

*Unofficial Minutes, Subject to Board Approval

6/10/2013

Seacoast Charter School Board of Trustees, at the Seacoast Charter School Art Room

Public Meeting Minutes

Board Members In Attendance: Rob Wise, Stacey Eaton, Steve Liponis, Marc Wood, Matthew Broadhead, Bill Jordan, Kelly Arp, Jacki Rice, Kristin Larrabee, Roberta Mantione.

At 7:03pm Chairman Steve Liponis called meeting to order.

Steve introduced Attorney Barradale who represents the school with respect to its tax obligations. Attorney Barradale stated that there is an initial question of whether or not the school is required to pay SSA as detailed in last month's meeting. Attorney Barradale has been in touch with the IRS and the state representative who is in charge of administering Social Security programs and he has concluded that the school is required to pay and withhold Social Security taxes. He noted that our payroll company has taken a position that the school is not required to this, but has declined to offer that opinion in writing per a request from our business manager, Kim. Matt added that after the Board meeting last month, we voted to immediately begin withholding and paying Social Security taxes and directed our business administrator to instruct the payroll company and that, according to Kim, the payroll company declined to do so saying that their position is correct. Matt asked if Attorney Barradale would be able to forward his position to the payroll company and ask for them to respond in writing as to the basis for their opinion. He said he would. To resolve the tax situation, Attorney Barradale spoke with someone in D.C. regarding an informal ad hoc close out program, but this program requires payment of the full amount owed in full. He understood, given the finances of the school that this is not an option. The only avenue left is to file amended payroll forms. This means that the liability will include interest automatically and there is a penalty, unless we can make a case against it. If there is a hardship we may be able to get a reduction on the amount owed. There was evidence of a deficit this year, which may help in reducing any assessment. He noted that there may be son personal liability for responsible persons on 40% of the liability for the amount that should have been withheld from the employees pay. Jacki had a question about the next steps in terms of making an offer in compromise. Attorney Barradale that we first need to know what the total assessment is and then we work with another department in the IRS to determine how it is paid. There are circumstances under which we can make an offer in compromise or the equivalent thereof. Once we go to the collection group, we can then talk about an offer in compromise or installment agreement. In installment agreements they typically look for 24 months payment plans, although it can vary case to case. A Board member asked about liability of the payroll company. Attorney Barradale said he is not a litigator. Matt said that once an assessment is made, then we can figure look at our options for litigation. Steve asked about the time frame going forward. Attorney Barradale said that hopefully there would be a 60 day turn around after we file the amended returns, but he is still awaiting the necessary documents. Rob added that Kim was looking for them and he asked if in Barradale's letter to the payroll company that he could include a request for the necessary forms since they prepare all of our tax forms. Roberta asked about social security wages and whether they will be counted toward their retirement benefits. Attorney Barradale said that in addition to covering the tax deficiency, we will file amended returns with the SSA so that the teachers will not miss out on benefits owed to them. He is not sure at what stage this filing is made at this time.

Matt moved to authorize Barradale to file the necessary paperwork and to disclose this situation to the IRS once he has the required tax forms needed to make said filings. He also moved, in the same motion to authorize Barradale to write to the payroll company, People's United Bank, and to request the necessary tax forms and to provide his opinion with respect to the law regarding the SSA wage withholding/contribution issue. Rob seconded. Unanimously approved.

We reviewed minutes from last month's meetings. Jacki said that she emailed Matt with a few suggested edits. Neither Matt nor Jacki had a copy of those proposed edits. Matt said that maybe it would be wise to table the approval of the minutes for next month's meeting so that those potential changes could be discussed in a public meeting. Matt moved to table the approval of the May minutes until next meeting in July. Rob seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence to the Board was received from Lisa Spurling and is attached to the minutes. There was no further discussion on the correspondence.

Steve noted that Marc Brown resigned from the Board of Trustees. He thanked him for his many years of service as an employee and recently as a Trustee and Treasurer.

