

MINUTES
VSWEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2021
VIA [Zoom](#)

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kerstin Kubina (KK)–President
April Sauer (AS)–Secretary
Dan Franks (DF)–Treasurer
John Tanner (JT)
Danielle Martinez (DM)

Nellie Grossenbacher (NG)
Ben Fong (BF)
Myriah Mhoon (MM)
Scott Edwards (SE)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dan Franks

The President and Secretary were present, and a quorum was reached.

GUESTS

Invitees of the Board:
Frank Mirizio (FM)
Michelle Kratzer (MK)

Members of the public present via Zoom/Registration through Google Forms:

- Heather Sullivan
- Blayne Goodman
- JJ
- Barnaby McGillicuddy III Esq.
- Helena Moriarty
- Blayne Goodman
- Jamie Converti
- Sami Rank
- Laura Heaney

OPENING VERSE / INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting was called to order at 6:34pm. KK welcomed the public to the meeting, read the opening verse, and reviewed meeting procedures.

The Board members introduced themselves along with FM and MK.

BOARD EDUCATION

KK I have some heartbreaking news about Joan. Her husband has been ill for a while and has taken a bad turn. He is in hospice, so she is spending as much time as she can with him. Please reach out to her if you know her well to support her.

PARENT COUNCIL

MK Everybody is anxious to hear about Winter Faire. We don't have all the numbers in quite yet. We're waiting for some reimbursements, and then we're also wanting to count the tickets to see how each booth did. There was a survey that went out today to see how everyone felt the faire went. We want as many perspectives as possible. We'd like to know things we can change, improve on, what you loved. There will be a drawing for Renaissance Festival tickets for those who submit their names on the survey. Overall, I'm hearing good things. People loved the layout. The vibe and energy were pretty amazing. It was a success in that way no matter what the money is. It felt amazing, and that's really why we do it—for the community. There are a few asks out right now on PS for Hope and Health. A family lost a loved one, there's holiday meals, there's class gifts. None of these are required. We understand that not everybody can participate or give; even just writing something is appreciated. So don't feel obligated to give money or anything like that.

MM Thank you for all the work you and parent council put into this. I'm not sure if you even got to sit down, so thank you.

DM Thank you to Parent Council, all those who helped, and who attended. We enjoyed having the event, and it was wonderful to see so many board members there. And thank you to everyone who worked a shift.

AS This is such a great community event. I have kids who are not students at DMS, and they look forward to this event every year. They hang out at the tea garden all day and wait for friends and old teachers to stop by. It's just wonderful. It's such a great event, and we're so grateful. I know how hard you and Laura work. You know every detail and can answer every question for those working the faire. It's a tremendous amount of work, so thank you to parent council and everyone who volunteered.

DM I'd love to see an alumni booth since they're so important to our community.

MK We'd love that. If anyone is willing to share ideas and put that together, that would be great.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

FM In regards to Winter Faire: wow. It was an electric environment. There were happy people everywhere. I counted seven board members who weren't just there, you were hands on, working. It really was a true test of stamina. I know you also enjoyed yourselves, but I'm just wowed by the board, parent volunteers, and the general feeling of how exciting everything was. I'm sure members of parent council nit picked afterward to make improvements for next year, but we're so grateful. I will do my best to help push for parent volunteers. Nellie and Danielle were everywhere and anywhere. I'm so happy to have you guys and all the work you do. The community loved every minute of it. My hat's off to you.

01.05.21 Approved

FM We are down to 284. Our budget is 287. We toured 13 students, and 6 have committed to start after break. We tend to weave up and down about five kids. Kudos to Dr. Darian and Crystal Lee and Bonnie Chase who give tours to future DMS families. I'm very proud of them.

FM I want to announce that tomorrow is our first virtue of the month luncheon. We have two adults being recognized: Evan Copaken, a new English teacher, and for non-teaching staff is Felicity Gernert, who is a new special ed aide to us. She is worth her weight in gold. Our two students: Emma Carrera, our student body president, and sophomore Bella Melton. She is a wonderful young lady and was recognized for her compassion and ability to help others. We're very happy for those four individuals. We'll sit and have lunch together and get to chat about what you like, what you want me to address. We'll get some good feedback. The first month went very well.

FM The bathrooms at the high school will start next week. They'll lay lines for AC and electricity. We're hoping to do the noisy stuff while on break. But I'm happy that we're taking the next step on that. Those are the big highlights.

NG Where are we in regards to finding a Waldorf certified teacher for 1st grade for next year?

