



The Association for the Advancement of Education, DBA, The Hawbridge School  
Board of Directors Meeting

Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2020

Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom

I. Call to Order – 6:02 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Attending Board Members: Todd Nicolet (Chair), Natalya Barker (Vice Chair), Dawnya Bohager (Treasurer), April Williams (Secretary), Kathryn Brown, Matt Buckmaster, Christina Fisher, Dianne Ford, Renee Lynch

Attending Executive Director and Faculty/Staff: Mya Ciccotti (Executive Director), Jonathan Farmer (Faculty Representative to the Board), Daryl Feldman (Assistant Director of Student Services)

Other Attendees: Monika Caruso, Elizabeth McCue

III. Approval of Agenda

IV. Public Comment

Elizabeth McCue, a 20-year community member of Saxapahaw, shared with the Board her concerns over worsening traffic conditions in Saxapahaw and her hope that the Board will become allies for a new committee that is forming to promote pedestrian and bike safety in Saxapahaw.

V. Consent Items

A. Approval of minutes

Minutes for our June 24 and July 10 special session meetings were approved.

B. Future Meetings/Events:

The Board reviewed a proposed meeting schedule for 2020-21, including the following dates: August 26, September 23, October 28, November 18, and December 16. We agreed to continue meeting the fourth Wednesday of each

month beginning at 6:00 p.m. The Board voted and approved that our next meeting will be on August 26 at 6:00 p.m. Meetings will remain virtual until further notice.

## VI. Reports

### A. Board's Report

- Committees overview: For the benefit of new Board members, Todd provided a brief explanation of how committees work and where the committee listing can be found (either bylaws or policy manual). Two very important committees to consider are the Fundraising and Communications Committees. Other committees to consider include the Expansion Committee (perhaps we need this committee less now) and the Renovation Committee, which may be needed for the lower building (Todd wondered if this is more appropriate for full board). Each Board member should serve on at least one committee; please consider serving as a leader of a committee.
- Welcome e-mail from the Board: As we currently do not have the new Communications Committee established yet, Todd will send an e-mail out to the school as a welcome from the new Board, offering support during this new year. He will draft the e-mail and share with the rest of the Board via GoogleDocs. Please review and make any changes to reflect the voice of the new Board.
- Committee updates:
  - Fundraising
 

Kathryn shared that three former board members have rolled off the Fundraising Committee, so now it is just her and Natalya; therefore, they are in need of new Board members to join. Kathryn and Natalya attended a workshop in the spring about grant writing. Matt has grant-writing experience at Elon, so he may consider joining the committee (two-tiered: grant writing and capital campaign). Responsibilities on this committee include reaching out to community members, administrative work, accumulating and updating a list of donors, acquiring contact information, etc.
- Question of non-Board members serving on committees: The issue was raised as to whether we should open our committees to non-Board members and individuals not directly affiliated with Hawbridge, such as former Board members or Saxapahaw community members and stakeholders. For example, some recent former Board members have expressed interest in continuing to work on behalf of the committees they have served in the past. This raises the larger issue of considering how to make committees more robust and effective. Should we create a kind of advisory board to serve this need, and what the rules are regarding taking advice from non-Board members? We must be clear about the intentions of these committees and advisory boards and have clearly defined roles for committee participants and consultants.

