

Baxter Academy for Technology and Science

Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, October 18, 2022, at Baxter Academy and via Zoom

Present: Thorn Dickinson (chair), Ruth Dean (vice chair), Nik Charov (secretary), Jana Lapoint, Tristan Oldmixon

Absent: Peter Montano (treasurer), Simon McGurk

Staff: Executive Director Anna Klein-Christie, Head of School Cicy Po, Vice Principal Mary King, Director of Special Education Laura Parks, CFO Kerry Bush, IT Director Amos Cooper, Compliance Coordinator Tyler Beaulieu, Operations Director Michael Thorp, Outreach Coordinator Jonathan Delorme

Agenda item

I. General items

Chair Thorn Dickinson called the meeting to order at 6:04pm, in-person and online via Zoom.

- A. Approval of minutes

Secretary Nik Charov motioned that the draft minutes from the September 13, 2022, board meeting be approved as presented. Ruth Dean seconded, all present in favor.

II. Finance updates

In lieu of Treasurer Peter Montano, Thorn Dickinson and CFO Kerry Bush presented the first quarter of the fiscal year's financials to the Board. Through September 30, BA is running a \$179k surplus, which will balance out by year-end through allocation to next summer's salaries. (July and August 2022 used accrued summer salary from SY22.) All current ratios were met; assets to liabilities stand at 2.5. Legal costs are higher this year, as expected, due to ongoing consultations. Custodial costs are higher than budgeted, due to a new custodial contract signed after budget development last spring. No other significant variances were reported.

Thorn Dickinson motioned to approve the first quarter of SY23 financial report, Ruth Dean seconded, all in favor.

III. School updates

Newly installed Executive Director Anna Klein-Christie presented the following information in an updated dashboard format:

[Link to 2022_10 Slideshow](#)

Highlighted stat: 31% of the student body is under IEP or 504 interventions (other high schools are closer to 18-20%).

October is a heavy reporting month – all reports to the Charter Commission were submitted on time. Anna has continued to meet with consultant/mentor Bob Kautz and has included senior staff in his meetings. The Panorama survey results from last spring continue to guide outreach and student community building; communication with families continues to be of paramount importance. Other areas of concern highlighted by the survey include student nutrition options and communication channels.

The October Census Day revealed a student count of 355, which is below the 10% variance from the enrollment target of 400. The Charter Commission will expect a recruitment strategy to be presented in the coming months. Efforts are underway with the homeschooling community, the Maine Association of New Americans; school tours are occurring regularly with prospective families.

The Portland Public Library is now offering library cards to BA students; the Portland Museum of Art may soon offer memberships. BA students have gone on 20 field trips already this year, though transportation beyond the local neighborhood continues to be a challenge.

Anna wishes to recruit a subcommittee of a couple board members interested in Fundraising, now that the new Bloomerang database has been installed with an initial batch of 3,000 records.

Peter Montano will be resigning from the board in November; a new Treasurer will be sought. Board members expressed a desire for a Certified Public Accountant to join the board to provide nonprofit financial expertise.

Boulos has sold the building at 185 Lancaster Street to Port Property Management. BA still has 20 years left on its lease, however.

Head of School report

Head of School Cicy Po presented additional information on the Panorama survey results, highlighting the need for more relationship building with families.

Cicy shared a video from science teacher Andrew Ritter, showcasing his students' Flex Friday projects and their goal of submitting them to the Maine State Science Fair. Student projects include work with: equine DNA, environmental DNA (eDNA) for smelt detection, and investigations of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in local waterways.

Student engagement at BA continues with senior leaders, restorative practice discussions, nature immersion walks, and input through the Principal's Table. Faculty and staff continued professional development, seeking external partnerships, and interdisciplinary work. Family engagement increased with parent lemonades, a Back to School night, and a Friday speaker series.

Update on the Maine Charter School Commission

Board member Jana LaPoint read the following statement:

At the Maine Charter School Commission's June 23 Business Meeting, a new Performance Framework was adopted for use in all Maine Charter Schools beginning with the school year 2022-2023. The National Association of Charter School Authorizers has established standards that must be clear, quantifiable, rigorous, and attainable. They have also required that charter school schools must adopt a Performance Framework that includes academic, financial and organizational performance measures. These are all part of the charter contract with BA. The commission also states if the contracted number of students should go above or below 10%, it must be reported to the commission with an explanation and what will be done about it. Baxter is currently in this position with a contracted pupil figure of 400 and an Oct. 1 figure at 358.

It is essential that our board be extremely familiar with all aspects of the contract, since the current authorizers' knowledge of charter schools is extremely limited. For example, there are five members that have recently been appointed by the governor. Of those five, two were in the legislature and have voted against charter schools. The Commission also recently lost their Director and Interim Director within the past six months. It is also clear that the recent vote to close Harpswell Coastal Academy was accomplished by referring only to the recent renewal contract, with three commission members having less than a month to learn what made Harpswell the true school that it was. Considerations such as 49% of students with IEPs, approximately 52% economically disadvantaged, nor an amazing amount of supplemental information that showed how the school had improved in chronic absenteeism

did not matter. A vote of five commission members is necessary to allow a school to continue and the vote was 4-3 to close the school. Now 145 students will have to go back to schools in their hometowns that could not and did not meet their needs for many reasons.

There is currently a group of former charter school leaders that are researching the possibility of forming a 501c3 organization to help protect Maine's charter schools. It is hoped that all of our current schools will become members, along with their head of schools and board members. Our schools are all in a difficult position and their boards will need to be very diligent in the workings of their school if we are to survive.

IV. Public Comment

A parent asked questions about the board's oversight of special education.

Another community member recommended the board give more attention to the new Performance Framework and the next board member in the Treasurer position.

V. Executive Session

There was no Executive Session called.

Thorn Dickinson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:50pm. Jana LaPoint seconded, all in favor.

Next regular meeting: November 15, 2022