APPROVED

Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

In Person

Date and Time
Thursday March 27, 2025 at 4:30 PM

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

One tap mobile +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/u/k8aG053ZG

Trustees Present
A. Errichetti, A. Hickson-Martin, A. Martínez (remote), A. Mendelson, D. Ford, R. Martin, R. Sela

Trustees Absent
D. Fuller, L. Doherty, M. Freeman, M. Landon, 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 Mar 27, 2025 at 4:38 PM.

B. Approve minutes

R. Sela made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 02-27-25.
A. Hickson-Martin seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Board Chair Report

A. Board Chair Update

Ann would like to thank the Board for 100% completion on the Board survey!

III. CEO Report

A. Development Update

The Board members who have contributed to the Spring Appeal were thanked for their support. We are currently about $8,000 away from reaching our $50,000 annual goal, and we are confident we will meet this target.

B. MCAS Testing

MCAS testing has begun and the schedule is as follows:

High School MCAS Testing:
March 25-26 – ELA
May 20-21 – Math
June 4-5 – Biology/Physics

Middle School MCAS Testing:
April 7-8 – ELA
May 8-9 – Math
May 13 & 15 – STE (Science & Technology/Engineering)
May 22 – 8th Grade Civics

IV. Governance Committee

A. Trustee Recruitment

Due to time constraints, the discussion on the Trustee Recruitment will be bumped to next month's meeting for further review and discussion.

V. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Report

Liquidity and Cash Flow:

- Liquidity is in good standing with no significant issues. The pressure on our ability to manage cash flow, particularly regarding vendor payments, has eased.
- Current cash balance averages $1.6 million, which is above the desired target of $1 million. The extra cash provides a small cushion for operational flexibility.

Income and Attrition:

- Unfortunately, we are experiencing student attrition, particularly in the high school level. However, this has been offset by grants, and we are still projecting a net position at year-end of approximately $400,000, plus or minus.
- In February, we lost a net of 8 students, which is below the budgeted expectations for this point in the year.
    - **Rebecca** asks if the attrition is specific to high school students.
    - **Rachel** hypothesizes that the attrition may be related to the **ICE (Innovative College Experience)** program.
    - We track where students go when they leave (i.e., whether they move out of state, transfer within the state, or leave for another school such as SPS).
- **Denise** highlights that the highest attrition is in **9th and 10th grades**.
- We've also seen attrition among high school students struggling with the Early College program. This is one of the reasons we are exploring more work-based learning options.

Backfilling Policies:

- **Rachel** reviews our backfilling policies with the Board.
- In previous years, we have been under our total allotted student capacity, which allowed us to over-enroll in all grades to avoid the need to backfill. However, this will change next year when the full program (grades 5-12) is in place.
- We are entering the new budget cycle, and further details will be provided as we move forward. Overall, we are in good financial shape.

B. Review of Cash Management Solutions

Overview of Deposit Insurance and IntraFi:

- Traditionally, the FDIC insures deposits up to $250,000, and with the Deposit Insurance Fund (DIF), companies can insure amounts exceeding $250,000.

- **PeoplesBank** has recently exceeded this limit and, as a result, will lose the ability to insure amounts over $250,000 through DIF. To address this, PeoplesBank is offering a product through **IntraFi**.
- **IntraFi** is not a bank; rather, it works by taking the excess funds in our accounts from PeoplesBank and distributing them to other banks that can insure amounts over $250,000.

Concerns Raised by the Finance Committee:

- The finance committee met with PeoplesBank to review the IntraFi product. During this meeting, **Denise** raised concerns regarding **counterparty risk**.
- Upon reviewing the list of banks in the IntraFi network, Denise found it confusing. Many of the banks shared similar names, and the way the list was organized made it difficult to locate specific banks and assess their locations.
- **Denise** also inquired about how we monitor the list of banks in IntraFi to mitigate risk. Through her research, she became uncomfortable with some of the banks included on the list. She provided the Board with examples from her research that were less than convincing.
- Denise noted that using IntraFi would result in our funds being spread across multiple banks. This would make accounting more complex, as statements would show accounts with different banks, which could complicate our financial management.

Alternative Options Explored with Seeley Howard:

- In response to these concerns, the finance committee consulted **Steve Howard** at **Seeley Howard (our investment company)** for alternative options. He suggested several alternatives:
    1. **Invest in T-bills**
    2. **Vanguard Money Market Fund**, offering a 4.25% return.
    3. **Farmer's Credit or Federal Home Loan bonds**, yielding a 5-4% return.
    4. **Federal Funds or ACH transfers**, with federal funds being available on the same day and ACH transfers taking a few days.
- The finance committee plans to receive more detailed information during the next **quarterly investment subcommittee meeting** in **April**.

Recommendation:

- Based on her research and concerns, **Denise's recommendation** is not to proceed with the IntraFi product. Instead, she suggests we consider one of the investment options recommended by **Seeley Howard**, particularly the **Vanguard Money Market Fund** offering a 4.25% return.
- **Rachel** expressed her hope to maintain a loan with PeoplesBank and set up automatic transfers to pay off loans. She noted that while the beginning of the year can be trickier, Veritas typically settles into a consistent cadence where automatic

transfers would work. As long as we don't exceed the $250,000 threshold overnight, we would be able to monitor our accounts and ensure we stay within this limit.

