Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School

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APPROVED

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - FINAL
Wednesday, April 24, 2024
6:30 p.m.
AKFCS High School Grade 8 Wing

Patrick Royce, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Attendance was recorded as follows:
Board Members in attendance: Adam Beaudry, Patrick Royce, Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku
Staff in attendance: Gabriel Beltran, Amelie Cabral, Dr. Carrie Cole, Kelly Gould, Shelly Hinds, Rob Kerr, Kimberly Nobrega, Nardella Thomas, Heidi Paluk
Guest: James George

Chair Royce read the Abby Kelley Mission Statement into the minutes.

Chair Royce recognized Rosa Nguyen's request to make Public Comments to the board members. Mrs. Nguyen was allowed three minutes to make public comments to the board. Mrs. Nguyen addressed the trustees reporting her experience as an AKF parent, the lack of processes within the Special Education department, the implementation of services, and overall displeasure with the communication she received regarding her child over the past 18 months to address her child's need for specialized services. Mrs. Nguyen requested clear and timely communication from the special education department, her child's teachers, the principal, and the administration.[1]

Chair Royce called for a motion to review the March 27, 2024 meeting minutes. Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku made the motion, seconded by Adam Beaudry. Clarification was made by WBDC with the construction of a shoulder for pick up and drop off (2nd page 2nd paragraph). Meeting notes will change to *WBDC may construct a shoulder to provide for bus drop-off and pick-up*.

Vote recorded to approve March 27, 2024 meeting minutes with amendments.
Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku - yes Patrick Royce - yes Adam Beaudry-yes

Action: March 27, 2024 meeting minutes approved.

Chair Royce moved the meeting to the next agenda topic of budget discussion and invited Jim George and Executive Director Heidi Paluk to provide trustees with an update on the proposed FY25 budget. Chair Royce introduced that Facilities and Finance Committee members requested the proposed FY'25 budget be revised per the meeting discussion and the budget presented to trustees at the April meeting.

Mr. George explained to the trustees that he and Executive Director Paluk looked into the issues raised by the Facilities and Finance committee. In addition, AKF received State notification of tuition change. Change in tuition by State has decreased by $60K, numbers were updated by State, on April 23. Chair Royce asked if there would be future changes and if these numbers would likely go down in the future. Mr. George replied that he does not believe the figures will likely change due to AKF revenue primarily coming from one

[1] Mrs. Nguyen submitted a written statement to Executive Assistant, Nardella Thomas, who will distribute the document to trustees.

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district. Executive Director Paluk added that there is an above foundation rate that many districts account for above their minimum requirements. This adjustment is typical at this time of the year, however, we usually have already approved the budget when the numbers are released. For example, the FY24 tuition increased by $20k-$30K more than the initial estimates. The budget will be adjusted as we continue to try to meet salary priorities with tuition/transportation perimeters.

Mr. George moved on to Operations of Maintenance//Building. Mr. George shared an Excel sheet of the Operations and Maintenance historical budget and high-level allocation classifications. On average, over the past 3 years, we spent $1.2 million. This is in line with FY'22 and actual expenses 22-23. This year on track $1.2 million. $1.2 million does not include fixed assets year over year.

Chair Royce asked about the variance in figures from 2021 to 2023. Mr. George stated that 2021 was down due to COVID-19, and 2020 saw large purchases. Chair Royce asked to see what is allocated into line items year over year. The Executive Director noted in 2020 AKF purchased the BRM space - which depreciated in budget.

Chair Royce asked if the figures were coming from the audit. Mr. George responded yes. Mr. George explained the expensing projects and repairs difference where some projects were expensed or capitalized. Executive Director Paluk noted flood occurred in 2021 repairs were not expensed reported until 2022.

Chair Royce asked if the FY'25 proposed budget of $1.255 is capitalized and operating or is budgeted as a cash-out in the monthly balance sheet. The Executive Director will work with Mr. George and investigate where variances come from at the next finance committee meeting. Chair Royce suggested that the proposed budget for Operations have a subcategory line item for Long-Term Capital expenses. Trustee Beaudry remarked the proposed budget gave conservative figures, and ideally, capital and operating expenses would be split.

Mr. George continued through the FY25 proposed budget to discuss in further detail per the Facilities and Finance committee meeting, the Administrative/Leadership salaries. Mr. George and the Executive Director reviewed the source documents to see which personnel were in the Administrative Salary line item. The FY25 budget will include 14 people in the Administrative Salary. Mr. George identified not having source documents from the historical budget. The FY'25 budget was built with a Position and Control allocation placement within the budget. Mr. George's review of the budget looks like the Administrative Salaries grew although everyone in place last year is in place this year. Includes Executive Director, central office, IT office, Assistant Director. Salaries as a whole were tied to people, not to individual account numbers.

Mr. George and Executive Director Paluk are looking at ways to save money, as well as create money. Due to additional savings within the proposed budget, next week's budget will be amended to increase the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) from 1.5% to 2% in addition to a step increase for teachers. Teachers off-scale will receive 2% COLA. In addition, the Instructional Assistant (IA) scale will also increase by 2%. Administrative staff and employees who do not have steps will have a COLA at 3%. The net effect is roughly the same position AKF has proposed previously.

Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku asked if the amended budget in terms of salary comes close to the salary increase from the Faculty Benefits Advisory Committee. Executive Director responded that the committee was advocating for the changes Executive Director and Mr. George were able to create in the amended budget. The Executive Director briefly explained that some budgets were reduced in departments and some district-level budget items. Chair Royce acknowledged the work and effort Executive Director Paluk put in to amend salaries for AKF faculty and personnel.

