



**Old Sturbridge Academy Charter Public School
Minutes of the Board of Trustees**

Approved October 27, 2021

Meeting Date: Wednesday, September 29, 2021
Time: 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Location: Zoom Video Conference
Members present: Keith Blanchette, Pam Boisvert, Vivian Brooks, Linda Denault, Louis Fazen, Amy Herman, Jim Korman, Rich McGrath, Jessica Miller
Staff present: Lisa DeTora, Jim Donahue, Melissa Hogan, Tina Krasnecky, Sarah Parks, Jasmin Rivas

Order of Business:

Public Access 1 on Docketed Items*

1. Approval of FY2021 audited financial statements.....Keith Blanchette
 - Motion: Approve the FY2021 audited financial statements as presented.
2. Report of the Governance Committee.....Pamela Boisvert
 - a. Nomination of Jennifer Melendez to the Board of Trustees
 - Motion: Approve the nomination of Jennifer Melendez to the OSACPS Board of Trustees for 2021-2024.
 - b. 2021-2022 Committee appointments
 - Motion: Approve the 2021-2022 Committee appointments as proposed.
3. COVID-19 update – state mandates and other policies.....Jim Donahue
4. New/other business

Public Access 2*

Adjournment

Documents and Exhibits:

- Audited financial statements
- Jennifer Melendez resume
- 2021-2022 Trustee and Committee Slate – draft 2021-09-27

Mr. McGrath called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

Mr. McGrath conducted a roll call of the Board. Quorum was established.

Public Access 1 on Docketed Items

Mr. McGrath asked if there were any comments from members of the public. There were none.

1. *Approval of FY2021 audited financial statements*.....Keith Blanchette

- Motion: Approve the FY2021 audited financial statements as presented.

Mr. Blanchette said the Finance Committee met with AAF last week to review and discuss the audited financial statements. The Committee asked AAF to confirm that the Board is operating in accordance with the management contract and that all transactions between OSA and OSV were properly accounted for; AAF confirmed both queries. Mr. Blanchette said even though the Academy and Village share services, they operate independently. Mr. Blanchette complimented Ms. Krasnecky and her team for their work.

Mr. Blanchette said at the end of the meeting, the Committee voted to recommend the audited financial statements as presented.

Motion: Ms. Boisvert moved to approve the FY2021 audited financial statements as presented.

Second: Dr. Denault seconded the motion.

Mr. McGrath conducted a roll call of the Board.

Vote:

Mr. Blanchette: Yes.

Ms. Boisvert: Yes.

Ms. Brooks: Yes.

Dr. Denault: Yes.

Dr. Fazen: Absent.

Ms. Herman: Yes.

Mr. Korman: Yes.

Ms. Miller: Yes.

Motion passed.

2. *Report of the Governance Committee*.....Pamela Boisvert

- a. Nomination of Jennifer Melendez to the Board of Trustees

- i. Motion: Approve the nomination of Jennifer Melendez to the OSACPS Board of Trustees for 2021-2024.

Ms. Boisvert said the Governance Committee met today and recommended to the Board the nomination of Jennifer Melendez to the Board for a term of 2021-2024.

Mr. Korman asked if candidates are vetted through the Governance Committee.

Ms. Boisvert confirmed that they are. She noted that the Committee will discuss creating a more formal and robust nominating and vetting process at its October meeting.

Mr. McGrath said anyone on the Board can bring forth a candidate. He said he wants to make sure that nominees have true affection for the Academy and the Village in addition to the skill sets they bring.

Dr. Denault said that the new process will be consistent as well as robust.

Ms. Brooks said that the Strategic Plan includes outlines that the Board will establish a vetting process for potential new Trustees.

Motion: Mr. Blanchette moved to approve the nomination of Jennifer Melendez to the OSACPS Board of Trustees for 2021-2024.

Second: Ms. Herman seconded the motion.

Mr. McGrath conducted a roll call of the Board.

Vote:

Mr. Blanchette: Yes.

Ms. Boisvert: Yes.

Ms. Brooks: Abstain due to process.

Dr. Denault: Yes.

Dr. Fazen: Yes.

Ms. Herman: Yes.

Mr. Korman: Yes.

Ms. Miller: Yes.

Motion passed.

b. 2021-2022 Committee appointments

- Motion: Approve the 2021-2022 Committee appointments as proposed.

Ms. Boisvert said the Governance Committee reviewed Committee appointments presented to the Board on September 25. Under the new structure, every Trustee sits on at least two committees. She said the only change since Saturday is that Ms. Miller will remain on Governance. Per Ms. Boisvert, the Governance Committee recommended ratification of the committee members for 2021-2022; changes to Committee membership may be made over the course of the year.

Motion: Dr. Fazen moved to approve the 2021-2022 Committee appointments as proposed.

Second: Mr. Blanchette seconded the motion.

Mr. McGrath conducted a roll call of the Board.

Vote:

Mr. Blanchette: Yes

Ms. Boisvert: Yes

Ms. Brooks: Yes

Dr. Denault: Yes

Lou: Yes

Ms. Herman: Yes

Korman: Yes

Ms. Miller: Yes

Motion passed.