Concerns about the Banking Industry:

- **Denise** raised concerns regarding the increasing trend in the banking industry of **"banking as a service."** Banks are partnering with fintech companies that are less regulated than traditional banks, and these fintechs are using their policies to move funds. This presents potential risks, as fintech companies are not subject to the same regulations.
- **Aaron** asked about the average monthly amount we would be sending out. Denise estimated the amount to be between **$500,000 and $650,000**.
- **Aaron** expressed support for considering the **Vanguard Money Market Fund**, emphasizing that at a 4.25% return, it seems like a low-risk option with good potential.

Next Steps:

- The finance committee will review the information gathered from **Seeley Howard** and make a final decision on how to proceed with managing excess funds.
- The next **quarterly investment subcommittee meeting** is scheduled for **April**, where further discussions and details will be provided.

VI. High School Report

A. High School Report

Overview of Dr. Mahoney's Role and Approach:

- **Dr. Mahoney** is still serving full-time in **Holyoke** but has spent **15-20 days** at Veritas Prep, immersing himself in classrooms, working with **Amy**, and conducting leadership interviews.
- In the coming weeks, Dr. Mahoney plans to bring the entire team together to outline the vision for the high school for the next academic year.

Key Goals and Strategic Focus: Dr. Mahoney presented his strategic vision for the next **two years**, with a focus on **rebooting** the school after two years of leadership and staff instability. By the **third year**, he envisions training the next principal to ensure continuity and sustainability of leadership.
Big Bets:
Leadership Structure:

- Currently, leadership operates in silos, with leaders focusing on their individual areas rather than thinking holistically about the school. Dr. Mahoney plans to **reshape the leadership team** to include a principal, two assistant principals, a

dean of early college, a dean of student support services, a dean of students, and an STCC campus coordinator.
- The goal is to eliminate silos and create **whole-school accountability**, where the leadership team collectively owns challenges. Dr. Mahoney shared examples of how leadership has been fragmented, which has led to inefficiencies.
- Offers have been made for key leadership positions, and Dr. Mahoney expects the leadership team to be finalized by next week.
- There will be **closer coordination** between the high school and middle school, including initiatives such as the high school **e-sports club** mentoring middle school members and students serving consequences at the middle school.
- **Rachel** inquired about the number of leadership positions, and Dr. Mahoney clarified that the new structure would involve **fewer positions** than the current one, with **two positions being cut**.

Advisory Program:

- The advisory program currently lacks ownership and has not effectively supported students' social-emotional and academic development. As a result, when **Seminar** starts, students are not fully prepared, making it less impactful.
- **Post-April vacation**, Dr. Mahoney will work with a team of staff to overhaul the advisory program. Teachers will be expected to **invest** in creating a meaningful advisory experience.
- Advisory will be redefined as a structured time where students receive **relational and academic support**, focusing on skills like advocacy and communication. It will be a small group setting where each student has a **"go-to" adult** who knows them well outside of academics.
- **Advisory will be treated as a core subject** and will be nested between two academic periods to ensure students take it seriously.
- The advisory program will eventually be a **graduation requirement**, with assessments such as **senior talks**, portfolios, and other options.
- Dr. Mahoney emphasized the importance of **celebrating successes** within advisory, encouraging a culture of recognition that will be incorporated into the advisory period.

School Culture:

- **Teachers** have expressed a need for more **active coaching and support** in the classroom. Dr. Mahoney acknowledged the findings from the teacher survey, which showed that only **20% of teachers were satisfied** with the current administration, particularly regarding **student behavior management**.
- Dr. Mahoney aims to create a more **cohesive and consistent** leadership team and establish stronger **accountability** among teachers and staff.
- He also stressed the need for more **joy and celebration** in the school culture. He noted, "We can't just bring the stick; we need the carrots." This includes inviting staff to **school and sporting events** without the expectation of payment.

- Dr. Mahoney extended an invitation to **Board members** to attend the next **honor roll ceremony** as a way to celebrate student achievements.

Addressing the "Two-School Threat" and Building a Unified Campus:

- Dr. Mahoney acknowledged the challenge of managing **two campuses**, particularly with **Rachel** and **Amy** not spending enough time at the **STCC campus**. He emphasized the need to transition from thinking of the campuses as two separate schools to fostering a **"two campuses, one school"** mentality.
- Dr. Mahoney proposed **dedicated spaces for college students** on the **Carando campus** and plans for college students to be on the Carando campus every **Friday** to reinforce the sense of unity.
- **Improved communication** between the campuses will be a key priority moving forward to ensure a seamless experience for both students and staff.

Next Steps:

- The leadership team will be finalized by next week, with a clear focus on **eliminating silos** and promoting whole-school accountability.
- Post-April vacation, the advisory program will undergo a significant overhaul to ensure its effectiveness in supporting students.
- The advisory program will become a key part of the school's **graduation requirements** and will emphasize relational and academic skills.
- Dr. Mahoney will work on strengthening **coaching and support** for teachers and creating a more joyful school culture, including increasing celebration of student successes.
- Work will continue to integrate the **two campuses** into a more cohesive structure, with plans for college students to spend more time on the Carando campus and improved communication between campuses.

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 6:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Errichetti

Documents used during the meeting

- MCAS Testing Schedule 2025.docx
- MCAS message to families 2025.docx

- Veritas Prep Charter School Trustee Onboarding Plan.docx
- Financial Reports to the Board March.pdf
- PeoplesBank Cash Management Solutions - IntraFi.docx
- Seeley Howard Cash Management Solutions.docx