

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

Minutes of SABIS Board of Trustees Meeting – April 15, 2020

In Attendance: Sonja Shaw, Ellen McDonald, Freddy Lopez, Luis Aponte, Atu White, John Delaney, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Paula Meara, Joyce Gondek, Patrick White, James Hollins, Derryl Gibbs, Daryl Johnson

Guests: Maretta Thomsen, Amy Wesley, Vanessa Pileggi, Steve Bissonnette, Mark Blaubach, Justin Baker, Jean Reardon, Christi Cole

Not Present: Dena Facchini

Meeting held via conference call.

I. **Meeting called to order at 6:10 p.m.**

II. **Approval of minutes**

Luis Aponte moved to accept the following meeting minutes: Regular meeting of 3/18/2020; Finance/facilities committee of 3/18/2020; Contract committee meetings of 3/30, 4/6 and 4/14/2020; Education committee meetings of 3/24 & 4/13/2020. Seconded by Paula Meara and approved by voice vote, YES: Sonja Shaw, Atu White, Daryl Johnson, Ellen McDonald, Joyce Gondek, James Hollins, Paula Meara, John Delaney, Derryl Gibbs, Patrick White.

III. **Contract Committee**

Atu White reported. Amy Wesley and the contract committee have been in communication since January to present contract by May meeting. Eight areas for consideration identified and reviewed: (1) Director reporting to Board and SEM in current contract; to add language either party notified early in a process rather than later relating to problems or successes; helps either party be notified early in a process; (2) Business Manager, in current contract “shall be appointed by SEM with approval of trustees...” to add similar language where both positions report to Board and SEM; (3) 48-hour reporting process, if board or committee requests info, would like delivered 48 hours prior to meeting and SEM requested seven working days prior to that deadline/agreeable. And allow SEM time to address committee to explain information that was given. (4) 5-year contract, have agreed will be straight contract from July 1 to June 30, 2025 removing option to extend section as in current contract. (6) School evaluation, SEM has requested to add language that third party evaluations are fair, objective and data driven. Agreed. (7) student outcomes; SEM is creating plan that won't measure benchmarks based on AMS alone. Once info is compiled, invite back to contract committee to explain along with the education committee, and entire board

can attend. Once date is set, will send email. (8) remuneration, looking to keep a little over 9% financial holdback that's tied to benchmarks agreed upon for student outcomes.

Anne-Marie Nicolai asked regarding school evaluation, an outside evaluator would review total picture, of course it should be objective and fair, but data-driven does not necessarily make sense if an evaluator were to come in. Atu White noted benchmarks yet to be decided upon/hoping to have information prior to the meeting.

Patrick White--need to identify a plan to be implemented in order to meet DESE expectations over the next two years.

IV. **Director's Report**

Remote Learning Plan

Sonja Shaw sent out the "remote learning plan" for the Board to review/received around 5:30 pm. Amy Wesley talked about working on achieving a remote learning model and figuring out how to provide equitable access, and bridging socio-economic divide in country; provide education to students and what divides students is access through technology. Developed a hybrid remote learning plan and discussed some components of it. Realized since then wasn't using resource available to school – Board who represents insight into school community. Review Plan and get Board perspective and guidance, what should RLP look like moving forward? Two different models reviewed, per the document. The first model relies heavily on technology. SPS provided chromebooks for grades 3-12 and just this week City made a deal with Comcast for cable fee for Springfield families. Access for students look different today than even few days ago. There are also hotspots funded by corporate neighbors. City is prioritizing access to tech and internet. School conducted tech survey, one on-line and one by phone. Feedback from 735 families, 419 of those (57%) reported not having access to technology. Minimum of 75% of students, about 900 students. Enrollment numbers broken down by section K-4 is largest with 627 students. 5-8 there are 554, and 392 in 9-12. Devices in school could be reconfigured and loaned out. Time required estimated to be about 4 days of FT work for 3 IT employees. If wish to pursue would have to be careful and make sure IT employees have safe environment to do the work. If choosing to access the 600 devices, any tech removed from the school would need to be replaced prior to school resuming – used for AMS and MCAS testing. If school were to resume, still need to use for assessments. New technology /chromebooks/ quoted \$212 each. Devices need to be formatted in order to rolled out and these costs including internet filter, brings to about \$253. Have implemented these in other schools. \$90K allocated in current budget that hasn't been used yet. Projected budget variances would add up to about \$494K. If projected favorable variance funds are used to purchase tech and school reopens, those funds would not be available and would be needed for school operations. Do not know how long schools will be closed per Governor since current goes to May 4. Commissioner may announce something on Friday, not confirmed. Another variable , hard to know exactly which students have access, cannot predict extent of loss/theft/damage; consider that many live in environment where basic needs are not being met (food, safety); method of device distribution would need to be