Steve announced that he will be stepping down as Chair of the Board effective at the conclusion of today's meeting. An election will be held at the July meeting. Stacey, as vice-chair, will preside over that meeting.

Roberta gave her Head of School Report. Roberta announced that due to the fact that the school has recently lost its designation of being located in a "rural" area, it was determined that it was no longer eligible for the REAP grant, which is \$28,000. They are trying to fight for this grant or some sort of re-designation. Eileen Liponis, the head of the NH Charter Association, reported that Charter school funding appears to be intact for the next biennium. Robert was happy to report that there are approximately 338 students at all grade levels on our waiting list.

Staffing vacancies for Grades 1-6 have been filled. Hired two people who were staff before one is coming from York. Still interviewing for Kindergarten. Re-posting for a 7-8 grade class. Found a replacement for Kristin for the first three months due to her maternity leave.

Roberta finished the Accountability Report to the state which contained new sections including a section addressing goals for reading proficiency and an arts integration section.

Roberta Announced that this was her last board meeting thanked the Board for their work, enjoyed her time here, Jacki thanked her for everything and said that the teachers are planning a more formal thanks. Matt thanked her for dedication to the school and academically and artistically she is leaving the school in better shape than when she found it.

Steve noted that with Marc Brown's departure we no longer have a treasurer. Jacki asked Marc Wood if he would be comfortable as Treasurer. He said he would, but he did not feel that he could shoulder the commitment of being both the chair of the technology committee and the treasurer for an extended period of time. Jacki nominated Marc Wood to be treasurer, Kristin seconded. The vote to elected Marc Wood to treasurer was unanimous.

Personnel committee: they were able to solidify evaluations for Head of School. They set new goals including finding ways to stabilize staff and to develop a mentoring program for new teachers.

Governance committee – Matt announced that we currently have two vacancies on the Board: we need one parent member and one community member, hopefully someone that has an arts background. If anyone is interested or would like to nominate someone, please let Matt know. You can email him at mtbroadhead@gmail.com.

Steve pointed out that he felt Kelly would be perfect as chairman for the development and outreach committee. Kelly said that she would not want to 'go it alone' and would like someone to work with her. She also asked whether there is a goal or directive for the committee and whether anyone else was interested. Matt noted that as far as he was aware there was no formal description of the role of the committee. Steve said that it is typically up to the Chair to take it in the direction they choose.

Technology committee – Marc described his team and felt he had a good core group to move forward with on the committee. They are working on drafting policies and goals going forward.

PTA is working on organizing a field day for the school although there may be an issue with location. Apparently Chase field needs to be reserved and they are not sure it is available. It was discussed that going forward there should be a clearly delineated responsibility as to who reserves the field – the PTA or the School administration.

Head of school hiring committee – Rob said that they have received 40 applications and there are several viable candidates, hopefully will be able to name the next HOS by July. Salary discussions have been positive. Matt inquired about the hiring process. Steve said the hiring committee will recommend one person and then bring that person to the Board for final approval.

Back to school night: orientation board could meet parents, could present the budget, having a regular board meeting, present the budget then adjourn and have a more relaxed environment.
Orientation...money – where is money going...

501(c)3 entity update – Roberta asked what the next steps are with the friends of seacoast and whether we need to change the entity or create a new one, we need to clarify what the status of the school

Trust building committee

Marc Wood presented the following recommendations which were adopted by the Board after discussion and edits: (Jacki moved, Bill seconded, unanimously approved)

At the May 6 meeting of the Board of Trustees (the "Board"), the Board voted to establish a committee to build trust between the Board, the Teachers, and the Parents. Five members of the Board agreed to serve on this committee to respond to comments made by teachers and parents at the meeting, solicit feedback from parents, teachers and administration (the "Community") and make suggestions for restoring trust between the Board and the Community. The committee met weekly in the period between the May and June meetings to analyze the feedback and develop a report.

The committee focused on generating ideas for improving the school's functioning and restoring trust in the Community.

