

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

**Minutes of SABIS Board of Trustees Meeting – June 17, 2020  
via conference call**

In Attendance: Sonja Shaw, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Ellen McDonald, Paula Meara, Daryl Johnson, Freddy Lopez, Luis Aponte, Patrick White, Dena Facchini, Derryl Gibbs, John Delaney

Guests: Vanessa Pileggi, Amy Wesley, Maretta Thomsen, Atty. Paul Nicolai, Atty. Raipher Pellegrino, Christi Seiple-Cole

Not Present: Atu White Joyce Gondek, James Hollins

---

I. Meeting called to order at 6:03 p.m.

II. **Approval of Minutes**

**Luis Aponte moved to approve the regular meeting of 5/20/2020; special board meeting of 6/9/2020; education committee of 6/1 and 6/16/2020; contract committee meetings of 5/26, 6/2, and 6/16/2020; with a correction to the 6/2/2020 contract committee minutes on page 4-- the draft minutes mention "holdback of 12%" but the calculation on the flat rate discussion should read "16%". Seconded by Dena Facchini and approved by voice vote; YES: Ellen McDonald, Luis Aponte, Daryl Johnson, Derryl Gibbs, Patrick White, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Dena Facchini, John Delaney, Freddy Lopez, Sonja Shaw. ABSTAINED: Paula Meara.**

III. **Finance Committee**

Freddy Lopez said that Steve Bissonnette talked about SEM being unable to make offers to teachers until budget is approved. Steve Bissonnette provided a summary. This fiscal year projecting about \$1M net income surplus; not much changed since last meeting where budget was reviewed. In regards to next year's budget question is the per-pupil funding—as of now there are no new updates. Chart School Association is in constant communication with DESE and it looks like earliest for revised preliminary numbers could be late July or into early August; most charter schools are submitting a budget with level funding just as we have with a conservative approach to budget for next year to their boards. Those boards are approving those budgets with the caveat that when the preliminary numbers for next year are updated that they will supplement those budgets accordingly. Without approved budget schools are not able to move forward with merit increases for staff but staff reviews were done. Amy Wesley added that the

budget may need to go into reserves as result of COVID since the current budget is not based on adverse impact. Ellen McDonald asked about comment from previous meeting that teachers resigned? Atty. Pellegrino said he did mention teachers left, could not extend offers this year. Ryan Meek said budget was done pre-COVID but was refined up to early May; incorporating IT investments, in anticipation of COVID. Approval of budget would allow basic operational items like merit increases and operational July expenses. Ellen McDonald agreed, from financial point of view makes perfect sense but that budget would not include non-essential (new) positions and suggested approval with caveat that it's flat budget to move forward operationally and that it will be revisited once per-pupil funding is identified and what the plan is for the fall. Steve Bissonnette clarified roughly \$11-12M in reserves, will know exactly with audited financials at year-end. **Anne-Marie Nicolai moved to approve budget for 2020/2021 fiscal year as presented exclusive of new positions and extraordinary expenses and that offers of employment and merit increases can be offered. Management fee will be in accordance with approved management agreement if entered into. Seconded by Paula Meara and approved by voice vote, YES: Ellen McDonald, Luis Aponte, Daryl Johnson, Derryl Gibbs, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Dena Facchini, Paula Meara, John Delaney, Freddy Lopez, Sonja Shaw. ABSTAINED: Patrick White.**

Freddy Lopez noted that the grounds contract was signed and work commenced. Next meeting can discuss question of return of funds requested from last year.

IV. **Education Committee**

Ellen McDonald reported on committee work to date. On June 1 reviewed accountability plan, which exists for term of charter. All board members encouraged to review. Commissioner memo identified areas of concern: translation of material, bylaws and oversight of SEM; and dissemination. A working partnership with collaboration and was conveyed to education committee would be huge benefit to students. School has committed to maintain relationship with a local college for students to earn college credits; preliminarily identified AIC. Review and vote at July meeting. Committee met to review chromebooks and summer learning; and noted summary of Springfield Public School plans. Committee meeting looking for information on topics for board to make objective decision. Amy Wesley sent an article by NWEA to committee. SEM indicated programs can alleviate summer slide. At last night's meeting, the committee requested information on final count of chromebooks and the plan for collecting devices. Of 42 distributed to seniors; there are just four outstanding and the AQC's are following up directly with those students. SEM indicated there are 184 students to participate. No plan in place yet should students need to return devices if not in summer school. Need clarification on numbers. K-5 103; 6-8 60 students, and in 9-12, 65 out of 300 students will be attending. SEM wanted to comment at that meeting but time constraints didn't allow; SEM left the meeting. Noted that every trustee on this board, students are always #1 priority. Last night's meeting was intended to gather specific information for the board on summer enrichment program, procedures, etc. and it is difficult for the committee to do its job without the information. Should students be allowed to keep

the laptop over summer if we don't have specifics? On June 1 SEM did provide general information on summer ideas (see minutes) to avoid complete slide before September. Committee doesn't have any more insight as to how SEM would generate interest in participation. Another tool the committee is unable to report on is the parent survey on remote learning; asked at the June 1 meeting and SEM agreed it was a good idea. SEM survey was done through Survey Monkey 6/12 through 6/16. Do not have results, had expected them at the meeting. After SEM left meeting, committee expressed concerns on integrity of survey and people being able to complete it multiple times and should board consider third party to prepare a survey? Also looked for preliminary plan for fall/return to school and blended model. Complex process going forward. Does BOT have any questions for education committee before we talk about chromebooks? Many unanswered questions because SEM left last night's meeting.

