



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

Date: Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom

I. Call to Order – 6:01 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), Emily Martin (School Counselor), Jennifer Shelton (Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction)

Other Attendees: Ben Culp (Aspire Construction Management)

III. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved unanimously.

IV. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

V. Unfinished Business

Todd reminded the group of the many projects and responsibilities the Executive Director and her administrative team are managing, which include:

- Construction of the new upper school
- Renovation of current space to become the new lower school
- Hiring for approximately 30 new positions
- Planning for fall 2021, anticipating the new building will not be ready until spring
- Recruiting a larger number of students for the expanded school
- Managing and facilitating ongoing instruction during a global pandemic

Tonight's goal is to focus on how we as a board can help with these responsibilities to support Mya and the other admins to position the school for success.

A. Hawbridge Expansion Update (Little Diversified and Aspire Construction)

- The construction loan closed on November 19, 2020.
- We're still waiting on a couple of things: an amendment to the contract and getting a recorded easement to the USDA (this should happen by Friday).
- December 14 is a tentative date for CT Wilson to begin doing some preliminary work at the site, minor things to prepare for the start of construction (e.g., putting up temporary fencing, bringing in some equipment, etc.)
- Ben anticipates that construction will be able to start in the next couple of weeks.
- Todd reiterated that Jason and Ben have done excellent work for us during this process, as well as our closing attorney; the closing was more complicated than anticipated and the closing attorney put in ample quality work to help us. Todd also reported that preliminary work and conversations with CT Wilson confirm that they are a great choice for this project.
- Key point: The new school building will not be ready by fall 2021, but we can anticipate it being ready by the beginning of the spring semester 2022.
- Construction period will be 11 months from the start of construction, plus approximately 2 weeks to get moved in.
- Mya anticipates the winter break being when we will move everything into the new building, during the weeks of December 20 and December 27.
- The anticipated first day in the new building is January 3.
- As we plan for what to do for the fall semester, we should consider adding a month to our anticipated timeline, in case something arises with the construction.

B. Groundbreaking ceremony

- Mya encouraged the board to lead the planning for the groundbreaking event.
- The board agreed and created a new committee to spearhead the project.
- Kathryn and Renee agreed to co-chair the new groundbreaking ceremony committee. Board members can reach out to them to volunteer to help.
- Regarding timing, the fundraising committee was wondering if the groundbreaking ceremony could be pushed out to the spring. The ED and admins felt this was too late, because it missed the opportunity to position it as an event to help with recruiting. Instead, it would be ideal to have the groundbreaking ceremony around the same time as the open houses (these will be the last three Thursdays of January). We want to make sure that the groundbreaking event is at least two weeks prior to the close of the lottery on March 1. The board is therefore considering the last week of January or the first week of February for the event. A proposed date is February 2 (Groundhog Day!).
- The purposes of this event are to celebrate the beginning of this new phase of the expansion, to recognize and honor the donors who have made this possible

(especially the land donors), and to raise Hawbridge's profile for recruiting new students.

- Mya also pointed out that the groundbreaking ceremony is a good opportunity for members of the Hawbridge community to get to see and meet the board.
- Given the complexities of launching a full-fledged fundraising campaign, the concern was raised that we should simplify our fundraising message prior to the groundbreaking: How do we want to encourage folks to support the expansion through donations? What's the best way to give? How do folks give (by check to the school, online, etc.)? What do we say as a board when someone wants to designate a gift to a particular aspect of the expansion (money for the gym, outdoor spaces, general fund, etc.)? These are all important questions for the fundraising committee to address and for the board to consider. Prior to the groundbreaking, we need to determine our simplified fundraising message to the community.
- Kathryn brought up the need to consider donor recognition—some folks like to give anonymously while others appreciate recognition, such as having their names engraved on bricks or acquiring naming rights for parts of the school.
- Mya mentioned having different levels of recognition based on the amount donated, which could include hanging donor recognition banners in the gym.
- Renee shared the idea that we could stream the groundbreaking ceremony and include a “Donate Now” button so that folks could give as part of the event.
- We want to be careful not to overlap with PASTA's fundraising efforts. The parent group is launching their first online silent auction in February to raise funds using items that were donated and scheduled to be auctioned in April but couldn't because of COVID.

