



Boston Renaissance Charter Public School
Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, January 17, 2018, 8:00-10:00am

Trustees in Attendance: Lupita Bispham, Edwine Alphonse, Brian Keith, Shaumba-Yandje Dibinga, Aaron Kesler, Stacia Copeland

Staff/Guests: Alexandra Buckmire, Franklin Shearer, Phil Littlehale (by phone), Tamika Jones (Public Comment only)

Meeting called to order at 8:05

I. Public Comment

Tamika Jones, Parents of Renaissance Executive Committee was present and made a presentation on an international travel opportunity for BRCPS Students with Education First (EF).

The proposed trip would be to England and Wales during April vacation, 2019. The trip would be paid for by families of students. EF offers monthly payment plans, so the more time before the trip, the more the families can stretch out the payments. Students would stay in 3-star hotels. All meals and lodging, logistics, everything is taken care of by EF. Cost is approximately \$2,000 per student, and approximately \$3,000 for adults.

A. Buckmire supported the idea, saying it would be a wonderful experience for our students. One recommendation is that the board look into the liability and insurance before voting.

S. Dibinga shared that she has taken students abroad through her nonprofit organization and seen the positive impact it can have on young people. Also, Ms. Dibinga is familiar with EF because her brother worked there and had a very positive experience. She has seen young people raise money through their own family networks, they can be resourceful.

P. Littlehale will look into the insurance and will provide the Board with an update.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes, November 17, 2017

Two typographical errors found. Minutes accepted by unanimous vote, with the two minor corrections. Typos to be corrected by F. Shearer and minutes posted to BRCPS website.

III. Head of School Report – Alexandra Buckmire

Getting positive feedback on the change in model with the addition of Assistant Directors. We are seeing directors able to get into classrooms much more - which was the main purpose for the creation of the new position - and feedback to teachers has increased dramatically.

Research for Better Teaching (RBT) has been providing strong professional development. Documents have been created to help teachers have a quick reference guide for seeing teaching objectives.

We are seeing greater school-wide consistency in instructional practice, and greater consistency in how we provide observation and feedback. I'm proud of the way leadership and teachers have been working together.

We have been holding a lot of data meetings in recent weeks. We conduct ongoing data review and planning for interventions. MCLASS after-school program has started, targeting 4th grade students with academic interventions to prepare them for the MCAS.

The new Family Resource Center will have a grand opening on Thursday, January 19th. We are working to continue to foster positive relationships with our parents. Student led conferences were a huge success with 672 families in attendance.

Working with Climate and Culture team and with Boston Police Dept. to get the emergency lock-down procedures in place and running drills. BPD has come and toured the building to make sure they are familiar with our layout, exits, etc.

S. Copeland – We are informing families of the seriousness of the flu, letting them know we have had two confirmed cases of Flu, and how to protect themselves and their children, what to do if they see certain symptoms. We have also informed the Day Care.

MLK event on January 12th was a great success, had a very positive and well-run program.

IV. Finance and Operations Report – Phil Littlehale

Food services – The school has recently undertaken the DESE procurement review. There are federal requirements to keep in mind. Currently, the only money we pay on food service is for food service; if we were to buy kitchen equipment there would be very specific rules to follow.

We are in the 4th year of a 5-year contract with Chartwells, our food/dining services provider. We need to allow more time for our contracting process next time. Phil would like to get RFP out in November this year for contract begins in July 2019.

Phil has begun looking into the HVAC throughout the building. We have rooms and areas in the building that vary drastically in temperature. We have paid for a recommission study and report to find out what the challenges are and what it will cost to repair/replace the system. The school and Board will receive the report when it is complete.

FY19 budget process is just getting started. Finance team has begun to look at salaries and benefits. Staff have some thoughts and questions they want to raise – a meeting is scheduled for January 18th with our health insurance broker to discuss options for FY19. Mr. Kesler will join the meeting to share staff concerns.

Enrollment is steady, we are fully enrolled. Due to state regulations, our enrollment on February 15th will have an impact on revenue; hopefully we are fully enrolled at that date.

In regards to bus monitors, we have had trouble getting the position posted due to changes in personnel at Boston Public Schools. Things are moving forward now and the positions should be posted soon.

V. Strategic Planning – Reflections from Meeting with ESC (strategic planning consultants)

L. Bispham – consultants asked some thought-provoking questions, led to a good conversation.

B. Keith – seems like the strategic plan could help us stay ahead of the game on various aspects of governing the school.

E. Alphonse – this is a good opportunity to move more toward proactive thinking, as the Board has had to work from a more reactive posture, in some cases, in recent years.

A. Buckmire – hoping the strategic planning process allows for additional reflection and positive engagement with the Board of Trustees. This should create opportunities for deeper Board engagement, once the plan is established. Also, the school will submit a charter renewal application in 2019 and the strategic plan development is timed well to inform our application.

F. Shearer provided a quick synopsis of the planning process – the current stage of research, to be followed by more forward-looking and planning discussions to take place in early spring. The work should be wrapping up in late May, with a complete strategic plan in place before the school year ends.

Mr. Shearer will contact ESC to provide the board with dates for March/April retreat meeting(s).

