

Old Sturbridge Academy Charter Public School

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: August 10, 2017

APPROVED BY BOARD: OCTOBER 27, 2017

Members present: Reed Hillman, Pamela Boisvert, Daniel Soucy, Louis Fazen, Keith Blanchette, Dan Pear

Members absent: Richard McGrath, Jasmin Rivas

In Attendance: Jim Donahue, Tina Krasnecky, Lisa DeTora, Kristen Rhodes, James Connally

Order of Business

1. 5:30 pm Tour of School Facility
2. 6:15 pm Public Access 1
3. 6:19 pm Final Review and Vote on the Management Contract
4. 6:40 pm Approval of Extension of OSV Limited Services Agreement
5. 6:45 pm Engagement of Mirick O'Connell
6. 6:55 pm Report of the Executive Director
7. 7:00 pm Vote to Request a Change to the School Calendar from DESE/discussion of School Opening Date
8. 7:12 pm Public Access 2
9. 7:17 pm Adjournment

Meeting began with a tour of the Academy facility construction site.

Mr. Hillman called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

Agenda items may be taken out of order.

Public Access 1

Ms. Zainha Rivett stated that she would be more inclined to ask questions and comment during the second public access period.

Final Review and Vote on the Management Contract

Mr. Donahue summarized the changes made to the Management Contract after DESE's final review. The modifications made by DESE were minor and technical in nature. DESE recommends revisiting the contract with their changes, making it acceptable to them. One significant recommendation was in Section 4 as it pertains to the role of the Executive Director in managing the Directors of Teaching and Learning and Student Support.

Mr. Fazen asked if the Board could hear from the Directors regarding the proposed change.

Ms. DeTora said that she is predominantly focused on the faculty team at the Academy, but that she and Ms. Rhodes do seek Mr. Donahue's guidance often. Once the school takes shape, Mr. Donahue will be

able to better focus on the big picture. Ms. DeTora indicated that Mr. Donahue has made both her and Ms. Rhodes feel empowered in their management of the school.

Ms. Rhodes stated that the stipulation granting her and Ms. DeTora more authority does not alter their working relationship with Mr. Donahue. It is, however, best practice, and in the best interests of the Academy to have something in writing formally.

Ms. Boisvert commented that the operation is currently moving so smoothly because the Academy has a terrific team, but that it is important to give the Board a little more authority, and be a little less reliant on the Executive Director.

Mr. Hillman stated that this change is dictated by DESE, and that Ms. DeTora and Ms. Rhodes are public employees while Mr. Donahue is not.

Mr. Hillman stated that if the Board characterizes these changes as “technical,” then no formal action is needed other than inserting them into the document.

Mr. Fazen commented that these changes are more significant than “technical” changes.

Mr. Donahue suggested voting on the contract, or voting on the contract after the changes suggested by DESE are reviewed by the attorney.

Mr. Hillman entertained a motion to table the approval of the Management Contract.

MOTION: Mr. Soucy made the motion to table.

SECONDED: Ms. Boisvert seconded the motion to table.

VOTE: All in favor.

Approval of Extension of OSV Limited Services Agreement

Mr. Hillman introduced the approval of the extension of the OSV limited services agreement.

Mr. Donahue stated that OSV would continue to provide services to the school under the limited services agreement until the Board approves of the Management Contract.

For this period, Old Sturbridge Village would bill Old Sturbridge Academy 9% of the tuition going to the Academy. The bill will be prorated. This cost is identical to what is already assumed in the budget.

Mr. Hillman entertained a motion to approve the Extension of the OSV Limited Services Agreement.

MOTION: Mr. Blanchette made the motion for approval.

SECONDED: Ms. Boisvert seconded the motion for approval.

VOTE: All in favor.

Engagement of Mirick O’Connell

Mr. Hillman introduced the proposed engagement of Mirick O’Connell. There is no retainer to the firm. For the first year the firm has agreed to charge the Academy a discounted rate for services.

Mr. Donahue read from a letter from the Law Offices of Mirick O’Connell.

Mr. Hillman commented that if the Board signs this agreement, this firm will provide all legal services for the Academy and Mr. Madaus will be the Academy’s primary attorney. The Academy can back out of the agreement at any time.

Mr. Hillman entertained a motion to approve the engagement of the Law Offices of Mirick O’Connell.

MOTION: Mr. Blanchette made the motion for approval.

SECONDED: Mr. Soucy seconded the motion for approval.

VOTE: All in favor.

Report of the Executive Director

Mr. Hillman introduced the report of the Executive Director.

Mr. Donahue stated that the faculty is completely on board and very motivated. The teaching team started August 1st. He credits Ms. DeTora and Ms. Rhodes for assembling such a great team. Currently, the team is making home visits, which have been receiving positive reviews; in addition the teachers are currently undergoing professional development.

