

**MINUTES
VSWEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY AUGUST 26, 2020
VIA ZOOM**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85041843807?pwd=RTIaN3NybTBUCDFZdmQvendKQkNZQT09>

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Matthew Walker – President (M.W.)	John Tanner (J.T.)
John Elling – Treasurer (J.E.)	April Sauer (A.S.)
Gregory Schneider – Secretary (G.S.)	Nathaniel Allen (N.A.)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

The President, Treasurer, and Secretary were present and a quorum was reached.

GUESTS

Invitees of the Board:

- Christie Kriegsfeld (C.K.)

Members of the public present via Zoom/Registration through Google Forms:

- Adeline Carrera
- Alyssa Gardner
- Alison Easter
- Amiah M
- Barb Cunningham
- Carol Moriarty
- Cigdem Koroglu
- Colleen Pope
- Craig Smith
- D. Salinas
- Dan Franks
- Daniele Ippoliti
- deb
- Debbie Allen
- Debbie Natzke
- Harper Rose
- Heather Sullivan
- Helena Moriarty
- Gina Reyes
- Jamie Converti
- Jean Falconburg
- JJ
- Juli Curtin

- Jordyn Ervin
- Kari Frech
- Kerstin Kubina
- Kim Baker
- Kristen Ziegenbein
- Laura Alvarado-Coady
- Laura H
- Lee Riddell
- Lucia Valdez
- Meghan Kelsey
- Melonee Crouse
- Michelle Kratzer
- Myriah
- riva
- Sami Rank
- Sandra Lovelady
- Sarah Fairchild
- Sophia McCurley
- Susan Kerr
- Will Walker
- Williamon Monson

OPENING VERSE

Meeting was called to order at 6:38 p.m. M.W. thanked C.K., the faculty and staff, the parents, and the students for their efforts in making the school reopening a success despite numerous challenges. M.W. read the opening verse.

J.T. joined the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

Board Members introduced themselves and review of meeting procedure occurred. M.W. provided an overview of the evening's agenda.

BOARD PROCEDURES

Approval of Minutes

M.W. moved to approve minutes of 8/12/2020 meeting; A.S. second. No further discussion. Yea: M.W., J.E., J.T., N.A., A.S. / No: -- / Abstain: G.S. **Motion passes.**

Board Calendar / Events / Deadlines

A.S. – Provided a reminder to the Board and community regarding the Board application process and timeline. A.S. created a document summarizing the procedures and proposed deadlines leading up to the November 18 meeting.

M.W. asked for volunteers to draft a communication to the community.

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G.S. volunteered.

A.S. will share a Google document with the Board containing the information and deadlines.

BUDGET AND FINANCE

M.W. invited C.K. into the meeting, and C.K. joined the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Fundraising Update

M.W. invited an update regarding materials/consumables fees contributions.

C.K. reported that teachers are communicating to parents the need for the consumables fees and what they go toward. C.K. has also met with the LDC to share flyers that N.A. and A.S. created. The teachers will then distribute to their respective classes.

A.S. clarified that some automated payments should be coming in for those signed up to make materials fees donations during enrollment.

C.K. reported on rolling out the new donation system.

Update on RSF Negotiations

M.W. reported that negotiations are ongoing, we submitted counterproposals but are still waiting for a response. RSF has indicated that they would get back to us this week. Likely at our next meeting we will need to have an executive session to discuss in more detail.

Enrollment Stability Grant Program

C.K. reported that in the past Aspire has managed grant management. But because of the specifics of this program, Aspire has recommended that clients directly apply for this grant. It will thus be the school's responsibility to submit the application. It is in progress and will be submitted by September 4.

M.W. clarified that the grant is related to guaranteed funding from the state.

C.K. clarified that it is for a one-time payment to be utilized to bridge the gap between increased expenses resulting from COVID-19, but is not a guarantee of monthly equalization payments.

Aspire Contract

C.K. reported that the initial engagement of Aspire was for financial oversight to replace functions previously handled in-house by a bookkeeper. That arrangement expanded based on the school's needs to respond to the audit and to clean up its books. As those issues have been cleaned up, Aspire's role has continued to evolve. As a result, more of the day-to-day work has come back in house and the contract is being renegotiated.

M.W. asked who is handling the day-to-day issues if things have moved back in house.

