

Baxter Academy for Technology and Science

Board of Directors Meeting

5:30 to 7 p.m., Tuesday, December 14, 2021, in-person and via Zoom

Present: Patti Oldmixon (chair), Peter Montano (treasurer), Nik Charov (secretary), Ruth Dean, Thorn Dickinson, Jana Lapoint, Simon McGurk, Executive Director Kelli Pryor, Head of School Cicy Po, Director of Special Education Laura Parks, CFO Kerry Bush, IT Director Amos Cooper, Compliance Coordinator Tyler Beaulieu

Agenda item

I. General items

Chair Patti Oldmixon called the meeting to order at 5:35pm.

- A. Approval of minutes

Secretary Nik Charov motioned that the draft minutes from the November 9, 2021, meeting be approved as presented. Jana Lapoint seconded, all in favor.

- B. Policy updates

BA Executive Director Kelli Pryor sought the Board's approval for the ELL/Lau Plan submitted for a first reading at the previous board meeting. The plan was developed with ELL consultant and with input from an expert in the MDOE. **Patti motioned to approve the submitted ELL/Lau Plan. Ruth Dean seconded, all in favor.**

Kelli submitted an updated JHC, prohibited substance use policy for approval. It was created based on models from Portland, Cape Elizabeth, and Yarmouth high schools. Its intent is to put resources in place for struggling students and protect the BA community. This latest draft includes language notifying the community that law enforcement may be called in some cases. **Patti motioned to accept the JHC prohibited substance use policy as amended. Ruth seconded, all in favor.**

II. Finance updates

- A. Financial statements

Treasurer Peter Montano presented the profit & loss report through October 31. Net assets increased as COVID Relief Funds were finally reimbursed. Net assets are \$1.97M, with \$756K of undesignated assets. Revenues are behind by \$58K, mostly due to as-yet-undrawn \$50K federal grants. Donations are behind by \$15K. Most variances will equalize by the end of the fiscal year.

- B. FY21 Audit

Peter presented the draft report from the auditors. No issues or concerns were raised during the audit. There was an \$8K adjustment for depreciation, but that was it. The management letter from the auditors states no material deficiencies or weaknesses. Peter: “an unqualified opinion basically means an ‘A’ grade.” Kudos to CFO Kerry Bush and accounting assistant Danielle Skillin and the team for accuracy and transparency during a challenging and complex financial year. FY1 year-end numbers: 1.7 assets to liabilities ratio, better than the 1.5 ratio requested by the Maine Charter School Commission (“MCSC”). Net assets increased by \$361K, with 32 days of cash on hand (or 84 days if counting the COVID Relief Funds receivable). General & Administrative costs were 8.8% of the total budget. Peter: “that is very low for a nonprofit.” Thorn Dickinson asked whether the Notes Payable (building debt) allow for early retirement? Peter: no, due to the New Market Tax Credit used in the financing. The debt fund currently stands at \$600K and will be tapped in 2024 when the Notes come due.

Patti motioned to accept the FY21 audit as presented. Ruth seconded, all in favor.

III. School updates

A. Remote Learning Plan

Executive Director Kelli Pryor sought board approval for the school’s updated Remote Learning Plan, which the administration first presented at the September meeting. The policy has been updated as the pandemic continues to present new challenges. Public district schools are required by the state to have board approval for remote-learning plans, and though charter schools were not explicitly included in the guidance, Kelli thought it best to follow the state guidance. Board approval safeguards remote learning days as official school days. At BA, remote learning this year follows nearly the same plan as an in-person school day. **Patti motioned to approve the Remote Learning Plan as presented. Thorn seconded, all in favor.**

B. MCSC School Year 2021 monitoring report

Board member Jana Lapoint noted that BA’s MCSC SY21 monitoring report was approved by the Commission in Augusta today. Kelli stated that, with the revisions sought by BA, the annual summary report is now a more fair report. It still contains some misrepresentations and misinformation but the approved version at least does not allow for snap judgments. It now requires more careful reading. Test scores are provided as raw data, but with no comparisons. Jana reported that the SY21 statistics would not be posted on the MCSC website; they will only be available as attachments. Jana did stress the importance of the “school liaisons” in relationships with the Charter Commission; “they add nuance and BA used to have one.”

C. Head of School report

BA Head of School Cicy Po introduced Gabe Merriam, BA class of ‘16, who has returned as the school nurse. Gabe was giving eye exams earlier in the day. He is also assisting with the pooled testing regimen. In fact, a positive test result earlier in the day resulted in a smooth

pivot in daytime activities by the operations team, led by compliance coordinator Tyler Beaulieu.

Cicy gave a short presentation on psychological health and “whole student wellbeing” at the school. It’s a stressful time. Partnerships with local social agencies and targeted small-group meetings help. Agencies include: Portland Public Health, Portland Police Department Behavioral Health, Maine Youth Court, Maine Boys to Men, SARSAAM, and neurophysiology consultant Heidi Weicker. Simon McGurk asked how much of the wellness instruction is optional. Cicy reported that participation is required.

Cicy also presented on BA faculty after-school time commitments, which can include staff and department meetings, IEPs, chair meetings, and the new teachers group.

Cicy explained that a “critical friends” team from Harvard’s School of Education are currently evaluating, and lauding, the Flex Friday program. The Harvard team interviews students, teachers, and administrators and reflects on possible approaches to improve professional training and programming to support teachers as Flex Friday mentors. Federal Title II funds, ~\$15K, cover the cost of this professional development opportunity; the project will continue through the school year.

D. Strategic Rebuilding

Kelli Pryor explained that the emergence from the pandemic offers the opportunity to “build Baxter back better.” Priorities are crystallizing and include more attention on easing teacher workload, supporting the STEM-centered student experience with partnerships, exploring different learning formats, and taking pressure off the physical space during the school week. Stay tuned for more thinking on strategic rebuilding in the months to come.

IV. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

V. Executive Session

There was no executive session at this meeting.

Patti motioned to adjourn to adjourn the meeting at 7:02pm. Thorn seconded, all in favor.

Next regular meeting: January 11, 2022