

Seven Hills Charter Public School Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday April 6, 2010 at 6:00pm-8:00pm
Held in the Library at Seven Hills Charter Public School

Welcome

Meeting began at 6:10 PM. In attendance: Carlton Watson, Kevin Bradley Marianna Islam, Joanne Newcombe, Beverley Bell, Robert Ramirez, Krista Piazza, Cindy Krackovic,
Guest: Rebecca Blodgett from the Learning First Foundation.
Staff in attendance included Mary Garland-Human Resource Manager, Sherry Trainque-Student Support Manager, Henry Chamberlain-Grade 2 Teacher, Donna Clark-Cranham-Grade 2 Teacher, Rene Underwood-Grade 2 Teacher, Alkia Conerly-ESL Teacher, Mike Belanger-Technology Integration Specialist, Kate Clark-JA SpEd Teacher, Shelly Hinds-Academy Director. Beth Gillis recorded meeting minutes.

Minutes:

Minutes of the March 2, 2010 SHCPS Board of Trustees Meeting presented for approval

Motion to approve the meeting minutes: Joanne Newcombe

Second: Kevin Bradley

All voted to approve.

Public Comments

The BOT has allotted 15 minutes to those individuals from the community or staff who have notified the Board in advance that they would like to speak on a topic that may or may not be on the agenda.

1) Presentations:

- a. Site Visit Feedback Report & School Planned Response: Response due April 9th
Presented by Ms. Piazza. Mr. Watson asked for the Board's reaction to the report and explained that this is a "critical junction relative to our charter." Mr. Watson explained that Seven Hills is at a crisis moment and that the school must establish a new set of criteria to meet our goals. The school must convince the DESE that Seven Hills has a clear understanding of the concerns and have a plan in place to address them. Mr. Watson wants to make sure that the Board is "all on the same page."

Ms. Piazza commented that the MCSA has provided a list of consultants who have worked with schools throughout their renewal processes. Ms. Piazza. Based on reference checks, Ms. Piazza narrowed the field to three consulting firms and then conducted interviews with each. After doing so, the candidate who was clearly most qualified and responsive was identified (resume provided in the packet). She has asked her to prepare a proposal of services and fees and has set up an in person meeting with the board chair for next week. They will discuss the school's history and goals, relative to our accountability plan and site visit reports. She may facilitate our annual Board of Trustee retreat as a springboard for renewal consulting.

Ms. Bell suggested that they revisit the Board roles and responsibilities relative to governance and school performance. Mr. Watson responded that the Board will move to a higher level of understanding at the Retreat. He also suggested that all of the Board subgroups need to remember that their work was designed as a direct result of conversations around student achievement and school performance. We need to revisit our approaches to the tasks to ensure

that they are policy focused, not operational. Ms. Islam suggested that attention be given to 3 or 4 areas to be developed within each subcommittee, i.e., how does parent/family partnership address student achievement and what will student motivation contribute to achievement, etc. Ms. Newcombe believed that the subcommittees were already doing this. Ms. Bell supports the idea of picking a “single theme” that should run through all of the sub-committees.

In response to Mr. Bradley’s questions about “teaching to the MCAS,” Ms. Newcombe answered that teachers are trained in Massachusetts Frameworks but the students are not taught “MCAS skills.” Instead, students are taught test-taking skills that they may apply to the MCAS test. It is the expectation that teachers arrive with a basic understanding of the Frameworks, but they do require and receive training about understanding them and using them to guide instruction. Ms. Piazza discussed the difference between teaching content, skills and critical thinking versus test taking skills. Both are necessary.

The Board asked how the teachers responded to the report. Ms. Piazza answered that the teachers do understand the sense of urgency. Ms. Underwood explained that “teachers are working hard but not seeing the results; it’s disheartening.” The teachers know what the students are accomplishing day-to-day and that does not show in one test. She also discussed that every year is a building block on the year before and it is a shared responsibility (i.e. the third grade test is based on the achievement not only of third grade but of every grade leading up to that). Ms. Clark feels that consistency in implementation of school programs and expectations is key, as is the leadership role in holding people accountable. She also commented that time needs to be allowed to see if the things we have put in place are going to be successful. Ms. Newcombe responded that the reality is that Seven Hills only has one year; “the school is on the line” and “we need to work smarter, not harder.”

