

**RHODE ISLAND MAYORAL ACADEMYSM
BLACKSTONE VALLEY**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MINUTES

5:30 p.m., May 23, 2011

Blackstone Valley Prep Elementary Cafetorium

291 Broad Street, Cumberland

Mayor McKee called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. Present were:

Mayor Daniel J. McKee (Chair)
John Morton
Kenneth Vaudreuil
Joe Almond
Stephanie Noris
Angelo Garcia

Also present were Executive Director Jeremy Chiappetta, Deputy Executive Director Drew Allsopp, Secretary Daniel C. Waugh, Treasurer Michael Magee, and legal counsel Antonio Afonso, Jr. Additionally, Jen LoPiccolo, Assistant Secretary and Director of External Affairs for the corporation was present.

1. Minutes

Dr. Morton (seconded by Mr. Vaudreuil) moved to approve the minutes of the board's March 22, 2011 open session. The motion passed on the following vote: AYE: McKee, Almond, Garcia, Morton, Norris, Vaudreuil. NAY: None.

2. Executive Session

Mr. Vaudreuil (seconded by Dr. Morton) moved to go into executive session to consider matters relating to potential litigation under R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(2) and to consider matters relating to the potential acquisition or lease of real estate under R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(5). The motion passed on the following vote: AYE: McKee, Almond, Garcia, Morton, Norris, Vaudreuil. NAY: None.

*** * * EXECUTIVE SESSION * * ***

At 6:24 p.m., Mr. Vaudreuil (seconded by Mr. Almond) moved to reconvene in open session. The motion passed on the following vote: AYE: McKee, Almond, Garcia, Morton, Norris, Vaudreuil. NAY: None.

Upon return from executive session at 6:24 p.m., **Dr. Morton (seconded by Angelo Garcia) moved to seal the minutes** of the executive session. **AYE: McKee, Vaudreuil, Morton, Almond, Noris, Garcia. NAY: None.**

Dr. John Morton (seconded by Mr. Garcia) moved to return to public session. **AYE: McKee, Vaudreuil, Morton, Almond, Noris, Garcia. NAY: None.**

3. Adoption of Regular Meeting Schedule

Some discussion occurred around dates that various board members cannot attend and whether 3rd Monday of the month made sense with schedules. Tony Afonso reiterated that a board of this kind for open meeting purposes must adopt a regular meeting schedule.

Mayor McKee asked for a motion to adopt a regular meeting schedule for a regular meeting to be held the 3rd Monday of every month, beginning at 5:30PM.

Angelo Garcia (seconded by Ken Vaudreuil) moved to adopt the 3rd Monday of every month as the regular meeting at 5:30PM. AYE: McKee, Vaudreuil, Morton, Almond, Noris, Garcia. NAY: None.

4. Executive Director's Report

(See PPT presentation for further details)

- a. Facilities Update included presentation pointing out that the current elementary facility at 291 Broad Street and the overall positive solution this building has been. With the exception of parking for which some negotiations are in progress with neighbors.

Strategic need for a long term solution for the current middle school.

- b. Student attendance at elem is 97% and hovering at 98% for middle school. Teacher attendance at both schools is as high or higher than school attendance. In terms of academics, this time of year is a lot of gearing up for end of year exams. Elem. is taking state required DRA2 and early analysis of this is that our scholars are going to do "ridiculously well" on this. There will also be the Terra Nova data at the end of the year when it is taken as well. At our middle school,

exam mode is at the end of the year. ELL data based on a screening process. 8 scholars in kindergarten were screened in early Fall and of those 8, 4 in Feb. met the proficiency mark and will no longer be classified as ELL scholars. In 1st grade, we identified 7 and all but 1 scored proficiency and will no longer be classified as ELL. 12 scholars in 5th and 9 scored at proficiency or higher and will no longer be classified as ELL—impressive results.

Angelo Garcia asked what is our minimum score for proficiency? Our required score for exiting our ELL program is 3.5. Stephanie Noris asked how our scholars compare to other neighboring districts to which Jeremy said we do that whenever possible (as well as benchmarking nationally), but we do not have a good sense, in terms of apples to apples, how this compares to neighboring districts.

- c. Staffing report included Jeremy pointed out that school leaders have been hired. An Academic Dean position has been posted. Over 1,100 applicants have applied—900 for elementary, 150 for social studies, and what this means is that we will continue to be able to set the bar high. Our process includes screening, interview, demo, feedback session and then often another demo lesson still followed by a deep reference check. Our process is deep before we bring on a new employee. We will continue our partnership with Teach For America and planning to have more new corps members join our team for next year.

Angelo Garcia inquired about diversity of staff to which Jeremy replied that there are currently two (2) bilingual Latino women. Try to screen for the most talented folks and try to think through our recruitment efforts

McKee inquired whether we have been recognized by RIDE as having three (3) to which Jeremy reiterated that we have approval from RIDE and codes assigned for three (3) separate schools. Mike Magee reiterated that pushing charters through as a designated district and not just a school is essential for the mayoral academy vision and same plan that RIMA is looking to replicate with Achievement First. Secondly, Mike noted that this is important for robust start-up funding, federally and through philanthropic efforts as well.

5. Hiring Resolution

Jeremy recommends to the board to hire 1) Colleen Colarusso as Elem. school 2 be hired formally as Head of School for 2nd elementary school; and 2) Kate Crowe as Upper Elementary (grades 5-6) be hired formally as Head of School for grades 5-6

Motion to hire new school leaders was made by Joe Almond (seconded by Ken Vaudreuil)

Discussion to follow included some conversation about the terms of contract as comparable to those in the community and neighboring communities.

AYE: McKee, Vaudreuil, Morton, Almond, Noris, Garcia. NAY: None.

