

**The SABIS International Charter School
160 Joan Street
Springfield, MA 01129
Board of Trustees**

Minutes of SABIS Board of Trustees Meeting – April 6, 2020
Contract Committee
via conference call

In Attendance: Atu White, Paula Meara, Joyce Gondek, Freddy Lopez, Luis Aponte, Daryl Johnson

Guests: Vanessa Pileggi

Not Present: N/A

I. **Meeting called to order at 6:08 p.m.**

II. **Review Contract**

Director and Business Manager positions discussed at last week’s committee meeting. Atu White reviewed items as responded to by SEM in an email dated April 6. This info was also sent to the education committee this morning for their response. (item from email copied here as read aloud the question and a portion of the education committee response:

“item (2), I would like to touch upon the matter of reporting for the director and business manager. The type of reporting you are proposing is not something we have ever done, and we are not inclined to agree to it. The role of the board is as an oversight function, and the role of the education service provider is an executive one. This division exists for the good of the school’s operation. If the service provider is to be held accountable – and we accept and expect that – we need to have the authority to operate the school. In order to consider your proposal, I would need a better understanding of why the board wants the switch. If you could provide specific examples, it would help me better understand your position.

The role of the board may be governance, however they hold the charter and DESE has mandated with the current renewal that the contract reflect the authority, oversight, and autonomy of the Board. Based on DESE recommendation that Board of Trustees also evaluate the Bylaws concerning governance and submit revision to their attention for approval, the Charter renewal is contingent upon the Board’s role of oversight of school’s management. The Director and Business Manager are two positions that should report directly to the Board, these are both key positions in the daily operation of the school. What happens if the academic conditions set forth by the commission are not met and DESE and BESE mandate that SEM no longer manage the school or if SEM chooses not to continue (this has happened New Jersey ad NOLA), for a seamless transition it would be in the best interest of the students and families of the SICS Community that the Director and the Business Manager be a direct employee of the board and not the management company”

Committee consensus is that yes, Board would like these positions to report to Board because of contract and bylaws. Paula Meara said that DESE noted it could go either way. Board wouldn't have capacity to do a search and would not want to see a third party like Schoolworks do a search. Atu White noted it was suggested that SEM bring their top candidates but Director would report to Board.

Automatic Renewal clause being removed, for a straight five-year contract. if need to terminate sooner, that language would remain.

Student outcomes question – Atu White read aloud the question to education committee and the response in the April 6 email:

1) In order to be able to provide you with meaningful responses to your questions and proposals, it would be helpful if you could share with me the methodology and rationale that stands behind the proposals. As I asked when we spoke, what methodology contributed to the committee's request for a student performance outcome of 95% of students in grades 3-8 and 10 earning "meets or exceeds" on annual MCAS exams in ELA, Math, and Science & Technology? Similarly, what was the methodology used to develop the proposal of a 15 percentage point growth year-on-year for 2020-21 and 2021-22? Understanding the methodology and rationale used by the Contract Committee would help me better understand your point of reference and streamline our exchanges moving forward.

This was a simple mathematical conclusion. Our current status is approximately 44 points behind where we think we should be. We are trying to establish doable benchmarks for improvement. 15 points a year would give us 95 points in three years. That is our goal. Instead of asking for 45 points in one year we are asking for reasonable improvements. This is important especially for grades 3-8. Our students cannot wait for some sustainable changes to give them the better than average education that they expect at SABIS. We as a Board cannot wait three more years to be in the same situation we are in now. There has to be a steady measurable improvement and the committee believes that 15 points per year, if not more, is attainable.

Question of where the 95-point goal came from? Was this the original benchmark in contract? SEM felt board want to use because of correlation with AMS and MCAS but makes most sense to use summative and comprehensive internal results and proposed use EOY results as a point of reference. Suggesting new way of reporting. Committee thoughts? Freddy asked if Education committee has discussed – but this was just received today, so education committee has not reviewed yet. Daryl Johnson suggested defer to education committee for now.

Financial holdback: reviewed Amy Wesley's response about fee calculation; management agreement that existed had a set fee which was fixed. 6% of actual tuition and 6% licensing fee then switched to flat fee. Not sure how flat fee was derived. Freddy Lopez/finance committee, consider review how other management companies charge? He will email finance committee and try to find information. Find out what other companies are charging for fees vs. tuition and return information to contract committee/Atu White ASAP.

Paula Meara asked if management agreements would be public information from the other schools?

Atu White will find out if there can be an extension to the May 1 deadline. Switching to end of year reporting would take time to work out. Committee considered this pandemic experience and whether to consider issuance of chromebooks like the City of Springfield did? Could make things less traumatic for the students but once returning to school there would be a lot of transition within that. Living in unchartered territory currently. Joyce Gondek mentioned that Maretta Thomsen created a YouTube video to address families. Atu White read a comment from Amy Wesley that was sent to him today on the possibility of Chromebooks. Where does City of Springfield get the funds? Would SABIS have access to same funds? Freddy Lopez will try to reach out to the City and to Steve Bissonnette.

Paula Meara moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Daryl Johnson. The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne-Marie Nicolai, Secretary
SICS Board of Trustees

Attachments