FM The goal to have Mr. Grant cycle back to 1st grade. When we get back, staff will have some discussions about who will continue on and what their plans are, and then we'll know more. Last year we had Liz Beaven at a board meeting. She is the president of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. The western area. Joan, Peter, and Liz and I will have a conversation. We'll be meeting with the two trainers we had over the summer. We want to know how to get our summer Waldorf teacher training certified. How do we get these people certified? She did say that this isn't something we usually do, but she is hearing and from enough states that it is so hard to find Waldorf trained teachers that she's willing to talk to us about our plan, and she would involve the powers that be to see if she can make that happen for us. We did our training last summer, but now we need to make that certificate official. I'm very happy about that.

NG This summer you're having two levels of training, right?

FM Yes, that's the plan.

NG How many days?

FM Two and half weeks. We're willing to move it to three or four if we need to. My staff's biggest concern is putting out 28k to go somewhere to get trained. I think Parent Council would be willing to help us again to cover summer training. And once we get word from Liz, that would be great.

DM Is there a discernment with those families doing tours? If they're special needs and need services beyond our capacities?

FM Before anyone can enroll, we have to ask for IEP records. We cannot turn away anyone, but there are levels of IEP's that we cannot meet. For children who need a contained classroom, we cannot provide that. With high school we require a transcript to make sure they're on track for graduation. We do have the right to not accept students who aren't on track for graduation. We do scrutinize as much as we can. We also get behavioral reports when we get transfer students. The only reason a school can automatically say no to a student is if they've been expelled from another school district. Schools in AZ are bound to respect the expulsion from another district.

01.05.21 Approved

There's only three reasons to be expelled—bringing drugs and harming people, bringing weapons and threatening violence to the school and people, or assaulting a staff member. I'm not talking about private schools. I do look at those files to decide whether or not to accept students. We do scrutinize past behaviors and academic records.

DM Thank you. Are all classes supported in those areas?

FM We have the standard speech, OT, emotional support, a psychologist. If there's something specific like for vision, we contract that out. Carol Moriarty handles those types of specialty items.

NG Are we doing exit interviews on the families who have left?

FM We haven't done that, but we do ask why they're leaving. Crystal tells me on a spreadsheet the reasons for leaving. In some cases: name, grade, parent has decided to homeschool. We've had about 40 kids leave, and I think out of 40 maybe 4 have specifically listed Covid or masks. And it's not one sided. Not enforcing mask wearing and we don't want our child to wear a mask. I have more families threatening to leave than actually leave.

DM All losses are significant.

FM Yes, I didn't mean that in a personal way.

KK I know that the spiral walk for 1st grade is happening.

FM Yes, it's happening right now.

KK I love Winter Spiral, and I'm grateful that we were able to make this work even though they were originally on quarantine. I'm grateful for the teachers who have put that together.

FM The spiritual piece of this is so critical and important. I was just wowed by it. I did move it up so that we can get kids home in time for their bedtimes. Mr. Rustempasic is handling this right now as we have this board meeting.

BUDGET AND FINANCE

Financial Update

KK Shared her screen to show the Balance Sheet for November 2021. Assets 526k. Total assets at 2.7 million. Shared Profit and Loss on screen. Net income at 202k. We have a new report to share that Monique put together for us. Shared her screen to show FY 21-22 Cash Flow Budget Worksheet. It shows actuals and projections. I highlighted a simple example to look at being electricity. We budgeted 25k for electricity. On the upcoming months we guess what those numbers would be. It's a common practice to blanket an expense that way. Then you can see we had those fluctuations in the early months of school starting. So I felt like this was a nice report so we can keep our eye on budget and tracking as we progress through the year.

DM Can she possibly add year over year?

KK Yes, I like that. I'll follow up with her on that.

01.05.21 Approved

Refinance Update

KK We have all of our paperwork in. I's dotted an T's crossed. We should hear back from Desert Financial soon. That will save us around a 1000 a month, which will be huge across the life of the loan. Gregory, FM, Dan Franks and Monique have all helped with this. We have been in communication with RSF. We're in good standing with them. FM and Amy had a get together recently, so no worries on that relationship at all. And we hope to use their services in the future. We know they give out big project loans, so that might be something we're interested in. So our strong relationship with them remains.

DM May I have the information on the existing rate on the amortization? And then the rates from Desert Financial as well?

Kk Yes, I'll send that out to the board.

BOARD PROCEDURES

Approval of Minutes

KK moved to approve the 12/01/21 Meeting Minutes. DM second. No further discussion. Votes in favor: KK, AS, DM, NG, JT, MM, SE, BF. **Motion passes.**

Board Goals

KK I thought we could each spend two minutes about goals you think are relevant for the board and how we can measure that goal and how it will help the community. I think this will be an ongoing discussion. We can pair it down as we go. Any thoughts on better ways to capture potential goals?

