

Meeting Minutes – June 2013

It is the mission of Exploris Middle School to create a challenging and supportive learning community that engages each student in understanding and building a connected, just, and sustainable world.

Meeting Title : Exploris Middle School Board of Directors Meeting		
Location: Exploris Middle School	Attendees: Bob Whitehead Kathleen Evans Frank McKay Liz Baird (Chair) Kendall Hageman Summer Clayton Susan Johnston Anne Franklin Shannon Hardy (Observing)	Facilitator: Liz Baird (Chair)
Meeting Date: 6/18/2013		Note Taker: Frank McKay, Faculty Board Rep in absence of BOD Secretary Barry Kostner
Start Time: 4:07pm		
End Time: 6:10pm	Absent: Barry Koster Sean Gargan Wes Moore (intern) Rachael Lambert (intern)	
Agenda: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Call to Order and Welcome 2. Approval of Meeting Agenda 3. Consideration of Minutes from May 21, 2013 4. Presentations <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Exploris Strategic Plan 2013-2018 5. Treasurer’s Report <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Financials Update b. 2013-14 Budget Considerations 6. Action Items <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consent Agenda: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Approval of Monthly Financials ii. Approve FY14 Budget iii. Approve Strategic Plan 7. Announcements / Discussion of New Business <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Committee Updates b. Personnel Update c. Consideration of Board Vacancy 8. Next Meeting: August 20th 9. Adjournment 		

Item Discussed/Decisions Made

CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

- SJ motioned to approve, BW 2nd.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES from May 21, 2013

- Summer is posting minutes on Google Docs and referring to them in the Agenda- no hard copies.
- Motion to approve May- SJ, 2nd by BW
- Motion to approve March and April, shared via Google Docs - KE, 2nd by KH

Brief discussion about BOD access to Google Docs. (AF could use some assistance)

PRESENTATIONS

- Exploris Strategic Plan 2013-2018, proposal presented by SC. Note: many from Strategic Planning Committee are present for this discussion including LB, SJ, Summer, KE, SH, (Sean G, Karen Rectanus, Barry K. and David W. not present)
- This is final draft of proposal, ready for final BOD input and approval. Faculty has had input, Summer does not plan to open up for additional faculty input beyond the members of the planning committee since we are nearing final plan.
- AF noted importance of including a clear date for final version and as document is updated in the future, maybe as header or footer.
- Some discussion about the wording of the vision, "Being the change..." AF suggested that the gerund form of "being" is not as strong as the infinitive. SH and SC commented that it is not a future statement. We want it to be clear students and staff are currently in the process of modeling and contributing to positive change in the local and global community.
- Summer- the heart of the plan is addressing six core critical issues facing the school, the essence is we want to have a larger impact and be more financially sustainable. The 5 year vision is to make EMS K-8 with app. 500 students. The plan itself is the six strategic goals that address the six core issues. The committee felt that reworking the mission, vision, and core values was important groundwork for creating the plan.
- AF asked what determines the number of students, ideal number, what is the right scale? SC commented that usually the school model determines what the ideal number is, but the majority of NC charter schools have an average number in the range of 500 students.
- AF the scale of the school is important since it determines how relationships are built and how the school operates. SC EMS seems to have hit a good number growing from 14:1 to 17:1 student: teacher ratio. Elementary school could have larger ratio as high as 20:1. LB the committee played with some of the numbers for the K6 component of school, but no conclusion for ideal ratio. SC more work will need to be done by committees carrying out the plan.
- SH research on various models indicates that 15:1 is an ideal size for corporate teams (based on book Good to Great). If we want to be a replicable model, we have to have a ratio that other schools can look to as sustainable for their populations. AF- is that represented in the strategic goals? SH addressed in goal 6.
- SC- 500 would be considered a small school in WCPSS
- Frank- other schools (Evergreen) have demonstrated how structures can help a larger ratio (24:1) feel smaller (12:1), using weekly meetings of their CREW for example
- LB- the Summit School in Winston Salem has a small school feel structures that help create a family/community feel.
- SC- Empire properties is now looking for properties that would allow EMS to expand.