## B. Director's Report

- Jumpstart has started: Mya reported that the state-funded Jumpstart program started July 20 and will run until August 7. Students invited to participate are receiving virtual help each day in the areas of reading and math to ensure they are prepared for the start of school on August 17. Eleven students were invited to attend, and five have been participating.
- CARES Act funding: On July 9, the North Carolina State Board of Education voted to include public schools in the CARES Act funding. Hawbridge received \$14,000 to assist in COVID-related expenses. Hawbridge will use these funds to purchase more Wi-Fi hot spots to support families who are struggling Internet connection, a necessary component of virtual learning.
- Reopening survey results: In response to a recent survey sent out to Hawbridge families and staff regarding reopening, the overwhelming preference expressed was for the remote-only model. Of our 300 families, 250 participated in the survey (which was better participation than for past surveys), and nearly all faculty responded. The opinions shared communicated that virtual-only was the safest decision for students, families, and staff.
- Continued reevaluation: Mya shared that Hawbridge will continue to reevaluate every four weeks regarding how to proceed. Because Hawbridge is a charter school serving students from all over NC, they consult with six other health departments besides Alamance County's.
- Resources and preparedness: The admin are working hard to provide consistent procedures for faculty on how to do live instruction every day, to provide handbooks for parents and students that include user guides for Google classroom, to prepare virtual orientations for parents and students, allowing them to submit their questions ahead of time. Likewise, teachers and staff are having to work more over the summer to be prepared, including having some virtual staff meetings, and the facilities are having to be maintained with rigorous cleaning and changing air filters.
- Question from Board member: When will the decisions happen regarding each four-week block as to whether virtual learning will continue or another model will be started? Answer: Decisions will hopefully be made a week before the end of the four-week period; Hawbridge perhaps may need to re-align the reevaluations and decisions from a four-week assessment to a nine-week one, aligning it with grading periods. A lot of districts are taking this approach, and two other charters already doing this.
- Question from Board member: Is there any role the Board needs to play in this? Answer: Mya is managing these decisions; the Board would only need to weight in if the school needed to tap into additional funding or if policies needed to be amended due to COVID.
- Communication: Communication regarding Hawbridge's response to COVID has been well-received. The FAQs were really helpful and timely.

- Question from Board member: Is there any additional funding that we should be anticipating that we may have to make decisions on? Answer: We have devices to supply to everyone; the potential financial hardship is going to be due to demand for hot spots. Our current hot spot is through Verizon, though we need a different data plan. The need may exceed the \$14,000 we received from the state. Currently, we're waiting on an assessment of how many families will need hot spots.
- Preparedness for in-person learning: Hawbridge used the initial \$11,000 provided by the state to stockpile cleaning supplies (\$8,500), masks, and air filters. Screens have been put in windows to improve airflow; some classrooms have been designated unusable because of a lack of airflow. Every single classroom has been measured in anticipation of rolling out plan B and students having to sit six feet apart.
- Question from Board member: How does COVID affect our financials, especially regarding enrollment? Is enrollment down? Answer: Contrary to what we expected, enrollment is up. The school is being bombarded with questions from families on the waiting list who are anxious to secure a spot with the school. Several families have asked if the school goes to plan b, do they have to withdraw if they don't want to do in-person learning, but no, they can move to plan c (virtual-only). Currently, we're at 328 and we will keep enrolling until we're at capacity.
- Updates to grievance policy: Donna Rascoe, the attorney who represents the Board of Directors, has recommendations for us to consider regarding the grievance policy. Mya will share those with us in our August meeting folder. Please review before the meeting. Per Donna's recommendation, we need to clarify the language more, but it's not radically different.

#### C. Treasurer's Report

- No report; still in first month of new fiscal year.

#### D. Faculty Representative's Report

- The faculty would like to express relief that school will be starting online, gratitude that faculty got to weigh in on that decision, confidence that it's the safest option, and a lot of anxiety about how to do a good job in this new virtual format.

### VII. Unfinished Business

#### Hawbridge Expansion Update

(From Little Diversified and Aspire Construction—Julie McLaurin and Jackie Tomlin represented Little; Mya represented Aspire, since Jason was away on vacation)

- Little, Jason, and CT Wilson are working closely on cost reductions (value engineering). Meeting set up with CT Wilson on Friday.

- Daryl and Mya looking at FF&E line item to see what we really need, doing a real concrete inventory of current facility.
- Easements—need to be signed by John Jordan, Jason to follow up with this.
- DOT approvals—we’ve received all of those.
- Erosion control and storm water permits—still awaiting those.
- Great conversations with CT Wilson, down almost \$400K, changing a little bit of the material (the manufacturer), budget is looking up, long way to go, but confident we can get there.
- CT Wilson went back to sub-contractors to get lower bids than the initial bid
- No major changes have happened in the building yet—no major things have been removed.
- Next steps: We’ll have a meeting soon where we can go over those detailed and any potential major changes that may need to vote on; we need a closed session next week.  
Natalya will do a Doodle poll for when—Wednesday or Thursday and possibly Friday.
- Question: How is CT Wilson feeling about our timeline? Answer: CT Wilson anxious to see how quickly we can get our approvals back; they are giving the impression that it’s still doable, but we need to get this started soon. Everyone’s goal is to make this happen as soon as possible.
- Permits—just sit tight and wait a little longer (storm water and erosion), since we’re at about 20 days into our 30-60-day timeframe; we check in frequently with CLH. Getting the DOT approvals was great. Building permits are ready to go; we only have a foundation permit right now, but now that we have CT Wilson on board, we’re able to get ahead of the game; CT Wilson has a lot of experience with Alamance County on this.

