

Trillium Charter School
Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
07/08/2013

Note: Board meeting minutes are approved at the following month's meeting. Posting of minutes is done prior to the approval of the meeting minutes and is considered in DRAFT form until after the next month's meeting.

Board Members: Emily Swensen, Christian Nielsen, Jennifer Jardee-Borquist, Meghan Ferns

Staff: Sarah Cramer, Emily Saxton

Jennifer Jardee-Borquist & Christian Nielsen moves to approve the amended June 2013 minutes. Motion passes unanimously.

Sarah Cramer gave a summary of a Restorative Justice in the Schools conference she went to. She has been reviewing the behavior policy, and will add the Restorative Justice piece in Tier One that includes conversations and mediations. Sarah is devising policies and sending it out to staff for feedback. The behavioral policy will be a living policy, but it will be "finalized" after she includes the Restorative Justice piece.

Fundraising Report: Emily Saxton explained the TIB numbers, and how the Tours will work and we hope to get people to sign up to sustain Trillium on a monthly basis. She has been fostering relationships with Overlook Business Associations and other community groups.

Director's Report: See Attached.

We may have a person who retired from a background in business Human Resources, interested in joining the board. Discussed Kieran's community surveys and we will be rewriting the job description, and come up with goals that address the themes of the survey, and create a plan for next year.

**Jennifer Jardee-Borquist moves to adjourn, Christian seconds. Passed unanimously.
Report to the Board of Directors of Trillium Charter School
Executive Director Kieran Connolly
7.8.13**

Financial Report

- **Current Budget Position** – As seen throughout the year, we anticipate coming in approximately \$80,000 below our budgeted expenses this year, which means that we have some considerations to make regarding the extra cash. This will not impact next year's budget, as it is one time availability, i.e. cannot be counted on to be replicated in future years (in other words, we would not want to use this money on, for instance a staff members salary that we would not be able to continue to invest in in a future year). Some considerations we are weighing. Depending on how we track fundraising this number could be as high as \$100,000
 - **PERS** – We could use a significant chunk of it to better pay down our PERS debt, our current debt is now below \$189,000, at our current rate of an additional \$6,000/ month dedicated towards our PERS debt, it will be gone at the conclusion of 2015. We've made significant progress on this debt and I feel good about our

commitment to it, dedicating more money to it would represent a sound financial decision, but is unlikely to improve the school in any immediate way or to impact morale in the school.

- **Cash Balance** – As we have mentioned in the past, the ideal for an organization of our size is to have three months of cash in the bank at any given time, we are closer to two months. While this does not represent the ideal, it is still a responsible place to be in, investing some or all of this to bump up our cash balance would make a more financially sound organization.
- **Building Improvements** – There are a number of small and large improvements we could make to the school that would help in any number of ways. Our building is generally in need of a lot of things and this money, as a one shot could help both technically and aesthetically. I would like to invest at least some of it in making improvements and making our building a nicer place to be in, I think that this could both be a solid investment as well as boost overall morale in the school and make it feel like a more welcoming and professional environment. I think a small investment could pay significant dividends in this regard.
- **Professional Development Investments** – In lieu of the comparatively large monetary investment that a staff salary would represent, I have been working on investing in professional development where I can. Investing in the teachers' professional development both helps the school to improve academically and communicates to the teachers that they are meaningful to us and worth an additional investment. I have already budgeted a significant amount more next year (\$10k) towards this than has been invested in the past, so it may not need an additional investment, I think the more we can continue to invest in this kind of thing, however, the more likely we are to be able to keep teachers despite not being able to pay them a wage competitive with the School District.
- **Curriculum Materials** – While constructivist pedagogy advocates for a curriculum free approach, there are certain materials that can help in the classroom that it may be worth investing in. Our lower school teachers have been using an "Investigations" approach to teaching math for the past few years, but have not had a full set of Investigations materials at any level. The lower school would like to expand their science teaching in the next year, but would need to invest in science materials. The upper school science and math programs would also benefit from an investment in materials, particularly the high school science program that makes due without much in the way of labs.
- **Technology** – Our school has scraped by over the past several years with primarily donated materials, while this has kept our expense down, it has also not been without its challenges. A one time investment in technology could help our school to run more smoothly, we still won't be able to compete with better funded schools, but we might be able to shore up a few areas.
- **Conclusion** – I think there is merit to all of the above, however, it feels like the building, curriculum and technology all are the most pressing needs. We have been very financially responsible over the past year, these investments could help people to feel like we are moving forward and building/ growing and not just stacking sand bags. I think we are going to continue to walk a line between being fiscally conservative and investing enough to make people feel like they are a place they want to be in, we have been conservative a lot, this might be a chance to spend a bit of money.
- **13-14 Budget** – If you've been consistently following the news you are likely aware that the legislature continues to debate the state budget and may do so up until the constitutional deadline of July 13th. Education funding is the largest issue on the table, with discussions to both increase the per student funding through additional tax revenue as