C. Plans for Fall Upper School students

- Given that the new building will not be completed until the spring, we need a plan for how to instruct the upper school students in the fall.
- Bethlehem Presbyterian Church (at 3624 Saxapahaw Bethlehem Church Road) has offered their buildings and outdoor space as a site for instruction for as long as we need it. The church is less than four miles from Hawbridge, just down Saxapahaw Road.
- Mya, Daryl, Jennifer, and Todd will meet a church member there tomorrow for a tour of the property. If we choose to use the property, we would likely rent it from August 1 to January 1.
- Mya anticipates that we will need to rent trailers (up to five or six) and possibly outdoor event tents for the space. Also considering forced air heaters for outdoor classrooms.
- Mya has looked into other spaces, such as the Holt warehouse on 87 South (not suitable for teaching, as it's just a huge warehouse that is not climate controlled) and Cornerstone Community Church (unable to get anyone on the phone, as so many folks are working from home these days, and the concern is that this is too far from Saxapahaw).

- Whatever transition facility we use, it would need to accommodate approximately 285 students.
- The question was raised if we could adjust the start date of school. The lower school should be able to start mid-August. Jason will have numbers within the next two weeks for how much it will cost to renovate the current building to accommodate the new lower school. It's possible we could push back the upper school calendar start date until after Labor Day, as long as we continue to meet the state's guidelines.
- The question was raised if we could consider a virtual option. We would have to take that before DPI and get approval. The concern is that as of now, roughly 40 percent of families are ready to have students come back to in-person learning starting in January. If we extend virtual learning into the fall, we run the risk of a high withdrawal rate among upper school students.
- The question was raised if we could create a hybrid offering that includes in-person and virtual learning. Mya's response was that we would have to investigate this further with DPI to see if it's a possibility.
- The question was raised about what the legalities were regarding paying the church a rental fee since the school is a nonprofit organization (this was some concern last year when we first looked at the church as an option). Mya assured us that there are no legal concerns if we are pursuing the church as a temporary solution and we do not do any construction or permanent modifications to the church property.
- The church property consists of ten acres of land, a sanctuary, a large fellowship hall, Sunday school classrooms, several restrooms, a paved basketball court, and a gazebo.
- Things to consider: An AA meeting has used the space in the past, pre-COVID, but are now virtual; they may want to use the space again in the fall. The Internet in this area is not very reliable.
- The question arose of the costs associated with using the church as a temporary upper school. Mya's (nonbinding) estimate is \$200,000 for the trailers and FFE (furniture, fixtures, and equipment).
- If we are able to use the FFE budget for the expansion to furnish the temporary trailers and then move that furniture into the new building once it's finished, it would save us \$100,000 in the upfront costs. Mya will confirm with Jason that this is an option.
- Todd asked Dawnya to review our current budget in light of this new projected expense for the temporary upper school.
- Our current surplus is \$748,350, but in the past, we have wanted to keep six months' expenses in the surplus, around \$600,000. Once we hire new teachers for the lower school, this amount will need to be higher.
- Reminder that we will be reimbursed by the USDA for all of the out-of-pocket expenses the school has accrued for the expansion, which is around \$700,000. We'll need this money because we will have a number of expenses for the new lower school; Jason needs two weeks to figure out those renovation numbers.

Mya needs two more weeks to negotiate with the trailer rental companies and figure out the FFE.

- Furniture in existing building will not be suitable for the K-5 kids. Could we take what we can't use and put in the trailers and buy new equipment for lower school? Daryl and Mya will collaborate to figure out furniture.
- It was proposed that we get more solid numbers for these fall expenses to consider and vote on in January. Recap: We'll need to determine how much we can spend on the lower school renovation plus the temporary site for the upper school.
- If anyone has any connections or other ideas, please send them to Mya.
- Mya asked if any board members would like to attend the tour of the church at 3:30 tomorrow, since it will be important to have board members see the temporary spaces as we consider this as a possible option. April volunteered. Mya agreed to take and send photos to the board.
- Christina recommended a space in downtown Siler City that she owns. Todd asked Christina to send those details to Mya and encouraged everyone to err on the side of sending all ideas to Mya, because we never know how it will play out.
- It was noted that during the months of September through December we will have a considerably larger student body and therefore more income, but we will not be paying the loan yet, because the building won't be finished. Mya will get these numbers to the board for consideration.
- Note that while we will also have extra income, we will need more cash on hand because of the increase in faculty.
- Dawnya noted, too, that we do not always get money from the counties at the beginning of the semester; it trickles in erratically and slowly.
- Empty apartments in the mill were suggested, as were hybrid options.
- Matt encouraged us to keep the temporary site close to the original school.
- Regarding trailers—how does the water, septic, and electricity work? The current Hawbridge trailer has its own electrical meter and is likely tied to the village water and septic system.
- Other suggestions included Alamance Community College, Buckner Steel, and the American Legion on Hwy 54 (CT Wilson built it).
- Security—how do we maintain good security at a temporary site like the church? Signage will be in place as well as an office manager right at the front doors. Renee pointed out that church spaces are often thought of by the community as more open to the public, so we should be mindful of this.

VI. Adjourn – 7:25 p.m.