Trustees and Mr. George discussed the budget process change of submitting a whole

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budget to submit a separate salary budget given the timeline of distributing contracts to personnel, then fine-tuning the budget where needed in the Spring. Mr. George provided professional knowledge of working with other schools and budget discussions expanded on the high-level priorities for trustees, in addition to Mr. George's knowledge of salaries correlating to the full budget and proposed increases or decreases.

Further discussion continued with budget implementation and best practices for appropriating surpluses within the proposed budget to a different budget line item allocation when a surplus comes before the board to vote to approve allocation fund moves. Mr. George explained the process to amend the budget which is standard practice as the budget is approved in April and may change in November. The best practice suggested is to bring surplus change allocations to the Facilities and Finance Committee, keep members informed, track budget amendments, and Facilities and Finance Committee report back to the full board. Executive Director Paluk added the proposed budget will be amended if needed and reviewed after the audit in October.

The proposed FY'25 budget final draft will be submitted by the end of the day, Friday, April 26. Executive Director Paluk will provide a bulleted summary. Chair Royce summarized the proposed budget will not create an adverse impact. The budget will allow for a 2% increase for faculty and a 2% increase for IA's. The budget will adjust for a $60K decrease in tuition revenue.

Facilities and Finance Report - Adam Beaudry

Chair Beaudry reported that AKF has $1.5 million in net income. 66% of budget spending to date. Change in Net Position $14 million up from $1.2 million last year.

Mr. George was excused from the remainder of the trustee meeting at 7:12 a.m.

Trustee Royce called for a motion to approve an additional $150,725 for the High School parking lot repairs. Trustee Beaudry made the motion, seconded by Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku. Roll call vote recorded.

Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku - yes Adam Beaudry - yes Patrick Royce - yes

Action: Trustees approved the additional appropriation of $150,725 for the High School parking lot.

Education Committee Report – Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku

Trustee Zabage-Ndiku referred trustees to the materials in the meeting packet and provided a brief overview. Principals provided highlights at the Education Committee meeting. Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku reported that AKFCS Graduation is May 29.

Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku reported an informative Seal of Biliteracy presentation. Three or four students are expected to graduate with the Seal this year. Chair Royce asked for clarification on 4 students who will graduate, ELL Director Amelie Cabral reported one student who is completing their testing will know the results before graduation. All 4 students will have a Seal from their native language, and we have the first student to have a Seal in Portugese Trustees and Mrs. Cabral discussed testing details and benefits of a Seal of Biliteracy in preparedness for college courses and scholarships, and Mrs. Cabral shared an example of a student receiving the Seal and their success at Worcester State. Mrs. Cabral reported an increase in student interest as well as parent support for students in the program.

Trustees inquired about language immersion field trips. The Executive Director shared some historical information on a previous student trip to the Dominican Republic.

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Immersion trip is a possibility so long as students have an interest.

Executive Director Paluk updated trustees on the Mission Statement. Shared the recent efforts, presenting staff and families with a survey the Friday before April vacation and by several methods up to Tuesday, April 23 at 5:00 pm when the survey closed. In addition, there were several reminders via email, newsletters, and PowerSchool. Executive Director Paluk reported the survey results 76% selected the proposed mission statement and 23% selected the current mission statement. 180 responses were collected.

Chair Royce called for a motion to approve the proposed mission statement changes and move on to submission to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku made the motion and was seconded by Trustee Beaudry. Chair Royce called the roll call vote.

Bibiche Zagabe-Ndiku - yes Adam Beaudry - yes Patrick Royce - yes

Action: Trustees approved mission statement changes and submission to DESE

Executive Director Report - Heidi Paluk

Executive Director Paluk referred trustees to the Executive Director report that included photos taken from the professional development trip to Ghana. Executive Director Paluk reported that the AKF Block Party is on Saturday, April 27 from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm. ED Paluk thanked organizer Amelie Cabral for her efforts making the Block Party possible. Mrs. Paluk reported Abby Kelley has received recent media attention. High School teacher Dave O'Brien was featured as the WooSox organist on SpectrumNews1. US News and World Report on school rankings came out, and Abby Kelley Charter Public School increased its rankings from last year in all categories.

- o Up from 49 to 35th Best High School in Massachusetts (top 8%)
- o Up from 1,249 to 819th top high school in the Nation (top 4%)
- o Up from 222 to 153rd Best Charter Schools in the Country (top 5%)
- o Up from 6 to 5th Best in all of Worcester County
- o AKFCS remains the #1 High School Charter School in the City of Worcester

Trustees congratulated Principal Kerr, and Principal Kerr credited the efforts of the faculty and students. Trustees discussed briefly with Principal Kerr the criteria for the rankings.

Executive Director Paluk provided an update on the professional development trip to Ghana over the April vacation. Director Paluk reported there is a lot from the trip she continues to process and will provide an update. Director Paluk reported to trustees the schools she visited what each school was like and their differences. She elaborated on meeting some students and educators noting similar trends in likes and dislikes. Director Paluk described her historical visits and the African slave trade. Director Paluk reported her observances of the local area and family dynamics and described the surrounding neighborhood or compounds in proximity to where she was staying.

Trustees asked if she recommended the trip, and Director Paluk said with a few tweaks she would support the trip. Trustees briefly asked about the trip organizers. The Executive Director reported the difference in the school calendar year and explained briefly the politics of testing for high schools. Trustees asked if Director Paluk made any connections with the Ghana educators to which the Director reported she was able to make new connections with school administrators in Ghana. Executive Director Paluk concluded her report.

Chair Royce reported the next committee and trustee meeting on the calendar. No

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other comments or questions from trustees, Chair Royce called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Zagabe-Ndiku made the motion, seconded by Trustee Beaudry. The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

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