well as reducing the PERS responsibility on public institutions, both of these ideas could have a significant impact on our school. As currently constructed, the deal that has been discussed could add an additional \$100,000 to our budget for next year. The legislature continues to discuss a deal that could net us even more. All of this is up in the air however, and even once decided it will take a bit to know exactly how it will impact us. However, much like the positive variance we've experienced this year, I'd like to propose some ways we could invest it.

- **PERS compliance/ extension** – I would like to extend PERS benefits to our IT person and our primary maintenance person. We already plan to extend these benefits to our chef. We are currently investigating what our responsibility is regarding our three preschool employees and our two aftercare employees, which would be the only remaining employees that are PERS eligible (through meeting hourly requirements) and not currently enrolled. Due to the fact that they are employees for fee for service programs, we may not need to enroll them, but either way we may want to consider one or both for enrollment from a quality of life perspective. Maintenance only would cost us \$9k, maintenance and preschool would cost us \$29.5 k, all eligible employees not currently enrolled would cost us 37k.
- **Staff salary increases** – Because this is money we can expect to be consistently present, we can indeed invest this in salaries. This could be done in a number of ways, we could do an across the board raise, or we could push teachers closer to the salary schedule I established last year, with this in mind I would also like to consider weighting the high school teachers differently due to an increased level of responsibility as well as considering that we receive significantly more per student funding for our high school students than we do for other students.
- **Internship Coordinator** – We could invest in a part time internship coordinator to help get our high school program off the ground. Jess Brooks has done some good work to get this up and running, but in order for it to be sustainable I believe it needs to be held by a person not currently on our staff. The person would be responsible for recruiting outside internship mentors, training those mentors, building the assessment and tracking of the program and supporting the interns. At 15 hours/ week for 10 months, this would cost us around \$18k.
- **Conclusion** – I think I would like to do a hybrid of them all. The internship coordinator, as I mentioned, I believe will eventually be imperative for a successful high school model. I would like to shore up at least IT and Maintenance on PERS, we had also planned to increase the IT position compensation before Blake Swensen left us and continue to plan on that, will eat up an additional \$4k. This would take up around \$40k, if we have an additional \$60k the decision as I see it needs to be between getting more employees into PERS or giving staff salary increases. If we do the latter it is my strong preference is a staggered raise to get closer to the salary schedule, as opposed to an across the board percentage raise. Through that process I would also like to consider weighting those with TSPC teaching licenses rather than charter registries alone, every charter registry is a strike against us, our salaries should take that into consideration.
- **PERS** – We continue to pay down our PERS balance, which is now down to \$189,000. The legislature continues to debate the state of PERS for the next biennium which could reduce our liability next year under what we have currently budgeted (note, this is only in conjunction with our regular obligation, this is not tied in any way to our past debt).