Feedback fell into four main categories:

1. Communication and Transparency
2. Financial Management and Oversight
3. Board and Administrative Personnel
4. Teacher Morale

1. Communication and Transparency

Feedback confirmed the committee's assumption that communication and transparency are contributing factors to trust issues between the Board and the Community. Specific feedback related to New Hampshire's Right-to-Know law, RSA Chapter 91-A, was received and recommendations attempt to address these concerns. The committee recognizes the need for continued education and adherence of the law.

The committee developed the following recommendations:

- Evaluate the use of the 'all-call system' or email to announce Board meetings and evaluate its effectiveness in six months, or less.
- Include the Board agenda in the Seacoast Charter School weekly newsletter. All changes to the agenda, post publication, shall be reviewed and approved at the Board meeting.
- Publish minutes for all public proceedings (RSA 91-A:1-a Definition of Public Proceedings) and store them in a clearly marked binder in the office in accordance with RSA 91-A:4 Minutes and Records Available for Public Inspection.
- Post all public proceedings (RSA 91-A:1-a Definition of Public Proceedings) with the date and location at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.
- Schedule public comment on the Board of Trustees agenda (i.e. placement on the agenda) in such a way to encourage respectful and constructive community input.
- Install a comment box at the office for anonymous Community member feedback and establish a process for reviewing and acting upon the feedback
- Request the establishment and review of processes and procedures, concerning the receipt of communications addressed to the Board, from the Clerk.
- Facilitate a collaborative School Administration and Board sponsored Seacoast Charter School orientation.
- Create additional community-building events to celebrate the Seacoast Charter School Community and promote active engagement.

2. Financial Management and Oversight

It is clear the IRS tax withholding issue is a root cause for many of the trust issues and has revealed clear problems with financial management at the Seacoast Charter School. The fundamental financial management of the school must be improved to ensure the community can feel confident financial problems that threaten the sustainability of the school will not arise in the future.

The committee developed the following recommendations:

- Form a new Board Audit Committee that provides governance over the annual audits of the Seacoast Charter School's financial management processes, procedures and practices, in accordance with RSA 194-B:10, II.
- Review the current audit and payroll firms' effectiveness and scope of the annual audit.

- Establish an advisory committee to create the scope, and execute on, an internal audit of the Treasurer's financial administration processes, procedures and practices.
- Approve third party audit of fundraising earnings to assure funds are properly handled in accordance with 501(c)(3) IRS tax law.
- Enhance budget presentations by including prior year budget and expenditures and current year budget, forecast and expenditures at the aggregate and line item levels.
- Provide a detailed financial report, including grant reports, at least quarterly at the Board meetings and make the reports accessible to the community.
- Reports due to the New Hampshire Department of Education, in accordance with RSA 194-B:5, IV-a, must be made available to the community.
- Request the creation and review of documented processes, procedures and practices, of the Treasurer's administration of financials affairs, by the Treasurer.

3. Board and Administrative Personnel

Strong disapproval was directed at the Board in general as well as specific members. The committee examined the feedback related to Board members and discussed them in non-public session in accordance with 91-A:3 Nonpublic Sessions. The committee considered all feedback and made recommendations that take into account the value of Board continuity, effectiveness and continuous improvement. The committee also evaluated the feedback in relation to current and prior roles in order to formulate appropriate recommendations.

The committee developed the following recommendations:

- Provide training and education for the Board (e.g. New Hampshire's Right-to-Know law, Board member assimilation binder, webinars, suggested reading).
- Board committee chairpersons should recruit community members to participate in committees and generate a feeder pool for the Board.
- Leverage peer charter school boards by attending their meetings and engaging in discussions related to challenges and opportunities.
- Conduct an annual Community Opinion Survey (COS) to solicit feedback from the Community on the effectiveness of the Board.
- Facilitate an annual 360 degree Board self-evaluation survey. The evaluation will measure the effectiveness of the Board by the Board.
- Publish an organizational chart of Board members and Administrators, including Board Officer Designations, committee chairs and members.
- Review Board Officer Roles and Responsibilities as outlined in the Seacoast Charter School Bylaws.
- Review detailed Roles and Responsibilities of the Head of School and Business Administrator roles, assess for gaps and make recommendations for improvement.
- Create annual Board objectives and measures at the Board and committee levels and establish processes to review measurable results on a bi-annual basis.

