



MINUTES
VSWEA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, January 18, 2023
VIA [Zoom](#)

Members Present:

Kerstin Kubina (KK)—President
April Sauer (AS)—Secretary
John Tanner (JT)
Ben Fong (BF)

Danielle Martinez (DM)
Myriah Mhoon (MM)
Nellie Grossenbacher (NG)
Ashley Parks (AP)

Members Absent: Dan Franks

The President and Secretary were present, and a quorum was reached.

Guests

Invitees of the Board:

Frank Mirizio (FM)
Sophie McCurley (SM)
Michelle Kratzer (MK)

Members of the public present via Zoom/Registration through Google Forms:

Nicole Goodman
deb
tammy/tom
Addie Heartkin

MD
Morgan Davis
deborrah allen
H

Opening Verse/Introductions

Meeting was called to order at 6:33pm. KK welcomed the public to the meeting, read the opening verse, and reviewed the agenda.

The Board members introduced themselves along with FM.

Executive Director Updates

FM We are losing our choir teacher, Ms. Hipps. We have hired Ms. Shumway, and she starts Wednesday. Our math teacher is going on maternity leave, so we are looking for a long term sub to cover those classes. Our woodshop is still stalled due to permits. Our new bathrooms are operational. We are currently adding furniture for the lounge area for our teachers. Our stage is complete, and we used it for our Martin Luther King Jr. assembly, which was great. Our cameras and speakers were completed today. Fruth will be connecting our phones to them so we can use them as a PA system. Our Riparian area has been cleaned up. Huge thanks to NG who wrangled some parents and students to help with that. A huge thank you to all who helped with that. Our next staff meeting is tomorrow. Our enrollment is at 290. We're 10 below where

we started. Monique has assured me that financially we're okay, but we are still trying to get students enrolled. Crystal runs a lottery for our school. We have 143 new students in the lottery. This doesn't include students who are already enrolled. That number has climbed over the years. Last year it was at 119. Fundraising is going well, but I'll let SM speak to that. I proposed two dates for the town hall, perhaps you can choose those today. I wanted to get those dates to you early. Per our Bee, we had a student who lost a dad in an accident, and our community has come together. There is a gofundme page to help that family. It's a very sad time. Our teacher is hurting; the parent and family is hurting. Please keep them in your prayers.

KK Do you want to touch on the tax credit that Monique got?

FM Monique/Aspire has several accounts. She turned a couple of her schools onto this tax credit. If you are a school that stayed open throughout COVID, this money is able to give back all of the payroll taxes that you paid during that time. We signed up, got our paperwork in, and we qualified. We have been advised to keep it in the bank for a year in case congress decides to take it back. This cost us nothing. It's a good thing.

KK That's a good chunk of money. I'm wondering if we should invest it. The ruling can change, which is why we're advised to keep it in the bank. That's very exciting for us. I reached out to Monique and FM to say thank you. This amount of money can do huge things for us.

MM Did we have a PPP loan?

FM We did. And we got news that it we didn't have to pay that back. I gave all the information needed, and we didn't have any issues.

AS Can you repeat that number? I missed it.

FM It's between \$670,000-760,000.

NG Are we budgeted for 300 students?

FM Yes, we are.

NG Our numbers are fluctuating a lot.

FM Our lowest was 289, so I'm not worried about it.

Parent Council & Animal Care Updates

KK MK is here, and she'll be joining us in one moment. Thank you for sharing the document in advance.

MK We will be updating the 100th day celebration by celebrating in March. We'll be doing a potato bar.

KK The community event for Shea Darian is a paid event. Does the attendance look good?

MK There are about 7 paid already, but I know there are several who haven't RSVP'd yet. I'm thinking around 15-20.

KK Have we reached out to some of the other Waldorf schools to see if anyone wants to travel to us?

AP I did, but it's a bit of a trek. It's on a Thursday, so I don't think we'll get a lot.

MK It may be good to send it to Rebecca Hipps or anyone who was at the summer training.

NG Do you have pricing for the Animal Care fundraiser?

MK Probably around \$60-70. We are really excited about the fundraiser. We have scheduled a dinner and a show. The show will be at Hale Theater on August 2nd. The dinner will be provided by local Gilbert restaurants.

