



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

Date: Wednesday, April 28, 2021

Location: Virtual Meeting

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), 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

A. Monika Caruso – After thanking Mya for putting a link to the virtual board meeting in Sunday's e-mail, Ms. Caruso asked if there is a fundraiser planned in lieu of PASTA's usual silent auction. In answer to her question, there is a PASTA fundraising drive happening on Facebook; we will ask PASTA to share information about this event in additional ways so that folks not on Facebook can participate.

V. Consent Items

A. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

The board unanimously approved minutes from March 27, 2021.

B. Future Meetings/Events:

The board unanimously approved our next meeting for Wednesday, May 26, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

VI. Reports

A. Board

- Groundbreaking Committee (Kathryn Brown) – Due to construction delays, the topping-out ceremony will be pushed back into mid-summer. The committee met on April 14 to go through guidelines of everything that needs to be done, assigning tasks and reviewing the timeline. The next meeting will be May 25.
- Fundraising Committee (Kathryn Brown) – The committee met on Monday, April 19, and Thursday, April 22, to discuss copy for the fundraising web page. They are trying to work collaboratively with PASTA. The current focus is to support the school renovation and projects at the school, to help Renee and the renovations committee locate some funding for the projects they're focused on, in particular the renovations of the lower school.
- Communications Committee (April Williams) – The committee met April 27 and reviewed progress toward our short-term and long-term communications goals (as outlined in the "Charge Communication Committee" document, which the board approved last fall). We've made good progress in two short-term goals:
 - Update the Board web page to include Board bios and cleaner access to current minutes, policy manual, and expansion updates
 - Share the progress of the school expansion project with appropriate communities of interest

The recent press release helped us with two of our long-term goals:

- Publicize important activities of the Hawbridge School in local newspapers and social media platforms
- Recruit a larger student body to our expanded school

More work is needed in the following areas:

- Communicate the work of the Board to the Hawbridge School faculty, staff, students, and families
- Tell the story of the Hawbridge School within the statewide charter school community (This goal may be best performed by the administrative team—who know more of this story—with the communications committee providing support as needed.)

The committee has developed a timeline for communications with the Hawbridge faculty and families to include introductory letters to be e-mailed in the fall, a progress report to be e-mailed in either late December or early January, an e-mail invitation to apply to the board in years when board positions become available to be e-mailed between February and April, and an end-of-year e-mail letter in which we share a brief summary of our work for the year.

The committee also recommends adding some more easily accessible links to our virtual meetings on the Hawbridge website:

- From the home page, clicking on the “Monthly Board Meeting” icon/thumbnail, add a statement to this page along the lines of, “To attend the virtual board meeting, click [here](#).” (Note: If we set up a recurring meeting, the Zoom link would remain the same each time, so it wouldn’t have to be updated as often.)
- On the Board page, under the subheading “Upcoming Meetings,” add to the “Agenda” hyperlink some language to indicate that the link is in the agenda, such as “[Agenda and Link to Virtual Meeting](#)”

The committee also discussed the need for more streamlined faculty appreciation efforts, considering the possibility of adding another committee (perhaps as small as two members) that would be preauthorized by the board to make spontaneous gestures of appreciation as opportunities arise, given a pre-approved spending limit and budget.

- Renovations Committee (Renee Lynch) – With students back in the building and interior renovations forthcoming, the committee is focusing its efforts on the exterior of the lower school. Committee members met with some of the new faculty and talked about how the outdoor space can support their curriculum; we are looking at how to get funding to make these projects happen. Daryl has an upcoming meeting with Ginny from Sprout Farm, who may be able to help with some of these projects. Renee created a design for outdoor seating with a planter attached to it that should be fairly easy to put together. Renee is also talking to some local artists to get quotes for a mural for the outside of the building. When asked if PASTA could offer some funds, as they have expressed interest in helping with the exterior beautification, Renee responded that we are grateful for any support PASTA can offer us, and we should probably wait to determine the best way to maximize their help, since there are some grants that we can only use toward outdoor learning expenses; we’ll want to reserve PASTA funds for some of the big ticket items (such as repairing some water damage) that would not be covered by these grants. Daryl is also collecting estimates for adding some handicap parking; as soon as he has those numbers, he will get them to the committee.
- Selection Committee (Matt Buckmaster) – The committee updated the application form and posted it on the website. We extended the submission deadline to May 7. We currently have four applications and expect a few more to come in; we already have some very impressive applicants. The committee did some norming about selection and scheduled a two-hour meeting in May for the selection process.

B. Director

Plans for the Fall – After many months of research, planning, and consulting with every available resource, the administrative team has determined that our best option for the upper school temporary location in the fall is to add additional temporary classrooms close to the current school building. The benefit of this plan is that it will keep everyone in a close proximity, so that families will only

have to drop off at one location, and students and faculty will not have to travel between locations throughout the day.

