

BOSTON PREP BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
*Hybrid - 885 River Street, Hyde Park, MA and/
Video Conference link: <https://bostonprep-org.zoom.us/j/7171526696>*

May 17th, 2024
8:00 AM- 9:30 AM

Trustee Present: Kim Borchert, Nathalie Branch Lewis, John Johnson, Andrew Kaplan, Sarah James, Claire Newton, Jovi Ripert, Amelia Cheers, David Berkley, David Wolff

School Staff Present: Meekerley Sanon, Rob Rametti, VaLonda Harris, Vanessa Shiu, David Wolff, Tyler Martin, Eric Tabb, David Berkley, Tori Riley, Geraldine Longchamp, Aaron Canto

Community Members Present: Mayeti Gametcha, Jon Beck

I. Open Meeting Protocol

- Kim Borchert, board chair, called the meeting to order at 8:02am and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.
- An ice breaker was conducted to set a positive and engaging tone for the meeting.

II. Vote Approval of Minutes

MOTION to approve

- The February 2nd meeting minutes from the previous board retreat meeting.
- The March 14th meeting minutes
- Motion to approve, Claire- So moved, Berkeley, Second- all in favor. Approved.

III. Public Comment

- Kim called for public comment, no comments
- Review of Agenda

IV. Board/ School Business

- Reflections on return of international travel:
 - VaLonda: it was nice to see the return of the international trip and the ability to get the school out of Boston. There were a lot of students who don't speak up in class who stepped up as leaders during the trip.
 - Kim: How many students attended?
 - VaLonda: 52 with ten chaperones
 - Vanessa: The trip embodied our values, we saw that in action when we were late for our flight in Dublin. Tabb had to run to help some kids with luggage, Vanessa had to manage the flight attendants. The kids showed grit and perseverance especially with air travel. The kids showed courage by stepping out of their comfort zones, trying dance classes and cooking classes.

- Nathalie: The kids had an incredible time, they compared the McDonalds in another country and had a great time in the Spanish class and the Flamenco dancing. They came back so excited.
- Meekerley: Spain was a student choice, the students voted to go to Spain. We'll continue conversation about what is next for the international trip, whether to continue to give students input as there are pros and cons to allowing their input, knowing that Rome was a well established trip.
- iReady Score: we are seeing improvement in iReady scores both in reading and in path with almost 30% improvement, so kids moving from red to yellow or yellow to (orange?). All testing is now all on computers, but we need out students to be comfortable both using computers and scratch paper, it is really exciting to see them more comfortable in both spaces. We are working to provide more hands-on activities in the middle school both in STEM and the Humanities.
- Tabb: In the high school we have an academic and a cultural focus. On the academic side, we have focused on structure so that students know what to expect when they walk into the classroom every day. We have now shifted to student engagement, so the coaches are working closely with the students to keep them engaged and actively involved in class. We know the school year is coming to a close and it is starting to get warmer, students are starting to get antsy, so we're focused on making sure their engagement is high. Our culture team helps to make sure that students are in the classroom for as much as possible, so we practice first ten, last ten meaning that students are required to be in the classroom for the first and last ten minutes of the period. The culture team also works to ensure that there are no phones, technology out during the day. We have # of students on the honor roll. We have cut down significantly on both vape detection and altercations, we'd prefer to see that number at zero, but we're are making good progress toward that goal.
- Absenteeism: asked if we were reviewing, this information will be gone over in next meeting and in year data review

V. School Data Update

- **Persistence:** We have 88 students who will walk on June 12th, and we still have two class of 2023 who are working on class requirements and three who are classified as "Grade 13" and will continue to receive support.
 - Of the 88, 81 applied to two or four year colleges, representing about 92% some students have expressed interest in applying to Franklin Cummings.
 - This is an assortment of the schools are students are matriculating to:
 - Two year- Bunker Hill, Roxbury, etc.
 - Four Year Public: Bridgewater, UMass Lowell, we're always happy to see students enter the UMass system for their financial aid and support.
 - We also have a lot of students matriculating at 4-year schools: BU, Spelman, etc.