Staffing Operations update

- **Staff Evaluations** –The evaluations for the most part went well. It was clear to me during the process that evaluations had never been done at the organization; as a result, many staff members were very unaccustomed to having difficult and/ or self-reflective conversations about their practice with administration. I believe that revamping the evaluations themselves, building a culture around them and building a culture of trust and support can go a long way towards improving this. While it led to many difficult conversations, these conversations in the end will help both the individual staff members as well as the school grow. I am currently researching critical friends groups and other ideas to build our staff culture, I will tie evaluations into this as well. I'll research all of this this summer and play around with ideas throughout the school year.
- **AmeriCorps Garden Position** – We have had resumes flowing in for this position due to its posting on the national AmeriCorps site. I have not yet begun reviewing them, but plan to do so shortly after I return from New York. The member will be hired at the end of August and begin their work in early September. The member will first be charged with a needs assessment for how to get the garden program up and running then eventually creating curriculum for K-12, building community partnerships and implementing that curriculum.
- **IT** – Our IT person, Blake Swensen, quit unexpectedly last week, we are currently in the process of advertising the position in several places, I am also considering a local company that provides comprehensive IT services, it may be a better fit for us than an in house IT person, I am going to look into it further when I return from New York.
- **Spanish** – Our part time Spanish teacher, Sarah Elmallah, has left the organization, we have advertised for a new one on Edzapp, we have thus far received one application.
- **Preschool Assistant** – We have moved this next year from three full time preschool positions to two full time and an assistant, we are currently hiring for the assistant.

Program Operations.

- **High School Plan** – The high school team and I met for the majority of the week after students got out of school.
 - **Graduation Portfolio** –We are developing/ fine-tuning a new graduation portfolio that will be more comprehensive than our current senior project. A significant part of this portfolio will be a senior thesis, which will be a scholarly paper that will reflect academic research, community interviewing and personal experience. I believe that this portfolio will introduce more academic rigor to our high school experience as well as help students translate their passion into real world viability and responsibility. I think it will also be extremely attractive to colleges considering our graduates.
 - **Internships** – We have a plan for most Juniors next year for in house internships. The program will kick off next year in a largely testing fashion, we plan to work out kinks of our program through placements in the school. Internships are designed to have significant benefit to the student and each student should have primary ownership over a project. I am working hard to clearly designate how a position should be different from a teacher's assistant. Internships should be meaningful experiences and not just helpers. The Board may benefit from having an intern considering these stipulations.
 - **Proficiency** – We are rolling out proficiency grading for our 9th and 10th graders next year. The transition will be challenging, but we should be able to work out many of the kinks over the next year.
 - **Leadership** – The sophomore class will be engaging in a leadership curriculum designed by myself and Christina Aucutt. They will be charged with assessing the needs of the school and working collaboratively with administration, students, teachers and community organizations to improve the school and be the keepers of

- the Democracy in many ways.
- **Planned Parenthood** – Another group of high school students will engage in an experimental, evidence-based curriculum with planned parenthood that will suffice as their health credit.
- **Campout** - Additionally, we have decided to move away from the high school campout next year. The event, while offering some meaningful community building, was a tremendous drain on staff time and resources and we are confident that we can replace the community building with other events. We will begin the year with a two day high school wide off site Orientation, we will then hold several school wide education-oriented trips throughout the year.
- **Discipline (including Suspension/Expulsion) policy** – Sarah has been investigating Restorative Justice and how to bring it to Trillium in a meaningful way. This will serve to augment the current intervention stages we have including mediation and collaborative problem solving. I would also like to do deeper training for all teachers on Collaborative Problem Solving. As we continue to further develop Sarah’s position I would like to make her the organization expert in this regard, not only handling individual incidents, but working with teachers on how to be stronger, more collaborative and empowering educators, which should reduce the amount of discipline problems overall.
- **Arts** – I have met with Grace Hwang to outline the arts plan for next year. We will be offering significantly more art to the lower school, each classroom will have an art period once per week, we will also increase the music funding and offerings next year. We are facing some challenges, however, the Oregon TSPC has not approved Grace as highly qualified, if she cannot gather enough materials in the next month to be so, we may have to look into another art teacher for next year.

Portland Public Schools reporting update

Enrollment – Current Year: I did not get the latest numbers from Debra before she left for vacation, these were the numbers in June.

