



**Association for the Advancement of Education, DBA, The Hawbridge School**  
**1735 Saxapahaw-Bethlehem Church Road**  
**Saxapahaw, NC 27340**  
**(336) 376-1122**

## **BOARD MINUTES**

**Date:** July 26, 2018

**Location:** Hawbridge School

**Attending Board Members:** Todd Nicolet (Chair), Karamarie Fecho (Secretary), Natalya Barker, Lori Edmonds, Sue Eldon, Diane Ford, Val Hanson, Brian Setliff, Tim Toben

**Attending Executive Director and Faculty/Staff:** Mya Ciccotti (Interim Executive Director), Emily Martin (Guidance Counselor), Cameron Ratliff (Faculty Member)

- I. Call to Order
  - 6:20 pm.
- II. Roll Call
  - 6:21 pm.
- III. Approval of Agenda
  - Motion to approve the agenda. Seconded. Unanimously supported. 6:21 pm.
- IV. Public Comment
  - Doug Williams commented that he and Claire Haslam view the school as an important part of the Saxapahaw 'village'. They believe that the school expansion is necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of the school and local community. John Jordan seconded that sentiment.
  - Jonathan Romm thanked Mya, Dr. Moles, and Dr. Kreiner for all of their hard work on the school expansion project over the past few years. He also thanked the Jordan family, Williams, and Haslam.
- V. Consent Items
  - A. Approval of previous meeting's minutes
    - Motion to approve minutes from June 27, 2018 regular meeting and July 18, 2018 special session. Seconded. Unanimously supported. 6:30 pm.
  - B. Future Meetings/Events:
    - Board Meeting: 6:00 pm on Wednesday, August 15, 2018
      - Motion to move the next regular meeting date to 6:00 pm on Wednesday, August 22, 2018. Seconded. Unanimously supported. 6:33 pm.
- VI. Reports



#### A. Board

- Board Chair Nicolet formally thanked PASTA for the dinner they provided to the Board prior to the July regular meeting. He also explained the purpose of PASTA to incoming Board members and provided an overview of the work they are doing.
- Board Chair reviewed the purpose of the reports from the Board, Director, and Treasurer. He also clarified the purpose of Unfinished Business and New Business.
- Board Chair reviewed the purpose of Board Officers and noted that two positions remain open: Vice Chair and Treasurer. He suggested that Board members consider whether one of these positions is something they might be interested in serving on. Board will vote on the open positions during the August regular meeting.
- Board Secretary Fecho requested that Board members send her contact information (i.e., cell phone numbers, personal email addresses), as required by the school's bylaws.

#### B. Director

- Interim Executive Director Ciccotti provided an update on school enrollment to date for calendar year 2018–2019: 320 students are enrolled; eight additional offers have been extended, with a deadline for decision due next week. For perspective, last year's starting enrollment was 325 students. The current enrollment breakdown is as follows:
  - 20 students enrolled in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, no additional offers will be made
  - 23 students enrolled in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, no additional offers will be made
  - 39 students enrolled in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, one additional offer remains open
  - 40 students enrolled in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, no additional offers will be made
  - 40 students enrolled in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, no additional offers will be made
  - 43 students enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, additional offers remain open
  - 39 students enrolled in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, one additional offer remains open
  - 33 students enrolled in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, additional offers remain open
  - 43 students enrolled in 12<sup>th</sup> grade, no additional offers will be made
- Interim Executive Director distributed the revised State Conflict of Interest policy. Board reviewed the policy. Board members must sign before August 3, 2018.

#### C. Treasurer

- Board Chair Nicolet noted that the Board Treasurer position remains open. He highlighted several pieces of the budget report and explained the purpose of these pieces to incoming Board members.
- Board Member Fecho commented that the budget has been stable and in good shape for quite some time.
- Board Chair clarified several questions from incoming Board Members.



- No further comment on the budget.