- We're working to have those conversations with students on decision making. We're struggling this year with the slow turnaround from FAFSA, so we're not as able to have comprehensive conversations with students and their families based on all of their aid letters.
- Boston Prep has an average 6-year graduation rate of 61%
 - o 2017 – 60%
 - o 2018 – 59%
- College continues to be the preferred pathway, despite the conversations about whether college is worth it, etc. Some students are interested in trade schools, but are choosing to start in two year college.
- o **SATs:** This year we did not see the majority of students submit SATs as a part of their college packages. All students take SATs here on site. They take PSATs, SATS, and are able to take the SAT for a second time. We are seeing some improvement in scores. 80% more students scored over 100 than previous classes. We still have some work to do to be competitive.
 - Andrew: Going from 1000 to 1200, do we have a sense of the meaning of that change compared to the national average?
 - Rob: In terms of student readiness, we see a correlation to reading. As we focus on literacy next year, we are seeing that students are able to do many of the things we're asking of them to prepare for college (identifying the main idea, etc.) but are more successful with less complex texts, so we're hoping to see more success in more complex texts to better prepare them for college and the SATS. MS: we are asking teachers to provide more complex texts in class and we are considering traditional SAT prep, including incorporating SAT math prep in junior math. They have done a lot of re-envisioning of the SAT as more of a measure of college readiness rather than the archaic test we were familiar with in past year. We want to remind folks that they are doing work to align the SAT with readiness and professional norms.
 - MS: If we go back to college acceptances, Canto are there any major shifts we should expect based on the impact of having to submit SAT scores in future years when this year very few minutes submitted their scores?
 - Canto: I want to underscore the point that these scores are indicators of readiness. In terms of SAT – the state schools will always be SAT optional, but the ivy's are moving back toward SAT required. We're going to need to see scores move more toward high 12's and low 13's, we also will want to improve scores for students who are applying to highly selective programs at state schools, to strengthen student applications. A student with a lower GPA but a strong SAT score might help with acceptances. We're not sure if BC and BU, for example, will shift back to SAT required, it is expected that the ivys will shift first, but we could see many second tier schools following suit.

- Amelia – How do SAT’s and AP exams interact? We often do things like having AP teachers offer study sessions and teachers will deliberately integrate old exam questions into assessments along the way. What we know about the SAT and the AP exam is the time constraint. You have to be able to demonstrate your knowledge in a limited amount of time, so we’re thinking about ways to deliberately build stamina in students so they can demonstrate their knowledge and relatively quickly. We’re looking at how to leverage AP Classroom to support students before they sit for the AP test. They SAT and the AP test are different in that the SAT is designed so that even if a student has not seen a specific question, the skills they have accumulated in the classroom should prepare them to respond.
- MS: Transparently, we are not happy with where AP scores are for our students. We are seeing that the ability to sit for an exam is one thing that was likely lost due to the pandemic. We’re also looking at milestones to proactively measure student preparedness for the AP exam.
- Rob: The iReady data says starkly that our students are a number of grade levels behind. This is echoed in the SAT. The College Board had given more insight into how to interpret the scores, so when you look at what their score demonstrates in their ability, a student with a ~400 score is able to perform at a middle school level. In classes, it is sometimes harder because most students have some kind of compensation method, so they are working to do alright in their class, but their skills independent of those interventions are being demonstrated in the SAT and iReady scores.
- **Human Capital:** we are in hiring mode, we have 15 open roles, which is the low end for charters at this time of the year
- **Enrollment:** Vanessa: We are currently preparing for next year. Our goal is 715 – 725 for total enrollment by the end of the second week of school. We are gathering information from our returning students. Sixth grade continues to be a challenge, so we have opened up a new lottery for grade 6 to ensure that the grade is filled. We do expect natural transitions during the school year, so we exceed our cap with intentional buffer.
- MS: The city of Boston has had a decline in school-aged children. BPS is currently restructuring their schools, they are moving to a K-6 and 7-12 model, so we are paying close attention to 6th grade enrollment. We do feel confident that we should keep our 6th grade, but we are keeping a close eye on what BPS does and what that is meaning for 6th grade students.