SE So we're coat tailing on Dan Franks's comment at the last meeting?

KK These are based on board goals. He mentioned advisory roles, which could be a specific goal. What do we want to achieve as a board this year?

SE A Waldorf education today is difficult, and I wonder if there's some way that parents can know that we're considering Waldorf education as we make decisions. I think transparency in communication is important. When parents talk, around many schools, there's a feeling that there's a lack of transparency of what's going on in the classroom. I think it's an issue to be aware of. This also applies to the board. There are conversations that shouldn't be public, but there are also conversations that they need to hear about.

KK So is this a goal you're proposing?

SE Yes, transparency from the board.

Kk So how do we measure that goal?

SE I don't know.

KK Community cohesiveness? Does my idea for capturing goals work for everyone?

01.05.21 Approved

DM Yes. And I do need to leave for a moment, but I'll be back.

NG I want to piggy back on SE. His statement about Waldorf and guidelines. I got caught at the last meeting not knowing our mission statement. I feel like one goal I've stated as a board applicant is helping the admin and staff capture Waldorf teachers, train Waldorf teachers, and adhere to the Waldorf curriculum. I don't know how we can do that, but we're all passionate Waldorf parents, and we don't want to lose that. I see some things that are slipping through the cracks, and I think it's important that as a board we're working side by side with admin, that we're adhering the Waldorf education. I've seen classes who aren't making it out to the garden or have only had one painting or their main lesson books aren't great. Waldorf is why we're here. We want this education for our kids. Even though it is a public school, we can still adhere to Waldorf curriculum. I'm so excited that our training has the possibility of being certified.

KK So let me write that down: working with admin and teachers to ensure we're following our Waldorf curriculum.

NG I know that FM has tried for a year to capture Waldorf teachers, and it's hard, so I don't know.

FM Well, the first one is easy. We started with training. We had four trained this year; next year we'll add six. Dr. Darian is looking at main lesson and what is being produced in the form of art or main lesson books. Those are tied to teacher evaluations, so he could share with me for example 6/8 teachers met the goal of four art projects and a completed main lesson books.

NG But what's considered an art project?

FM It's a variety. Maybe painting, maybe sculpture.

NG JT, how many paintings do you do with your 7th grade this school year?

JT So I don't paint wet on wet. We do tape down with traditional watercolors, so that technique takes a longer period--about three weeks to produce one. So I try to have them paint every Friday, but that doesn't always happen. I don't have a number for you.

NG That's a good goal though, it can be gauged.

JT There are many reasons for the painting. It's a different reason in 1st grade than in 7th grade. Next year for example there are colored pencils that can be wet and you can add them to a main lesson book page, so that could be another outlet. Although 8th grade gets more into charcoal drawings. We have some willow, so I'm hoping they can make their own charcoal. I'm probably telling you more than you're interested, not that you're not interested.

NG Other than supporting admin to get teachers certified and hiring teachers who are willing to step outside their comfort zone to change their way of thinking.

KK It will be an ongoing discussion. We have it documented with a couple measures, and we can revisit at our next meeting. I think this is a fantastic first step.

MM I would love to work on a strategic plan. I'm excited that we have the ability to forecast into the future. The possibility of bringing certification to our training is fantastic. I'd like to have a tool that captures all those plans to have a cohesive guide to the next three to five years. I want to

01.05.21 Approved

be innovative and looking into the future. We do feel like we have good leadership and we're moving forward.

KK Strategic planning for 3-5 years, the measure would be to have the plan and being able to have cohesive guidance.

MM Yeah, it gives us a tool to check on guidance, to make sure we have pillars and outcomes and goals to capture everything. Contemplation, training, education.

BF My proposed goal has long and short-term parts centered around development. I'd love to get some grants. Short-term can be getting together some generic grant language and getting those out in the spring. Longer term: starting the conversation to hire a development director. I know there are a lot of needs all competing for attention, but I do think that that position in the long term would put us in a good spot. Development is the goal.

DM I'd like to bring back the goals we haven't completed with the contemplation.

KK I didn't realize there were still goals we hadn't made yet completed.

DM Read portions of the goals.

KK Contemplation completion? How would you word the goal? Contemplation continuance? How will we measure that?

DM Contemplation continuance. I'll read out the plan. Parent Council representation marked off. Retreat activity, learning piece, accountability of board members, faculty feeling unsupported, feeling like no one is above the board, being accessible. Lacking respectful two-way communication.

KK Why don't we put them all on there, and then we can see the progress we've made.

DM Continued to read from the list of requests for board members.