2013-14 Enrolled Thus Far:

K-5	171
6-8	90
9-12	88
Total:	349

Parent Communication

- **State of the School** – I plan to write a State of the School Address in mid to late July recapping the year for our parent community, discussing successes from this past year and challenges facing us in the upcoming year. Over the course of the next year we have discussed planning out the coffee klatches in a more intentional way and alternating them from social to informative.
- **Events** – We are mapping out the school wide events for the year, as of now it looks like we will do the following mixture of informal/ social, formal and intentional, and fundraising
 - September – Fall in Love with Trillium, informal festival gathering at school
 - November – For the Love of Trillium, formal school driven event designed to celebrate and inform
 - December – Arts and Crafts Spectacular, TFT fundraising event
 - February – TFT organized social event
 - March – Trillium in Bloom fundraiser
 - June – End of year celebration/ graduations

- **Class Rosters** – We will release class rosters in July, they will be posted at the school for parents to come in and view. In previous years rosters have not been released until the first day of school. Our intent is to allow students and parents to gain familiarity with new teachers earlier, and communicate with them if need be. It also allows for more lead time in dealing with concerns and conflicts, last year the first day was almost exclusively dealing with parents concerned with their advisory placement.

Physical Plant/ Facility Needs

- **Playground** – We are beginning work on our playground this week. We have finalized the plan with our playground designer and will be able to complete significant work for the funds raised throughout the year. The work will be focused solely on the western portion of the playground, much of it will be done with volunteer labor. All installations will be focused on natural play spaces rather than metal and plastic jungle gyms. The eastern portion of the playground will be repainted and used mostly for sports, eventually we would still like to invest in a cover for this area, but that is a significantly higher expense down the road.
- **HVAC** – We have begun the work on our HVAC system, it should be completed in the next week. During our latest assessment it was determined that we will not need a crane to remove parts of the roof to complete the work and that the work in general should be a few thousand dollars cheaper than initially quoted.
- **Painting** – We have begun repainting the school and cleaning up a year’s worth of use.
- **Office moves** – We have moved several people around at the beginning of the summer. Jenny Peterson will now be teaching our second K-1 blend, we wanted her closer to the bathroom for Kindergartners and have thusly switched she and the computer lab. Our lower school Special Education teacher and Speech Pathologist have been moved to the office under the stairwell for increased confidentiality, Sarah Cramer has moved into my office, Emily Saxton has moved upstairs to share an office with Michele Dobos and I have moved into the old conference room.

Fundraising projects, partnership development

- **Ask Event** – We raised just over \$30k in commitments that will come in throughout the year next year, we raised just over \$6k at the event itself. The event felt very successful, felt clean, warm and intentional, even the missteps that occurred, which were largely outside of our control, were handled well and calmly. It is a good beginning for our work going forward. Now that we are one year into exploring Benevon I believe we are in a place to begin exploring how it matches up with Trillium. Much like our conversation about the tours, I think we can blend the structure of Benevon with the culture and intent of Trillium to craft a strong fundraising approach by the end of the next school year.
- **Juan Young Trust Grant** – We were awarded a grant at the beginning of the past school year that we have now begun to implement. The grant is designed to invigorate our lower school reading programs. Lyndsey Arnold (2-3), Sara Tretter (4-5) and Brandi Torres (K-1) are taking leadership on investigating reading intervention strategies that will work for our school. The grant is paying for their time researching.

Volunteer engagement

- **Liaisons** – At the June TFT meeting we explored ways to empower liaisons to have a stronger and more effective presence in the classroom, Sarah Cramer will work with the TFT volunteer coordinator and the teaching staff to further develop this based on the need determined by the teachers and the available capacity of parent volunteers.

Lunch Program

- **Blend switch** – one impact of the blend switch is that lunch will now be done in mixed age groups. The northern portion of the lower school hallway will have lunch and recess

together as will the southern half of the hallway. We believe this will allow for more potential responsibility for the 4-5 students and more opportunities in general for a mixed age environment in an informal setting.

- **Supervision** – After removing teachers from supervision of lunch and recess last year the responsibility fell to Sarah, Debra, Emily and myself. Next year we need to explore some other alternatives to help with this.

Information Technology .

Our loss of our IT person will temporarily put a hold on some of the following.

- **Information Storage** - Next year we will move towards a more consistent system of information storage, away from Google Docs and storage on personal computers, this change will take time, but hopefully by this time next year we are far closer to a consistent system than we are currently.
- **Synergy** – Beginning in July we will move towards a new Student Information System called Synergy, all schools in the District are moving towards this, we have extensive training throughout the summer for Debra, Sharon, Sarah, myself and Miranda Cryns who is the teacher leader on the transition.