school is considering purchasing the

high school building but without firm details on pricing or timing yet. There is discussion about how to best use investment funds in relation to potential property purchases and ongoing expenses.

VI. Other Business

A. STCC Partnership/Early College Update

Early College Program Updates

The Board discusses the school's extensive early college program in partnership with STCC, where many 11th and 12th-grade students take classes aiming for an associate's degree upon graduation. Many high-achieving students are often off-campus, which leaves fewer role models at the high school. There is a need to create engaging opportunities for students not in the early college program. The school is considering partnerships with four-year colleges like Westfield State to provide different pathways. Discussions are ongoing about whether pushing for an associate's degree is always the best option, especially for students aiming for selective colleges. The school is exploring ways to better integrate early college students with those remaining on campus, possibly through project-based learning or entrepreneurship programs.

Expanding Options for Non-Early College Students

The Board discusses the school's exploration of partnerships with local businesses for internships and work-based learning. Certification programs in fields like healthcare and advanced manufacturing are being considered. There is discussion about creating a 'Viper Tank' entrepreneurship program to engage students across different tracks. The school recognizes the need to prepare students for various post-high school paths, including trades and technical careers. The focus is on creating more engaging opportunities for students, such as e-gaming clubs and computer science classes. The school recognizes the need to create a strong school culture that includes both early college and non-early college students.

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 6:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Errichetti

Documents used during the meeting

- Monday Message_9.30.24.pdf

- FY25 CEO Goals_summary October Meeting.docx
- Possip Middle School.pdf
- HS Possip Report.pdf
- Financial Reports to the Board October.pdf
- Vehicle Lease October Meeting.xlsx
- 3Q24-Veritas Portfolio Monitor October 2024.pdf