FM We bought over 200 tickets. I have the ability to jump to 250 or 275. MK and Laura will put those up for sale right before or after Spring Break. We picked Beauty and the Beast because we want it to be a family event. It would be great if we sold every ticket for DMS. Then we'll have 3-4 restaurants in the area who can give us a good kickback.

MK This will go to the Animal Care budget. We're excited, thank you.

Marketing and Development Updates

KK Sophie is joining us as a panelist.

SM Our fall sustaining fund campaign ended at the beginning of December. \$30,959 raised from 61 donors. Now we're at \$33,707 up to 64 donors, moving us up to 28% participation. \$4150 in tax credits. I do expect to see a greater amount roll in as taxes are getting done. A mailer went out to every family last week. The Bee has also had communication. We'll send out some printed flyers as well. No big event scheduled, just the spring pledge campaign for now.

KK Shared her thanks to SM and her efforts.

AS Mentioned the last postcard that went out was when Amy Bird was here. Thanks to SM and everyone who is donating.

Financial Update

KK Shared her screen to show P&L Forecast with Budget. We are still looking good for the year. Our fiscal year starts in July so we're about half way through. Shared Profit and Loss and Balance Sheet. As our tax credits come in these numbers should go up.

DM Now that FM mentioned these upcoming funds I have no questions.

Proposed Motions

KK moved to approve the 12/14/22 regular board meeting minutes. NG second. No further discussion. Unanimous votes in favor: KK, AS, BF, MM, NG, DM, AP. Abstain: JT. **Motion passes.**

KK moved to go into Executive Session for discussion of the Executive Director's contract renewal. DM second. No further discussion. Unanimous votes in favor: KK, AS, JT, BF, MM, NG, DM, AP. **Motion passes.**

Executive session began at 7:10pm.

The minutes of the Executive Session are confidential and are maintained separately pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(B).

Executive session ended at 8:00.

KK moved to approve option #1 for the Executive Director contract. AS second. No further discussion. In favor: JT, AS, AP. Opposed: KK, BF, NG, DM, MM. **Motion fails.**

KK moved to approve option #2 for the Executive Director contract. DM second. In favor: KK, AS, JT, BF, MM, NG, DM. Opposed: AP. **Motion passes.**

Continuing Business/Open issues

Substance Abuse Program

DM We had the two options we spoke about earlier. Be Kind has assemblies we can attend, if we'd like. There's one tomorrow. We can go as a guest. There's another one on Monday. They've expanded out of state. There are a lot of options, and we can do them a la cart. They've given us some dates to look at as well. I'm working with Ms. Dietz to get her thoughts as well. I also have a call out tomorrow to Sarah. Both options are exciting.

KK Thank you for doing the research and looking into this. Have you spoken with Ms. Dietz about this? I know she was working on what we can do.

DM She is on board. I would like tonight to be about questions I can answer. Her area of expertise is phenomenal. Both programs are willing to customize. Be Kind is evidenced based. I haven't been able to make a connection with Sarah yet to discuss the Waldorf program.

MM What is your thought on how the Be Kind program may or may not complement Waldorf curriculum.

DM Be Kind was very in line because they're willing to customize for us. Other than recorded music, I didn't find anything that we wouldn't find purposeful or beautiful. There were other corporations that were media based and loud, and they weren't a good fit. Be Kind wants to incorporate DEI with their programming. It's a great slogan: Be Kind. We can all benefit. There is a video in the email I sent showing some coverage of the students and speakers. They have afterschool activities also.

NG Thank you for doing all this work. They both sound like great programs.

DM I didn't do this on my own. A member of community sent some information to me, and I went from there.

A/C Quotes

KK Last meeting we had quotes from one company, but I don't think we got the other.

FM We did get a second quote and didn't like it. We're getting a third quote. Things have increased so much in cost. We're hoping someone can give us a better quote. I'm hoping we can save \$4-5,000. Steve is looking into another company. I'm sure that I'll get it for less than \$40,000.

Strategic Goals

KK These goals are for 2023-2026. I think we should start adding in completed dates. The goals are in three buckets. A lot are already in progress or have been completed.

FM The committee on staff and hires has met once already. We're discussing our salary schedule and benefits to help with teacher retention. We're meeting again in February. We all agreed we want to change our salary and benefits. The finance piece—that tax credit is a big amount and our sustaining fund and tax credits are going well. It's so interesting that while working on one goal you lower on another, but we want to pay our staff more. I feel good about those two things. The LDC is looking at adding strings or music or Spanish. We'd like to add an elective, particularly something Waldorf friendly.

