

Baxter Academy for Technology and Science

Board of Directors Meeting

5:30 to 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 12, 2020

185 Lancaster Street, Portland, Maine

Present: Board Chair Patti Oldmixon, Vice Chair Christian Sparling, Treasurer Peter Montano, Secretary Ruth Dean, Thorn Dickinson, Nik Charov

Guests: Executive Director Kelli Pryor, School Physician Dr. Charles de Sieyes, Chief Financial Officer Kerry Bush, Attorney Dan Amory, Attorney, Daniel Stockford, Engineering Teacher Jon Amory

Agenda item

I. Opening Items

A. Minutes

Secretary Ruth Dean moves to accept the minutes with corrections to the typos. Thorn Dickinson seconds, and all vote in favor.

II. School

A. Executive Director Update

Executive Director Kelli Pryor presents, noting first that graduation will be held at the Saco Drive-In on Sunday, June 14th. Anna Gervais is working with the student graduation committee to hammer out the details. The originally scheduled event on May 30 at Merrill Auditorium is unworkable given social distancing rules associated with the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Secondly it's been a big couple of weeks due to the ventilator project. Baxter Academy's Ventilator Team is one of seven teams to advance to the finals in the CoVent-19 Challenge. More than 200 teams from around the world submitted designs for a rapidly deployable, minimum viable ventilator as part of a hackathon hosted on GrabCAD.com. The finalists now have until June to build a working prototype, which will be tested by a team of judges led by a dozen anesthesiology resident physicians from Massachusetts General Hospital.

Also, as part of efforts to celebrate National Charter Schools Week, Baxter Academy joins a select group of 10 schools from across America being recognized by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools as Above and Beyond Award honorees in recognition for our work with the ventilator project.

Engineering Teacher Jon Amory updates the board on the project. The original focus of the project was ventilators for Maine. They did not expect the international attention. Thanks to the CoVent-19 challenge they are now working with Mass General hospital and experts from around the country giving our students advice on testing and manufacturing. We are now working hard to hit all the criteria by the June 21st deadline. The team is building two ventilators, one to be tested here in Maine, the other to be sent to Massachusetts. Working on being able to do volume controlled ventilation as well as pressure controlled ventilation. Jon noted that this challenge has the students going above and beyond their original goals.

Executive Director Kelli Pryor notes that the ventilator project shows the value of Baxter's project-based education and is an example of how programming can continue robustly, if it is necessary to continue with remote learning in the coming school year, though that has not been determined yet. Baxter's COVID-19 response team is monitoring the data as well as the plans of schools from around the world to make sure we are best serving our students.

B. COVID-19 Response

Executive Director Kelli Pryor introduces School Physician Dr. Charles de Sieyes. He starts by noting that he hopes that these awards go to show how Baxter is a leader in project-based education. He has been working with our school's health committee, operations manager Tyler Beaulieu, ED Kelli Pryor and Coordinator of Student Services Anna Gervais. The team has been drawing on the experiences and strategies of schools from San Diego to Denmark, monitoring what works and what doesn't. Dr. deSieyes pointed out that the big concern is for Baxter is that the school draws from over 60 communities; that increases the potential for widespread community transmission of the virus. The top priority is the safety of our community. Dr. deSieyes outlined the current state of the pandemic and its response in Maine.

Board Chair Patti Oldmixon thanked Dr. Chuck for the update and context.

III. Finance

A. Draft Budget

Board Chair Patti Oldmixon presents a timeline for next year's school budget. In the normal timeline, the state issues allocations in January and the finance team works through February to April to prepare the next budget. Now, due to expected revenue losses related to the pandemic, the Maine Charter School Commission estimates a 10-15% or more cut in funding and notified Baxter on May 4. Work started then to recast the draft budget for tonight's meeting. Normally the board would be approving the budget tonight, but instead there will be a special meeting of the board on Tuesday May 19th to vote on the new budget.

The impact of COVID-19 on the Maine Economy is projected to be significant, revenues are down. There is a projection of a 1.2 billion dollar shortfall for next year. Moody's has put us in the highest brackets of economic suffering from the pandemic, this was concurred by the Maine Center for Economic Policy. Much of our state's revenue relies on tourism and sales tax.

The charter commission recommends we model budget scenarios with revenue cuts of 5%, 10% and 15% and more. They also recommend that we should avoid adding new debt and possibly renegotiate current debt. At 15% that would be over \$600,000 out of our budget for next year. This would put us below the budget of the 2018-19 school year.

There are four levers we can pull:

- Reduce expenses where possible. Shift new laptop purchases out to a different year.
- Work to renegotiate our operational contracts for cleaning, transport and leases.
- Freeze salaries at the 2019-2020 rates. Faculty salaries are subject to negotiation.

- Adjust the number of FTEs in our budget. Use attrition when possible and protect the ability to educate students.

Given all the moving parts, we will ultimately need to create multiple scenarios.

1. Are classes in-person, remote or a combo.
2. Is the funding cut 10%, 15% or more?

For tonight's discussion we base the budget on remote classes and a 10% reduction in funding.

Treasurer Peter Montano takes over the presentation. He explains that the team projected both revenue from the state as well as from donation to be down 10%. Which works out to a reduction of \$447,450 from last year's budget.

The team started with our Operational Expenses to identify potential savings, although many expenses are fixed. After all operating expenses were cut, the last item to be adjusted was the salary line, currently an 8% reduction. There was a 19% increase in our health insurance costs, which had to be included in the budget.

The new budget looks at removing 4 teaching and 4 administrative positions. Several of those positions hadn't been hired and we are hoping to use attrition when possible and protect the school's ability to educate students. Peter notes that he hopes we do not need a 15% reduction as that would be a big blow. The changes outlined in our first draft shown tonight.

Board Chair Patti Oldmixon outlined our next steps.

- Community feedback. Please send comments to board@baxter-academy.org
- Special meeting scheduled for May 19, 2020
- The Board will be asked to approve the operating budget for 2020-2021 school year.

IV. Parent Engagement

A. BPO

Parent leader Karen Fream shares that parents organized teacher appreciation cards for Teacher Appreciation Week. Also the BPO were able to celebrate seniors by putting up lawn signs for all the seniors. Board Chair Patti Oldmixon thanked Karen Fream and the rest of the BPO for all their hard work.

V. Public Comment

The board entertains questions from the community and answers questions related to the budget, graduation, enrollment, and prospects for what school will look like next year.

VI. Closing

A. Executive session*

Board Chair Patti Oldmixon moves that the board go into executive session in accordance with provisions of the Maine Revised Statutes. Vice Chair Christian Sparling seconds. All directors vote in favor.

Special Meeting: Tuesday, May 19, 2020; Next regular meeting: 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 9, 2020

185 Lancaster Street, Portland, Maine

** Executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters pursuant to Section 405(6)(A) of the Maine Revised Statutes, and for the purpose of meeting with legal counsel to discuss the rights and duties of the Board pursuant to Section 405(6)(E) of the Maine Revised Statutes.*