AS Echoed BF's words regarding a development director. I previously read through years of meeting minutes, and the board continually brought up the need for a development director as money was good when we had one and not great when we didn't. I know it would be difficult to make that leap to hire someone, but in the end I think the position will pay for itself.

JT Have we had anyone other than Amy Bird?

AS I don't remember specific names, so maybe not. But I know there was mention of hiring a development director short term. 3 months here, 6 months there, but board members always mentioned that they needed someone full time.

JT I'd like to have the board do a training from the state. It's been six or seven years. FM knows about that, and he could probably speak to that.

FM I think, DM, that was listed as one of the contemplation goals. Wasn't AS contacting someone at the state?

01.05.21 Approved

AS That was Gregory, and the outcome was that we missed the boat for the training, but I do have a name I could contact to see when the next one will be so we could get it on the calendar and be prepared.

FM We've added five board members recently, so maybe they'd do something for us anyway.

AS I can check in on that and see if we can do that.

JT I don't know if this is the board's prevue or not. I know FM knows this. We need programming. But we have to find a way to fund it. We need more happening at the school. I'd point particularly at the middle school. We need greater accessibility to projects and expression, particularly in the area of science. The high school would like that as well. I'd like to keep the middle school strong. I'd like to leave the middle school better than the way I found it. I don't know how the board could help, but I'd like that.

KK Is that something in the curriculum or special projects?

JT Could be both. For example, a strings teacher or wind instruments. We used to have a small ensemble. You could have people come in to assist with blocks. Science in particular takes a lot of materials. I'd like it to be more driven by the school. Fine arts for example in the middle school.

FM All of these goals are great goals, but I don't think we can afford all of them. A strategic plan could incorporate projects, programming, future funding development. All of that can be in a strategic plan. That's a way to incorporate many of them. That way we don't lose any of them. We can pick and choose which items we want to work on during certain years.

KK I love that. Once we start pushing things to back burner, they tend to fall off the stove. My goal is working on documentation and compliance. Gregory started that by creating a playbook, logistical, operational. This will help us for a variety of reasons. Adding in the officers duties of what they do day to day. DM realized our DBA was due, and that wasn't something that was documented, so this would help with operational efficiency. I'd like to seamlessly onboard or offboard officers and members. I'll add Dan Franks's goal as well. I'll put together a document and send that out to the board.

Tax Credit Update

DM We're definitely behind where we'd like to be. I think that's a sign of the times. I had a conversation with Melissa. She had some wonderful approaches to our marketing. We've been relying on parent square and face to face interactions. We'll work on that, making sure we have reps at class meetings, getting with Crystal to find out if we're talking tax credits on tours, and making sure people know it's not limited to our families. We're up to \$1700, but in a normal year we'd be about 10k at this point. She suggested we change our approach to families participating instead of dollar amounts. We've incorporated working with Laura to make sure messaging is going out, so we are going to be changing our approach. Melissa was willing to draft up a new timeline and new steps to see how that would work with the approach.

KK Is there anything we can do as we finish up this last 20ish days?

01.05.21 Approved

DM Sure. We'd like families to donate by December 31st. Postcards were delayed in production, but we'd like to get something going home with students. So promote as much as we can when we're talking to families and friends.

KK Could you send the board the flyer? That way we can get the message out.

DM Ms. Deb recommended that we update the flyer so that it's a direct pay on the site.

MM The AZ State statute did revise that it's not for corporations.

DM We've been more successful when we've decided on a specific project to fund.

MM I always thought that it would be interesting to see a visual of Waldorf supplies vs standard crayons and putting a dollar amount to that. Our supplies are very expensive, so I thought that would be a good visual.

DM Ms. Deb does a lot of ordering so I think she could get that price to us, so we can incorporate that in the flyer.

Document Reviews

KK Covid-19 Mitigation, Parent Code of Conduct, Bylaws, etc. I thought a good way to approach these reviews is to review covid mitigation first and then we can review that as homework, and then we can come back with suggestions for revisions. That way we can keep our thoughts organized.

SE I would like to help and collect documents because the page on Maricopa public health is pretty watered down. I think the CDC offers more information which would allow more wiggle room. FM, are you aware of any violations so we can avoid any potholes?