KK I think it's good to revisit those goals and see how we're executing them.

Cameras and Speakers

Kk We already got an update from FM on this.

New Business

LDC

KK JT has agreed to give us some more information regarding the LDC.

JT FM has given everyone the LDC document. Basically, without going through it point for point, the first sentence covers it. "The LDC is an advisory body that provides pedagogical leadership at Desert Marigold School in all areas of pedagogical import, including curriculum development and implementation, teacher hiring, mentoring." All final decisions rest with FM with the help of Dr. Darian. At one time, that was not true, but that is a change that was made. Some things we're working on now are: the schedule for next year, programming, issues regarding the day and the flow and how that's going. There are sort of administrative questions that have a pedagogical flavor to them. Are there any pressing questions? It's not a secret society. It's an open group led by Dr. Darian and FM.

NG JT, thank you very much for speaking to this.

JT We've also been discussing the leadership. It will turn over. We have some other candidates.

NG I've heard FM say "The LDC says no" and that concerns me. Can you speak to that?

FM I have to challenge that. I don't think I've ever said that. It's more of this is the decision.

NG, FM, AP, JT, and DM discuss LDC.

BF I'm not sure what inspired this conversation. I want to publicly state that I think it's good thing that you rely on the LDC and work with them.

JT When the school was in transition the LDC and transition team was under a great deal of criticism. Many of those issues have been corrected. How can we move forward with positivity? I'd also like you to know that there are term limits on the members.

NG Can there be a more open line of communication between the board and the LDC?

FM The LDC has asked JT to be a representative of the LDC, so he's here to answer questions.

NG Can these issues be discussed at our board meetings?

FM Yes. JT has agreed to give updates and answer any questions about the LDC.

NG I do think it's important that you have an advisory board. It takes a village to run a school. I'm not disapproving. I just want there to be open lines of communication. I'd like to hear more about term limits and if there will be any specialty teachers added.

JT Some teachers are leaving the LDC, and there is room for new teachers including specialty teachers.

FM We made changes to the qualifications to include more people. We made changes on term limits. We made changes to the amount of time you had to be at DMS. All of this makes it possible to include more people. Each realm will select their LDC representative.

DM and FM discuss adding new members.

MM Thank you, JT, for the update. There's an undercurrent making me uncomfortable. I think this group needs to allow for rebranding and resetting. I feel like we're falling backward. I'm fine with updates and asking questions. I think we need to be asking in less of a side eye way and more of an inquiry way. I sincerely want to trust until trust is broken. I want to allow all parties to have a reset button. I want to hear from them in a trusting way.

KK This transparency is great. MM, I appreciate your comments. We're all in this together, and this is a good step forward making sure that all pillars are feeling comfortable and that we're moving in the same direction.

JT Thank you, and that's all I have.

NG Thank you, JT. I appreciate your time.

Campus Touch Up Projects

KK We talked about hiring a building inspector to ensure we don't run into any issues. I know FM and Steve have been working on some initial concerns that NG and I have put forward. I'm hoping to get a quote for a building inspector soon so we can do our part to ensure our buildings are sound.

FM Hector, Steve, and I have met and have already worked on some of these issues. We're just checking them off one at a time. We're working on the parking lot, some outdoor lighting, buying furniture for the conference room, changing air filters, getting AC quotes.

DM I'd like to say thank you for that as well. I like the outer beauty, but I'd also like to look into the inner beauty as well regarding programming. I don't know if we mentioned the concert, but it was beautiful, and I want to thank all those who prepared for it and attended.

AS I love the idea of hiring an inspector. As someone who was here during the mold issues and had very strong opinions about what was happening, I'm happy to know we'll have a plan to keep our buildings well maintained. Do we have an idea of how often the inspector will come?

KK I'm not sure, but that's a good thing to think about.

FM I would suggest at the end of the year so that we can fix all the problems over the summer.

KK That's a good idea, and we'll solidify that and update later about that.

Announcements

KK Our next board meeting is 02/15/23 via Zoom.

KK moved to close the 01/18/23 board meeting. DM second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: KK, AS, JT, BF, DM, MM, NG, AP. **Motion passes.**

Closing Verse

DM read the closing verse.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:57pm.

Prepared by AS on 01.18.2023.