

Syringa Mountain School

Work Session Minutes – 05-12-17

Attending:

Randy Flood - BOD
Amy Jonas - BOD
Christine Fonner
Angi Hunter - BOD
Tenaya Kolar - BOD
Phoebe Pilaro - BOD

Meeting Called to Order by Randy Flood at 5:09pm. Board Members Present: Randy Flood (RF), Tenaya Kolar (TK), Angi Hunter (AH), Amy Jonas (AJ). Non Board Members: between 36 - 41 community members in and out

Opening circle

1. Wendy introduced herself as moderator; included background, non-partial opinion and role as moderator for the evening. Once the floor is open to comment, each person will have 5 minutes to speak.
2. RF did a flexibility exercise to demonstrate balance between accounting; at 135 students we have ~200k deficit. Update as of today, state revised May numbers and we are off an additional \$20k in state revenue. BOD is trying to make sure we have a strategic plan in place for the long term.
3. Teachers re-enrolling their funds is NOT sustainable. College of Teacher (COT) model came about during budget review process. We need to consider what are we missing? Yellowstone example: as long as we can breathe, we can solve problems.
4. TK introduced more on COT model. Deficit this year pushed towards \$450k due to lost revenue and building requirements. 2016/17 model started with a \$350k deficit. We MUST get sustainable. We are shooting for <\$200k deficit for 2017/18 and to do so, it looks different.
 - a. Two options - Budget A is COT with FT Director top down model
 - b. Budget B is COT with not FT Director and more flat, horizontal leadership model
 - c. Budget A is typical public school, top down administration; unsustainable amount of work for one director, recreates the wheel each time a new admin comes in, teachers have little say
 - d. Budget B - teachers have more stake in the school "buy in", creates adaptability, builds community, character and culture.
 - e. COT exhibit - teachers own curriculum, student life, etc; group is now in charge with committee support; gives power back to teachers; reduces admin duties; gives room to reinstate farm and garden/handwork in shoulder seasons
 - f. We don't assume transition to be seamless
 - g. Strength of new model builds continuity into the system
5. Bags Brokaw - community school teacher; private Waldorf experience; 30 years as administrator; here to help bring a teacher and parent perspective; Waldorf was the best

experience for his kids; where we are currently is logical that there is turnover and angst. There are no two Waldorf schools alike but there are cultural tendencies in a Waldorf continuum. MUST RESPECT WALDORF TENANTS. Waldorf is not hierarchical, it is flat. His comment: SMS is trying to build system while at sea. In the end, work toward a collaborative process. No tuition adds an add'l drain. His comment - faculty is trustee for curriculum and pedagogy. Worth to keep SMS alive and progressing. Need an admin to keep the whole together. COLLABORATIVE SERVANT LEADERSHIP. Not all decisions are equal. Our environment is not a normal structure. Suggests focusing on "ABC" decisions: A = administrative, B = republican/committee decisions, C = ALL Group decision. Use this as filter for varying topics. Need to take an inventory. This messy feeling is typical and after 40 years at CS they are still having the same conversations.

552pm - Public comment open

1. Hailey O - ok w/ model; sent lengthy email (see email); asking we slow down; she has a list of concerns
2. Maryann - a tone exists of "right v wrong"; focus as a team on finances; main point - a united focus on a budget issues will get SMS sustainable.
3. Kelly - concerns are working hard to understand each other (see letter she gave to RF); working to bridge gaps; supports CF
4. Julia H - speaking as a parent not a teacher; someone who has been here from the start; CF asked teachers to be creative thinkers; was not a secretive initiative; it has been a broken model for 3 years; teachers voices have been oppressed for 3 years; teachers are trying to stay together as a team; staff meetings are collaborative
5. Hope - Question: COT+Admin are we proposing both without cutting admin completely?
 - a. TK answer: keep admin but in a smaller role
6. Janet - appealing strategy; do we have admin who will take paycut?
 - a. RF answer: working on model and some creativity to keep flexibility and talent in school
 - b. CF answer: it's a PT position still undefine so can't answer
7. Spencer - How much gets taken on by teachers? have they been included?
 - a. yes, it's been a collaboration
 - b. KF - CF tasked us to find budget relief by cutting one and taking specials back; they started looking at what other smaller schools do; relieving admin of some duties and adding COT to take some to provide relief; was not secret, just an idea.
 - c. AS - In the meeting yesterday we refocused. Our "why" is to bring kids to fullest potential guarding speech/heart/actions; providing something worthy of imitation; low pay to other teachers in the valley, sacrifices, emotions, do teachers want ALL the extra work? no - BUT we are trying to save programs.
 - d. KD - we've sacrificed every year since year 1 and we continue to sacrifice - BUT we can't sacrifice the core group of teachers.
 - e. Travis - apologies if the model surprises anyone; teachers have always been the head of the school at the start. this is not a budget problem, this is a trust problem. Don't step away from them.
8. Nancy L - torn b/t true problem. relationships always have stress around finances; has seen improvement with CF; hard to separate logic from feelings; not about "likes" wherever you

work; have to work with what we have; the models aren't apples to apples; can we partner with other groups in town and use additional outside resources to supplement budget?

9. Parent (didn't get name) - there is only a \$10k difference between Budget A and B. Additional \$\$ should come from parents.
 - a. RF clarified that it's the impact on total deficit. Parent body needs to be conscientious of group impact (regarding attendance numbers)
10. Hailey O (again) - admin responsibility - liability is reason for cost differential in salary; concerns about teacher attendance and evaluations; she has concerns around missing leadership
11. Brad - elephant in the room; admin problem and principal visibility; BOD job should be in charge of admin and right now tail is wagging dog; there isn't time, ship is sinking; need positive changes and embrace community together
12. Dena - sped teacher since Jan 16; supports CF; fear in new model is that sped won't have support; conflict of interest since we are a public school; will we go backwards?; concerns for lacking support
13. Mike - been here since inception; helps with budget on occasion; admin is vitally important and we need everyone we have right now; kids parents all of it; need to focus and come from a place of abundance; communication problem is on the board; more \$ or less cost - probably somewhere in the middle; watch cutting muscle - we are already really lean; before you complain - DONATE! don't cut specials
14. Cara - in the current and past deficits, we are not living w/i means; things are not sustainable; something needs to shift in model; humans are inherently fearful; invest in the knowledge of what we have around us and in our strengths; CF brings admin strength and teachers are the root of the school - knowledge.
15. Bianca - we make up a beautiful school sharing love for children and experience w/ teachers; we must fight for it;
16. Amy C - have no fear; waldorf has done it/not first rodeo; teachers are most important; we chose waldorf, let's commit; hard to be different
17. Phoebe - need to get more collaborative; teachers hiring/firing each other not realistic or how it's done; elephant needs to be dealt with; hiring new admin not realistic; so if we want CF to stay, trust issue needs resolved
18. Amy J - I've seen few parents at ANY BOD meeting; invitation to come and stay updated

719pm Close w/ Amy S