FM In May/June, I contacted the AZ Charter Board. A lot of parents were asking why other districts weren't sending people home. I asked her about that; it's a budgeting issue. If they got a fine for 150k it would be nothing to them. She asked me if we get fined 150k per incident how would that affect your school? I said that would close our school. So she said her recommendation was that we follow the Maricopa County and AZ State health department guidelines. They're the departments that fine, not the CDC. I did more checking because parents have asked if any schools have been fined. I don't know of any. But do we want to take that chance? Especially as we are refinancing? That could really affect us. I know this because I've talked with Gregory and Amy Bird, and our loan could fall through if we make changes and are not following these departments of health recommendations. Parents have asked me to check in on this stuff. I have checked into these things. They asked if other schools are sending kids home, so I looked into it. The first two schools I called were Tempe Prep and Benjamin Franklin, and they have both shut down. So I stopped calling after that. That was enough to say yes, other schools similar to us in size are closing down.

SE Was there an outbreak?

FM At Tempe Prep, there were sleepovers over the break and they had several cases and shut the whole school down. At Benjamin Franklin, they had several cases in second grade and shut that class down. Typically, it's a week of shut down. I definitely check all this stuff when parents come to me with questions. I'm trying to be a good listener to all. This topic is heart burn for all

01.05.21 Approved

of us. I wish I had an answer. SE sent me some information, and I forwarded it to KK, and we had a conversation. The CDC information fluctuates all the time with new information. I'm not sure that we've taken a look at our mitigation plan from a while ago.

KK I think that's what we want to do. Maybe we create a folder on the drive, and we can add information to it so everyone feels like their documentation is presented to the board. We'll know what our current mitigation plan is. All I ask is that we try to refrain from Facebook feed stuff. I think we can all agree that those aren't the best sources. We want the best information to make it into the folder. I know there's a parent group working on healing the community, and I'd like to hear from them. I'm always hesitant when someone states they speak for the community. I want to make sure we're not overstepping. Those are my thoughts on gathering data so we can review the mitigation plan.

NG I appreciate that we aren't accepting memes, but are we accepting information outside the CDC?

SE Science is broken down to levels. Double blinded studies all the way down to five, which is expert testimonies. We need to keep our level of evidence above a three.

NG I'm saying information from doctors.

MM Are you asking, 'can that be shared?'

NG KK is asking for credible information.

MM I think it's per the person. I don't think it means we'll land in that direction, simply that we shared it.

FM I think we need to make sure that we offer the AZ Department of Health and the Maricopa County Health. I know no one's been fined, but I don't want to be the only Executive Director that's been fined.

KK I want to find a way to get everyone's information available. SE, is there a way to give us any pointers?

SE Well, we'd worry about amount of documentation. Of course, we need to offer up documents from local health departments and the CDC. When you submit an article for scientific publication, it's already marked by its level. I think we should approach it that way.

NG That's reasonable. I was just wanting to know what level I could provide information. As FM can tell you I've shown him medical studies from the CDC.

KK We'll create that folder, and if we get data dumps, then we'll consider.

MM I'm curious about the purpose. There seems to be a high probability that we're going to change the mitigation plan. Are there specific lines we're looking to change? Are we wiping everything or are we just blessing it?

DM We made that mitigation a few years ago and it's expired. Right now we're just following the CDC guidelines.

01.05.21 Approved

KK We've voted to continue to follow a plan for this year. We can look at the data and review the plan and see if we want to change things or not. We also want to consider how this will affect the community or our insurance rates, etc.

SE I think it's about changing as the data changes to make sure that we are being compliant and not being outdated and insensitive. I wonder if it wouldn't be helpful to send out a message to parents saying that we're aware of the issues and we're working on it.

KK I think we can do that.

NG I think the more communication the better.

JT I don't think we need a motion. We want to do everything we possibly can for the safety of the children. That's our number one priority. I would add that avoiding having to pull classes and avoid going online is also a priority. That's disastrous in many different ways. It takes quite a lot of recovery time for kids. It takes a toll on kids. There's a lot of factors, so I appreciate the thoughtfulness of this conversation.

KK Thank you. Some excellent points. Any other discussion or thoughts?

NG I know a few months back, part of the contemplation was that we were asked to be more responsive in our emails. One of the things we talked about was making an auto response. Was that ever done?

KK I don't think so. DF was supposed to connect with Deb to make that happen. I don't think it happened, but I will follow up on that.

NG I'm wondering if it would be helpful to send out a survey to the community to see what their concerns are and how they're feeling about the work we're doing.

KK I'm concerned about running into meeting violations since this topic isn't on the agenda.

NG Let's put that on the next agenda, and I'll have that ready.

MM We have two meetings a month, and we used to have one meeting. Can we put that on our next agenda to discuss that and see if we'd like to make a change?

KK Yes. I'll get that on the agenda.

KK moved to adjourn tonight's meeting. NG second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: JT, AS, DM, NG, KK, MM, SE, BF. **Motion passes.**

CLOSING VERSE

SE read the closing verse.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:24pm.

Prepared by AS on 12.15.2021.