

# Bear River Charter School Governing Board Meeting

## I. Call to Order

5:45 p.m. on March 9, 2016.

## II. Approval of the Minutes

B. Bingham moves to approve the February minutes; M. Kidman seconds. All in favor, none opposed.

## III. Public Comment

Kiana Livingston, K Teacher at BRCS:

Teachers choose to dedicate their lives to students. Figuring out what is best for the students and the school are pressing issues on teachers' minds, and they spend a lot of time and effort developing the proposals they come up with. Ms. Southwick said to her: just because a person has a degree, doesn't mean that they are qualified or great at the job. Ms. Livingston and Southwick, along with many other teachers, trust in Dr. Adams as BRCS' leadership, and believes she is making decisions in the best interests of the school.

Francis Kaplan, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher at BRCS:

Wanted to address the removal of Spanish from the charter. She was struck by the supposition that the only way cultural literacy is being taught at the school is through Spanish. Wanted to reiterate that the teachers are professionals and they know what the core standards are. Simply because a person comes to us from another country does not make them an expert in cultural literacy. She feels strongly that BRCS students are not being taught to speak, read, or understand Spanish. Also feels that removal from the Charter doesn't mean that the teachers cannot teach their kids Spanish.

Ken Cannon, parent of 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, would like his email to be entered into the public comment. His comments to the Board via the previous email are not intended to be an assault or negative commentary toward the teachers or administration of the school. The email is as follows:

"Hi All—I want to begin by thanking all the members of the board for their time and efforts. Having served on several boards I know it is time consuming and not always appreciated.

The issue that is of most concern to me is the proposal to use paraprofessionals in the instruction of Art, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish. As highlighted in the BRCS charter, Art and Music (and prior to the latest charter draft Spanish) are core values. Through the employment of paraprofessionals in these subjects we are greatly devaluing them. This occurs both in the reduction in pay for the position and in the use of individuals who are not fully trained in either teaching practices nor their subject. I believe replacing certified professionals with paraprofessionals is a serious change in the philosophy and values of the BRCS for which I do not agree. A major reason we chose this school for our

children was that BRCS provided a full and well-rounded educational experience in which they would thrive. Having professional teachers in those positions is paramount. If the decision to replace professional teachers with paraprofessionals is a fiscal concern that information was not conveyed at the last meeting. Providing teachers' aides as the expense of a professional staff in other subjects should not be an either or proposition. There should be a discussion of various alternatives that does not diminish (or devalue) one subject or another. Thank you."

Dan Murphy:

As we look at the credentials that folks have earned for those positions, it is important to keep that in mind. There is a reason for people seeking degrees in this area. There are a lot of components involved that make this place great, and changing that requirement could alter BRCS dramatically.

Amy Hopkins, 5<sup>th</sup> grade parent:

Agrees with the prevailing sentiment about Spanish. One of the reasons she brought her children here was because of Spanish and the arts. Rather than getting rid of it, we should strengthen it, and strengthen (and expand) the arts program. These are things the students will carry with them forever and will help them throughout their lives.

#### IV. Other Business

SB 38 was passed today. It is good news but not as good as we thought. In order to get it passed, it was significantly reduced. The equal funding bill turns out to be a "slightly less equal funding" bill. RBCS is likely to see less than 1/3 of the initially projected \$90,000.

#### V. Additional Board Member

Tim Slocum stepped off of the Board last year due to a host of conflicting issues. He has served as a friend of the Board since that time. H. Kleiner yields the Chair to N. Vouvalis. H. Kleiner believes that the conflict of issue issues have passed, as Anne has decided not to return to the school. Harrison would like to nominate Tim Slocum to serve on the Governing Board of Bear River Charter School. A. Odum asked for information on how that process typically works. H. Kleiner described past processes, and how those support Tim's reappointment. M. Kidman seconds. No further discussion; all in favor, none opposed. Tim Slocum rejoins the Bear River Charter School Governing Board.

#### VI. Financial Update from Red Apple

This report is through the end of February. We are mostly yellow or green (positive) and there are the same areas as red as previously noted. We paid some dues and such for the

entire year up front, so we are actually fine in those red areas. We have made more requests for the federal dollars we should have coming in soon.

Last month the forecast was right around break even, and now it is back up \$30,000 because of the initial Title I funds that we were supposed to have. February was a slightly expensive month.

With SB 38, the "floor" stayed in place (if the locality doesn't raise enough taxes, the state would supply a funding floor). We will get some share of the dollars that go out to districts traditionally. The most recent property tax averages piece was cut (\$16M revenue expected) and it is not scheduled with this year.

Also, because of the ADM funding model, we will have a shortfall next year if our numbers jump back up. Special Ed and CTE percentages have been raised; the state took unrestricted money in those areas and gave us restricted money.

