



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

Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Location: Virtual Meeting

I. Call to Order – 6:03 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: Jason Imhof and Ben Culp (Aspire Construction Management)

III. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved unanimously.

IV. Public Comment

A. There was no public comment.

V. Consent Items

A. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

The board unanimously approved minutes from February 24, 2021.

B. Future Meetings/Events:

The board unanimously approved our next meeting for Wednesday, April 28, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

## VI. Reports

### A. Board

- Groundbreaking Committee (Kathryn Brown) – Next meeting will be April 14. BJ at the Methodist church has agreed to help with the AV for the event. Mya informed us that we will have to delay the topping-out event by a month due to construction delays.
- Fundraising Committee (Kathryn Brown) – The fundraising committee did not meet this month; they will continue the work they started when they met with Renee last month regarding acquiring and using grants for renovations to the lower school.
- Communications Committee (April Williams) – The committee raised questions to consider the overall communications goals of the entire board:
  - Communication with Hawbridge community: Do we want to have regular communication with the various stakeholders (families, students, staff), and if so, what should the form be (e-mail, newsletter, videos, minutes), how frequent should we reach out, and what content would we want to include?
  - Communication with new Hawbridge parents: Is there a need for different communication with families new to Hawbridge, and if so, when and how should we reach out to them?
  - Communication regarding the Upper School: How can the committee support Mya and the other admins in communicating information to families regarding the upper school construction and transition space for the fall?
  - Access to virtual board meetings: In light of last month's concerns raised by a parent regarding difficulty accessing our online board meetings, is there anything we can do to make this process easier and more accessible, since it is such a key communications component in terms of our accessibility and transparency to the community?

Discussion with the larger board included the following:

- If we do send any introductory e-mail to new families, it would be helpful to send it to current families as well, as the board and our responsibilities are likely not top-of-mind for most folks and refreshers are helpful.
- There is a Facebook page for both PASTA and the school, but not a Facebook Hawbridge parent group. The Hawbridge Google Group is how e-mails go out to all parents.
- We could send out an e-mail to the community regarding the updated Board web page. This could go out with a message from the board before the end of the school year.
- Caution against a quarterly newsletter or anything of that frequency, simply because we don't want to have to scrounge to generate content. Instead, consider what we think would be useful information for the Hawbridge community.
- Q: Is there a way to tie in board communication with existing communication that is already going out? What about Mya's Sunday updates—perhaps a message from the Board could be added onto those? A: Those Sunday

messages are only two minutes of recording time, so it is very dependent on what's going on with the school if there is any time left over. If time-sensitive, need another way to send it. If not, then we could send something to Mya to work in when there is time available.

- Suggestion: Put together a very short synopsis of the board minutes, or a more detailed version of the agenda.

Ultimately, there is no clear baseline or expectation for our communications based on past years, so it is up to the committee to make that recommendation for the larger board's consideration.

- Renovations Committee (Renee Lynch) – Mya and Renee met with Ben and the architect. They are reimagining plans for the vestibule to include admin offices so that we can use current admin space as a classroom. Other points of conversation included security issues, adding two bathrooms, HVAC upgrades, lighting and audio concerns downstairs, etc. There was a lot of talk and planning about the aesthetics of downstairs. The timeline is doable by end of summer (yay!). Mya will meet with some of the staff over spring break to support their ideas and design improvements. We are still waiting for final numbers on budget, but renovations should be within budget and timeline.

Discussion with the larger board included the following questions:

- Q: Will there be murals on the walls? How are we making the space more inviting for younger people? A: Combination of committee and input from new hires will ensure the lower school space is inviting to younger children. We want to give teachers a chance to make their mark on a clean, freshly painted space, which will include appropriate size furniture. The whole school has been painted; Anthony has renovated the upstairs: eliminated some counter space, created a storage space for the Chromebooks in the common area, etc. There's already a mural in the common space that could be updated for younger students—upper school students may want to have a hand in updating murals and adding new ones, as a nice legacy to leave behind; Mya will talk to Ms. Cornette about it.
- Q: Is there a budget for these changes? A: Each teacher will have an annual budget for supplies and materials, not sure how much yet until we know what we're doing with REAP grant funding. Admin team will have to figure out best way to spend this, because once we access those REAP funds, they have to be spent within five days.
- Q: What are we thinking in terms of beautification to the entrance? A: Simple and quick fixes for this may include raised beds and flowers (could be up within a month or so), potentially adding the school mascot or symbol above the name of the school on the exterior (have someone professionally do it), and having the symbol on the front of the building somewhere, etc. One of the new kindergarten teachers is interested in starting pollinator and herb gardens.
- Selection Committee (Matt Buckmaster) – The committee presented new edits to the board application regarding diversity and inclusivity. As the form has already

been published on the website, this revised form will need to be swapped out and make sure the revision goes to the PASTA rep. If an e-mail about the form has not gone out to the parents, we should wait on this until the revised application is up. The committee will meet again to brainstorm recruitment strategies to encourage applications. Perhaps the communications committee could help encourage not only awareness of the board, but also participation on the board.