4. Teacher Morale

The committee recognizes teachers are the single most important factor in the quality of the Seacoast Charter School's education. The recommendations make every effort to establish the framework for

restoring trust between the teachers and the Board, as well as the school administration. It is clearly understood the IRS issue has resulted in significant anguish and must be resolved in a manner respectful to the teacher's interests. Morale is a delicate and often far-reaching matter that is not taken lightly by the committee. The committee recognizes teacher morale issues may extend beyond the areas addressed in this report.

The committee developed the following recommendations:

- Reassess the 2013-14 Seacoast Charter School Budget to ensure it adequately funds academic rigor expectations and provides a safe environment for teachers, students and administration.
- Assure teachers that the board will comply with federal and state statutes with respect to collective organization or concerted activity for mutual aid and protection.
- Ensure adequate teacher representation in the Board decision making process. In order to operate in a functional manner, the Board, teachers and administration must work in coordination.

These recommendations were adopted by the Board and sent back to the Trust Committee for further recommendations regarding implementing these provisions.

Public Comment:

Diane K – commented that the website problems exist because the guy who created it was supposed to train Marc Brown on how to operate it, but then he left before he could be trained.

Jacolyn stated that she writes the newsletter for the school and said it would be easy to include notice of the Board meetings in it. She also said the handbook can easily include the time and place of meetings.

Kyla J – appreciates the idea of starting a mentorship program and using newsletter to communicate.

Mike M – He agreed with those that said that the business manager position is critically important to the school and we should make every effort to ensure that the position is managed by a capable individual. He also stated that he is a webmaster for North Andover and offered to help the school with its website difficulties.

Jenny C – Asked that the Board check into 501c3 issue to make sure we avoid any future problems or confusion. She thanked the trust committee for their recommendations.

Tammy – Said she is unclear as to who is on which committee and whether parents and Board members can both join committees. Bill mentioned that he recommended put an organizational chart where people can know who is on what committee.

Kelly T– she felt that the 501c3 issue was a huge problem and asked that we address it as soon as possible. She felt that it was not a big deal to receive calls about meetings from the all-call system.

Matt moved, Steve second, a motion to go into for private session to discuss a personnel matter pursuant to RSA 91-A:II(a)(b)and (c). The vote was unanimous.

[Minutes sealed]

Matt moved for the nonpublic minutes to remain sealed pursuant to RSA 91-A:III. Rob seconded, the vote to keep this portion of the minutes relating to a discussion of a personnel matter sealed was unanimous.

Next meeting is scheduled for July 8, 7pm at the school in the art room. Motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned 10:04pm.

Seacoast Charter School

*Board of Trustees Meeting
Monday June 10, 2013 7:00 p.m.*

Art Classroom
13 Church Street
Kingston, NH

Agenda

1. 7:00 Call to Order
2. 7:00-7:30 Update – IRS Atty. David Barradale
3. 7:30-7:40 Receipt and Approval of Minutes and Correspondence
4. 7:40-7:45 Chair Report Steve Liponis
5. 7:45-8:10 Head of School Report Roberta Mantione
6. 8:10-8:30 Committee Reports:
 1. Finance
 2. Personnel Jacki Rice
 3. Accountability Stacey Eaton
 4. Governance Matt Broadhead
 5. Development & Outreach Kelly Arp
 6. Technology Marc Wood
 7. PTA Representative
7. 8:30 – 8:45 Discussion – September 2013 “Back to School Night” Event
8. 8:45-9:15 Report – Ad Hoc Trust-building Committee Bill Jordan
9. 9:15–9:25 Public Comment*
10. 9:25-9:30 Summary and Action Items
11. 9:30-9:35 Items for Next Agenda / Date for next meeting
12. 9:35 Adjournment

* The public comment section of our agenda is an opportunity for community members to comment on the work of the board. Members of the board are interested in hearing views from individuals, but will be unable to respond to comments immediately in this forum. They will, however, receive serious consideration, and may warrant discussion at a later date. Please limit your comments to 5 minutes to allow time for others to speak. For lengthier comments, please feel free to submit a letter to the board.