## VII. Land Trust Funds

J. Adams went to the last SCA meeting, as they are our parent committee for approving the land trust plan. J. Adams is proposing to standardize BRCS' use of grant funds. The plan is written this year for the hiring of classroom aides. It is just under \$19K, so that would almost buy us 2 aides in the classroom.

N. Vouvalis moves to approve the use of the land trust funds for classroom aides next year; A. Odum seconds. All in favor, none opposed.

## VIII. Middle School Model and Staffing Needs

Handout: A Proposal for the BRCS Middle School

In a traditional middle school, teachers are content experts. We do not have enough students in classes to fill full time staffing positions. BRCS has historically struggled to find content experts.

Under the grade school model, teachers are certified to teach a grade. They are generalists, but are often specialists in an area. Instead of hiring a subject-based teacher in the middle grades, teachers will be responsible for a class. Because our teachers will have areas of expertise, our students will receive teaching that allows the teacher to teach to their

strengths. So BRCS will be a grade school with content area experts who will engage in team teaching.

A. Odum wonders whether adopting the grade school model locks us into a particular paraprofessional/specialist model. Steve Finley says no, and H. Kleiner adds that it is actually the opposite because it frees up additional dollars.

T. Slocum moves that we adopt the grade school model as described in the first three paragraphs of the handout. B. Bingham seconds. H. Kleiner wanted to add to the discussion that parents have been very enthusiastic about this change. All in favor, none opposed.

In terms of staffing needs, Marianne Young will be issued a site-specific license. Marianne has been a teacher for 14 years. She started at Logan High; went to Mt. Logan Middle school. Has been a teacher here for 9 years. She has always taught Language Arts at Bear River Charter School. With the new structure, it is all that she will teach. N. Vouvalis moves to grant a charter specific license to Marianne Young, A. Odum seconds. No further discussion. All in favor, none opposed.

Ms. Morris has a K-3 certification, and has an interest in moving into the K role. With Kiana Livingston moving to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, BRCS will move Ms. Morris to K.

So the three positions we will need are a 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, a 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher with a math emphasis, and a Special Education Director. A week from today, USU is hosting its job fair on campus.

N. Vouvalis will join the Special Ed teacher hiring committee.

#### IX. Proposals for finding money for more teacher aides

One idea is to increase parent contributions. This is twofold: this needs to be easy, and we need to make it meaningful. Allowing an earmark is also a nice thing, though parameters need to be put in place; parents cannot just donate to those items that would benefit their student. J. Adams will follow up on some good parameters for the donating piece, and we will revisit at the next meeting.

J. Adams thinks that the art position could be reduced to half time without losing time for the children in the art class. Steve from Red Apple has taken a look at the current status,

and he agrees. The current structure may be paying a 5/7 time teacher for what is a half time (or possibly only slightly more) position; we will need to look at schedules and revisit. Part of the Beverly Taylor Sorensen Grant would allow us to fund a certified art teacher and help with PE, if we were willing to supplement with some movement in music type pieces. A. Odum would like to learn more about what that program looks like.

#### X. Parent Meeting Debrief

There was a very large concern about the abandonment of diversity as a core value of the school in discussing getting rid of Spanish. Parents felt disenfranchised; they felt they had not been given enough opportunity to chime in on important charter changes.

We need to walk the process back. Parents need to be given an opportunity to discuss the charter revisions, and especially the Spanish commitment. The other thing we need parent feedback on is whether we should remove Spanish instruction. We had initially wanted feedback on how certified the art teacher needed to be, but the Beverly Taylor Sorensen grant requires a certified teacher. So that piece is settled.

N. Vouvalis expressed concern that the removal of Spanish is a broader removal of the commitment to diversity and cultural literacy. She supports getting rid of Spanish language instruction, but wants to see a core value of diversity enshrined in the charter upon its removal. A. Odum asked whether it was possible to engage in meaningful second language acquisition, and the Board agreed that it was not. The Board agreed that the core value is diversity and inclusion, and we need to come up with a vision for how that is operationalized in the school moving forward.

#### XI. Sabbatical Requests

The Zhan (2 children) and Belmont (1 child) families are requesting a sabbatical next year, having them reenroll in the fall of 2017. The affected grades are 1, 4, and 7 (next year). The Board discussed concerns about the low enrollment. Enrollment is already down, and then we will be overenrolled year after next while being funded in a very, very low average daily attendance rate. T. Slocum noted that our cash reserves can float us for one year if

necessary. A. Odum moved to approve the sabbatical requests; Slocum seconds. No further discussion, all in favor, none opposed.

#### XII. Closed Session

A. Odum moved that the Board enter a closed session to discuss confidential personnel matters. N. Vouvalis seconds; no further discussion, all in favor, none opposed.

#### XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:18 p.m.