Exploris Middle School
Meeting of the Board of Directors
November 15, 2011
4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Board Members Present:        EMS Staff Present:        Board Members Absent:
Liz Baird, chair            Kevin Piacenza        Matt Friedrick
Karen Barlow               Sonja McKay            Kendall Hageman
Kathleen Evans             Leah Perry
Tammi Garceran
Sean Gargan
Susan Johnston
Barry Koster, recording
Tracy Linton
Tim Martin
Dave Currens
Fiona O'Sullivan
Laura Newman

PTO Representative Present:
Nicole Feeny

Exploris Middle School's Mission is "To create a challenging and supportive learning community that engages each student in understanding and building a connected, just, and sustainable world."

CALL TO ORDER, introductions
Liz called the meeting to order shortly after 4PM. We did a round of introductions for new Board member Kathleen and also for Duke Business school students Laura and Fiona, who will be visiting non-voting members this year.

MINUTES FROM 2011 Oct 18
A motion to approve the minutes was seconded and it was approved by voice vote with no dissention.

SCHOOL UPDATE
- Sonja (and Kevin) reported that the 7th grade class went to the State Legislative Building on 2011 Oct 24 to participate in nationally recognized Food Day. They presented a project on how individuals can make a positive impact. Visitors were impressed with our students. There was a fresh fruit drive that went with it, and it got media scrutiny, but it was unfortunately overshadowed at prime time by the ecoli outbreak hitting on the same day. They did; however, get coverage in the NC DHHS newsletter and on Facebook.
Wednesday 2011 Nov 9 the 7th grade class went to the Farmer's Market to present a project, and it inspired an NCSU professor to bring their whole class to come see. Many good connections were made, including with the creator of the file Food Inc.

Coming in December is a ceremony to dedicate the bus bench that is the realization of our students’ winning entry in last year's design competition. The bench is on Wilmington St. right outside of the AIA building. Speakers are being arranged. It was suggested that we bring Exploris brochures to the event -- never hurts to use the spotlight when we earn it.

We had a site visit from Ron Miessen, Director for Sustainability etc. at Baxter Healthcare. He was so impressed with our school that he personally donated $2500 for professional development. There is a Green Schools National Conference in Denver at the end of Feb that seems like our sort of thing http://www.greenschoolsnationalconference.org/index.php and it was suggested we use this money (in part) to send Frank. Early registration deadline is Friday, so Liz will move quickly on this.

The Silent Auction known as The Frolic is coming in February. If you have company sporting or concert tickets or vacation housing or anything that can be auctioned, please let Kevin or Nicole know.

The audit is complete; there are 3 hard copies available. Summary of the summary -- everything is ship-shape (we basically knew this last meeting but I guess we didn't yet have the report). They are, of course, really only looking at the money. Kevin extract some highlights for us, $350K net assets, up by $23K from last year, steady enrollment at 194, and slightly decreased potential debt made only of vacation days people haven't taken yet.

ORGANIZATIONS

- We are considering the possibility of joining the Coalition of Essential Schools http://www.essentialschools.org/. Membership (assuming our application is accepted) would help us showcase our excellence and principles, and may be a helpful sort of certification when we do fundraising. This would also give us access to their training. And it was noted our website belies good industry connections, but fewer educational ones. It's $400/year. PTO might give a grant for it -- Karen volunteered to write it up.
- Governor Purdue has created a NC_STEM program/registration for schools. We will apply when details become available. (This one is free.) There may be federal money we can apply for once we have the official STEM designation.
- We have a forming idea to do workshops, to promote (sell) our 'special sauce', to teach other schools' faculty the methods that work so well here. There are some connections and grants that can be applied for.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
A committee roster was distributed last time. **Please let Sean Gargan know what areas you are interested in helping with by next week.** Sean will send out the various charges, so the nubies among us will know what to pick (and then the committees themselves can clarify as they begin to work).

**Marketing (Sean reporting)**
- We are moving forward with the video project.
- The website re-design is progressing. The first pages are back from the designer. We plan to bring the new website up in January. This will be switching to WordPress, which is easier.
- The committee is reviewing our various blurbs and contents for a brochure (in addition to the website).
- Some current pages with annual event dates need content updating. Send pointers to Liz.
- It was suggested that we start using the website for *internal* documents and organization. This is obviously NOT marketing, but since the website is under Marketing for now, the possibility of expanding its function is in the committee’s court.
- Liz has Evergreen of Asheville’s marketing materials to model. Sean will get.

**Educational Program Development**
- This committee is headless at present. Matt (former co-chair) is not going to take the helm in Emmanuel’s place.
- This committee has a lot of teachers on it. OK, what else do we need?

**Administration (Tammi)**
- The current spate of changes to the Employee Manual are nearing completion. Insurance and a number of other details have been updated. Distribution of this document is currently in hard copy.

**Professional Development (Liz)**
- We could offer workshops for other schools' faculty to learn our 'secret sauce'. How about a pilot next summer?

**Financial Development (Karen)**
- They have been working on trying to get funds for a workshop next summer.
- There’s a grant offering on the Triangle Community Foundation’s website [http://www.trianglecf.org/](http://www.trianglecf.org/) we could try.
- Biogen Idek is offering mini-grants for teaching projects. iPads in class is a thought. They want to know what we would actually DO with them before they give us the money. Autistic kids respond well to the devices.
- Burroughs-Welcome also has mini-grants for school projects ($2500 each).
- We need to put lots of hyp on the website when we do one of these, so companies have incentive to do so, maybe even compete with each other.
- We have a project needing plug-through power meters (fairly inexpensive at $27 each), but we need $1547 of them. We need to find patrons for this sort of thing.
- The Board generates annually a $5K discretionary fund... we could use it for one or two of these sorts of projects. Fundraising so far this year is in good shape for this fund PTO cannot give money to specific children, but the Board can if needs are identified.
- The 7th grade is going to DC this year. Scholarship procedures for field trips need to be published soon. How about on the website? Karen Barlow will follow up.
- The kids are selling CityPassBooks to raise money for their travel.

Facilities (Tim)
- The committee is having a meeting on Thursday to generate clear goals for a new building. Tim distributed an outline of the architectural/building process. This is estimated to be a long process, 5 years, maybe even close to the end of our 10 year lease.
- Leah says the staff are nervous. Are we ok? YES, this is not scrambling for footing, but a thoughtful process to take the next step upward.
- Susan explored a more near term possibility. Working with a bank to quote current interest rates for us, she determined that if we had bought the building we were in 2 years ago at its value of $1.2M, we would be paying $80K/year mortgage. Instead, we are paying $180K/year in rent (admitting that this also includes utilities, janitor, some improvements, but still it’s a big difference). Conclusion: we could take a step up NOW by buying. Note: the banks want to know who is on the Board, our resumes. Please forward details to Susan. They also want to know our positioning / branding statement. Sean is working on that.

SEARCH COMMITTEE
- We need to form a committee to find Kevin’s replacement. We need this committee functioning by January. Leah will be looking into staff selection.

ADJOURN
- The meeting adjourned around 5:20pm.
- The next meeting: at the school on 2011 December 13, 4pm.