- SC- EMS will have to apply for expansion as a NC Charter School through the NC OCS. Many of the strategic goals will have to be addressed simultaneously as the school applies for expansion. The strategic goals timeline outlines the suggested process.
- BW- the timeline is essentially an action plan, yes? SH- the action plan will be more detailed with actions and deliverables outlined by the committee working on each goal. BW can share Chemware's templates for creating action plan and documenting progress. SJ- that would be helpful for to consider for EMS committee use. BW templates are very helpful in breaking down large tasks into manageable tasks.
- KE- do we have people identified outside of the board who can help take leadership on strategic planning committees. Summer- has received large response through community surveys sent out to various listservs. KE has more volunteers than needed for Pass the Hat campaign. Could redirect them to Summer for SP committee work.
- SC - this is an aggressive timeline being proposed. We need input on what's doable from the board. LB- time is of the essence as Raleigh real estate market starts to boom. SJ -market values have not yet reflected coming increases. SC- Empire Properties says to act fast or we will lose out.
- SH goals 2,3, and 6 really need community leadership from families and other community leaders. Faculty need to focus on instructional goals.
- SJ- do our best to accomplish everything we can. Worst case, we delay expansion one year.
- KE- there is no expectation that faculty take on the whole process. BOD is working hard. This adds a whole new layer to the existing responsibilities. It will really take a village to make this happen.
- SJ- at some point, we may need to make a decision to hire a consultant to help complete some tasks SH- like marketing pieces
- KE- as we hear about financials, we'll see we may have some money to help
- AF- is staying down town in the SP? We may want to consider what other businesses are doing, may want to be a "moveable school."
- KE- we need a home
- BW- having an established school means parents know they can invest in the school once they are in
- SH- tough to rely on investment of local committee b/c of the open lottery. Lottery will be more limited (relative to size) once we are k8
- SJ- Emp. Property leaders expressed that WCPSS elementary schools are too far (20 miles away)
- Summer- challenge of being a moveable school is the amount of investment it takes to create a school facility that meets our needs.
- BW- labs do this all the time. Moveable labs within a non-moveable structure.
- AF- an owned facility would be great downtown, but reality is that we need to consider all options
- Summer- Emp. can use moveable model b/c they make money and can adapt as needed, Schools have more limitations
- SH- one more thought- NC schools do not get instructional money. We are funding facilities through instructional money. Other states have other options for charter schools for facilities, but we do not. We can't be at the mercy of downtown rents. We need to establish our sustainable model with a home base and then look to expand.
- Ann- county commissioners will have the power to offer more options soon. right now we are in a very expensive model. won't happen over night, but it will happen.
- SJ- reflecting back on process of getting to the point where we are with the lease, we never expected the cuts to ed. funding that have happened in the past two years.
- Summer- Emp. is looking at a building we could buy and renovate. Details are emerging. Emp.

feels city council will look favorably on our renovating existing structure to create downtown school.

- BW- what determines our lease increase. Summer- lease increases based on CPI or per capita allowance of students
- Summer- our lease is costing \$2.5 million over the life of the lease. We could own a building for the same money. Part of the SP is looking at our options and seeing what we can get downtown.
- KE- expressed appreciation to the committee for the work and energy
- SH- important to credit Karen R. and David Wisz
- KE- would like a few days to look over the plan before approval. Other board members should see it too.
- LB- would like to have more eyes on the document, as well, before approving
- AF- what other baseline assumptions are part of the plan that are important to moving forward. Discussion about example of what a replicable model looks like.
- Summer- a concern: digesting the document is important, but school needs to move forward on implementation and need board approval. BOD does not meet in July, so delaying approval creates a significant delay.
- BW- does BOD have material objections before approval. For example, there should be a preamble, but that is not a material objection. This could be an approved draft one.
- SJ- we know there will be changes as committees start their work.
- AF- is there a way to just endorse the action plan? (BW-yes, exactly)
- Summer- needs board to approve six strategic goals
- AF- moved to approve SP as presented. KE- 2nd. Passed unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

- Financials Update
 - Summer- does everyone have current version?
 - KE noted that after challenging number crunching, KE and SC have determined the school will definitely have budget surplus for FY13. 2 reasons: 1- successful Pass the Hat campaign in the fall. 2- Summer's salary being partly offset by app. \$25k by federal EC funds due to her extra work on EC this year. Before/Afterschool program also netted additional unexpected \$14k
 - Rent was a downfall, did not budget correctly.
 - KE expressed she has learned a lot this year to help restructure budget next year so monthly tracking is not as challenging
 - SJ appreciated work KE and SC have done to clarify and refine budgeting process this year.
 - KE noted everything will be coded to eliminate guess work required on tracking money in past budgets. SC- e.g. individual field trip money has been difficult to track since it was lumped together. Coding will help school track funds better
 - AF asked if Before/Afterschool program a fee based program? Answer: Yes.
 - SJ asked if it is possible to manage school budget process in house in the future.
 - SC would like to eventually have an onsite business manager. It depends on school student numbers. Right now it does not make sense to employ full time designated BM. As school grows, hiring one, even two support staff will make more sense.
 - LB- Friends of the Museum was at a size that required outside professional accounting.
 - SC- Sallie B.... Charter uses a combination of in house budget management with Acadia support
 - KE suggested that any business (or school) should always comparative shop each year for support work to save costs.