C.K. reported that Jessica Jarrett, who has deep institutional knowledge and was involved in cleaning up the books, has offered to assist with the day-to-day bookkeeping needs. In contrast, Aspire is handling high level financial matters. This should not change anything from an end-user, operational perspective.

G.S. questioned what specific tasks Aspire was handling, would it be the general ledger, profit and loss, balance sheet, etc., while Jessica handles day-to-day operational transactions?

C.K. – Yes, that is the general arrangement. There is a spreadsheet with a more specific breakdown of tasks. The goal is to have checks and balances in place so that reconciliation of the books is being handled by someone independent of who is handling the day-to-day operations.

COVID-19

M.W. again thanked C.K. and the faculty and staff for their hard work in reopening school and invited C.K. to provide an update regarding how the distance learning program is going, and invited Board members to ask questions.

G.S. – Report noted school not ready to reopen. Can you give us more detail on why that is, what the logistical hurdles are?

C.K. reported as follows:

- Report was not focused on metrics, but rather on the logistical hurdles that would be required to overcome to start in-person learning.
- We need to figure out logistics of staggering on-campus presence so that we can successfully manage safety of students on campus, including with a hybrid model.

G.S. asked how much lead time is necessary to be ready to overcome logistical hurdles.

C.K. responded that is difficult to answer, and there are a variety of views on campus, but at a minimum we would need 2-3 weeks lead time, others believe we would need as much as 6 weeks.

A.S. asked how the implementation of the reopening plan we received earlier this summer is going.

C.K. responded we do have working plans, but it's difficult to pick which plan to roll out without knowing by which date we need to be ready, and what the Board will approve in terms of staggered start times.

M.W. asked for clarification on staggered start of school, and how that could work.

C.K. this is still in the preliminary discussion stage. So far we are trying to figure out where K-3 would start, how to guide them through this process, and how to get them settled into a new routine for school that would involve a lot more safety precautions than they are used to. The idea is we will figure out the issues related to those grades and then progress from there.

M.W. commented it sounded like a sensible approach and would address concerns for students likely to be struggling the most, and questioned whether a draft of the plan would be available by the next Board meeting.

C.K. responded yes, that would be feasible, and it would give additional time to figure out how the remote nature of school would work in conjunction with in-person learning, and it would be beneficial for the kids to be able to return to remote learning by becoming more familiar with it.

J.T. commented that he could not stress enough the importance of considering the fare of the small children in grades K–3 and how much of a struggle it is for the teachers and the children to learn successfully in a remote learning environment. He noted that he has been lucky with the 5th grade class, and they have all been helpful and patient with the technology challenges. But he needs to have the children back in the classroom for the sake of their education. He also shared he has heard that the high school is getting along OK so far, but that the stakes were very high for these students who are preparing to enter their young adult life. Concluded by stressing again the importance of having grades 1–3 return as soon as possible.

M.W. provided background and context of a document created to guide discussion of the decision whether to re-open or not, and to provide transparency on the Board’s decision-making process, and in the hopes of creating a framework that could be used in the future.

M.W. discussed the guiding principles of the school:

- We will act with fidelity to DMS’s Mission and Goals.
- We all recognize and ideally want teachers and students to be together, in person, learning and growing at a wonderful campus.
- We must also ensure that we are creating and offering an experience that is safe and healthy for the entire community – teachers, staff, students, and their families at home.
- There are a variety of legal obligations and expectations to consider, as well as possible financial implications.
- DMS students come from the entire Valley, which is not a small geographic footprint but nor is it the entire state of AZ.
- We will ensure hygiene and health related procedures are research based, clearly communicated, effectively implemented, and diligently enforced
- We are not deciding what people can do, or not do, outside of school/campus.
- We must make the best possible decision for VSWEA and DMS, regardless of whether it is a popular decision.

M.W. laid out the criteria for considering the decision whether to re-open:

- General criteria for the Board to consider and discuss:
 - Waldorf philosophy
 - Our professional experiences
 - Our personal beliefs
 - DMS faculty/staff survey and DMS leadership recommendations
 - What other schools in the Phoenix area are doing
 - What other public charter Waldorf schools in AZ are doing

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- DMS's experiences since school opened on August 17
- DMS campus readiness
- State-issued guidance for the Board to consider and discuss:
 - AZ and Maricopa County guidance and data

G.S. commented that we can and should also consider recommendations and guidance from the CDC and the WHO, and the experience of reopening schools from other parts of the country.