Dena Facchini noted that SPS is allowing students to keep their Chromebooks over the summer. Board asked about concerns about monitoring and how to get kids involved to be sure there is a benefit. Noted that Atu White is hosting a roundtable tonight with superintendent of schools and Ellen McDonald submitted a few questions. May need to create a special board meeting to review further. Schedule another meeting next week to ask SEM about program. Asked Amy Wesley can put this info in writing to Education committee by Tuesday.

V. **Governance**

Paula Meara reported/nothing new to report; believe that DESE is awaiting the contract and will review together with bylaws. Paula Meara said will follow up and forward email from DESE.

VI. **Contract Committee**

Daryl Johnson updated activity to date. Still a few sticking points with Board and SEM but attorneys are in direct contact. Next step is to send SEM final firm points and await response to those. As of this afternoon, contract is back to attorneys' hands for final revisions. Granted extension by DESE to 6/15 and is currently late but DESE is aware that attorneys are reviewing and they know they will receive as soon as review is completed. Trying to get consensus on renumeration/holdback amount. Need to clarify amount agreed upon. Explaining how came up with % for the holdback. Prior contract paid fixed fee. This contract still talked about fixed fee and SEM wanted increase in pay. When committee discussed increase, wanted SEM to have incentive for conditions to be removed; if fixed fee were to be increased then the holdback should also be increased which would keep SEM's pay the "same" base rate however increase would be received once conditions were lifted. When paid holdback, the amount would bring SEM up to the increased fixed fee. Fixed rate agreed is \$2.34M; with the holdback, would have to be a 16% holdback and if conditions are lifted the 2.34 would be paid. If not lifted, would be paid same as last five years which is 1.9M. last week at meeting, reduced 16% holdback to 11% after talking about meeting in the middle. Was misunderstood that

12% was the high end but 16% was the initial amount. To be sure everyone is on board with holdback of 11%. Ellen McDonald said 11% brings their flat fee to \$2.1M which is like a 6% “raise”. Confirm this is acceptable to DESE. Holdback is retroactive and incentive to get conditions lifted. Atty. Pellegrino commented to clarify what SEM requested/ because of history with this school would stay with 12%. \$1.9M was 12% of tuition at that time. 12% this year was based on tuition revenue this year. Holdback was compromised at 11%.

Will do vote once have an agreement; consensus of board members for now. Annual fixed fee is based on \$2.34M, which is 12% of tuition per-pupil funding, normally SEM requests 15%. Previous contract, the \$2.1M was equal to 12% of the funding we receive. SEM didn't earn the holdback so it was \$1.9M. Proposal was to increase annual fee to \$2.34M, but with the holdback percentage increased, it is a bigger incentive for conditions to be lifted. Atty. Pellegrino said condition can't be lifted for three years because of test timing so is released once DESE rules; otherwise never would be a chance to receive the holdback. Consensus for 16%: Ellen McDonald, Luis Aponte, Patrick White, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Freddy Lopez, Sonja Shaw. Consensus for 12%: Daryl Johnson, Derry Gibbs, Dena Facchini, Paula Meara, John Delaney. Daryl Johnson will bring this information to the committee and share with Atu.

VII. **Chair Report**

Sonja Shaw reported. For conference calls in place on in-person meetings, have used her workplace Zoom account and now using free Webex account which expires July 1. Bring to board to consider pricing for Zoom or Webex. Ellen McDonald moved to approve conference call cost up to \$15/month, seconded by Dena Facchini and approved by voice vote, YES: Ellen McDonald, Luis Aponte, Daryl Johnson, Derryl Gibbs, Patrick White, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Dena Facchini, Paula Meara, John Delaney, Freddy Lopez, Sonja Shaw.

Sonja did use a free service to post board secretary position; has received three resumes to review; one candidate dropped out so there are two current. If those do not work out, consider using MassLive ad for the position, standard package is \$425 for 30 days. Finance committee confirmed expense would be ok. Paula Meara moved to appropriate up to \$500 to place an ad for the position. Seconded by Derryl Gibbs and approved by voice vote, yes Ellen McDonald, Luis Aponte, Daryl Johnson, Derryl Gibe, Patrick White, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Dena Facchini, Paula Meara, John Delaney, Freddy Lopez, Sonja Shaw.

Amy Wesley contacted Sonja Shaw on some minor changes made to Student Handbook regarding participation in remote learning/student conduct which was read out loud. Also adding in “all rules relative to student behavior shall also be effective while students are participating in remote learning services.” Ellen McDonald asked what is specific violation of code of conduct related to remote learning? What are the consequences and what are the specific violations? What are consequences and rules?

Amy Wesley said they will make the update as soon as it's approved. Amendments are just the highlighted text but all the context for use/appropriate use are handled in the acceptable use policy which is part of handbook already and sent with chromebook distribution. Education lawyer recommends those two changes be made. Could we add this to agenda so that Trustees could read entire section for context? Yes. Vote on this item after Trustees read the section and vote at next meeting when vote on chromebooks, next week.

Ellen McDonald moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by John Delaney. The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne-Marie Nicolai, Secretary  
SICS Board of Trustees

Attachments

Minutes for approval

Student handbook section with edits