Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School

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Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - DRAFT
Wednesday, November 29, 2023, 6:30 p.m.
https://akfcs-org.zoom.us/j/94761349175?pwd=Q08rUEtjQ0d0N0xZTC9sWi9vMFUzUT09
Webinar ID: 947 6134 9175 Passcode: 264643
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Trustee Chair Patrick Royce, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
Attendance Recorded:
Board Members: Adam Beaudry, Patrick Royce, Noah Ligeti, Amy Vernon, Shelly Yarnie, Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku
Guest: Melanie Rivera, Breaker28
Staff: Gabriel Beltran, Andrew Cruickshank, Dr. Carrie Cole, Amelia Cabral, Kelly Gould, Robert Kerr, Shelly Hinds, AnnMarie Little, Heidi Paluk

Chair Royce read into the meeting the AKFCPS Mission: "*The Mission of the Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School is to assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children by providing a classical liberal arts education grounded in the great works of Western Civilization and aimed at academic excellence, musical competence, and character formation.*"

There were no public comments
There was no old business.

Chair Royce called for a motion to approve October meeting minutes. Edits to October minutes will record Patrick Royce's "Yes" vote approving motions.
Chair Royce made a roll call vote to approve the minutes. Mr. Beaudry made the motion, and Mrs. Yarnie seconded.

Mrs. Vernon – yes	Mr. Beaudry – yes
Ms. Zagabe-Ndiku – yes	Ms. Yarnie – yes
Mr. Ligeti – yes	Mr. Royce – yes

Action: Trustees approved October minutes with edits.

Meeting Attachments:
Strategic Plan - Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School - DRAFT
Executive Director's Update
Executive Session Agenda

Chair Royce, welcomed Melanie Rivera, Breaker 28 consultant to present the draft of Strategic Plan pillars to trustees.

Ms. Rivera provided attachments for trustees and guided them through the strategic plan draft. Ms. Rivera pointed to areas to direct trustees' focus for discussion and provide Ms. Rivera feedback to

incorporate it and make it into a final draft. Ms. Rivera asked trustees to include any points not discussed in the overview to include in feedback as there will be time to review and submit to create a final draft. Ms. Rivera shared with trustees a way of providing feedback. They can either use Google documents to make edits and/or comments that are shared amongst trustees and the Admin Council or Email Executive Director, Heidi Paluk and Ms. Rivera with any edits and/or comments.

Ms. Rivera encouraged trustees to provide constructive feedback and shared several examples to make changes and/or considerations either broad as a strategic directive, or granular such as editing a sentence. Ms. Rivera also explained comments can contain areas for exploration, which could be implemented into the strategic plan, other considerations may be tabled until a future period to be determined by the trustees and executive director.

Mission Statement – Mrs. Rivera recalled in the previous presentation to the trustees, a member brought up the AKFCS Mission Statement. Discussion about if a new mission needed to be included with this plan since the intent is to update it and this plan should be aligned. The Mission Statement needs to be formally approved by the Board of Trustees, this is noted in the footnote of the draft plan. **Vision Statement**- Ms. Riveria suggested the trustees focus on the vision statement. Vision statement is where the board of trustees have an important role.

Ms. Rivera began the introduction of the priority of the three-year plan, that she has engaged with the trustees and Executive Director Paluk in candid conversations, reviewed documents and the draft contains the priorities that were already known areas to focus on; there should no be any surprises contained in the draft.

In the previous trustee meeting in September, Ms. Rivera talked through the broader areas Talent - Academic Achievement - Infrastructure and Systems - Facilities and Family Trust & Partnership. Each pillar goes into having a tight strategic plan draft. Ms. Rivera spent time getting the pillars organized by creating table documents with columns in each pillar for Related Activities and Subsystems to Refine and Measures of Success Over 3 Years. Under the Academic Achieve 3-Year Plan, Ms. Rivera noted the schools' accountability goals and other goals that may not align timewise with the three-year strategic plan. There may be points that are tracked against next year, some things that are tracked against two years, there are some things that are tracked against five years. Ms. Rivera suggested trustees provide feedback or questions about the timeline in Academic Achievement.

Talent - Ms. Rivera explained the deep dive in the Talent pillar to make progress. Ms. Rivera shared that, it is her opinion that it is getting the right people, in the right positions can make the most difference. Reviewed recruitment, onboarding, development and support, and performance management. Questions to consider – measure whose talent is managed when things are not going in the direction AKFCS wants. How to make sure AKFCS is measuring good performance? What will make the biggest difference?

Summarizing Talent – Ms. Rivera placed an emphasis on development and support. If trustees have other areas to focus on, a good place to provide comments and feedback (ie – "this feels a little off").