N.A. commented that there may be more esoteric points to consider but these are fine for the context we have now.

M.W. queried the board on how they would like to proceed. Look at data or begin discussion?

G.S. and J.T. commented they would like to look at the data at least for a few minutes.

M.W. provided a summary of the faculty/staff survey:

- When will you be ready and prepared for students return in-person? (i.e. classrooms ready while still providing remote learning).
 - September 8 (after Labor Day): 7
 - September 26: 2
 - October 5: 6
 - Other dates in September/October: 4
 - January 2021: 2
 - August 2021: 1

A.S. asked how many faculty/staff the received the survey versus how many responded.

C.K. responded that most responded, there are 42 staff/faculty, and there were 21 teachers who responded, which is all of them (although the third grade is in transition).

Discussion ensued regarding the faculty response between M.W., C.K., and J.T.

M.W. provided reminder of executive orders requiring consideration of various factors. Provided particular discussion regarding the Initial Reopening Checklist:

- Reopening buildings for on site services or in-person instruction is consistent with applicable state and local orders
- Consulted the local health department to confirm all three benchmarks are within the minimal or moderate spread category for two weeks. LEAs and local health departments may use additional considerations for initial reopening as outlined above.
 - Cases <100 cases / 100,000 or a two week decline in number of cases
 - Percent Positivity: <7%
 - COVID Like Illness: <10%

- The adopted mitigation plan includes strategies for traditional, hybrid, virtual, and intermittent models
- The adopted mitigation plan has been posted on the LEA's website.

J.E. questioned whether we had had a health professional review our mitigation plan? It would be a potential knowledge base to tap into.

M.W. responded he did not know, but that we were not required to.

C.K. noted that none of us are health professionals, but it was created based on information provided to all schools by AZDHS, although it was not specifically vetted by a healthcare professional.

M.W. asked about campus readiness and whether we are now or could be within 1-2 weeks ready to have all the PPE, handwashing stations, daily cleaning lined up.

C.K. noted we have all the PPE we need. Handwashing stations are continuing to be refined. We need more than just a few days to get those in running and working order. We are working on signage and protocols for drop off and pickup. Ideally we need at least two weeks to accomplish all of these things. We have a cleaning company. We need some time to implement the educational piece and to educate all involved to adhere to the health and safety protocols.

M.W. noted it was fair to request lead time and that it is perfectly reasonable given the limited resources and personnel available to assist in developing new sets of procedures.

G.S. noted a conflict between some of the state versus county guidance on the cases per 100,000 factor.

Further presentation of factors to consider and the most recent data continued.

J.T. commented that the data we are examining is effectively three weeks old.

M.W. agreed, but noted that it cuts both ways – if things are getting worse, we would not know for three weeks either.

A.S. noted that the data from the survey was just that – data – but we also got substantive responses about what the faculty/staff wanted to say. It was a mixed bag, but many of those responses were concerned about the benchmarks.

N.A. asked for clarification on the LDC's recommendation specifically. Noted that there has been a change in the faculty's point of view on a desire to open. Now they would like to, where previously they did not.

M.W. clarified background of the LDC's vote and their memo to the Board, and that they had suggested an opening date of around September 21. This represents a shift from 4-1 against reopening, to 6-0 (one abstaining) in favor of reopening.

N.A. queried what happened in the last few weeks that led to that change. And commented that the shift would bake in the lead time requested by C.K., and would like to see a date for reopening set (at least for those who desire it) to provide certainty to the community and provide a date to work towards to carry on the positive momentum for reopening.

A.S. commented that there appears to be conflicting information from the LDC on reopening; two of the members responded to the faculty survey saying they wanted to reopen when benchmarks were met, but the memo we received today appears nearly unanimous in favor of reopening with no mention of benchmarks. Also, the parent survey was sent prior to the state setting benchmarks. Are there any plans to send another survey?

C.K. noted that the hybrid plan was part of the information available to parents prior to answering the survey, so that we could plan for how many students potentially would be attending in person.

M.W. commented that he found the faculty survey significant in that it appears a large majority are in favor of resuming in-person learning at least by late September or October, and may be based on the way people are viewing the data trends.

J.T. commented that it could also be a result of the faculty experiencing how treacherous it is to provide remote learning.

