

MINUTES
VSWEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 19TH, 2020
EURHYTHMY ROOM, DESERT MARIGOLD SCHOOL
6210 S 28th Street, Phoenix, Arizona

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Clayton Hopkins – President	Julie Haines
Gregory Schneider – Secretary	John Elling
Jessica Jarrett – Treasurer	April Sauer
	Matthew Walker

MEMBER ABSENT

The President, Secretary and Treasurer were present and a quorum was reached. Member John Tanner was absent.

GUESTS

Members of the public who signed in:

- Colleen Pope
- Adeline Carrera
- Jill Thomas
- Barb Cunningham
- Rob Hart
- Juli Curtin
- Michelle Kratzer
- Nathaniel Williamson
- Sophia McCurley
- Jamie Converti

OPENING VERSE

Meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm

INTRODUCTIONS

Board Members introduced themselves and review of meeting procedure occurred.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

J.J. moves to approve 1/15/2020 minutes, M.W. – second, approved. G.S. abstained from the vote, otherwise unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Barb Cunningham: Where is the job posting for the Waldorf executive director? If we are truly in need of money perhaps a Waldorf executive director would be half the price of an acting attorney executive director. Figuring out what the most important thing is, is the most important thing. This is the only school like this in the nation.

Jill Thomas: Is it possible to come up with a plan to dig us out of this financial mess? How did you get us into this position that students need to bring in their own cleaning products? DMS is a shell of the school it used to be. How can we recover? If the plan is to have parents write more checks, why should they when board members aren't paying fees? How soon until the proposal is to sell part or all of the property? Board's ineptitude has brought us within a whisper of certain death. Shame.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

C.K. – Previously submitted written report to the board. High school information night scheduled for 2/27/2020. Parents from at least five nearby schools and DMS parents of grades for 5-8 will be attending. Goal is to increase enrollment to at least 20 students. Several students have toured the campus and surveys will be sent regarding their likelihood of attending the school.

M.W. – Some sections on fees and fee changes. Not sure what the proposal is really here. What's the big picture?

C.K. – Previously there was a campaign to bridge the gap between Waldorf education cost and state provided funding. We are trying to reinstitute that under a different name to bridge that gap, which has remained for many years.

Also, plan to change the name of the “consumable materials fee” to something more transparent to address parent concern that they don't know where this money is going. Have not gotten to deciding what the fee is, but we have started the discussion about changing it to more accurately reflect the different in cost is and how parents can help.

M.W. – If it hasn't bridged the gap in the past, what make us think it will work this time?

C.K. – Can't speak to the past, but there was a program in the past that would try to bridge the \$2,100 per student gap in funding from the state. The consumable fees that have historically been charged may also have not been sufficient to cover the need for a true Waldorf education.

M.W. – What's the connection between what the volunteer fundraising committee has been doing and this campaign?

C.K. – The volunteer group has been focused on tax credits, whereas this is focused on a specific, identifiable gap in funding.

M.W. – Would like to see this as a coordinated effort for fundraising from all sources – so that they understand the full scope of the school's need, and opportunities for fundraising.

G.S. – Thanks for compiling this and glad to see this as something being taken on by the administration and the operational part of the school. Would like to see additions to this document including other ways to contribute (everyday spending through Amazon, Target, etc.),

as well as matching employer contributions. Also important to note this is voluntary – don't want anyone to have the false impression their child cannot be at the school if they do not participate.

M.W. – Decisionmaking – what is the question on decisionmaking and who has authority?

C.K. – There is not a clear answer in the organizational documents. Would like guidance on how much to ask for in the campaign to raise more funds. Not clear who needs to make the decision about that number, the board or someone else?

A.S. – One hundred day was successful. Do we have information on how much payments from the state will increase based on that attendance?

J.J. – Explains the complex formula the State Board of Education uses to calculate and provide DMS's monthly income allocation.

J.H. – Attendance went up for one day, but then it has been dipping. Unless we get a significant upward trend, this one day is not going to help a lot in the long run.

M.W. – Have we been communicating the importance of attendance? Is a tardy equivalent to an absence?

C.K. – No, they are different, but enough tardies can equal an absence.

C.H. – The money fluctuates, but not entirely hard to predict. The state can sometimes overspend on education on the whole state and then claw back funds. But the overall calculation from month to month does not change that significantly.

A.S. – Enrollment. The numbers dropped a fair amount. Where are the exit surveys?

J.J. – They're available online. Will send the link.

C.K. – We do send them, and they are part of the withdrawal procedure. But sometimes people just don't follow through.

C.H. – Have we started enrollment for next year?

C.K. – No, open enrollment has not started yet. It is slated for March. The lottery has already occurred. Those people have received notifications of their position on the wait list and will then be notified as spots open once re-enrollment of current students is complete.

PARENT COUNCIL

Spring Benefit is April 5, 2020 – a Sunday. Working out the details for this event. Funding request should be going out to the community in March and will be due at the end of March/beginning of April.

APPROVED 3/18/2020

Next meeting is Tuesday March 3, 2020, in the morning – after drop-off, around 8:20. A.S. will attend the March meeting.