developed so that it is safe for students, families, staff. Procedural steps are also listed on the document, regardless if going with tech or hybrid model so that board will be familiar. All students have to sign “acceptable use policy”. Parents and guardians would sign a “remote learning policy”. They can opt out of having their children learn through online sessions; if any opt out would need to use hybrid model, paper packets of information for instruction; parents/guardians would be asked to sign a form that acknowledges responsibility for loss/damage to the device.

Luis Aponte asked whether maintenance/insurance cost is built in? No, because of high depreciation value, didn’t seem worth the cost. Some cities have families pay a small fee toward that cost. Sonja Shaw said that many parents have been laid off, any expense would be a lot to ask.

Joyce Gondek asked is there is a buffer for malfunctions and what if another device was needed? Numbers shown as example were “exact” without cushion.

Freddy Lopez asked where SPS funding came from for devices? SPS currently in process to get approval to purchase 10,000 more to possibly deploy to younger students and that Mayor is hoping to get some allocations. Actively looking out for grants/none identified as of yet.

James Hollins offered to ask the Putnam principal to get some information.

SPS chromebooks were leased over four years. Didn’t include lease option in the document, as upcharge for leasing was over \$80K and cost prohibitive.

Paula Meara asked, would shortages be anticipated? Amy Wesley said the supplier currently has 2,000. Mark Blaubach commented SPS purchased 26K from local supplier, and they may still have 10,000.

Amy Wesley said the supplier can provide preformatted chromebooks in two days. Challenge/how to distribute/ be ready on April 27 regardless if going with hybrid or tech forward model.

April Vacation Week

Spring break decision/whether to use April vacation week? Commissioner has allowed each district to make a local decision. If time is taken, it would add on a week to end of official school year to bring last day of school from June 11 to June 17. Many boards are opting to take the spring break for students, families, staff. City of Springfield schools are taking the April break. Anne-Marie Nicolai said that New Hampshire has already extended two more weeks and considering for rest of year.

Ryan Meek confirmed that chromebooks would be capital expense and debt service ratio is ok. Freddy Lopez said that SPS budgeted for their chromebooks and it was not an additional fund.

Sonja Shaw noted that SABIS has always aligned its schedule with SPS for vacation week.

Hearing from parents some inconsistency of messages going out to different grades. School would officially be on vacation, those on academic calendar, out of school, not working. Calendar year contract employees could be working during that time. Doesn't need official vote. Asked board if any reason why students should not have "vacation" and asked for vote just to be sure Board is in agreement. **Freddy Lopez moved to accept the plan to hold April vacation next week. Seconded by Paula Meara and approved by voice vote, YES: Sonja Shaw, Daryl Johnson, Atu White, Joyce Gondek, John Delaney, Paula Meara, Derryl Gibbs, Freddy Lopez, Ellen McDonald, Patrick White. (James Hollins call dropped off).**

Amy Wesley reviewed the "hybrid" plan. There is a combination of students who have access to technology and SABIS digital platform to log in and participate in on-line remote instruction, with opportunity to complete assignments and take quizzes. For those without access, they would receive traditional paper content per subject weekly and teachers would interact with those students by phone, checking for understanding and answering questions. Need to work out details about how to receive completed materials. Students would follow set timetable for classes for remote instruction which would include time for additional support and time for teachers to call home and check in. Consider continuing to use paper for students under grade 3?