Ms. DeTora stated that the team is bonding remarkably well, that this will be an outstanding year. The teachers are becoming a “crew,” they are currently producing beautiful work.

Ms. Boisvert inquired about the size of the faculty. Ms. DeTora answered eight lead teachers with four associate teachers.

Mr. Donahue stated that Ms. Rhodes has been working on the physician, nurse, and other staff, in which they are making progress.

Ms. Rhodes stated that the ESL teacher has verbally committed to accepting an offer from the Academy, and that the formal contract has been sent out. Additionally, the Academy is close to hiring a nurse and speech specialist. They will be contracted, the OT will be part time, and that the speech therapist is also working in other school systems.

Vote to Request a Change to the School Calendar from DESE/discussion of School Opening Date

Mr. Donahue commented that the school furniture and equipment have been ordered and have begun to arrive. All the orders are being tracked, and that a team to assemble the furniture is going to be needed. Ms. DeTora and Ms. Rhodes are currently working on the details for the uniforms, assembling the handbook, and organizing the picnic on Tuesday at 5:30 pm. Additionally, now that the school year

is rapidly approaching, he needs every tool available from the Board to ensure that the opening runs smoothly. This will help to prepare for the unexpected. The building will not be ready for the planned first day of school (August 30th.)

There are a few options on the table with respect to the opening of the Academy. The first option is to open on August 30th, but find an alternative location to start the school year in. The best possible space for this is the Oliver Wight Tavern, which is currently undergoing a code review as an approved use.

The second option is change the length of the school year. The charter states that the Academy will have a 190 day school year, but by law is only required to have a 180 day year. This second option will involve requesting a waiver from DESE to start the school year later and to approve of the shorter year. Mr. Donahue proposed opening the school year on Monday, September 11. An OSV camp experience would be offered Sept 5-8 to lessen the burden of families due to the delayed start date.

Mr. Blanchette asked about the cost of such a program. Mr. Donahue indicated that he felt that OSV could provide the program at an affordable rate for the school.

Mr. Blanchette stated that he is in favor of the latter option, that it is an effective way to introduce the students to the Village.

Mr. Donahue replied that this is a proven program and would this plan would make sense logistically.

Ms. Boisvert asked if the Academy teachers would be involved.

Mr. Donahue replied that they would veer away from a confusing hybrid system; thus it would most likely be led by OSV staff. Additionally, Mr. King is currently keeping a close eye on the construction process, and that DESE suggested taking a vote on this waiver only for the first year. If the construction is slowed, we could submit the waiver if necessary. He needs a few days to see the status of the construction project to make that judgement call.

Mr. Blanchette asked for clarification, that if this vote was to alter the calendar.

Mr. Donahue responded in the affirmative, provided only if he deemed it necessary. He could not wait for another Board meeting as the beginning of the school year is approaching.

Mr. Pear inquired about the date of September 11th.

Mr. Donahue responded that in discussion with Mr. King they agreed upon September 11 as an opening date.

Ms. Boisvert stated that this would give them flexibility so school could start on the 11th no matter what.

Mr. Blanchette stated that we need to give the contractors a concrete date. People are motivated by a deadline.

Mr. Hillman stated that we still need to have an inspection. And that it is important to bear in mind that the staff is on full pay at in the meantime.

Mr. Donahue replied that OSV staff can handle the additional number of students at the Discovery Adventure, as the program is designed to handle 100 students per day. Buses and lunches would still need to be figured out however.

Mr. Soucy stated he was in favor of having the option available if it became necessary.

Mr. Donahue stated that it would be unobtrusive to families as well.

Mr. Hillman asked if this affects the per student payment from the state.

Mr. Donahue replied that the payment is a lump sum for the year.

Mr. Hillman entertained a motion to approve of a change to the school calendar if the Director deems it necessary.

MOTION: Mr. Soucy made the motion for approval.

SECONDED: Mr. Blanchette seconded the motion for approval.

VOTE: All in favor

Public Access 2

Mr. Hillman introduced the second public access period.

Ms. Zainha Rivett stated that it is important to have a consistent message put out to inform the parents, that it is important to build trust.

Mr. Hillman agreed, especially that the decision about the calendar needs to happen soon.

Mr. Donahue stated he will have a decision made by the BBQ on Tuesday.

Mr. Hillman entertained a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Mr. Blanchette seconded the motion to adjourn.

SECONDED: Ms. Boisvert

VOTE: All in favor

Meeting adjourned at 7:17 PM

Respectfully submitted:

Daniel J. Pear

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Documents in meeting package:

OSACPS Board of Trustees Agenda, August 10th

Extension of OSV Limited Services Agreement

The Old Sturbridge Academy Public School Calendar

Management Services Agreement