

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

**Minutes of SABIS Board of Trustees Regular Meeting – April 15, 2021**  
**via conference call**

In Attendance: Anne-Marie Nicolai, Joyce Gondek, Daryl Johnson, Paula Meara, Todd Fairman, John Delaney, Atu White, Sonja Shaw, Luis Aponte, Freddy Lopez

Guests: DJ Conway, Tom Compagna, Tim Tynan, Maretta Thomsen, Justin Baker, Ellen McDonald, Paul Nicolai, Amy Wesley, Danelle Skorka, Kathleen Dupuis, Steve Bissonnette, John LaFlamme, Raipher Pelligrino, Ryan Gaebel

Not Present: Dena Facchini, Derryl Gibbs

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I. Meeting called to order at 6:09pm.

II. **Open Forum**  
No requests

III. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**  
Minutes will be tabled to the May BOT meeting to allow adequate time for review.

IV. **Chair's Report**

*Inspector General Reports:*

One of the issues with the Inspector General report was that you cannot have a contract that gives the contractor the ability to terminate the contract on its own. The reports also say that the Board of Trustees should assign responsibility for administering and monitoring the school's management contract with SABIS Inc. or another management contractor to a school employee with appropriate financial and managerial skills and experience. Furthermore, the Board should be hiring the auditor; not SABIS. The financial staff should also be reporting to the Board and not SABIS. The director and the business manager all must report to the Board.

*Former School Director:*

Attorney Nicolai informed the Board that the analysis is simply waiting for one piece of information from Freddy Lopez regarding a document that requires a date. Mr. Lopez clarified that the document was mistakenly mailed without the date and will be resolved this evening for submission.

*Management Agreement:*

Attorney Nicolai explained that submitting proposed contracts ensures the autonomy and authority of the Board of Trustees not the vendor or educational management organization. These conditions relate to academic performance and the current charter with the exception of one little change. The first is the academic condition. By December 31, 2023 SABIS International Charter School must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence the school has demonstrated significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language, arts and science for students in grades three to eight. Should the school demonstrate significant and sustained academic improvement before 2023 the Commissioner and the Board of elementary and secondary education will consider removing this condition rather than waiting until December 21, 2023. The second condition was with alignment and bylaws, which have already been addressed. In the 2015 contract with SABIS there was a one-million-dollar bonus to SABIS if they were successful in getting those conditions removed from the charter. This did not happen. Now in 2020 DESE stated the renewal of the charter of SABIS International Charter School is explicitly conditioned as follows, failure to meet this condition may result in the board placing the school on probation, revoking its charter or imposing additional conditions on its charter.

John Delaney expressed appreciating the message and information from Attorney Nicolai but was extremely irritated by the delivery and believed apologies were due. Atu White acknowledged that some Trustees may have received the tone of the message differently and also understands the seriousness of these discussions.

Raipher Pelligrino shared that SABIS offered to bring former Commissioner David Driscoll to the meeting this evening for his insight as to whether SABIS's requests would be approved and for general advice but was informed that the Board did not want that. John Delaney and Paula Meara both expressed interest in hearing what Mr. Driscoll had to say. Atu White stated the meeting was declined simply because SABIS's position has been the same and DESE's position is the same. The Contract Committee doesn't think it was in the best interest of the Board or for the school to hear Mr. Driscoll's opinion. Nor was it proper as a board to entertain someone else's consultant while negotiating a business agreement.

**Freddy Lopez motioned to approve the document titled "Recommended to Board".  
Seconded by Anne-Marie Nicolai and APPROVED by voice vote. YES: Sonja Shaw, Todd Fairman, Freddy Lopez, Daryl Johnson, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Luis Aponte, Atu White.  
NO: John Delaney, Paula Meara**

*Interim Director Evaluation:*

Anne-Marie Nicolai, as Chair of the Education committee, commended the interim director for a great job during hard times. There was clarification that Maretta Thomsen and her team worked diligently in the midst of COVID-19. The Education committee's remarks also stated that Unfortunately, this has not resulted in improved academic achievement in the period up to March of 2020. This is most concerning given the condition on the Charter. The hope is that Ms. Thomsen's hard work at the leadership will result in real student achievement in 2020 - 2021. Ms. Thomsen shared that had it not been for COVID, the 5% academic increase in three months would have continued had the school stayed open.

**Luis Aponte motioned to approve the interim director's evaluation. Seconded by Anne-Marie Nicolai and APPROVED by voice vote. YES: Sonja Shaw, Todd Fairman, Daryl Johnson, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Luis Aponte, Atu White. NO: Paula Meara. ABSTAINED: Freddy Lopez, John Delaney**

*Interim Director Salary Increase:*

Education committee Chair, Anne-Marie Nicolai recommended the salary increase for a job well done under difficult circumstances.

**Anne-Marie Nicolai motioned to increase the interim director's salary by 2.35%. Seconded by Daryl Johnson and APPROVED by voice vote. YES: Sonja Shaw, Todd Fairman, Freddy Lopez, John Delaney, Daryl Johnson, Anne-Marie Nicolai, Paula Meara, Luis Aponte, Atu White**

V. **Interim Director's Report**

*Update on Return to Campus:*

DJ Conway reported arrivals and dismissals have been flawless with the help of staff and administrators. One-way traffic lanes and walking paths limit exposure. Students are served breakfast in class every morning provided by Sodexo. There are bathroom attendants at every bathroom for contact tracing and are grade specific. Lunch is in the cafeteria practicing six feet social distance with multiple monitors to supervise. Outside the building there are paw prints that remind students to stay six feet apart.

Nurse Kathleen Dupuis shared there is an increase in new students with chronic conditions. Parents are asked to use the COVID checklist daily. A Protocol was sent to parents today. This checklist and protocol applies to staff as well. So far four students have been sent to the medical waiting room but no positive COVID cases have been identified. Tim Tynan added that 20% of students are back and things have been running smoothly so far.

*Latest Commissioner's Guidance (including MCAS):*

Justin Baker reported that the MCAS has been waived as a requirement for graduation this year. Grades three through eight will be able to take the MCAS remotely from home. Tom Compagna shared that 95% of the seniors have been accepted to a college or trade school and the school is actively working with the other 5% making sure they have a solid plan for the fall. 56% have received the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

which ensures full tuition to any in-state public college or university for excellence on MCAS. Two students have been awarded the prestigious Springfield/Holyoke full four-year full tuition scholarship from Smith College.

Justin Baker added that May 2nd is the beginning of teacher appreciation week. The leadership team is requesting a contribution to honor teachers with various surprises such as ice cream, breakfast, box lunches and gifts.

Amy Wesley informed the Board that she has asked Vanessa Pileggi to take on the task of coordinating the posting of public notices for board meeting agendas and meeting minutes within a reasonable amount of time following the meetings. Ms. Wesley would also like to have service support as an agenda item of which she will report on monthly. This will give the Trustees an idea of what is going on behind the scenes covering finance to enrollment, community aid, etc.

*Graduation Plans:*

SABIS graduation is June 5th at 5:00pm in the courtyard. Each student will receive 4 tickets and the event will be live streamed. The BOT is invited to join the celebration.

Anne-Marie Nicolai motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:16pm. The motion was seconded by Luis Aponte.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne-Marie Nicolai, Secretary  
SICS Board of Trustees