The plan is to rent five portable classroom buildings to be placed in the upper parking lot where students have usually parked. There are two classrooms in each building with a single-use restroom on each end. Septic connections can be provided by Carter, and Duke Power can handle setting up the meters for the electricity. The portable classrooms we have received quotes for are supplied by Willscot.

Mya met with a Willscot representative on site, along with Mr. Jordan, to make sure the space would be appropriate for additional portable classrooms. Daryl has had some estimates for minimal tree removal so that we can push them back a little farther so as not to inconvenience Saxapahaw residents and to be able to preserve some of the parking (this may involve some additional cost). The area may need some minute grading on one side and cutting back some brush.

All portable classroom buildings come equipped with whiteboards, and we will furnish them with the furniture that the lower school won't be using. We will continue to use our existing portable classroom building and single-use restrooms, as well as the schoolhouse—which, combined with the new buildings, gives us exactly the space that we need for the upper school students. We're still not sure where admins will be housed, but at this point they are willing to work out of their cars! Students will likely eat in their classrooms or in our various outdoor spaces, such as the picnic tables.

A note of gratitude: It has been a long and stressful process to get to this point to find this solution. Mya and the board cannot express enough our gratitude and deep appreciation for Mr. Jordan and his amazing generosity and support of the school. He has been so supportive of us throughout every step of our expansion project; this would not be possible without him.

A note to the public: As a board, we are not at liberty to discuss specific contracts with vendors in open session for confidential reasons and to preserve our negotiating power, but we will resume open session for our vote on the proposed plan, and any other non-contract details will be available.

- In-person Graduation – We got approval for our in-person graduation ceremony for June 1, 7 pm, with a limit of 100 people, in the amphitheater; this means each student can bring two guests. The ceremony will include the administrative team and the board chair, but no faculty or other staff or board members. Jonathan is pulling together a team of teachers to figure out how faculty might participate without exceeding the COVID safety limit or taking spaces from families.

- Teacher Appreciation Week – Next week is Teacher Appreciation Week, and we are *so grateful* for our teachers! We appreciate them all the time, but we hope to appreciate them just a smidge more next week. The board discussed how we could show our appreciation, wondering if one of the lunches we approved should be next week. Because PASTA is already doing a catered box lunch, Mya and Jennifer advised that we wait to provide our lunch during the week of testing. After some discussion as to other gestures we might make (donuts, pastries for breakfast, goodie bags?), Todd asked Mya to use her discretion to make some appreciative gesture to the staff—whatever best suits their needs—from the board to convey our deep appreciation for all of their efforts, especially this year under these extremely challenging circumstances.

C. Treasurer

Dawnya reported that our working budget is 75% through the fiscal year; our expenditures and revenue are keeping up where we want them to be. Dawnya asked a question of Mya: With this coming year being a significantly different financial picture, how can we as the board get a jump on this new budget? Mya told her that as soon as Nicole is done with her basic draft, she will set up a meeting with the three of them (Mya, Nicole, and Dawnya) to review it. Nicole is still getting updated information from Jason about the USDA loan and waiting on final salaries for all the employees (we still have eight people left to hire). Todd advised that we use placeholder values for the remaining salaries (estimating on the higher end to be safe) to allow Dawnya to start looking at numbers as soon as possible, especially as it is likely to take multiple meetings to manage this new budget. One important note: Despite the fact that it has been an extremely challenging year, we are remarkably on budget, one of the most on-budget years we've had in a while, which has allowed us to maintain a strong surplus. This is an important and noteworthy accomplishment.

D. Faculty Representative

Jonathan expressed gratitude for the support and appreciation. He joked that teachers are part vultures and always grateful for any food we share with them. Everyone seems to be glad to be back in the building. A few of the students who seemed to have fallen behind with virtual learning have undergone a real change and are doing much better. Nevertheless, the last quarter has been exhausting for everyone; the hybrid teaching is more challenging than they anticipated. The students are worn out and, with a few notable exceptions, are a lot less engaged at this point in the year. Faculty are also starting to look ahead to next year, which they anticipate will be another year with a lot of new challenges and a different set of unusual circumstances. Faculty continue to feel grateful for the ways they are respected and supported but are feeling exhausted like they've never felt before.

VII. Unfinished Business

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

- Ben reported that the recent dry weather has been great for progress. Building pads are up to grade. Lots of dirt going in. Parking lot areas are going in. Retaining wall is completely done and ready for backfill. The backside of the classroom building is being prepped and then we'll start getting concrete in for building pads. Plumbing is getting ready to go in. Our prefab gymnasium building is ready to go. Some site utilities have been run. Storm drain structures are in place. Fire/water lines are being installed. Force main from the school to the road was put in and pressure tested. We hope to keep up this progress. Aspire shared with Mya a picture report containing more specific details and photos of the site; it's in the board's shared Google folder for the month of April 2021. In the future, this will be how Aspire will keep the board informed of all change orders; this information will be on the last page of the picture report each month. Ben reviewed the change orders for this month with us. The board expressed gratitude for this picture report, since it helps give us a greater sense of the progress, and we agreed the system of change order items at the end of the report will work well. CT Wilson will have a few weeks of approved delay, due to the rain; Aspire is getting close to coming up with this exact number, which will be in the next change order.