SERVICE MARK UPDATE

M.W. – Membership status as developing member has been confirmed. Continued to have good discussions regarding next steps for applying to be a full member. Cannot use Waldorf in the name of the school, but can say we are a “Developing Member of the Alliance for Waldorf Education.” Can use it other contexts, with some restrictions.

Good discussions with Liz Bevin, president of the board of the Alliance. Hammering out details of what is required to obtain Full Membership status. Alliance would like to learn more about the transition the Board has discussed and the school is experiencing. M.W. trying to determine more specifically what that means. Will continue to work with Laura Alvarado-Coady regarding DMS narrative in responding to the Alliance.

C.H. – Has there been any more discussion around a site visit?

M.W. – Not yet, but seems to be leading there. Probably in our best interest to facilitate that.

FINANCIALS

J.J. – We received our payment for January in February, but it is booked in January. It included money that was withheld as a result of the audit being late.

Net profit for the year is -\$4,566, not including bills that have not yet been paid by DMS.

C.H. – Aren't these included in bills.com, so wouldn't they be included in the income statement?

J.J. – No, per Priscilla, they are not included in the P&L because they have not been paid.

C.H. – If this doesn't include all of our expenses, then this isn't as helpful as it needs to be.

J.J. – Will work with Priscilla to include these in the report for next month.

J.J. – Covers enrollment, aftercare, private program status.

G.S. – Enrollment is at 290 in this?

J.J. – Yes, had several withdrawals after end of January. Should we discuss boosting enrollment? I know historically we have not added students at a certain point.

C.K. – The teachers are willing.

J.J. – Seems we need to get this as close to what we were at the 100th day as possible.

C.H. – Is there some rule we would be breaking by taking students this late in the year?

C.K. – No, it is completely up to the school.

APPROVED 3/18/2020

J.E. – So are we going to proceed with filling those spots?

General discussion from board – no one objects. C.H. clarifies that this is an operational prerogative.

AUDIT

C.H. – We need to put together a corrective action plan. Would like to make sure we are approving minutes at every meeting, and also approving the financials.

General consensus that those are appropriate.

CLASSROOM FUNDS

C.H. – All of the classrooms have been in a position where they have fundraised dollars. But those funds were never segregated or tracked until Nov. 2019. Now we're in a place where we have requests for those funds and our records are incomplete.

J.J. – I don't know how to get to the reports of the past or how those numbers were generated.

C.H. – Who has the old QuickBooks files?

C.K. – We have them on desktop, but can't confirm the reliability of those numbers.

C.H. – Need to come up with a number. Does everyone understand the challenge? Let's discuss.

J.E. – We could look through every historical record to come up with numbers; the more records we review, the fairer we can be.

C.H. – We have spotty records. There may be records of funds coming in, but not going out. There are four different places we could look for records.

A.S. – Shouldn't there be forms that track this information? I wouldn't run any fundraiser without tracking this information.

General discussion ensues regarding accounting practices related to class funds.

C.H. – Will take the lead on figuring out fund allocation as to each class. Will talk to representatives for each grade and work with them.

G.S. – Unfortunate that this happened. Can we make some sort of statement to address how this happened, and how we have corrected it?

C.H. – Yes, valid concern. Will work with the parent representatives to address that.

7:35 p.m. – Motion to go into executive session by J.E., second by M.W., motion passes unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

[Minutes of the Executive Session are confidential and maintained in a separate document.]

A.S. moves to end executive session, second by J.E., unanimously passes at 8:25 p.m.

BACK IN REGULAR SESSION

Regular meeting resumes.

APPROVED 3/18/2020

C.H. – Protocols for board communication. Everyone have a chance to review, anyone have any communications?

J.H. – Reviewed, no comments.

No further discussion.

C.H. – Let's discuss communication.

G.S. – When will this go out?

C.H. – Soon. Next couple days.

G.S. – Seems to strike the right tone.

C.H. – I'd like to hear from everyone.

J.H. – Think it provides the right information and can direct toward a positive place.

M.W. – Wholly in favor of it, and love the idea of it. Important series of topics to put out there. Won't solve everything. But hope it generates additional questions and gives us a platform to provide additional information. Let's not get beholden to a particular page limit.

J.J. – I like it. I worry that people won't read the whole thing because it's over a page long.

G.S. – Good information to share; perhaps err on the side of detail rather than brevity. Should provide some comfort, perhaps cold comfort, but will let people have facts rather than rumors.

J.E. – This provides good information and will serve as a good foundation for continuing discussions on these issues leading into the New Year.

C.H. – My hope this is will be an ongoing communication with the community so that we are providing accurate and timely information.

J.H. – Should this be discussed at the next town hall? When is that?

C.K. – We aimed for end of February but couldn't make that happen with current educational commitments. We are now targeting for March.

C.H. – Submit any further comments/revisions to A.S. by end of the weekend. Letter will go out first thing Monday morning.

M.W. – motion to adjourn, J.H. second, motion passes unanimously.

CLOSING VERSE

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm

Prepared by G.S. on 02/19/2020 and revised on 2/24/2020, incorporating comments from A.S. and M.W. herein.