

SunRidge School
Charter Council Meeting
Minutes for 3/12/19

Call to order: 6:00pm

Present: Kalen, Rebecca, Laurie, Curt, Jaime, Deidra, Inna

Absent: Brian, Johann

Note taker: Rebecca

Quorum: yes

Approval of agenda: Inna/Curt/7/0

Correspondence: *none*

Approval of minutes for February meeting: Curt/Jaime/6/0/1 (*abstention due to absence*)

Open Session & Announcements: *none*

A) Review Action Items/Old Business

All met, with exception of hearing SUSD board meeting report from Johann since he was not present.

B) Admin Report

Pledge – We're behind in achieving our goal for this time in the year. Kalen sent out an appeal last week focusing on the importance of specialty teachers and aides in supporting the whole educational program. Theresa will compose a letter to reach out to encourage those who are still not participating. The Foundation has an idea for appreciating those who enroll in the automatic pledge program currently, as well as incentivizing future enrollment – probably a gift certificate to Screamin' Mimi's.

Enrollment –One student from 6th grade has transferred out. Homeschool enrollment is at 9. Winter attendance has been low due to illness but overall average for the year is still healthy. We have about 200 applications for the admission lottery. Open House was very well attended, even though not mandatory, including many families looking for grades openings.

Hiring – Cynthia Wood (homeschool parent) is now an assistant in the after-care program two days a week. We have an applicant for the director position, and Kalen negotiated with the district for a pay increase to make this position more appealing.

The math/science position will be posted as full-time for next year after negotiations with district.

Ms. Godfrey has returned in a part-time capacity, with 1st grade and RSP.

Public Waldorf certification – Certification through the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education is an option for SunRidge. We had a discussion of the relative merits and realities of this process. Our consensus was that, while we appreciate the Core Principles of Waldorf Education, it is not a priority to pursue certification at this point.

C) 8th grade trip approval – Cristina is negotiating with Santa Cruz Adventure Company and the budget looks to be well within school guidelines.

Action: 8th grade trip details to be approved next month.

D) Charter Council membership – *nothing to report*

E) School Survey review – We looked at survey results from staff, parents, and 5th and 7th grade students and focused on percentages that had gone down or were otherwise potentially concerning.

Areas of growth/concern (staff):

- instructional approaches and materials that meet children from minority groups
- students not respecting staff
- school's collaborative decision-making values not seeming evident in processes
- teacher salaries

Areas of growth/concern (parents):

- caring support for students with social or emotional challenges
- developmentally rigorous academic program
- instructional materials that foster multicultural understanding and appreciation of diversity
- disruptive student behavior
- awareness of/satisfaction with work done by Charter Council and Parent Council
- collaborative decision-making
- parent volunteerism is down as self-reported (74% in 2017 and 63% in 2019)

Areas of growth/concern (students):

-7th grade had many low scores for feeling safe and supported and for risky behavior assessment. We have concerns about this group and Kalen will follow up with the teacher to address it.

-In both classes, there is an increase in the percentage who watch a lot of TV and movies and play a lot of video games. We see a correlation with decrease in social-emotional health.

Inna expressed concerns about diversity training for our teachers, including that students feel safer in many ways when teachers have these tools and skills.

Action: Kalen will follow up with 7th grade and report back to us.

- F) Budget planning for 2019/2020** – For every one-percent of a salary increase for all employees, the cost would be \$16.6K. We need to keep the overall budget lean, and we are transitioning to a higher paid position for math & science. We will also need a lunch service employee and may make it a combined aide position. We need to look at ways to improve revenue and expenditure balance: Options include ensuring that pledge meets its goal, increasing homeschool enrollment, increasing class size, and/or decreasing specialty programs or instructional aide time. Making our voices heard at the state level is also important.
- G) Calendar planning for 2019/2020** – We looked at two options, one that maintains the tradition of weeks off in February and April, and one that has a week off in March (aligned with local schools) and several long weekends. The teachers really want February break. Deidra and Rebecca advocated for March as childcare is available and it aligns with a majority of area schools.
- H) Long-term planning discussion with Foundation members Robert and Dale** –

We began with a lay of the land from each group, with the intent of forming some questions we would like answers to.

Charter Council feels that the ideal would be to own the site we currently lease (current value approx. \$3 million). We have explored the option of buying land and building from the ground up, which is a much more costly option. We are also exploring whether becoming an independent charter makes sense in helping meet our goals (including improving teacher salaries).

The Foundation has also looked at buying the site and whether we would want to partner with a third party in order to do so (and, if so, who would that be/not be). It would be the Foundation who would buy/own the property. The Steiner Foundation could potentially make us a loan.

A mortgage payment would be similar to what we pay in rent.

Questions:

- What is the future playing field for charter schools (under the Newsom government)?
- What can we use to negotiate with Sebastopol Union School District, if they are firmly opposed to selling? What is our theoretical Plan B?
- What other costs would we incur in an ownership situation?
- With whom could we partner to acquire the property/site?
- How would we contract for special ed services?
- What risks might we open ourselves to as an independent charter?
- How do we increase teacher salaries if staying in the Twin Hills School District?
- What would it be like to have teachers form their own union? Pros and cons?
- Can we buy a site outside of our district? If we were to do so, are we eligible for state funding for buildings?
- Does ownership by the Foundation change what funds we are eligible to receive for facilities?
- Is it true that SUSD would owe us ADA money if we had 30+% of our students coming from the Sebastopol Union District? We're below that.
- Do we want the Foundation to take the lead in negotiations with the school district?

-What are other asks we could make of the district, if we can't pull together funds to purchase the site, or if we learn that they are adamant about not selling?

-What would the process/regulations look like if we were to find a third-party organization to help us make the purchase?

-What are the current and future concerns of the SUSD?

Action: Rebecca will send all CC and Foundation members the list of questions for people to take up and research.

I) Snack for next meeting—Laurie

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Davenport