VI. Committee Updates

Finance Committee

Committee Chair, Edwine Alphonse, provided an update:

- The student enrollment rate has been more stable than projected, so we should have a budget surplus at the end of the year. This surplus may allow for capital projects that have been placed on hold for now.
- Overall the financial picture has been going well this year, nothing out of the ordinary has come up. Some higher than expected heating costs, but nothing major. As a result, we have more operating cash than we expected. The school would earn higher interest with funds being in our savings account, rather than our operating account.
- Currently, we have a policy that restricts our ability to move our cash reserves from the operating account to the savings account. We want to establish a policy where we would keep two months of operating cash in the operating account and be able to move funds in excess of two months into the savings account. We can earn 1.5% on these funds instead of .2% interest.

Proposed policy change:

401A – Bank Account Balances

The operating checking/sweep accounts shall maintain a minimum balance equal to 2 months budgeted cash expenses. Cash Expenses are defined as all budgeted expenses less noncash expenses (e.g. depreciation, imputed interest expense, in kind expenses.) Funds in excess of this requirement may be moved to the savings account to earn a higher rate of interest.

L. Bispham – Motion to approve the proposed policy on Bank Account Balances, which allows the movement of funds between checking and savings accounts

In favor – Dibinga, Keith, Alphonse, Bispham

Abstain – Kesler and Copeland

(Motion passed by 4 votes, meeting the minimum of at least half of the Board's eight members, articulated in Board by-laws.)

- FY19 budget – Goal is to have the budget approved before June. The Finance Committee will present a budget update at the next meeting in March. The final budget will be prepared for a vote at the May meeting.
- Dibinga – Wondering if there are any fundraisers being planned? Have we had any discussions recently with the Boston Renaissance Foundation Board of Directors?

- Alphonse – The development of a new strategic planning presents a good opportunity to meet with the Foundation Board, and to discuss fundraising, including the Board of Trustees' role in fundraising.

Academic Achievement Committee:

Committee Chair, Aaron Kesler, provided an update:

- The committee met on December 18th
- BPS start times are not going to be changed next year, so we have stability in our schedule, at least for one more school year.
- DESE accountability system has changed in recent years with PARCC and now the new MCAS exam. Our SY17 MCAS scores have set our baseline for the new accountability system. We are preparing for MCAS with ongoing data collection and planning, including the after-school MCLASS program.
- The committee also discussed the need for a technology plan. Students will be taking the test on computers as we proceed in the coming years, so we need to ensure they have adequate computers and develop the necessary technological proficiency.
- ILT meets weekly; plan developed with Lori Likis in SY17 is being implemented with consistency.
- Scheduling a visit to the Mildred Ave School (BPS), which has a strong elementary school program, particularly their K1 program
- Looking for fundraising support and opportunities to provide additional resources for students
- The committee reiterates its prior recommendation to the Board that we recruit someone with a strong K-12 academic background to join the board.

S. Dibinga – Do we know what schools our 6th graders are applying to and enrolling in this year?

A. Kesler – We don't have data available to present at this time, but it seems we have more students applying to private schools and the exam schools than usual. We have had several visits from the admissions and enrollment staff of local schools to talk to 6th graders about their schools and provide applications.

We do our best to work with students' parents on student transitions from BRCPS to middle schools. Families and parents have to really take the lead and we work to equip the parents with the information, provide updates on deadlines and application requirements.

Mr. Kesler serves as the liaison and point person for the 6th grade team, but all the 6th grade teachers get involved in preparing students and families for transition to 7th grade.

Dibinga – having gone through the transition planning process before as a parent, it was a very difficult experience, very stressful the first time. Would recommend the school hire someone to fill this role.

Buckmire – an intern may be adequate for this role; it may not require a full-time staff person. The school will be looking into this role and will include this in our strategic planning discussions.

Parents of Renaissance Committee

Committee Chair, Shaumba Dibinga, provided an update:

- Open house tomorrow for the new Family Resource Center
- POR raised over \$1000 with the last event
- Feb 16th POR is hosting another event to build family engagement and raise a little money. This event will be a bit more formal than the last one. Board members are welcome to attend.

Governance & Nominations Committee

Election to a second term for Lupita Bispham

- Lupita Bispham's first term has ended. She expressed her interest to serve a second term and Edwine Alphonse made a motion to elect Lupita to a second three-year term.
- The motion was seconded by Shaumba Dibinga.
- Vote was unanimous, all in favor.

Nomination and Election of Fred Lowery, Thermo Fisher Scientific

Franklin Shearer described a recent conversation with Mr. Lowery in which he explained how he was introduced to the school several years ago, leading to a partnership between BRCPS and Thermo Fisher. Franklin informed Mr. Lowery that the Board of Trustees was interested in adding new members at this time, and Mr. Lowery then scheduled a phone call with Board Chair, Senam Kumahia.

Upon speaking to Mr. Lowery, Senam recommended his nomination to the Board; Senam was unable to attend today's meeting and asked Lupita Bispham to bring Mr. Lowery's election to the Board for a vote.

- L. Bispham made a motion to elect Fred Lowery to the BRCPS Board of Trustees
- A. Kesler seconded the motion
Vote was unanimous, all in favor.

A. Buckmire offered a reminder that the board is supposed to have a Vice Chair and that position has been vacant since Ambrose Faturoti left the Board last year. The Board acknowledged the vacancy and agreed to discuss the election of a vice chair later during this school year.

VII. Upcoming Events

Oratorical Society Presentation, January 26th, 8:30am
Chinese New Year Celebration, February 15th, 1:00pm

Motion to Adjourn at 9:48.