

# **Madrone Trail Public Charter School**

Jackson County, Oregon

Regular meeting of the Board of Directors

Friday, April 20, 2018 at 3:00 pm

Madrone Trail Public Charter School – 3070 Ross Lane, Medford, OR 97502

## **I. Call to order/ Roll call**

Monica Rathjen called to order the special meeting of the Madrone Trail Public Charter School Board at 3:00pm at Madrone Trail Public Charter School 3070 Ross Ln. Central Point, OR 97502. Sarah Trujillo conducted roll call

present: Monica Rathjen, Sarah Trujillo, Jane Higgins, Leann Tourzan, Gesine Abraham, Erik Johnsen, Alyssum Barber

Karen Bailey (Administrator)

## **II. Opening Verse**

## **III. Public Comment**

## **IV. Board Training**

**Monica Rathjen** There is a high standard, as a public official. There are policies, laws and ethics that we must abide by. I think when rules are broken it is usually by mistake, not malicious. I would like to do a short board training, have talked with Karen, and have contacted the Oregon Ethics Commission to get something in place where they can come and train the board and teachers, I think they require 25 people. We need to be aware of not only the financial conflicts of interest, but also the communication between board members. We are a board of 7, so 4 is a quorum. If we are discussing board matters amongst each other we need to be aware of public meeting laws, and not violating them. Especially for new board members, read our bylaws, and Oregon Revised Statute section 65 which is non-profit corporations. **Karen Bailey** Something to be aware of, reporters can sit in on executive session, they cannot report on what is said, but can file a freedom of information request for related emails, and those can be reported on. **Monica Rathjen** I recommend going on the website to review current polices, and the minutes from the last six meetings, so you can catch up with what we are doing now. Expect some board decisions to be unpopular, we are here to work in the best interest of the children, some people may not like the decisions we make, so try not to take it personally. When someone comes to you with an issue, please try to stop them if they are going into too much detail that would be inappropriate for you to hear

at that time, and direct them to the appropriate person. In most situations, that would be Karen, if is a problem with a teacher, encourage them to go back to that teacher. If you don't know where to direct them, you can direct them to me, or ask for help in figuring out. We also have the complaint policy and procedure, and they can be referred to that. OSBA is a great resource for information, and ethics guidance.

## V. Approval of minutes/ Agenda Adjustments

a. **Agenda Adjustments- Monica Rathjen** remove agenda item i., it is a duplicate. Approval of the minutes from the April 3<sup>rd</sup> work session will be tabled.

b. **Approval of minutes for work session on March 20, 2018**

### Motion Approved

**Jane Higgins** I make a motion to approve the minutes for the March 20, 2018 work session.

**Sarah Trujillo** I second the motion

**Aye – 7 (Rathjen, Trujillo, Higgins, Tourzan, Johnsen, Abraham, Barber)**

**No – 0**

c. **Approval of minutes for work session on April 3, 2018- tabled**

## VI. Informational Items

a. **Faculty Report- Leann Tourzan** The hiring committee has some great candidates for the grades, we have started the interview process. We are preparing for May Faire, and the auction. Stewardship day is taking place right now, and tomorrow. Calendar work was done by Cori and Jane. Rainbow Rosenblum, from the Alliance for Public Waldorf Charters came and spent some time meeting with Karen and the faculty, as well as Tracy, and that was nice. **Jane Higgins** We are had our Strings and Choir Concert last night. There has been the beginning of a discussion by the faculty for how we want the strings and music program to look in the future, what kinds of changes would we like to make, but since that is tied in with the budget, we have not made any real decision. **Gesine Abraham** What positions are you hiring for? **Leann Tourzan** First grade, possibly a shift in fourth, seventh, sixth, and woodworking. There are still some that are up in the air. The Hiring Committee is myself, Hillary Lowenberg, Mateo Trillium, Dara Nikolic, and Nancy Escherich

At the time the director is participating as much as need be, but she has said she is fine with the decisions we make, and we should be getting that done by the end of May.

**b. Director's Report- Karen Bailey** We are in the window of the Smarter Balance testing third through eighth grade, English and math. Fifth and Eighth have science as well. We are bringing Chromebooks into the classrooms rather than having the kids go to a computer lab. Our opt out rates are improving, then newspaper story had conflicting numbers, but we have cut that in half, and now are looking at a lower number again this year. The iReady test, is the district test. In the past we have not done Kindergarten, our first grade did it last year, and it did not go well, we are waiting until the end of the year to do first grade this year. In the Friday update I included something about creating positivity around testing.