VI. Finance Committee Update

- Tyler: We still have about \$300k in a covenant gap, if you could look over the finance notes and the attached budget. We have a couple of remaining cuts to make and we will bring a bank covenant compliant budget for approve at the next meeting.

- We have been talking about buying the lot next door for a long time. We had documents in place before the pandemic. We are currently paying \$200k per year and have an option to purchase the lot at the end of the lease for \$1.3M. We had an appraisal done and the lot is currently worth \$1.7M, but the purchase price is locked in with the addition to rent due up to the end of the lease.
- The committee is recommending is that we purchase the land earlier, we will try to negotiate rent concession. Some of the benefits of purchasing it early, it relieves some pressure on the convenient. We know that parking is important, and not having a place to park is a big concern for many people. This has also been raised in our benefits working group. This also creates some long-term option value for the school if we ever want to change the modular building, expand the building, etc. Otherwise, we would likely have to purchase three or four homes in order to expand. We currently have \$11M in cash, so we have the reserve funds to do this along with 6 months of reserves, which is the standard. We can't use the reserve cash easily, we need bank approval, so something like this is easier to get bank approval for rather than something like funding a new teacher, which is an annual expense as opposed to a one time expense.
- Nathalie: There is a building on the land right now, will we just leave the building until we decide what to do with the land.
- Tyler: We would like to remove the building and level the space in order to add additional parking.
- Kim: There will also be environmental due diligence.
- Jake: Is there something we've done in the past?
- Tyler: We've done an environmental phase one, which recommended an environmental phase two. We would build a contingency in the purchase and sales agreement for any environmental issues. Our land was relatively clean, so we're hopeful that that would be too.
- Jake: I would do the due diligence as though a building would be build there.
- Tyler: We would be unlikely to build there, instead we would move parking an expand the current building.
- Kim: We should still assess, just in case we ever have to sell it, knowing that someone may or may not be able to build there.
- Tyler: it does appear to be appreciating, which helps. Our principals are greatly in support of maintaining this addition of parking.
- VOTE: Allow the finance committee to negotiate lot purchase details and come back to the board.
- (Motion: Natalie, second: Amelia; All in favor) – 9:31am

VII. Governance Committee Update

- Sarah: We are in the process of onboarding new trustees. We are sad to say goodbye to (?) and Andrew who are terming out at the end of the schools year, so Meekerley, Tyler, Anders, and I are thinking about what kind of voices we want to add to the board next year. Jon Beck and Mayeti are on this call and have engaged with the school at various event. The One Team trustee will be voted on before the June board meeting. Dr. Wolff, Kim, and Sarah will provide an informational session to brief the potential candidates on what it means to be a One Team Trustee before the vote.
- We are working on formal evaluation for the ED, Meekerley, and just wrapped up 360 interviews. WE are also finalizing the official offer for Meekerley next year. We are offering Meekerley a 3% raise which includes the standard raise plus the 1% addition for everyone for inflation. WE would also like to implement a two year contract to provide Meekerley with the space to implement her vision, which we are very excited about. We will also include the same funding for PD and coaching.
- The vote is to allow the Governance Committee to oversee evaluation and negotiation process.
- Nathalie: Has the level of support you have been receiving been adequate?
- MS: Yes, I have two executive coaches who have two different areas of expertise and have been a great support.
- Kim: We're really trying to make this more formal and both qualitative and quantitative. It is interactive and in process, but we are feeling like we are making great progress.
- VOTE: All in favor of the Governance committee overseeing the finalization of ED contract process (motion to approve: Andrew; second: Wolff; all in favor)
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ACTION:

VIII. Looking Ahead - SY24 Priorities

IX. Closing & Announcements:

- June 21st, 8:00-10:00 AM
- Zoom and Hybrid option

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 Am

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