## VII. Unfinished Business

### A. Hawbridge Expansion

#### 1. Vote

- Board Chair Nicolet formally thanked the land donors who made a potential school expansion possible: the Jordan family, Doug Williams, and Claire Haslam.
- Board Chair requested that the Board discussion on the potential school expansion be separated into two sequential discussions on (1) clarification of questions and review of projected enrollment numbers and (2) reactions of Board members and potential concerns. He also set some 'ground rules' for the discussion.
- Questions and Review of Projected Enrollment Numbers:
  - Board requested clarification on whether the school had sought external funding opportunities for a school expansion, perhaps via grants. School administration noted that they reviewed opportunities for grant funding but did not find anything suitable. Board Member Fecho acknowledged that her research likewise only identified grant funding for targeted programs (e.g., farm-to-table education initiatives), as opposed to infrastructure support, and the identified opportunities typically offered relatively small amounts of funding.
  - Board Chair Nicolet reviewed the history behind the vote on the potential school expansion, which began several years ago with a potential land donation from the Jordan family and a subsequent land donation from Doug Williams and Claire Haslam. He invited former Board Member Romm to comment on the decision to move forward with the plan under vote, which entails a split in the Hawbridge campus, with an upper school (grades 7-12) relocated to land across from Saxapahaw-Bethlehem Church Road and a lower school (grades K-6) remaining in the current facility.
  - Board raised questions about whether any discussions took place regarding alternative models for expanding the school, ones that would include new sources of revenue, while also retaining the current school culture and adhering to the [Hawbridge 2020 Strategic Vision](#). Board acknowledged that the Board Expansion Subcommittee relied on the former school administration's proposed plan for the potential school expansion, which proposes for two classes per grade and two separate campuses, with an increase in class sizes per grade (except in grades K-3, per state-mandated cap of



18 students/class). Board Expansion Subcommittee also accepted the recommendation of the architect to move forward with the proposed plan.

- Reactions of Board Members and Potential Concerns:
  - Board Chair reviewed his considerations for the meeting vote on the potential school expansion; these were circulated by email to Board members prior to the meeting. Those considerations included: the need to move forward with a vote due to potential increases in construction costs and rises in interest rates; and waiting lists for current Hawbridge students that may help defer concerns related to projected enrollment. He believes that the Board needs to vote on the potential expansion sooner rather than later, as the timeline is tight for an anticipated Fall 2020 opening of the new Hawbridge campus.
  - Board concerns included the following discussion points:
    - extent of 'wiggle room' in the projected budget for the proposed expansion, which is hard to predict, but roughly \$300K;
    - funding for renovations to the existing facility, as well risks associated with accepting roughly \$12.75M in new debt;
    - absence of clear approaches to reduce the impact of the proposed plan on increased student numbers per class (except for grades K-3), which poses challenges on existing faculty, the ability to recruit new faculty, the school's vision as it relates to individualized education, the ability of EC staff to meet the needs of existing and new EC students, and attrition with respect to high school students, which historically has been challenging;
    - potential dissolution of the Hawbridge culture;
    - potential reduction in school competitiveness, with respect to neighboring charter and traditional schools;
    - lack of a thorough review of alternative plans and a reliance on the recommendations of persons with potential conflict(s) of interest (e.g., the architectural firm); and
    - failure to provide sufficient time between receipt of materials required to cast an informed vote and the actual vote (i.e., days to one week for review of essential materials).



- Several Board members expressed their general enthusiasm for the proposed plan and a desire to move forward with a vote.
- Board also noted the importance of keeping the mission and vision of the school first and foremost should the Board decide to move forward with the school expansion.
- School administration presented their thoughts on the potential school enrollment. The administration reported that it feels comfortable with the plan that is being put forward, even with increased student numbers per class (except for grades K-3). The administration believes they can hire sufficient numbers of teachers to reduce the effective class size and realize the Hawbridge 2020 Strategic Vision.
- Board expressed their appreciation for the school administration's careful consideration of and enthusiasm for the proposed plan.
- Motion to pursue the USDA loan in order to move forward with the school expansion. Seconded. Votes: seven in favor; one opposed (Fecho); one abstained from the vote (Hanson). 8:25 pm.

VIII. Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn. Seconded. Unanimously supported. 8:26 pm.

*Minutes recorded and respectfully submitted by Karamarie Fecho, Board Member and Secretary.*