## VIII. New Business

### A. Review of Board Responsibilities and Best Practices

- Board member should become familiar with the Hawbridge bylaws and policies. In particular, note the list of Board duties and specific actions.
- Our number one role is our fiduciary role, ensuring the short- and long-term future of The Hawbridge School. Our second role is providing supervision of the executive director of the school.
- Note that how to implement these responsibilities can get fuzzy. But to be very clear: We explicitly are not involved in the day-to-day operations of the school. It is crucial that the faculty and admins feel empowered in their roles. Hiring and firing of faculty and staff are not part of our role; these are the executive director’s responsibilities, who may ask for our opinions or advice, but who is not obligated to take them.
- The importance of our role when it comes to “supervision” of the ED is to make sure we can find and retain a really talented executive director (which we have with Mya);

if we get too involved in the day-to-day, we run the risk of driving EDs away and it will be hard to fill that role with another good ED and retain them.

- It's important to recognize that most folks—community members, parents, even faculty—likely don't know the purview of the board. We have to be clear about what is within our roles and what is not.
- Best practice: We will get feedback from community members—that's good; it's part of what we're here for—but we need to be consistent about how we respond to feedback. Really important that when we are in conversation with anyone about Hawbridge, we are explicit when it is our individual opinion and not opinions of the Board. When we speak as a Board, we have to have consensus about that message or it's not speaking for the Board. Sometimes we won't be able to communicate because we don't have a consensus.
- Best practice: If you get a message individually about the Board, just forward it on to [board@hawbridgeschool.org](mailto:board@hawbridgeschool.org). Be clear with that person that you assume it's for the whole board, and will send it to them unfiltered, unless they explicitly ask us not to. Explain to the individual what our role is before we respond, emphasizing that we don't handle the day-to-day of the school. Ask something like, "Would you be willing to send the message to the board at large or is it ok to forward your message?"
- Be mindful of which e-mail addresses you're using and when. If it's a personal opinion or about your Hawbridge student, don't use the Hawbridge board e-mail address; use your personal account.
- Remember: While you're on the Board, you can never take off your board hat, even if you send from personal e-mail address.
- Note: The Board does not deal with curriculum in any way; the educators are the educators. We provide input at a high level but not specific curriculum.

#### B. Changes to Enrollment Priorities

- Priorities for enrollment have changed on the legislative side; we need to vote on an amendment to our enrollment policy.
- Dianne moved to make the changes as described. Dawnya seconded it.
  - a. Question: What affect will this have on our goals of diversity and inclusion?  
Answer: It limits our ability to diversify the Hawbridge school; however, it's state law, so we have to make the change as handed to us by the legislature.
  - b. Question: Is there a possibility we could use a weighted lottery to protect diversity, having the ability to identify sub-groups (students with disabilities, students with ESL, students who qualify for free and reduced lunch—and if yes, what groups would we want to identify)?
  - c. Answer: We would need to be in communication with faculty regarding what support they would need. We would also likely need to take a look at transportation and lunch provisions before we look at a weighted lottery.
  - d. Hawbridge is actively doing anti-racism work. We are confident that the faculty wants to bring more awareness, equity, and diversity to our school, but the timing with COVID is making everything more difficult. We anticipate a lot of enthusiasm from faculty regarding efforts to make the school a more accessible and

equitable place for students and families. As it is now, Hawbridge has a lot of diversity, but not always visible: We have a large LGBTQ population, kids from seven different counties, roughly 15 percent with special needs (and we do not have an official school nurse or social worker; faculty take on this responsibility).

- e. Bottom line: If the state passes any kind of bill that affects charter schools and funding, our policies have to reflect those changes.
  - Board voted to approve the state's changes to the admissions policy; all yeses with abstention from Matt Buckmaster.

IX. Adjourn

Natalya moved that we adjourn. Renee seconded. Motion passed at 7:54 p.m.