Ms. Piazza presented a draft of the site visit response letter and asked the Board to offer their thoughts on revisions. Ms. Piazza asked that the Board members email her with comments about the response letter. Also, Mr. Watson felt that his signature should be included on the letter. The final letter must be submitted to the DOE before April 9, 2010.

2) Board Report:

- a. Board Work Plan: Sub-Committee updates and procedure for information sharing. The minute taker from the subcommittee meetings will email the minutes to all participants. In addition Cindy Krackovic will save in the subcommittee sub-folder in the BOT shared folder on our website and information provided.

Effective Instruction: Joanne Newcombe, Beverley Bell, Jessica Fede

- *Leadership Model*
- *Teacher Recruitment and Retention*
- *Professional Development*
- *Connection to Other Schools*
- *Continuum of School Services*
- *Charter School Promotion*
- *Homework*

Ms. Newcombe presented her findings after meeting with staff at Seven Hills. Mr. Watson asked that the sub-committees report be submitted to Ms. Piazza for her response. In response to a question regarding the

organizational chart, Ms. Newcombe answered that it is “simply a suggestion,” but felt that the roles of Superintendent and Academy Director/Principal require clearer definition and separation. Ms. Clark-Cranham commented that having one person in charge of the day-to-day responsibilities for the entire school may be too much. She suggested breaking up the position into 3 separate roles; each having specific responsibilities. Ms. Underwood expressed her interest in seeing different models, although it was pointed out by the Board that the school has one year to be successful; time is of the essence.

Ms. Piazza said that we need admin member(s) whose sole responsibility is instructional leadership. Currently, people responsible for that have other responsibilities as well and the immediate need sometimes takes precedence over overarching instructional support and longer term goal achievement.

In response to Ms. Clark-Cranham’s question about a timeline for any adjustments in the administrative model, Mr. Watson suggested that a final decision should be made within 1 to 2 months. Mr. Watson again asked for the Board’s approval to provide Ms. Piazza with the authority to move forward. Ms. Piazza explained to the Board that the roles between Superintendent and Academy Director/Principal are already clearly defined “on paper” but it does not get implemented the way that it was designed. -

The Board agreed that they will wait for Ms. Piazza’s recommendations in response to the subcommittee’s report.

Parent and Family Partnerships: Suzanne Biglione, Kevin Bradley, Robert Ramirez

- *School Member Profiles*
- *Strategies for Engagement*
- *Effective use of Support Services*
- *Charter School Promotion*
- *Homework*

Minutes from 2/22 and 3/22 meeting provided, and family survey

Mr. Bradley reported that the subcommittee has prepared a questionnaire that revolves around supporting families. The committee asked that this become a solo homework assignment taken home by the youngest member of the Seven Hills family. Mr. Watson reiterated Ms. Islam’s suggestion that this focus be addressed by all committees. Ms. Clark-Cranham presented the survey to the primary academy and reported that it was well received with just a few minor changes. Ms. Piazza confirmed that the survey would be translated for non-English-speaking families.

Student Motivation: Joe Hungler, Marianna Islam, Melissa Haffty

- *Homework*
- *Charter School Promotion*

Ms. Islam reported that the subcommittee is taking a “bottom-up” approach and hearing directly from the students regarding their learning experiences. She says that it has provided a great deal of insight to the committee. Ms. Underwood suggested making the committee members available within the school and arranging a meeting day (similar to the days when Ms. Newcombe was available to staff) whereby students could provide input about student motivation. Ms. Islam confirmed that the subcommittee already has a plan to do that in place. Ms. Piazza reported that students who participated were very open to discuss their daily issues both at home and at school.

b. Update on recruitment.

- c. May retreat: Discussion around agenda items was had, and submission of the resume of the proposed facilitator was provided.