6. Employee Handbook

Jeremy guided board through a high level overview pointing out a few key elements as follows

- Page 20: Family and Marriage Leave policy is 1 week for every employee and +1 for every year of service. We pay into TDI as well as an additional short term policy.

Dan Waugh pointed out that there need to be some legal recommendations to be made as well.

- Curriculum and Intellectual Property Policy—don't want to have that fight with our teachers who are committed to making contributions to the larger education community and hampering the creativity of the staff.
- Conflict of Interest and/or Commitment clause—staff member disclosure. For example, if Jeremy's wife was working here, it would be disclosed before an offer to hire entertained.
- Declination of Insurance Benefits—Administrator Almond had a number of questions about this in an earlier conversation. As a family of two, if you decline insurance benefits, you cannot “double dip” with one opting out and one getting benefits.
- Page 58: Children of Staff Student Enrollment Exemption – 3% of total enrollment is the maximum recommended. This is a policy allowed by both RIDE and federal charter regulations. This is designed to be a recruitment tool for prospective staff as well.

Dan McKee confirmed that health coverage is 80/20% and JC confirmed. The current plan is stated as such.

Stephanie Noris asked a question about the 401k plan from Stephanie is our way of replacing that teacher in traditional districts receive a pension

Angelo asked what the plan for roll-out to the staff and Jeremy noted that the staff also has a current copy of the handbook for review as well. Jeremy also reiterated that much of the handbook will be covered for all staff during our August onboarding/professional development

Motion to approve handbook pending legal review was made by Dr. Morton (seconded by Ken Vaudreuil) AYE: McKee, Vaudreuil, Morton, Noris, Garcia. NAY: None.

7. 2011-12 budget

High level review of the budget presented by Jeremy Chiappetta is noted below (and for a more detailed overview, the budget documents should be reviewed).

Teacher salaries are the number one cost driver. Jeremy spoke to the Fellows model. Our 1st year teacher Fellows will be making comparable to Providence Step 1 of approximately \$36,000. Teacher pay is currently Step + 10% and we are sticking with this model for the 2011-12 school year but hoping to move to a more progressive pay scale. To do so, we plan to engage in a process that allows us move towards a merit system with “bands” moving from beginning teacher to seasoned teacher, an approach used commonly among other high performing charters. Experienced teacher bands, new teacher bands, etc. designed to promote based on performance as determined by a series of rubrics

Walton confirmed short of signatures required for two more grants. Mayor McKee asked a question around Walton based on 2 schools from Jeremy reiterated one is currently funded for \$250,000 and then 2 more coming on line next year (for the middle school and the new elementary school).

There is also the chance to apply for Federal Charter School Program Grants awarded to RIDE to sub-grant for start-up funding. This budget shows conservatively assuming one will be accepted). Go out at find an additional \$50,000 in local funding.

Some of the items we outsource (and indicated as an expense) include transportation costs (waiting on those from the state), Sydexo (which is very little cost to us for things like field trips), custodial, finance, and IT.

Jeremy also noted that the League is not in the budget for next year as BVP has never paid for it. Mike spoke on behalf of RIMA that the League membership was not their intent to fund. RIMA’s own business model is different than that shared by the League. Furthermore, board representation on the League is a concern (given that there will be 5 schools but only one vote assigned to each charter).

Dr. Morton asked a clarifying question as to whether IT and finance on site is our plan moving forward to which Jeremy responded that price point is key as we grow.

Ms. Noris asked a clarifying question around the relationship with Sydexo to which Jeremy reiterated that relationship was established with Cumberland and we use them as a result.

Jeremy continued to note that per pupil revenue is up as it correlates to enrollment growing annually as well.

Jeremy asked whether there were any specific questions regarding non-personnel expenses as listed by line item in the budget.

Mr. Garcia asked a question around program incentives to which Jeremy continued to reiterate what those line items include. Moreover, this version of the budget is familiar to the board, but it does not break down federal title dollars versus per pupil dollars. That said, that level of detail is the budget used and is what is required to report out by the schools to RIDE.

Another clarifying question from Mr. Garcia was asked around who has been identified to do the audit. Jeremy said that we were pursuing an audit at this time and audited financials will be provided to everyone when they are completed. Further clarity was provided around what RIMA's audit is (or is not) and its focus is largely around performance and not an official financial audit per se.

Motion to approve the Blackstone Valley Prep 2011-12 budget was made by Dr. Morton (seconded by Ken Vaudreuil)

Discussion: McKee asked whether the budget needs to be posted anywhere; Angelo noted that it is not posted at Segue but made available to anyone who would like it. McKee further clarified his desire to be as transparent as possible and in a proactive way.

AYE: McKee, Vaudreuil, Morton, Noris, Garcia. NAY: None.

8. Public Forum

Lori Barden, parent of Blackstone Valley Prep, wished to address the board. She asked, "where is information about board meetings available? There is support from parents if they know about them."

Dan McKee responded to her question noting that we can make all documents available. The meeting that was closed was an Executive Session which is normal practice for some matters. The meeting is then opened back up to convene again. Mr. Chiappetta responded that he makes communication available by various outlets (Parent Portal) and the agendas are posted at the entrance of both schools.

Angelo Garcia asked for further feedback about how we work as an organization to communicate with families. As a Central Falls resident as well as a Head of School, ensuring that we communicate

Dan McKee reiterated representation of the board is selected to be representative of the four communities served. However, the board's relationship is with Jeremy as Executive Director to which Mrs. Barden expressed concern that she did not see herself represented by those currently sitting on the board.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Vaudreuil (seconded by Dr. Morton) moved to adjourn. AYE: McKee, Morton, Vaudreuil, Noris and Garcia NAY: None. The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer LoPiccolo

Assistant Secretary