SEACOAST CHARTER SCHOOL
PAYROLL TAX OPTIONS
JUNE 10, 2013

I. Based on information received from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (“DHHS”), which serves as the New Hampshire based Social Security Administrator for state and local government employers, it is clear that the School should have been withholding and paying social security taxes with respect to wages paid to its teachers since its inception.

II. Extent of the School’s Exposure

<u>Tax Year</u>	<u>Employer Portion</u>	<u>Employee Portion</u>	<u>Total Liability</u>
2010	\$ 26,546.37	\$ 26,546.37	\$ 53,092.74
2011	\$ 33,020.68	\$ 22,368.85	\$ 55,389.53
2012	\$ 41,749.90	\$ 28,282.19	\$ 70,032.09
2013	\$	\$	\$
Totals thru 2012	\$101,316.95	\$ 77,197.41	\$178,514.36

Note - The totals are for taxes only, and do not include interest and potential penalties.

Note - There appears to be an additional responsibility to correct Forms W-2 for periods before 2010 with the Social Security Administration. To date, I have received no indication that any additional taxes, interest and penalties would be sought for those periods.

III. The IRS has a very lenient settlement program in place of employers that have treated their workers as independent contractors instead of as employees and that will properly characterize their workers going forward. Unfortunately, the School is not eligible to take advantage of that program.

IV. There is a less formal option available through the Federal, State and Local Government Group within the IRS based in Washington, DC that considers factual situations on a case by case basis and proposes settlements that must be approved by the Director of that Group. One inflexible requirement for any settlement through this Group is payment of

the all of the tax liability up front. The School is not in a position to make such a payment in full.

- V. The remaining course of action is to file amended payroll tax returns “and let the chips fall where they may.” In the amended payroll tax returns, we would emphasize the Spring, 2013 date of discovery of the issue and the reasonable reliance on the payroll companies and the auditors for the proper tax treatment of the teachers, in seeking abatement of penalties. There is no guarantee that such arguments would lead to abatement of penalties.

Note - The individual at DHHS who sent the information described in I. above also stated that she could refer me to someone within the IRS about next steps for the School. I have not asked for the name of and contact information for that individual, pending authorization to do so from the Board.

- VI. Payment options include an installment agreement for the full amount owed, and an installment agreement within an accepted “offer in compromise” – for less than the full amount owed. In either case, the likely maximum time period of the installment agreement would be two years.
- VII. To the extent that this liability creates economic hardship for the School, it is more likely to qualify for acceptance of an offer in compromise, and it is more likely that the School will be able to receive assistance from the Taxpayer Advocate Service within the IRS. I am still waiting for additional information from Joceline Champagne, the Taxpayer Advocate based in New Hampshire, on what kind of assistance her group might be able to provide.
- VIII. In any payroll tax deficiency situation, the IRS has the ability to collect the “trust fund” portion of the deficiency – the portion that should have been withheld from the employees – from “responsible persons” within the employer. This liability is structured as a penalty. As a general rule, a responsible person is one who had the effective power (based on all the facts) to withhold and pay the tax. There is a specific exception for voluntary board members of tax-exempt organizations, provided that such board members meet all three of the following conditions:
- A. They serve solely in an honorary capacity;
 - B. They do not participate in the day-to-day or financial operations of the organization, and
 - C. They do not have actual knowledge of the failure with respect to which the penalty is imposed.

The penalty is equal to the amount of the tax owed. The IRS can collect it from any responsible person and is not required to seek payment from the employer first.

- IX. If the IRS were to raise the specter of one or more responsible persons, it is possible to pay the trust fund portion of the tax due before any other part of the tax due, and sidestep the issue in that manner. A specific procedure must be followed to accomplish that result.