#### B. Director

- Lottery/Enrollment – Thus far, we have 243 confirmed students out of 298 offers (82%). The lottery system really simplified the process; Lotterease will continually be reaching out to folks on the waitlist. There was a lag in the system at the beginning of the lottery process—more applicants than they realized—however, this did *not* interfere in any way with anyone’s chances at receiving a spot. High school numbers look good; 76 out of 93 confirmed for high school.
- Hiring – We have nine vacancies left out of 34, with three offers still out to potential new hires; if all three accept, we’ll be down to six vacancies remaining. We are attending a job recruitment fair for education at Elon University, hoping to fill our last few vacancies from there.
- Senate Bill 220 (mandating that schools reopen) – This bill does not include charter schools; we’ll remain on board with original plan that gives parents choice about which plan for their children is best. Mya received final confirmation from the office of charter schools that this bill indeed does not apply to Hawbridge.
- In-person Graduation – We are tentatively planning an in-person graduation ceremony for June 1 at 7 p.m. in the Saxapahaw amphitheater. We will limit number of tickets and attendants to ensure proper COVID precautions. Our reservation request is submitted to the condo association board; we’re waiting to hear back. We will make every effort we can to have some kind of safe in-person ceremony for our graduates and their families this year, as last year was so disappointing for everyone.

#### C. Treasurer

Dawnya reported that everything looks like it’s following on track for this year and that she is looking forward to new financials when they become available.

#### D. Faculty Representative

Jonathan reported that coming back into the building was a really positive experience. There was a lot of excitement and energy. Faculty are looking forward to a lot of opportunities for growth over the next few months. While there remains a little bit of nervousness, feelings are mostly of excitement, joy, and recommencement.

### VII. Unfinished Business

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

- Rain delays – It has been an extraordinarily wet winter and that has hurt the grading operation; crews are still grading the site. Last week was finally dry and they made some good progress, but not all of the grading is done. We will be facing rain delays. Aspire is going through the process with CT Wilson to try to minimize the impact; at this point, we're looking at upwards to a month of delays. It may be possible to get back some of the lost time once we get out of the mud and into the building phase.
- Progress – We hope to be on to the building part by the end of March. We've started to pour some concrete and are putting in the site retaining walls.
- Topping-out ceremony – Because of the rain delays, we should plan for this event to be mid- to late June now and may want to consider if this event is still appropriate given the new timing.

## VIII. New Business

### A. 2021-2022 Academic Calendar

The new academic calendar is in our board folder for our review. Mya originates this document, then looks at it with the school leadership; this version is the final result of those tweaks and modifications. The number of days in each quarter breaks down as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> – 41; 2<sup>nd</sup> – 43; 3<sup>rd</sup> – 41; and 4<sup>th</sup> – 44. Remember that as a charter school, we do not adhere to the 180-school day calendar, as public schools do. Instead, we must have 1,025 hours per school year. The new calendar has 1,098 hours at this time to allow for some flexibility. Eleven inclement weather days are built in as well.

### B. New Hires: Upper and Lower School Administration

Mya was excited to announce the new administrative positions and shared their highly qualified bios with the board:

- Lower School Director – Daryl Feldman
- Upper School Director – Jennifer Shelton
- Upper School Assistant Director – Emily Martin

### C. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Discussion

- The board confirmed our shared values and commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) with a robust discussion:
  - It was useful to read over diversity statements from a number of other institutions that Christina provided for us (SAS Institute, UNC Chapel Hill, Apple, Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Raleigh Charter High School). In looking through our board bylaws, we have an anti-discrimination statement, but that's the total of our public statement on DEI at this point.
  - This may be a negative approach, only being explicit about what we don't do. It would be good to also have a very positive statement along the lines of "we value...we work toward...we welcome..." Could we build a positive statement for our bylaws? Could this statement be used in other applications?

- Some agreed it would be good to craft a statement that is more forward-looking, more positive, something more progressive to help bring folks together and convey more of a sense of inclusion and belonging.
- For context, the mission and vision statements were shared.
- We seemed to be in agreement over the idea of making sure we call out some kind of statement about our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, possibly changing the bylaws, adding a statement about Hawbridge as an inclusive environment.
- Mya shared that during our online open houses this year, there were a lot of questions from potential parents about diversity of faculty and student body—this is clearly something that people are looking for.
- If we want to take a new stance on diversity and inclusion, it's important that we all say the same thing as representatives of the school.
- Mya shared that there have been parents who have said that the inclusive environment at Hawbridge saved their children's lives.
- We all agreed a task force to take up this important issue is necessary. The group should include representatives from the board, school leadership, faculty, students, and parents. The new task force will work together to determine Hawbridge's shared values regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion and develop language for a new statement for the bylaws and other school uses.
  - Concern was raised that a new DEI statement by itself isn't credible at solving actual problems. The statement needs to be coming out of a larger process where we recognize problems and how we're going to address them. We need to be concerned about a board process divorced from a larger conversation about what we're changing and how we're changing it. We need to make sure it's not an independent board process that's just making language.
  - Mya pointed out that if we can get a value statement or diversity statement in place by the task force, that's what will drive the professional development, training, discipline, and other policies for the school.
  - There was agreement among members that it is important that this issue not become a single line item on a board meeting agenda but an ongoing dialogue and commitment to living out the values we want for Hawbridge, making changes and taking action to make our values a real, lived experience for everyone involved with the school.
  - A board member suggested we consider doing some training in bias and antiracism, as well as use resources we already have, such as former board member Val Hanson, who works as a restorative justice director. Another recommendation was that we need more books in the schools that include more diversity. Having the new DEI statement then forces us to acknowledge where we aren't living up to it and the needs that we must address.
  - Make sure that we're including in this process the communities that may already feel left out—how do we identify these groups and address their needs?

- Christina, Matt, and Renee volunteered to be the board representatives on the new DEI task force. We defer to Mya to organize the other representatives.
- Next steps: As a board, consider what competencies we can develop and appropriate actions to take, including share knowledge and training in DEI that we already have.

IX. Closed Session

The board voted to move to closed session at 7:38 p.m. to consider confidential matters pursuant to NC G.S. §143-318.11, Subsection (a) - (5).

X. Adjourn – 7:56 p.m.