

SOAR Charter School Board Meeting

Date, Time and Place: November 13th, 2015, 4800 Telluride St. BLDG 4, Denver, CO 80249

Attendance of Board Members:

Present: Sue Sava, Rosann Ward, William Weintraub, Ethan Hemming, Claudia Gutierrez, Ellin Keene, Rona Wilensky, Dan Smink

Present by phone: None

Absent: Shelli Brown

Staff absent: Lacei Martinez

Quorum? Yes

Also in attendance: Marc Waxman, Sonia Sisneros, Brad Fischer

Members of the public in attendance: none

Meeting brought to order – Bill moved, Rosann seconds 8:48 AM

Business Meeting

Welcome Laurie Godwin to the SOAR Board

Rona recognized that SOAR has had zero suspensions. Marc explains student plans and supportive adult interventions.

No public comment

8:50-8:55: Consent agenda

- Minutes
- Monthly dashboard
- Monthly financials
- CDE Assurances for Financial Accreditation
- 990 Approval - attachment will be emailed later in the week

Sue suggests that we adopt the 990 with revisions.

Dan moved, Rosann seconds 8:52 AM

Motion to adopt consent agenda – Ellin moved, Bill seconds 8:53 AM

8:55-9:05: Finance report

The Audit: because of GASB 68 there are some disclosures and calculation adjustments that need to happen within the audit, therefore, our audit is technically not finished yet. Brad will send the revised audit when complete. Please note nothing is changing with our audited financial statements, but rather the calculations and disclosure related to GASB 68; our pension liability.

We have started the process for next school year's budget. Every year we are seeing less revenue. We are looking at Intervention and Flex and also the question about who replaces Marc. DPS has a grim outlook for future revenues. One of the things we didn't have to do was a schedule b in our 990; we didn't have a single contribution over \$5,000. We did receive word from DPS that we will receive reduced at-risk funds this year. The expected rate of decrease is a total of \$23,000. We may not know our final PPR number until May.

The Board anticipates this to be a part of the conversation about reserves and expects to spend conservatively.

Members of the Finance Committee identify themselves for the purposes of Laurie's introduction.

9:05-9:30: Reserves

We may not have been calculating reserves correctly. When we talk about reserves we're talking about "Fund balance". There are two kinds – the kind you can touch and the kind you can't.

Brad gives an overview of reserves, specifically how it ties to the audit.

- Non-spend \$28k
- TABOR \$117k
- Unassigned \$324k
- Total: \$469k

We should be calculating our reserves as the \$324k; not \$469k

With the \$324k as our starting point; we used \$172k as revenue this year. This means that our reserves are at \$152k.

Four months ago we could have had a conversation about if we were okay about using \$172k in revenue and being left with \$152k as reserves.

The \$152k is untouchable unless there is an emergency that the Board would vote/approve for use. Does the Board have policies for how the Board makes these decisions?

The finance committee has been discussing what the right number is for reserves.

The standard policy for budget changes as it relates to the Board approval: This is \$50k in one line item. Sue wants the Board to come back with a policy about the way we think about what that number should be and how the Board thinks about how to make decisions on spending the money.

Options for how much should be held in reserves:

1. 1-3 months of total expenses, or just operating
2. What is a true emergency in a school setting
3. DPS's FPF model; not every school is going to fit plus you have schools with different priorities, e.g. saving for a new building

The finance recommendation after our last meeting is that we are not making a recommendation right now, we will wait to hear DPS' FPF recommendation and revisit in December or by the January Board meeting.

The funding wildcard in a school is enrollment. Unanticipated expenses may be based on program/student needs. This number is probably an appropriate number. When we originally created the idea of how much money we wanted, we didn't have enough cash flow. Currently, we never have less than \$300k in the bank.

In terms of a visioning conversation, is there anything we want to save for? Also part of the conversation for saving is thinking about any structural changes that come about with Marc's transition. Finance will help us with some visioning on this.

9:30-9:45: Transition update
(see documents (2))

Executive Committee met two nights ago and hired Marty Caplan. We expect that he will bring multiple perspectives to the search process.

