

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

**Minutes of SABIS Board of Trustees Meeting – March 11, 2020**  
**Finance/Facilities Committee**

In Attendance: Wilfredo Lopez, Ellen McDonald

Guests: Tim Tynan, Steve Bissonnette, Vanessa Pileggi, Ryan Meek (via speakerphone)

Not Present: Dena Facchini

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I. Meeting called to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. **Facilities**

Tim Tynan updated the committee on status of fields project and RFP for site coordinator (OPM). Contacted Weston & Sampson who will oversee site and produce the RFP, set a June 23 start date, will have RFP ready, engineering specs—everything the general contractor would need to complete the project. Noted that the RFP price was built into the fee already approved by the Board. Will obtain quote prior to next board meeting, anticipating \$15-50K range. Part-time on-site position would be sufficient, and would be vetted by Weston & Sampson. Steve Bissonnette noted in the capital budget, \$40K was earmarked for the study which was completed for \$18,500. Built into the \$2.2M estimated project was a percentage which is approximately \$20K for RFP for engineering work/oversight is different.

Identify costs for writing, reviewing RFP. Also find out how they charge (% of completion or flat fee, for example). First step is the study, then RFP and vet bids.

III. **Solar**

EPS put in more than 12 months ago. Question whether tax credits/SMART program is still available, per Eversource email. Have asked Solar Design Associates to get verification from the State. Tim Tynan will contact Eversource directly to confirm. Will contact SDA to see how this will effect the project. Include SDA by phone at next week's meeting.

*Tim Tynan left the meeting.*

IV. **Finance**

Steve Bissonnette reported on YTD financials through close of February. Projecting \$950K net income surplus vs planned/budget net income surplus \$233K. Tuition revenue projected year-end annualized \$19,688,000 vs budgeted 19,445,000 for about \$244K favorable variance. When budgeting tuition, it is based off preliminary numbers as the State projections get revised throughout year. Will be another third quarter refined projection from State at end of March. Equates to about \$12,508 per student vs. \$12,354 budgeted. \$20K under other income note interest income on money market account. Of the \$717K favorable variance, \$220K is explained by revenue. Next big item is staff costs – favorable variance (under budget), refer to page 3 of report; \$134K due to staff salary expense savings (staff replacement costs and also two positions not filled and contain long term subs). \$30K in payroll taxes/corresponding to the salaries. Ellen McDonald noted that the Education committee had asked a question on subs and certification requirements and anticipating the director will report back.

Health/dental/life savings related to those positions and also during open enrollment many selected the lower cost plans/higher deductible. Average is 70/30. Three plans in total for options. Contingent liability line item \$136K to be considered unearned.

Textbook budget will come in under budget about \$23K. School maintenance variance (plowing). Copier lease contract changed for savings on annual contract. General operating/utilities has percentage increases built into plan and was overbudgeted.

Need to ask about the water meter in fields

V. **Separation Agreement**

Freddy Lopez reviewed/as directed by board to review the matter. Committee did see document quickly in business office but just received a copy two weeks ago. Goal is to get to agreement with SEM and Board together on how to handle the way payment was made. Board has charged the finance committee to come up with resolution. The finance committee feels the payments were a use of public funds that was not appropriate, logical approach is that SEM pays the money back; and would like to update Board at its regular March 18 meeting with a solution. Asking Ryan Meek again about SEM position on this; as DESE has deferred to Board to come up with solution directly. Ryan Meek said that SEM feels the amount was appropriate and within budget to be spent and paid for recognition of separation; release from the employee and also amounts paid in consideration of accruals of benefits and longevity of employment. Disbursements are dictated by higher ed guidelines, if an individual is represented by an attorney in their quest to achieve separation, payments are per the IRS, one-third value of settlement to attorney; one-third paid as a 1099; one-third processed through payroll taxes. Accrued sick, vacation values are documented. Ryan Meek didn't feel that speaking in public setting about rates is appropriate. Can provide but doesn't want to discuss in open meeting.

Committee asked what was the dollar amount for longevity of service and prevention of potential litigation but he was not involved in negotiation. Committee asked, is there a

policy to base longevity on? Something to explain what the numbers are? What about request for re-payment for the rest of the money to be presented to the Board. Have to provide information to DESE per duty under law to manage. If \$70K was spent with \$24K under W2 situation, \$24K under 1099; \$21,333 to attorney, then \$45K should be paid back to the school budget; school should be reimbursed as director was paid on administrative leave until August and then additional funds were spent to hire the interim director. Board was not party to the agreement. What was paid to interim director in that time period? Ryan Meek stated that SEM position is not to pay the money back and feels it would be inappropriate. Separate checks were consistent with IRS rules. Freddy Lopez will create a draft request to present to board and SEM can then respond. State funds were used to facilitate a settlement. Noted also, not looking for "pointing fingers," just want funds returned to school budget as board did not authorize.

The committee will meet again on Wednesday, March 18, 5:30 pm.

Ellen McDonald moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Freddy Lopez and approved; all in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne-Marie Nicolai, Secretary  
SICS Board of Trustees

Attachments

YTD budget through 2/29/2020