Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

October 16, 2019 – 6:30pm – 1 Westinghouse Plaza, Hyde Park

Present: Robie White, Peter Fishman, Jon Correia, Jesse Abair, Marc Sorresso, Jordan Biggers, Margaret Regan, Brett Carroll, Bernadine Desanges, Alysia Ordway, Spencer Blasdale (Executive Director), Oliver Truog (Chief Operating Officer), Priti Johari (Chief Academic Officer), Nicole Malo (Development Manager), Carmen Pierre Canel (MS Principal), Jonathan Diamond (Chief Culture Officer), Alexandre Kuehnle (Director of Student Support)

Meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm.

I. Minutes/ Schedule/ Events

A. **VOTE**: Today’s meeting Agenda – Mr. Biggers proposes to accept agenda as presented and Mr. Correia seconds. All approved.

B. **VOTE**: Approve remote access – Ms. Desanges motions to approve remote access for Ms. Smith. Ms. Ordway seconds. All approve.

C. **VOTE**: Mr. Fishman proposes that the board accept the meeting minutes with the addition of Mr. Juan Pablo Mejia. Motion was made to accept September 18 minutes by Mr. White and seconded by Ms. Regan. All approved.

D. Public Comment – None.

II. Program

A. Ms. Johari, CAO, presented on MCAS performance from spring, 2019. The first point was that the tenth grade has transitioned to the next generation assessment, as had the 3-8th grade assessments two years ago. Ms. Johari shared the state’s rationale for setting the bar higher for a truer indication of college readiness, based on Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s analysis of student performance, college matriculation and college completion. Ms. Johari then share performance of students at each grade level over time and noted that ELA performance has increased at each grade level (anchoring on scaled score improvement) while math performance has not increased and in some cases declined. Student Growth Percentiles fall into the “moderate growth” category of 40-59 percentiles and we are looking to do better than this. She compared MCAS performance state results and noted some highlights in 10th grade as well as ELA but gaps in math. Ms. Johari explained the curriculum and coaching work that the school is doing to ensure that all students are prepared for post-secondary education.

    a. Mr. Sorresso asked about key strategies to improve math. Ms. Johari and Ms. Pierre Canel spoke to the efforts to 1. Improve fluency and accuracy through differentiated practice and the iXL platform, and 2. efforts to increase deeper learning with curriculum design. They highlighted an 8th grade math class of math inquiry.
b. Ms. Desanges asked about assessments that would be interim indicators and Ms. Johari and Ms. Pierre Canel spoke about the three-times a year Achievement Network (ANET) interim assessments, given in grades 5-8 in ELA and math. While these do not predict MCAS performance they help teachers to know which standards students have mastered.

c. Ms. Desanges asked about the ELA team and Ms. Pierre Canel and Ms. Johari spoke about the open response interims and the writing prompts that are continuing. In addition, a teacher has brought another assessment platform, Edulastic, which also helps teachers give standards-based assessments and see immediate results of teaching and learning.

II. Finance

A. Mr. White, as chair of the finance committee, presented the audit. He noted that this was a clean opinion and that there were no material deficiencies in internal control. In addition, all deficiencies from the previous year have been corrected (i.e., investing surplus cash at a higher interest rate, etc.) After discussion of overall balance sheet and income statements Mr. White motioned for the board to accept the FY19 audit. VOTE: Mr. Correia motions to accept. Ms. Ordway seconds. All approve.

B. Playground. Mr. White and Mr. Truog shared the architects’ estimate of $2.0 million for renovations to the playground. While there is no vote needed the board discussed the general timeframe of summer, 2021 for construction. The strategy is to refine our financial projections, refine our multi-year capital plan, identify cash available from Foundation and plan for a capital campaign. The board will need to decide in the spring whether to commence with this project for Summer 2021.

III. Development

A. Ms. Malo shared an overview of development efforts to date with just under half of our goal raised mainly through foundations thus far and having 75 unique donors towards a goal of 230 donors. She shared the overall strategy for our annual giving campaign which kicks off in late October and runs through December. This campaign includes the annual appeal mailing on November 12 with our annual report and a Giving Tuesday call-a-thon on December 3. Board members were asked also to provide input into corporate sponsorship for our spring event to be held on May 9.

B. Mr Biggers asked about whether it would make sense to have one fundraising platform or have multiple asks. Ms. Malo provided a means for board members to create either a Facebook post or a Facebook fundraiser page that would direct donors to our website platform.

C. Ms. Ordway asked about fees and Ms. Malo responded that Facebook absorbs the fee / doesn’t charge user or donor a fee.

IV. Policy

A. Discussion: Ms. Kuehnle presented the school’s “Nondiscrimination on the basis of Gender Identity” policy. She noted that this was drafted from DESE guidance, reviewed and added to by our leadership team and reviewed by the school’s lawyer. VOTE: Mr. Biggers
motioned to approve the school’s nondiscrimination on the basis of Gender Identity policy and Mr. White seconded. All approved.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Mr. Fishman motioned for the board to enter into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Mr. Carroll seconded. All approved.

Executive Session Meeting Minutes
October 16, 2019

Present: Robie White, Peter Fishman, Jon Correia, Jesse Abair, Marc Sorresso, Jordan Biggers, Margaret Regan, Brett Carroll, Bernadine Desanges, Alysia Ordway, Spencer Blasdale (Executive Director), Priti Johari (Chief Academic Officer)

The Executive Director shared that the high school principal is no longer employed by the school. The board asked about how this information is being shared and Mr. Blasdale and Ms. Johari shared that they communicated to teachers and then students and families on Tuesday. They provided a forum for students to discuss the departure and emotions on Wednesday and invited parents for questions. The board discussed the severance package provided and asked the Executive Director to have a contingency plan for potential media coverage and to ensure continued communication and support from HR experts and legal counsel.