## **VII. Discussion Items**

**a.) Nikolic Eight Grade Trip- Dara Nikolic** submitted a request for out of state travel to Santa Cruz, CA for eighth grade trip. They will be staying at a house and looking at different hikes, surf lessons, and a day in Monterey.

**b.) Employment Status of School director- Karen Bailey prepared a statement**  
I came to Madrone Trail to help this school take the next steps in its organizational development. The Medford School District, and Michelle Cummings in particular, have been supportive of my efforts to improve governance structures, address financial weaknesses, and demonstrate the unique strengths of Waldorf education and be accountable for student achievement.

As a Waldorf teacher of fifteen years, two of them in a public Waldorf charter school, I knew there were challenges for everyone to hold together the tensions and stresses of adhering to a Waldorf curriculum while also demonstrating student achievement based on state and district standardized tests. The school I came from in Colorado was able to demonstrate the Waldorf Curve of starting slow but getting ahead. The year I served as Interim Director of Education, this occurred towards the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or into 4<sup>th</sup> grade. This past January, I demonstrated the Waldorf Curve was occurring at Madrone Trail, but that our students didn't surpass district averages until 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I was confident that we could continue to add educational support for students, create more positivity around testing, and work cooperatively to negotiate targets as part of a School Improvement Plan during our charter negotiations over the next few months. That was my vision of who we are/could be as a school.

In terms of financial stability, I was concerned about the Sabbatical policy that the board had created a few years before which cost the school \$40,000- \$50,000 per year per teacher. This is what I learned from Rainbow Rosenblum, a member of the board for the

Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, an organization we have been a member of for many years:

*I am aware of no school in the public movement that supports a paid sabbatical for teachers....in fact, many of the private schools no longer have such a policy. Summerfield WS, for example, gave that practice up over 7 years ago. It just becomes too expensive for schools so dependent upon parent contributions. In the CA schools, STRS has a very good pension program that every public Waldorf school contributes to, and this is understood as a much better alternative to the old sabbatical policy. Initially, private Waldorf schools had the sabbatical program in lieu of any pension program.....after a typical 8 yr. cycle, it did seem wonderful to have a teacher get a paid year off, but when they would retire in their later years with literally nothing, well, much reexamination occurred.*

The Madrone Trail board has gone through significant changes since I came in July of 2016. Amy Rudolph was a wonderful president who stepped down in January of 2018. At that point Brenda Stein graciously took the roll of board president and she and I worked hard to create a professional board. For example, after holding on to a legal opinion for a year that recommended we not have teachers as voting members of the board, the board voted in January 2018 unanimously to stop this practice. This was also to address one of the concerns identified in the MSD Annual Site visit.

Recruiting John Briggs this winter to join our board gave me confidence we could work through the difficult issues in our charter renewal negotiation. John became the Treasurer of the board, a position that has been vacant since I arrived at Madrone Trail. He spent many hours drilling down into the budget and annual audit reports for the past four years to reach a clear understanding of our finances. He attended the advisory Budget Committee meetings I had set up so teachers could give input into the budget. He reported to the board in March on the state of the schools finances, projecting that we would have a cash flow deficit next year. John joined the Charter Renewal Committee and met with Michelle Cummings and I to establish a mutual understanding of the negotiation process for our charter renewal. He also proposed that the board establish a Finance Committee as opposed as stated in our Bylaws.

The March 7<sup>th</sup> board meeting included almost an hour of public comment, as the teachers had asked parents to come to support them. Monica's presentation on creating a new Complaint Policy directed everyone to use the existing policy, something I have promoted since February of last year. I have documentation of my attempts at conflict resolution with the teachers, including a successfully facilitated agreement with an outside facilitator that we reached last spring. However, there has been a fundamental different perception of what the role of the School Director at Madrone Trail should be.

As you move forward with hiring a new director, I would recommend the board and faculty look at the following areas to clarify and make clear agreements and commitments that can be shared with prospective directors and the district to ensure consistent expectations for everyone.

- Teacher Representation and Empowerment
- Director Evaluation Process
- Shared Values
- Inspirational Purpose
- Process to gather multiple stakeholder perspectives
- Clear accountability
- Guiding metaphor for organization- Family? Village? Four Pillars/three pillars?