N.A. commented that he found the notion of staged reopening prioritizing the lower grades convincing, and that for seeking the best outcome for the children, given the trend of the data, we should set a timeline for reopening.

G.S. commented he agreed with concept of having certainty in a date for reopening, but that it needs to be far enough out that we have time to react to data that is delayed by a number of weeks, and that any date needed to be conditioned on positivity rate and cases per 100,000 criteria being met, and that a date in October would give us enough lead time to see how the data develops to make an informed decision.

M.W. generally agreed with importance of certainty of a date, and importance of getting the youngest grades back to campus so that everyone has something to work toward, and that an early October date, October 5, could be a good target.

N.A. commented that he would like to see a target date sooner and more in line with what the LDC was recommending of September 21 or 28, and that benefits of children being in school was too significant to delay further.

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M.W. commented that in-person learning is not the only way for children to grow and develop and that there are other ways, and whether N.A. was actually concerned about the date since he had commented earlier the specific date in September or October was not important to him.

A.S. agreed with the October date stating that teaching blocks are aligned to the school quarters, and this would provide a natural transition to in-person learning.

J.E. offered a consensus position where we would choose the end of the September as a beginning for a staggered opening.

M.W. queried whether anyone was considering voting against reopening regardless of the date.

A.S. commented she needed more factual criteria to be attached to a motion to say whether she would agree.

G.S. agreed that any date needed to be conditioned on hitting at least positivity rate and cases per 100,000.

N.A. left the meeting at approximately 9:04 p.m., and returned around 9:11 p.m.

General discussion ensued regarding how to piece together a particular motion and to interpret the data between M.W., G.S., J.E., and A.S.

A.S. asked C.K. whether there was a more viable date between 9/21 and 10/5?

C.K. believed the campus could be ready from an operational perspective by 9/21, but in order to build in time to develop logistics about various cohorts, it would be nice to have additional time. But a deadline would be helpful.

A break was taken at 9:21 p.m.

Meeting resumed at 9:33 p.m.

G.S. moved for DMS faculty and admin to plan to be ready for in-person instruction, in addition to distance learning, to commence on October 5, provided (1) the ED has provided to the Board by 9/9 an acceptable plan for staggered re-opening such that all grades will have re-opened for in-person learning by October 19, and provided further that (2) by October 1 the following benchmarks are met for Maricopa County as reported on the AZDHS website: (a) cases per 100,000 remains below 100 for two consecutive weeks; (b) percent positivity remains below 7% for two consecutive weeks; (c) hospital visits for COVID-like illnesses are below 10% for two consecutive weeks. M.W. seconded. Discussion ensued involving J.E., M.W., N.A., G.S., J.T., A.S., and C.K.

Vote: Yea: A.S.; Opposed: M.W., G.S., J.T., N.A., J.E. **Motion fails.**

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G.S. moved for DMS faculty and admin to plan to be ready for in-person instruction, in addition to distance learning, to commence on September 28, provided (1) the ED has provided to the Board by 9/9 an acceptable plan for staggered re-opening such that all grades will have re-opened for in-person learning by October 19, and provided further that (2) by September 24 the following benchmarks are met for Maricopa County as reported on the AZDHS website: (a) cases per 100,000 remains below 100 for two consecutive weeks; (b) percent positivity remains below 7% for two consecutive weeks; (c) hospital visits for COVID-like illnesses are below 10% for two consecutive weeks. M.W. seconded. Discussion ensued involving A.S., J.T., N.A., G.S., M.W.

Vote: Yea: M.W., G.S., J.T., N.A., J.E. / Nay: A.S. **Motion passes.**

M.W. and G.S. clarified that this motion applies to all aspects of the school, including the private program.

M.W. queried whether any further information or action was required from the Board.

C.K. replied none was.

M.W. queried whether the Board or administration should communicate the outcome of the vote to the school.

C.K. agreed she would draft the communication and asked to receive the written form of the motion in advance of the communication.

CLOSING VERSE

M.W. – move to adjourn, J.E. second. No discussion. Vote: Unanimous (J.E., G.S., M.W., A.S., J.T., N.A.). **Motion passes.**

M.W. read the closing verse.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

Prepared by G.S. on 8/26/2020 and revised on 8/31/2020, incorporating suggested revisions from A.S. and M.W.