Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School
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APPROVED

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 28, 2024
6:30 p.m.
AKFCS High School - Grade 8 Wing

The meeting was called to order by Patrick Royce, Chair at 6:34 p.m. The attendance was recorded as follows:

Board/Committee Members: Patrick Royce, Amy Vernon, Shelly Yarnie, Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku[1]

Staff in attendance: Gabriel Beltran, Amelie Cabral, Dr. Carrie Cole, Andrew Cruickshank, Kelly Gould, Shelly Hinds, Rob Kerr, Kimberly Nobrega, Heidi Paluk

Chair Royce read the Abby Kelley Mission Statement and noted there were no public comments or old business.

Chair Royce asked for a motion to accept the January 24, 2024 meeting minutes. Trustee Vernon made the motion, and it was seconded by Trustee Yarnie. Chair Royce performed a roll call to record votes:

Shelly Yarnie - yes Amy Vernon - yes Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku - yes Patrick Royce - yes

Action: Trustees approved, the January 24, 2024 meeting minutes.

Executive Director Report - Heidi Paluk

Executive Director (ED) Heidi Paluk referred trustees to the meeting packet that included the Executive Director Report. ED Paluk provided highlights of the Executive Director's Report.

Environmental: The WBDC project continues to progress off of C Street with little or no interruption to our school day. Mrs. Paluk continues to communicate with AKF's attorneys about easements and a Memo of Understanding regarding future work. A Community Meeting hosted by WBDC is scheduled for March and AKF will be present.

Facilities: Requesting motion for trustees to vote to approve roof replacement in Middle School and for trustees to vote to approve sink hole, water sewer drainage remediation in the High School. The elementary school hot water tank failed and was replaced this morning without interruption to the school day.

Information Technology: The IT department upgraded the phone system for federal and state requirements. All phones reach emergency dispatchers and identify the caller's exact location.

[1] Trustee Zagabe due to illness participated remotely. Meeting had in person trustees for quorum and proceeded meeting OML obligations.

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Admissions: Applications close February 29, lottery is March 11.

Students: Girls Varsity made it to playoffs, but sadly lost the game. Congratulations to the team and winter sports teams for a great season. Grade 5 students have a popcorn fundraiser currently underway. ED Paluk will provide information on various school fundraisers.

Foundation: The Foundation met this week and awarded two grants - One is for an outside fence art project to add school spirit and curb appeal to the AKF campus. Another grant is for Grades 2-7 school visit from local author Jarret Krosoczka this spring.

ED Paluk referred trustees to report noting the Strategic Plan and would elaborate on the Mission Statement later in the meeting. Executive Director Paluk concluded her report. Chair Royce opened up the meeting for comments and questions from trustees to Mrs. Paluk.

Trustee Royce asked about the status and timing of the WBDC project. ED Paluk replied 18 months to 2 years, projected to start in October or November 2024 and WBDC is making good progress. Trustees asked for a WBDC update, and ED Paluk will reach out to WBDC representative to provide trustees progress updates.

Trustee Yarnie asked ED Paluk about her professional development trip to Ghana. ED Paluk provided details on the purpose of the trip to Ghanna over the April vacation to visit schools in Ghanna. ED Paluk informed the trustees that the professional development opportunity is going to be culturally relevant to her continuing work at AKF.

Trustee Royce inquired about the Educational Foundation golf tournament. ED Paluk stated the last golf tournament was held back in October 2022. Members are looking at locations and plan to hold a golf tournament in the Fall of 2024. Trustee Royce expressed support to continue fundraising with an Educational Foundation golf tournament.

Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku asked for an update on the AKF Block Party and how the board can support it. Amelie Cabral, Director of ESL responded trustees are welcomed and encouraged to attend. Mrs. Cabral added Block Party will incorporate AKF's 25th anniversary with various fundraising efforts and exciting raffles. AKF Block Party is on Saturday, April 27, 2024.

Governance Committee - Patrick Royce

Trustee Royce provided an overview since the last Governance Committee meeting in December. Trustee Royce put before the board a motion to vote for a new three-year term for Trustee Amy Vernon. Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku made the motion, and Trustee Yarnie seconded the motion. Having no comments, Chair Royce administered a roll call vote on the motion.

Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku - yes Shelly Yarnie - yes Patrick Royce - yes

Action: Trustees voted to approve a new three-year term for Trustee Amy Vernon

Chair Royce discussed the board recruitment focus. Chair Royce provided an overview of his meeting recently with a prospective board recruit and the candidate's professional background would be a good addition to the current board. Chair Royce mentioned the next Governance Committee will introduce a recommendation to nominate a new candidate to AKF Board of Trustees. Chair Royce concluded the Governance Committee report.

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Education Committee - Amy Vernon

Education Committee Chair Vernon presented some highlights of iReady comparison Fall and Winter data. Students have shown growth 65% in Reading and Math from Kindergarten through Grade 8, noting growth in middle school in particular. Student Learning Goals in Reading - Goal is 70% of students will be reading at or above grade level. Students are currently at 47%. Student Learning Goals in Math - Goal is 66% of students will be performing at or above grade level. Students are performing at 25%. Trustee Vernon noted the goals including reducing the percentage of students behind multiple grade levels in reading and math, 17% in reading, and 18% in math.

Trustee Vernon presented the academic variance between testing results and grade reports. Trustee Vernon spoke about the academic variance conversations arising from parent inquiries, and national conversations around grade inflation. The committee requested an audit with students on track in mid-year grades and testing two or more grade levels below in iReady. The audit identified some emerging patterns and the data will be shared with teachers to provide support and training as well tracking the data. SEL Panorama, students are showing improvement and will review SEL data in the Spring. Enrollment data kindergarten application numbers are similar to last year and will continue to look at data for comparisons going forward. Trustee Vernon concluded the Education Committee report.

Finance and Facilities Report - Patrick Royce

Chair Royce presented the report to the trustees. Chair Royce deferred to the Executive Director regarding the Director of Finance position. ED Paluk stated the position will be posted in April, continuing to work with financial consultant Jim George to get the school through the budget and audit.

Chair Royce referred committee members to AKF's finances included in meeting packets. Overall the school change in net position is a positive variance through 12/31 of $413K. AKF is a strong position close to $13 in cash. Several options for major facilities projects are on the table. The committee met with consultants from QPD and looked at the revised/amended budget with Jim George in the Fall. The school has a position of $10-$12 million to borrow with $5-$7 million in cash. The high mark is $17 million for facilities projects. The consensus is to move Grade 7 to high school and make a good amount of improvements in Middle School.

ED Paluk reported that QPD, Bob Baldwin, and Lindsay Richard met with her and Jim George. Jim George will do a seven-year projection and gather more financials on what AKF's borrowing capacity would be. QPD will solidify operation projections and costs. The school wants to complete as many projects as possible within the $17 million current estimates.

Trustees discussed the Grade 7 move to the high school's unfinished space, renovating the cafeteria, bathrooms, and gym, and renovating the cafeteria in the middle school to make it a multipurpose space. Trustees asked about the impact on students and coordinating with WBDC project plans. Middle school grades will not be affected by build-outs. The Executive Director will reach out to WBDC on any coordination project timelines. Trustees discussed long-term projects being handled out of the Facilities and Finance Committee and creating a sub-committee to spearhead projects and work with QPD and construction on major school projects. Trustee Royce asked board members to consider serving on the subcommittee.

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Trustee Royce noted the voting action from the Finance and Facilities Committee to approve adding the Roth 403B plan and a nominal processing payment fee of $500. Chair Royce continued the committee report and discussed the AKF roof repairs and sinkhole repairs. Chair Royce made the motion to approve $158,400 to repair the Middle School Buffer Zone roof. Trustee Yarnie made the motion, seconded by Trustee Vernon. The repair is all five sections identified in need of repair. Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku about the cost of replacing the entire roof. Executive Director Paluk stated previous repair was for $280K same length as the current roof repairs. ED Paluk noted that a bid came in below other competitors the highest at $350K. ED Paluk noted the roof needs repair where there are identified leaks. Having no other comments, Chair Royce administered a voice roll call vote on the motion.

Amy Vernon - yes Shelly Yarnie - yes Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku - yes Patrick Royce - yes

Action: Trustees approved the motion to pay $158,400 to repair the Middle School buffer zone roof.

Chair Royce moved on to call for a motion to approve a $275,000 sinkhole. Trustee Vernon made the motion, and Trustee Yarnie seconded the motion. ED Paluk provided a brief overview of the suspected origin of the sinkholes, the collapse, and the need to repair them. ED Paluk clarified the area of the sinkhole and the scope of work involved. The area for the project is very large and will be done in sections for safety and to maintain the traffic, school buses, and parking at the high school.