Academic Achievement – Ms. Rivera noted important modifications making sure that academic achievement is tracking not only against Worcester public schools and the State but with other comparable schools as well. A deeper focus on support in this area will require AKFCS to hire a Chief Academic Officer (CAO) role to oversee that academic program. CAO is an important part of how to

ensure AKFCS meets the progress over the next few years. Ms. Rivera noted the accountable plan was added to Academic Achievement as well as the goals. Ms. Rivera commended the trustees and Executive Director Paluk for the goals set forth. This pillar has a lot of work and advises being careful not to add more but to manage Academic Achievement efficiently.

Summarizing academic achievement – Meeting Achievement Achieve will put AKFCS in a position where they want to be. Adding a CAO and managing this pillar is key. The goals of academic achievement have to be loud and clear to faculty.

Key Programs and Systems – AKFCS looks more closely at core systems, structures, and processes in the following areas: Talent, Operations & Facilities, Finance, and Specials (Gym, Art, etc.) Development, Academic Achievement & Character Development. Key questions to ask: What are your talent systems? What are the processes and procedures you have in place for operations, facilities, and finance? Has AKFCS controlled the controllable?

Summarizing Key Programs and Systems – Ms. Rivera suggests conducting an audit to review the optimization of core systems.

Facilities – Ms. Rivera stated there should be a needs assessment and build out a plan for Facilities. Ms. Rivera noted some areas in Facilities may have changed in working with building and discussion between trustees and the Executive Director.

Key questions: How is AKFCS talking about repairs and priorities? What resources are available to the school in terms of space? How are you considering shifts to school space?

Summarizing Facilities – Important for the team to work with the Executive Director and manage priorities. The draft is more focused on making repairs vs building a new facility. Renovating, what AKFCS has, how to optimize what you have, and finalizing the plan, to raise money, and spend resources on buildings. Also, consider the cost of the student experience. Ms. Rivera summarized this pillar could be the most identified area of modification.

Family, Trust, and Partnership – Ms. Rivera noted the emphasis on family communication. Some of the criticism heard was not keeping families in the loop or not hearing enough about activities/events/information, or hearing information too late. Ms. Rivera acknowledges the truth that people are not reading information. Ms. Rivera tagged perception versus reality. Ms. Rivera noted similar outcomes from other schools. Identified pillars can focus on establishing clear ownership of who owns family communication and various contexts within the district and what are the appropriate service levels.

Key questions to consider - For example, if there's been a major shift to a department that's gonna impact students, do families need to know? How to communicate with schools differently? What communication is the school committed to that is standardized?

Summary of Family, Trust, and Partnership – AKFCS has to have calibrated, expectations, and service levels around when families find out information. Have clear ownership. Continuing to deliver value to parents and students, and seeking parents' feedback and engagement is another area to continue to build trust and partnership. It is a protective mechanism in addition to providing good information.

In conclusion, in the draft, Ms. Rivera referred the trustees to the action plan for each pillar. The action plan is part of the draft, a good place to start when thinking of implementation and measurement of the strategic pillars. She suggested trustees take more time to discuss the draft, what is important in the direction of AKFCS, and how to be aligned with other goals. Referred to the documents to add feedback and comments, as well as and in addition to directional and exploratory ideas.

Trustees thanked Ms. Rivera for her overview and the details in the draft. Ms. Rivera commented that AKFCS needs to know what is being done quite well and identify areas that are absolutely urgent to address. Ms. Rivera recalled, generally speaking, that AKFCS trusts their leaders to know that the work is happening. AFKCS trusts the management level to have the school's best interest at heart. There are of course areas that the school knows better that Ms. Rivera was not able to deeply dive into such as finance or transactional function in HR as an example. What is the culture around development and support when people don't meet our standards?

Mr. Royce suggested taking an informal poll of trustees to think about the top two pillars they would like to focus on. Can begin to shape the ranking and priority from the input of trustees have further discussions and provide feedback and comments on shared drafts? Some Trustees made remarks to prioritize Academic Achievement, Talent, and Facilities, and all trustees would expand on their preferences and provide those priorities to Ms. Rivera and Executive Director Paluk.

Trustee Yarnie – 1) Academic Achievement. Soft 2) Talent – Having competent staff, the ability to recruit the best, and ensuring the culture is inclusive.

Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku – 1) Academic Achievement. 2) Talent. 3) Facilities – AKFCS has grown to where technology and facilities need to grow with the growth of schools.

Trustee Royce – Soft 1) Academic Achievement. Soft 2) Talent (correlation of talent benefitting academic achievement) Noted sense of belonging and the athletics at AKFCS.

Trustee Beaudry – Noted Facilities (can also undermine if not paid attention to) AKF has grown to the level to make sure it can respond to the needs of the students. Facilities should not be the major thing but in our case, it has become because it can easily get in the way of the good things we're trying to accomplish.