Marc asks us to think about timing of announcements. Not necessarily changing the timing but being aware that the PARCC data (related to renewal) is this same timeframe.

We have had a number of visits to the school and the school has presented well. Marc also suggested some rewording around founding of the school for the announcement. Rosann wants to be direct about the strong leadership currently existing in the school.

Bill recommends adding another paragraph that indicates our expectation of when the new leader in place; for purposes of reassurance of prospective families looking at SOAR for their children.

We don't know when that it is – there are budget implications with an earlier start. What is the make-up of the school going to be? There is a difference between selected by and in place by. What is our message on this? We agree that we should use "we expect" and "selected by", "Beginning of April".

Rona shares that her anxiety has been reduced due to the progress on the search so far and wants to know how we are going to get parents involved. Marty will get parents involved then he needs to connect with Sonia by next week. Rona shares some sentiment around getting to more parents and a public meeting.

Student involvement is also included. Marty's suggestion is to have students lead candidates on a school tour.

Marc asks who is going to share with the staff. He can do it in today's staff meeting. He will also mention that the Board has the results of the staff votes for representation on the search committee. The Board will email the staff, instead.

Brad, Sue and Rosann will meet about a cost of the consultant. The cost of the consultant is expected to be about \$15,000.

Marty's visit to the school went great. He will be at the Friday Board meeting on 12/11. PEBC will send some food over for that meeting. Additional details will be coming after the connecting and calendaring done with Natalie Newton.

Rona asks that once the job is posted that every Board member activate their network for candidates. This will be done at the December Board meeting. Each member will be accountable as Board members to activate the social capital to bring in the candidates.

We are not actually calling it a job description; we are presenting it categories of skill that is needed by the school. This search will be focused on qualities and attributes.

This is the formal announcement that goes out to networks; what happens in the interim if we get interested candidates. Sue and Rosann's SOAR email addresses will be listed with their networks. Emails from interested candidates would go to Sue.

The search committee will surface candidates and then the Executive Committee would be the interviewing body.

Rosann asks if we could share data from the schools in the area that shows SOAR in a positive light. Is there anything of comparative value? Rona wants Marc and team to put together a slide show or folder that they can access related to school performance. This should include full disclosure of data.

9:45-10:05: Family engagement strategic plan presentation (Sonia) - 15 minutes
Move to January retreat

Move to executive session
Bill moved, Rosann seconds – 10:13 AM

Motion to reconvene the board meeting
Ellin moved, Bill seconds – 10:37 AM

10:05-10:20: Director's report

- Monthly updates
 - Data: what is data and what counts as data? How do we discuss it with staff and the parent community? Ellin wants to be sure that it is a broad range of pieces of information and not all test driven. As part of the formal evaluation process student work is brought-into the conversation. Only in math is student work

shared in data team meetings. Marc explains the balance of doing this analyzing of student work, PD, data assessment and planning. Ellin offers her help in providing literacy data support.

- Marc expresses that unit planning is still not tight enough. Today Marc is surveying staff around what they want to opt in and out of in December. Marc will share the results from the survey in his Director's Report.

- Guiding Principles Action Plans Update: we built the action plans in a way that we knew we would be moving forward with them. Habits of systems thinking - what was staff reaction? The idea is getting baseline knowledge so that staff can decide if they want to dig-in more next year. It is implicit that we are deep in this work in many directions, e.g. using it as part of the work with students.

- Ellin asks if the SEL rubrics are still working. Marc shares that they were never used consistently. Rona shares news about the pending Denver Foundation support with SEL and CRP from the Denver Foundation. This effort would start in the Spring with SEL work with Gianna and build the "equity" work that would take place over the year. In an ideal world she would be doing more direct coaching with teachers and possibly parents. Sue asks for an update to be included in the next Director's Report.

10:20-10:35: Board development - attorney

- Sue asks the Board to put this on their "homework list"

Executive Committee

- Map out January retreat agenda

Adjourn – Bill moved, Ethan seconds 11:00 AM