B. Renovation Updates

- By the end of the week, we anticipate having full plans from the architect to review with Mya, and then we'll be able to get the plans out to bid.
- Assuming the permitting process is reasonable, the renovations still should start the first week of June and should be done before the school year begins. We are on track as of now, but it's dependent on how quickly the permits can be issued.

VIII. New Business

A. Summer School Plan

The state has issued additional relief funding to help with learning loss due to COVID. The administrative team has determined that our greatest need is to concentrate on 9-12 graders to make sure they stay on track to graduate with their cohort, as this impacts their immediate and long-term futures in significant ways.

Roughly 25 of our high school students are at risk of failing and possibly not graduating.

Mya is recommending we use the APEX Learning Credit Recovery program for 30 days in the summer. The program would run Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to around 2:30 p.m., with an hour break for lunch. Students would work online using self-directed modules, with two teachers to supervise and monitor their progress. Students can recover as many credits as possible in this 30-day time period; they could all potentially recover all the credits they are at risk of losing, which could allow

them to graduate on time with their cohort. As long as they show 70% proficiency, they pass and can move on; the program is self-paced and aligned with NC state standards.

A couple of Hawbridge teachers have already volunteered to help with this program. Mya has received a quote from APEX, and the cost is covered by the new funding with money remaining to cover teachers' stipends.

They chose to help the high schoolers because the learning loss could have a greater impact on them. It is challenging to prioritize, as we would like to offer summer school to every student, but we don't have enough funds to do it.

When asked how many students in the lower grades are at risk of being held back, Mya responded that no students will be retained this year. The administration feels it is not a positive step to retain students when the pandemic and its effects were completely out of students' and families' control. Therefore, there will be no retentions in grades 4 through 8.

When asked if it is possible to share any resources with the lower grade families, Mya said that teachers have been using a lot of free online resources that students can still access from home throughout the summer. Different families have different needs, so they view this as a case-by-case basis.

Everyone anticipates such a different semester in the fall. We recognize the learning curve from the different technology platforms and how students struggled to navigate different kinds of learning throughout the year and how much easier it will be when we are all back in person.

When asked where this summer school program will take place if renovations to the building will be underway in June, Mya responded that it will be held in the schoolhouse building and the existing portable classroom building.

EOC aspect: All of these students will have taken the EOC by the end of the year; they are not required to retake it. Board has to vote if we give permission to retake it. However, this year the scores are not being used in any kind of school report card; the schools are not being graded with this data. Just taking the EOC is enough for students to graduate. The credit recovery program is not for students trying to buffer their GPAs; it is strictly to help folks who need to pass courses to graduate.

Pacing of the course: If a student finishes up before 30 days, do they have to complete the entire 30 days of summer school? No, it is a self-paced program, and they can be done when they are done; it is up to the individual students. The teacher's screen under the APEX program allows teachers to see how much time students are spending in each module, which adds a high degree of accountability

on the students' part, because the teachers are able to track their work.

We have one teacher already lined up for the summer school program, and we are reaching out to another teacher who has expressed interest, so we will have two faculty members supervising this program, for a student-teacher ratio of approximately 12 to 1.

Does it impact students' learning if the teacher monitoring the summer school is not specialized in every discipline? The modules are designed to teach students independently. If students are struggling with the APEX system, the teachers can open up the free resource Khan academy, which students are already familiar with, for another way of explaining the material. It is indeed a challenging mix of classes that need to be supported. The two teachers will be facilitators and guides for this self-directed credit recovery.

A motion was made to approve the proposed summer school plan as outlined in the "School Extension Learning Recovery and Enrichment Programs to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on At-Risk Students. (SL2021-7)" document.

The motion was approved unanimously by the board.

IX. Closed Session

The board voted to move to closed session at 7:17 p.m. to consider confidential matters pursuant to NC G.S. §143-318.11, Subsection (a) - (5).

X. Open Session

The board resumed open session at 8:23 p.m. A motion was made to allocate \$225,000 to fund the total costs for the upper school's fall transition plan, including costs associated with the leasing, upfitting, delivery, and removal of five additional portable classroom buildings, with the directive that the administration have the latitude to spend up to this amount but to minimize expenditures as much as possible. The motion was approved by a vote of 8 to 1.

XI. Adjourn – 8:26 p.m.