Ms. Rivera commented that it is beneficial to measure and track retention, recruitment, and the culture that this is a sense of belonging, even for the staff, that will ensure longevity. Establishing clear expectations will help in thinking about when a school has a quick turnover and staff it weakens achievement and even just here, complicity. If everybody has the same philosophy, the main mindset, they achieve better than new employees who come in with their thoughts on philosophy and try to do their very best.

Trustees engaged in discussion on the Facilities pillar and thinking of a full analysis to gauge where Facilities fall in place of a priority. The trustees also talked about the culture at AKFCS, athletics, arts, and specials.

Ms. Rivera commented that some topics discussed can fall into pillars when you think of some subset of the pillars. Ms. Rivera provided the example of Trustee Yarnie making a good point about the culture. AKFCS is aware of the culture and sense of belonging. Ms. Rivera suggests trustees keep up conversations on priorities.

Chair Royce expanded on Ms. Rivera's suggestions, where trustees are considering talking about facilities, it's not the highest priority but can shift to be talking about and permits and addresses are very high ticket items. Then talked about athletics, which can fall under academics or culture holistically, and trustees need to frame conversations.

Ms. Rivera commented for trustees to prioritize and focus on the academics and on some of the culture and talent things. Replying to AKFCS having an amazing facility in sports however would target attention to a higher priority, restructuring things that are going on academically. Ms. Rivera provided a technique example of how to prioritize strategic points for trustees and think about the integrity of the school mission and alignment of goals.

Ms. Rivera concluded that she will keep working with Executive Director Paluk on revising the draft based on comments, edits, and feedback for trustees.

Chair Royce requested a timeline in place for trustees to provide edits, edits incorporated by the Executive Director and Ms. Rivera then make a final draft presentation at the next full trustee meeting.

Strategic Plan Edit Timeline

- Wednesday, December 6 - Trustees provide comments on Google Docs or emails to Executive Paluk and Ms. Rivera.
- Friday, December 15 – Revised draft to trustees to review and make final comments and edits.
- Wednesday, December 20 – Trustees presented with a final draft of the Strategic Plan for review and vote.

Chair Royce thanked Ms. Rivera for her presentation and discussion with trustees, Ms. Rivera was excused from the remainder of the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Executive Director Report – Heidi Paluk

Director Paluk informed trustees of highlights in Elementary, Middle, and High Schools.

- Jim Scott presented and composed a special song with second and third-grade students.
- Grade 6 and Grade 7 experienced Nature's Classroom in October/early November.
- Academy Award-winning director, Daniel Kwan met with high school students.
- Giving Day, Tuesday, November 28.

Upcoming noteworthy events –
State Senator Robin Kennedy will be meeting with the high school class on Monday, December 4.
Field trip to Geisel Software Inc., the opportunity for coding club and summer internships.
High school concert, December 12.
Grinch Day, December 21 with Kindergarten and Seniors.
Winter sports have begun.
Unibank CEO will be doing a site visit on December 6.

Executive Director Paluk referred trustees to the attachment to discuss roof replacement or repairs. Director Paluk walked trustees through the status of roof conditions. Director Paluk guided trustees to the referred attachment that designated parts of the roof marked 1 through 4 and Penthouse (PH), that need attention. Director Paluk pointed out which areas need repairs right away and which sections would be deferred. Director Paluk requested direction from the trustees to bid out the roof repairs in sections or as a whole replacement of the roof bid.

Trustee Beaudry remarked that AKFCS would want to engage the roofers as few times as possible. Sections 1, 2, and PH should be done at the same time.
Chair Royce suggested not breaking out each section but consolidating several. Prioritize those that are most in need over the next one to two years. Also, request a bid and price out the remaining separately, then price all together.

Trustee Beaudry concurred with the possibility of grouping 1, 2, and PH as one section, and looks like that's the most urgent section, then having the bid include all of them if we have to do the roof replacement at once. Trying to be cost-effective and preventative now that see rising costs in the future.

Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku commented that it might be costly to do the whole thing, but in the long run, it's better to do the whole thing than a section. If there is a short-term need and resources we do the first section 1, 2, and the penthouse, then in a year or two address the rest of the roof. Chair Royce summarized the direction for the roof repair is to bid the whole roof and bid the sections in need of immediate repair.

Chair Royce continued the meeting noting no timely topics. The next cycle of committee meetings was shared and the next full board of trustee meeting is Wednesday, December 20. Chair Royce reminded trustees of the timeline to provide comments and/or feedback to draft the strategic plan and timeline to review the final draft before the next full board meeting in December.

Chair Royce announced the motion to conclude the trustee meeting and enter into a brief executive session to review minutes from the last executive session meeting in March. Chair Royce called for a motion to adjourn the meeting and enter into executive session. Trustee Yarnie made the motion, Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku seconded the motion. Trustees unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned into executive session at 7:47 p.m.