The process will be completed in four phases. Dig up the sinkholes and perimeter, scope out the leaks and water main system and repair pipes, fill in the perimeter and sinkholes, and cover up and repaint the parking lot. The work will begin over the April vacation. Trustees asked if the repairs would fix the sinkhole issue. ED Paluk said there is no certainty but opening up the sinkholes and identifying the leaks will get closer to determining pipes in need of repair and the problems with water drainage. The project will have cameras going into the ground once the soil has been removed. The cost of the camera system scope is roughly $6,000. The school has to know what is underneath sinkholes and whether what is discovered is related to the sewer system. ED Paluk informed trustees that OHI environmental engineers will oversee the project. Facilities Director and ED Paluk reported that maps of areas where sinkholes are date back over 100 years. ED Paluk stated that timing is essential and that AKF does not have the time to do continual analysis given the length of time involved and continue AKF community concerns.

Trustees discussed insurance coverage and advisement from attorneys. ED Paluk has had ongoing conversations with the environmental attorney and general attorney about insurance coverage. Understanding if any or part of the sinkhole repair is covered by AKF insurance policy. ED Paluk will follow up with the general attorney on how to proceed and submit corresponding documentation with an insurance claim. AKF could pay out of pocket and get reimbursed given the emergency of the sinkholes, however, there would not be a determination of the cause of the sinkholes. The City can deem an emergency and bypass the system to have repairs. ED Paluk will provide an update on guidance from the attorney and make sure the policy does not preclude AKF from proceeding. With no additional questions or comments, Chair Royce called for a voice roll call vote on the motion to repair sinkholes, the high school parking lot, and the stormwater drainage system.

Amy Vernon - yes Shelly Yarnie - Yes Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku - yes Patrick Royce - yes

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Action: Trustees approve $275,000 for AKFCS to repair sinkholes, the high school parking lot, and the storm drainage water system.

Mission Statement - Patrick Royce

Chair Royce began the discussion regarding the AKF Mission Statement. The first iteration of the mission statement change in 2022. Come up several times through the Education Committee and full board. Chair Royce, Trustee Vernon, and Heidi Paluk had a meeting with a team from DESE. Amy Vernon, Patrick Royce, and ED Heidi Paluk met with people from DESE to discuss proposed changes. Chair summarized if changes are to be made there should not be any major barriers so long the mission statement does not affect any major programming or design of AKF.

Amy Vernon added to the discussion to talk about the timeline. Received a clarification from DESE when the timing would be right to make changes. Should try to get in by this charter cycle. Changes must fall after the charter renewal but before the accountability plan. Could submit both types of changes to DESE for review. Changes without major program changes would need a submission of justification to DESE for review. Mission change if to occur would need to be in place for fall 2025 to be submitted in Spring 2024.

Chair Royce suggested a timeline working backwards a board vote in April, the Education Committee can present a final version in April, Education Committee can present a draft in March. Historically the mission statement has been worked on and received parent and staff input from surveys. Chair Royce referenced the lengthy process taken over the past two years. The window to make changes is close approaching. Trustees talked about the process to move forward. Education Committee will bring up at the March meeting, and look at the history of where changes came from, proposed changes, and AKF Accountability Plan to justify to DESE no major changes to the design.

The Mission Statement draft is not set but can be supported. Surveys could be crafted and tailored for parents and staff. ED Paluk has a document that goes back to the original charter and what changes, and iterations have been done. The survey can be simple and have concepts (ie How important it character virtues), add survey questions that are not in the draft. Data could be ranked on the concepts and values to pull the best collection of engagement. The next step of what needs to be done is a litmus test with staff and parents. ED. Paluk stated reasonable to get data, parent-teacher conferences are coming up in March. The goal is to get a draft with additions to the Mission Statement to the board by the end of March.

Chair Royce stated that he and Trustee Clerk Shelly Yarnie received from Trustee Noah Ligeti a tentative resignation from the board. Mr. Ligeti has outside commitments that will not allow him to continue serving as a board trustee. Chair Royce and ED Paluk had a meeting to talk about exit transitions. There are some promising new candidates that the board is hoping to approve and onboard. Chair Royce reviewed the upcoming committee meetings. Having no other topics or comments, Chair Royce called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Vernon made the motion, seconded by Trustee Yarnie. Roll call unanimous vote to adjourn. The meeting adjourned a 7:40 p.m.

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