- 2013-2014 Budget Considerations
 - SC: BOD needs to approve of one of two budget options. Option (column) 1 brings staff to 100% of WCPSS teacher scale. Option (column) 2 is 99% of WCPSS salaries (still a raise, but percent per employee varies), excepting one teacher who was making significantly under WCPSS scale.
 - SC clarified that some EMS employees make more than they would with WCPSS or other districts. Both options stay true to current EMS pay scale in terms of years of teaching credit, regardless of what credit WCPSS would give them.
 - BW asked whether on a \$40k salary a teacher gets \$400, for example.
 - SC answered state teaching scale varies the salary increase depending on years of experience to minimize attrition.
 - LB noted at last meeting BOD discussed being fiscally responsible to the school, play it safe and then offer teachers a bonus half way through the year if budget is healthy. This means future budget would not have to absorb the past increase.
 - KE suggested teacher bonuses could actually be greater than the salary increase teachers would receive in proposed option 1. Other concern brought up by SC is future health care increase that is yet to be determined.
 - BW asked why books and supplies item increases by \$5k with lower salary option (option 2)? SC answered we have to balance the budget, so money goes to supplies. This does not lock school into that increase in the future. Based on experience in other states, when you pay a teacher a certain amount, you cannot retract that amount.
 - SJ noted that staff has run school on a shoestring
 - KE noted last year's bonus actually put teachers ahead of what they would have gotten with WCPSS increase.
 - AF- Frank, what do teachers say?
 - FM shared that matching Wake County sends an important message to teachers and will definitely have a positive impact on morale. Teachers understand there are other considerations here as well. Those will need to be communicated to staff clearly if option B is passed.
 - AF - don't teachers absorb a lot of instructional costs as they purchase supplies for instruction? SC - teachers do absorb some costs
 - KE - as a school, we should be able to meet WCPSS salaries. But on the other hand... BOD needs to be fiscally responsible.
 - SC shared that a salary increase benefits her and all staff in the short run... but teachers are well compensated compared to other schools, when factoring in all types of compensation: EMS has a positive working environment with a 17:1 ratio, international trips, autonomy, adequate supplies. Nationally, the teaching field is not compensated well but at a charter school there is often a trade-off. For a charter school, EMS teachers receive a competitive salary.
 - BW noted the difference to teachers is only a couple hundred of dollars.
 - SJ asked about the demands that implementing the SP will place on teachers. This will require hard work. What message is BOD going to send to teachers as school engages in this process?
 - SC noted BOD is making a decision for one fiscal year, not for every year. We have teachers who have been at EMS for many many years, this makes salaries at EMS expensive.
 - KH noted that next year, state teachers will not get masters and NBC supplements

- LB asked to consider strategic goal #5 relating to attracting and keeping high quality staff. AF expressed she is more concerned about the quality of what we are doing. BW-agreed
- BW asked about the likelihood there will be money available were the BOD to choose to do option 2 with a midyear bonus.
- Frank commented that while a bonus would be much appreciated, the immediate impact on morale from budget option 1 will be significant. With option 2, the message will have already been sent that we are not matching WCPSS salaries even though we came out of FY13 with a budget surplus in the range of \$20k.
- BW expressed that the BOD needs to take a long term outlook in terms of the fiscal health of the school, especially considering unknown increases in health care costs after FY14.
- KE said the BOD could do a bonus earlier based on surplus after Pass the Hat is completed in the fall.
- SC expressed that the point is the school is not just sitting on the \$15-\$20k, we're saving for the upcoming capital campaign and future building purchase.
- KE- motion to go with Budget version 2. BW 2nd. Passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

Consent Agenda:

- Approval of Monthly Financials
- Approve FY14 Budget
- Approve Strategic Plan

Motion- SJ. AF 2nd. Passed unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / DISCUSSION OF NEW BUSINESS

- Committee Updates:
 - No other updates- SP was only committee that met
- Consideration of Board Vacancy
 - Reminder by SC- Karen Barlow has stepped down. BOD still has 2 active applications.
 - LB- would like to re-invite new nominations as new 6th grade parents arrive, while also informing existing applicants of opening.
 - KE- agreed, especially since no current BOD members are current EMS parents
 - LB- is there a nomination committee? AF- what's the process? LB- we contact them first, and then BoD looks over applicants.
 - SC- need to consult the by-laws to see when new members need to be seated.
- Personnel Update
 - SC- BOD's new budget has approved 2 EC teachers. Sharon Cuff has accepted one of the positions. Still interviewing for 2nd position.
 - FM announced he is taking a new job at NC New Schools, effective July 8.
 - SC- will be sending out an alert to post teaching vacancy. Biggest consideration is whether to put 2 new teachers on one team. Will be thinking about best strategy with new hire.

Other

Summer is traveling to Hiroshima to attend an Ed Forum on Action Research in Professional Development. Will travel on July 3rd through July 10th.

NEXT MEETING: August 20th

ADJOURNMENT: 6:10 pm

Action Items and Next Steps:	Assigned to:	
1. Frank McKay to send minutes to Kendall Hageman to have placed in new Minutes Format.	1. Frank McKay and Kendall Hageman	