3. *COVID-19 update – state mandates and other policies*.....Jim Donahue

Mr. Donahue acknowledged Ms. DeTora, Dr. Hogan, Ms. Herman, and the entire staff of the Academy for their extraordinary work during the pandemic.

Mr. Donahue reminded the Board that at the end of last school year, the Academy operated under a state mask mandate. The micro campus model allowed the Academy to bring back everyone full and in person for the entire year last year. Per Mr. Donahue, over the summer, masking was optional for students participating in the summer programs at the Academy and the Village, but there were some cases of COVID-19 among students and staff at the end of the summer. Mr. Donahue said the Friday before the first day of school, the Commissioner informed school leaders that he would put a mask mandate before the Board the following Tuesday; on August 24, the State Board voted to enable the Commissioner to impose a mask mandate through September 30, 2021. The Commissioner has now extended the mandate for another month.

Mr. Donahue said the school opened with 320 students. The Academy has continued the micro campus model to provide space for the seventh grade classes; all classrooms have returned to regular spacing instead of the spacing mandated by DESE in 2020-2021. Mr. Donahue said that a handful of families were unhappy about the mask mandate and thought the school should be doing more to challenge or ignore the mandate. Ms. DeTora and her team worked very hard to bring these families along and make accommodations where possible. Despite this, two families decided to withdraw from the Academy. The trigger was a policy that Mr. Donahue sent out in the middle of September reminding families that the masking policy is a state mandate and the state has tools, through the Department of Children and Families, to enforce it. Mr. Donahue said the Academy been working closely with several families that still have concerns about masking and are in a much better place right now.

Mr. Donahue said that DESE has created a process for schools in which a minimum of 80% of the total population is vaccinated to meet additional data points and apply for a waiver for the mask mandate. The Academy is not eligible for this process because of the number of students who are not yet eligible for vaccination. In the meantime, the Academy will continue to comply with the mask mandate and emphasize outdoor learning so that students can have extended mask breaks.

Mr. Donahue emphasized that there are no policy changes on the table now. The Academy will continue to explore options for alternative face coverings, like shields, and outdoor learning.

Dr. Fazen suggested reviewing literature on the efficacy of face shields compared to masks. Dr. Fazen supported finding additional times and circumstances in which students can unmask. He noted that filing a complaint with DCF is a significant step if there is a suspected threat to the health of a child. While the Academy would not take such a step lightly, Dr. Fazen said it is important to communicate to families that it is a possibility.

Dr. Denault emphasized that filing with DCF would be a last resort.

Mr. Donahue said the Academy was approved to participate in the Test and Stay program. With parental approval, the program provides rapid antigen testing for close contacts of positive cases with the goal of keeping students and staff in classrooms as much as possible. Per Mr. Donahue, last year, close contacts had to go into isolation for a period of time. This year, with remote learning no longer an option, it is important to minimize time spent in isolation. With Test and Stay,

asymptomatic close contacts can remain in school. The program has created additional work for the school nurse and the entire staff.

Mr. McGrath asked if the Academy is prepared to move back to remote or hybrid learning.

Mr. Donahue said the Academy has the technology and teachers have the expertise to pivot quickly. Mr. Donahue stated that he has asked Ms. DeTora to be prepared for a move to a hybrid model.

Mr. McGrath asked if testing is available for people who are not close contacts.

Ms. DeTora said routine COVID-19 safety tests, or pool testing, is available. Per Ms. DeTora, weekly safety testing will begin soon. Students will take home saliva tests on Tuesday and return them on Wednesday for an outside lab to test.

Dr. Fazen asked how homeschooling fits in.

Mr. Donahue said Academy students are required to attend in person. Mr. Donahue said if the students withdraw for homeschooling, their families apply to their home districts to get on a homeschool plan approved by the district. Per Mr. Donahue, the Academy is not offering a homeschooling plan. Homeschooling students lose their place at the Academy. Newly vacant seats are filled from the waiting list.

Ms. Brooks asked if the Academy already filled the seats from the two families that withdrew.

Mr. Donahue confirmed that the seats have been filled. He noted that any empty seats are filled from the grade-level waiting list through February of seventh grade.

Dr. Denault asked how the waiting lists are created and if they exist at each grade level.

Mr. Donahue said a waiting list is compiled through the annual February lottery. Right now, seats are being filled from the waiting list generated in February 2021. Per Mr. Donahue, in the event there is not a waiting list for a particular grade, the Academy would advertise for and hold a lottery specific to that grade. Mr. Donahue said the state prescribes the rules for filling seats so the process is transparent and uniform across schools.

4. New/other business

There was none.

Public Access 2

Mr. McGrath asked if there were any comments from members of the public. There were none.

Adjournment

Mr. McGrath asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Mr. Blanchette moved to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Ms. Boisvert seconded the motion.

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Mr. McGrath conducted a roll call of the Board.

Vote: All in favor.

Mr. McGrath adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.