Amy Wesley, consideration in case SPS decides to circulate tech to youngest learners. Is there enough support for youngest students if they have to use technology? What problems could arise from that?

Ellen McDonald asked about incorporating the existing chromebooks, if they are capable? Consider contingent plan in case of loss of the original chromebooks. Or consider purchasing 1574 formatted and not have to spend the many hours re-doing the existing units?

Consider commissioner guidance of a half day of education, so families with multiple children may have difficulty.

Maretta Thomsen said insurance from Whalley is \$25/unit. It was noted that SPS did not purchase the insurance but that West Springfield schools did. Freddy Lopez reminded the board of the fields project which is moving forward, for budget consideration. Derryl Gibbs talked about his experience working with other schools. Some districts would lose almost half of the chromebooks. They get returned broken, smashed. Debt service ratio would still be ok with fields project and this potential expense. Ryan Meek suggested considering hedging expense with more units vs. insurance costs.

Whalley has the units in stock and required Google program is included and deployed by them. Fair price for what the product is, with a very quick turnaround. Freddy Lopez mentioned PeoplesBank had mentioned grants and may be worth asking for their participation. \$437,572 total expense.

Straw Poll suggested by Paula Meara. Majority selection option 2 from the proposal.

Luis Aponte moved to purchase approximately 1,205 chromebooks for students in grades 3-12 including insurance. Seconded by Anne-Marie Nicolai and approved by voice vote, YES: Paula Meara, Patrick White, Joyce Gondek, Daryl Johnson, Derryl Gibbs, Ellen McDonald, Freddy Lopez, Luis Aponte, John Delaney, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Atu White, Sonja Shaw.

Sonja noted she heard from parents about use of Teams where a student muted the teacher and couldn't be unmuted – IT rep Mark Blaubach said yes that will be taken care of and will adjust to exclude chatting outside of the classroom as well. Luis Aponte asked if consider if students are locked out of accounts, can there be a faster process to be able to get back in? Keep open communication with parents.

Continue to pay hourly employees

Amy Wesley reported, it is debatable whether there needs to be a Board resolution, but the Commissioner recommends that schools continue to pay hourly employees through the closure. Guidance is clear but there is debate whether boards need to vote. She read the guidance out loud. Sonja Shaw asked if parents are able to reach the school. Marett Thomsen said there are people available for few hours each day taking messages, answering questions and forwarding to appropriate AQC. Have not posted "FAQ" on website but have posted all other information so far.

Paula Meara moved to approve continuing to pay the hourly employees through end of year per guidance from Commissioner. Seconded by Joyce Gondek and approved by voice vote, YES: Paula Meara, Patrick White, Joyce Gondek, Daryl Johnson, Derryl Gibbs, Ellen McDonald, Freddy Lopez, Luis Aponte, Atu White, John Delaney, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Sonja Shaw.

V. Finance/Facilities Committee

Tabled.

VI. Education Committee

Tabled. Committee will meet to review SEM evaluation.

VII. Governance Committee

Joyce Gondek said committee is in process of wrapping up bylaws draft. Meeting tomorrow.

IX. Chair's Report

- Sonja Shaw reported that the contract and bylaws extension on deadline was granted to June 1.
- Asked if Director distributes meeting agendas to staff and teachers? She receives emails asking about meetings; some teachers don't know about the ability to do conference calls. Marett Thomsen said yes, have asked to email the staff. Suggested to post on the school website.
- Job description and new recording secretary.

Ellen McDonald moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Luis Aponte. The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne-Marie Nicolai, Secretary
SICS Board of Trustees

Attachments

Minutes for approval

Remote learning plan