3) Old Business:

- a. Mid Cycle Review Report – Ms. Piazza congratulated the Student Support Manager, Ms. Trainque and her team. Seven Hills has met all criteria for the mid-cycle review.
- b. Update on RTTT: Mass did not make first cut. State to reapply in June.
- c. Date change on Federal Program Review to June 3rd and 4th. Inspection Protocol provided.

5) New Business:

a) FY2011 Calendar

Ms. Newcombe asked what the differences were between Draft #1 and Draft #2. Ms. Piazza reported that the start date on Draft 2 was later, due to staff feedback and concerns over student attendance during the first weeks of school. There was also a staff request to combine two of the the half-day professional development days into one-day events but Ms. Piazza said that the PD times were aligned with benchmarking times in order to give teachers an opportunity to work collaboratively on data analysis and action planning. Ms. Piazza confirmed that Seven Hills' February and April breaks are in line with Worcester Public Schools.

Motion to accept the FY2011 Calendar: Joanne Newcombe

Second: Beverly Bell

All voted in favor.

- b) Tofias 3yr Audit Proposal – Ms. Krackovic reported that a full audit of all federal grants will now be conducted as a result of the ARRA funding and a resulting additional FY2010 cost of \$6,500. She asked the Board members to accept this increase and the 3 year audit proposal for FY2011, FY2012 and FY2013 provided by Tofias. Ms. Krackovic noted that we went out to bid three years ago, and with the Charter Renewal in FY2011 it would make sense to hold off going to bid for this coming three year period. Ms. Newcombe noted that we should go out to bid after this second three year period.

Motion to accept Tofias' 3-year proposal: Joanne Newcombe

Second: Beverly Bell

All voted in favor.

- c) Drama Ad: Each year the Board purchases an advertisement on the back cover of the school's musical program for \$100. Request was made to approve this ad for the FY2010 production.

Motion to purchase an advertisement: Kevin Bradley

Second: Marianna Islam

All voted in favor.

- d) Premium Only Plan (POP): Approval on document now carried under ADP verses HR Knowledge name. Ms. Krackovic reports that is the same plan; nothing has change except the originator of the plan.

e)

Motion to approve: Joanne Newcombe

Second: Beverly Bell

All voted in favor.

- f) Alumni Scholarship through LFF – Ms. Blodgett from the Learning First Foundation presented information about the Alumni Scholarship. Ms. Blodgett is asking the Board members as individuals to contribute to the Alumni Scholarship Fund. Criteria for qualification are under development. Checks the the Fund may be given to Ms. Krackovic or donations can be made by visiting the LFF website.

6) Financial Report

- a) Personnel Update: No Changes
- b) Enrollment Report as of 03/30/2010: 667 enrolled, waitlist 364, 671.64 ADM (Feb 15th is final enrollment for March reporting and PP payment calculation)
- c) Cash Balances: February 2010, reported there were no questions
- d) February 2010 Balance Sheet and P/L, reported there were no questions
- e) Budget Scenario Summary: A comparison as well individual scenario data was provided for the following three budgets; Flat Funded, -3% and -5%. Ms. Krackovic presented the three options, noting that her best estimate based on revenue figures and industry information is that funding will come in at around the -3 to -5% as proposed. It is not likely that we will see Flat Funding.
- f) Personnel Budget portion for approval: Ms. Krackovic recommended that we move forward with approval of the personnel budget as built within the -3% scenario to allow the ability to move forward with FY2011 contracts. Ms. Piazza expanded on the conservative nature of the -3% personnel build. Ms. Krackovic noted that if we end up in a -5% revenue situation that there are areas targeted within the personnel build should action be necessary to meet a balanced budget at a -5% revenue scenario.

Motion to adopt: Joanne Newcombe

Second: Beverly Bell

All voted in favor.

7) School Communication: Also visit www.sevenhillscharter.org

- a) Weekly Staff Notes: Accessed via link: <http://www.sevenhillscharter.org/botfiles/>
- b) Weekly Newsletter: visit www.sevenhillscharter.org under “family”

Motion to Adjourn: Joanne Newcombe

Second: Beverly Bell

Meeting adjourned at: 8:00 AM

Next meeting: May 4, 2010

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Elizabeth Gillis