If you find someone to replace me before my contract is completed at the end of June, I would be open to having my contract bought out for the remaining time. It has been quite a journey and a learning experience, here at Madrone Trail. The social emotional learning that we hope for the children is the very same learning we all are engaged in to be more fully human. That is what Waldorf education is all about for me.

- c.) **Hiring of Interim Director/Director- Monica Rathjen** It is required that we have someone that is a licensed administrator at all times, so as we look for an interim director, it would be good for us to have more than one person who has that qualification, so if the director that we hire does not end up staying in that position, we will have someone that keeps us in compliance. We need to post the job description and hiring post as soon as possible
- d.) **Personnel Status- Monica Rathjen** In order to discuss this item we need to offer the employee the opportunity to request a public discussion, if they do not request one, we will have an executive session to discuss the matter.
- e.) **Budgetary Proposal- Erik Johnsen-** distributed his analysis before meeting, available in the documents binder. **Alyssum Barber** The Professional development seems like a line item that might be a little high, also, if there were a way to not pay so much for supplies. **Erik Johnsen** We may find that the sabbatical is not working as intended, but I believe that if we have the funds, we should honor the commitment for this year. **Karen Bailey** The line item for substitute teachers is a bit high too, but what is unused in that fund is supposed to go into the teacher leave fund, so I am not sure we should cut too much there. We must submit a proposed budget to the district by May 1<sup>st</sup>. There are two ways to help make up the short fall, either they allow us to increase class size, or bring back the double track. These are things that still need to be negotiated with the district, but to make up the money one will be necessary. We will also need stakeholder input. **Monica Rathjen** We should speak to sponsorship as well. **Gesine Abraham** We came to have our charter under Medford School Distirct, buecause we were looking to the district with the most students, because we didn't want to appear to be taking students away for the district. If they had not been open, we would have looked elsewhere. We didn't want to go to Ashland and compete with the private school. **Monica Rathjen** There

had been a question about what to do if the sponsoring district decides not to renew, what are the options, university sponsorship is not likely, and state sponsorship would be challenging as well, they would be much stricter in requirements. **Monica Rathjen** In order to ask the state, the sponsoring district would have to deny charter renewal, but they do fund 90%. It would be a very slim chance.

- f.) **Forming Committees Monica Rathjen** There is a specific process to form committees, I would like everyone to get familiar in how we form committees, and who can serve on them. The sabbatical committee, budget committee, and charter renewal committee are priorities. Michelle Cummings has told me that she would like to see three board members and the director on the charter renewal committee. Erik and I are both on the committee, and we need a third. Do we want to form those committees next week? **Alyssum Barber** I would be willing to be on the charter renewal committee.
- g.) **Board Membership- Monica Rathjen** Everyone saw Jodie's resignation letter, that is now entered in the public record. We have a need for a secretary, as Sarah is stepping down in May. We can have officers that are not voting members. There is a fourth-grade parent that has expressed interest and has a financial background, but as there is now two parents from that class, and we do not want to stack the board with too many parents from one class, so having an officer is an option. **Leann Tourzan** In looking at Whistler Waldorf School they have a great website that had some interesting ways they had it structured.
- h.) **Charter Compliance- Monica Rathjen** Karen, do we have everything to send in the financial reports for charter compliance? **Karen Bailey** Yes.
- i.) **Climate Survey-Jane Higgins** I spoke with Louise, and she said she would be willing to send out the climate survey, she would need help compiling the results since she is no longer a board member. We would need to pay the survey company again, or maybe look at other companies or free versions.
- j.) **Thank you's**

## VIII. Action Items

- a. **Forming Board committees- tabled**
- b. **Nikolic 8<sup>th</sup> Grade trip**

### **Motion Approved**

**Erik Johnsen** I make a motion to approve Mrs. Nikolic's 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip.

**Monica Rathjen** I second the motion

**Aye – 7 (Rathjen, Trujillo, Higgins, Tourzan, Johnsen, Abraham, Barber)**

**No – 0**

**c. Employment Status- tabled**

**IX. Summarize upcoming dates/ confirm next meeting**

**Board Meeting Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 3:00pm**

**Regular Board meeting Wednesday, May 9, 5:30pm**

**X. Closing verse**

**XI. Meeting Adjourned**

Minutes submitted by: Sarah Trujillo

Minutes approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Board President