HOS COMMITTEE REPORT

Members of HOS committee now include:

Robert Wise - chairman/parent-trustee

Kristin Larabee - vice-chairman/teacher-trustee

Theresa Lorvig - teacher-trustee

Mary Maravic - teacher - trustee

Rhett Walton - parent-trustee

Kim Farnan - business manager

Jo Miner, HOS Live and Learn Early Learning Center- community member

There have been several meetings of the HOS committee. The initial meeting was for planning, and the creation of a posting of our position on school spring.

Approximately 40 applications have been received to date. Each member of the committee stratified the applicants based on the available information, and the top tier of applicants have been asked to interview.

Several interviews have occurred to date, more are expected to occur prior to the end of school.

It is the goal of the committee to complete its work in time to have a new HOS in place as soon as can be achieved, such that the new HOS will have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with operations well before the beginning of the next academic year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rob Wise

HOS Report to Board of Trustees

June 2013

1. REAP GRANT: We have been re-designated as non-rural and no longer qualify for the grant which is a loss of about \$28,000
2. State Funding note from Eileen Liponis NH State Charter Association: I just wanted to make sure you all understood a small change in the way the Senate proposed budget lists charter school tuition. They have combined the adequacy line and the disparity line into one line and then added a new line item for money for newly authorized schools. I want to make sure you and your board members understand that they did not strip out disparity aid for us just combined it. Somebody could easily misinterpret it and think that they took disparity aid away, not the case. The logic being that Senate policy thought the disparity aid looked like low hanging fruit and would be too easily targeted. They believe we are safer with one line item for our total tuition. They also made both lines non lapsing so the money carries over to the next year which is very good and something that I've been asking for for years. I want to reemphasize, all three budgets, Governor, House and Senate, have projected enough money for all the existing schools for the next biennium.
3. Enrollment: some news about students leaving but waiting list of 338 students at all grade levels
4. Staffing : All positions have been filled for grades 1-6
5. Rough draft of the accountability report is online. Please send comments.
6. Grant possibility:

GRANTS and REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

ALL RFPs Can be Found on the Department Website at

www.education.nh.gov/rfp/index.htm

A. Allocation of Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Funds for School Security Enhancements

The New Hampshire Department of Safety through the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) is making funds available to enhance school building security. The purpose of this Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) for Schools Program is to assist School Administrative Units (SAUs) with funding for projects that will improve and enhance their schools' physical security. Funds may be used for securing and controlling access points, extra security equipment and improving school security technologies. Each grant shall not exceed \$50,000 per SAU during this grant program's performance period of June 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014. Funds will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. More information can be found at www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/hsem/documents/school-security-grants.pdf or by contacting Cindy Richard, EMPG Program Manager at (603) 223-3627 or cindy.richard@dos.nh.gov.

Subject: FW: Note to the Board

From: Roberta Mantione <Roberta@seacoastcharterschool.org>

Date: 5/7/2013 3:15 PM

To: "steve@liponis.com" <steve@liponis.com>, Matthew Broadhead <MBroadhead@burnsbryant.com>, Marc Brown <marc@neratepayers.org>, Stacey Eaton <sdsweet@comcast.net>, Marc Wood <Marc.wood@libertymutual.com>, Kelly Arp <kellyarp@comcast.net>, Jacki Rice <jacki@seacoastcharterschool.org>, Kristin Larrabee <kristin@seacoastcharterschool.org>, Julie Wise <JAR226@COMCAST.NET>, "Jordan, William G." <wjordan@exeter.edu>

Passing this on to you.....

From: Kim Farnan

Sent: Tuesday, May 07, 2013 3:15 PM

To: Roberta Mantione

Subject: FW: Note to the Board

Kim Farnan
Business Manager
Seacoast Charter School
603-642-8400 ext. 101

From: Lisa Spurling [<mailto:lsurling@rocketmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, May 07, 2013 6:06 AM

To: Kim Farnan

Subject: Note to the Board

Kim, please forward to the board. Thank you and hope you are well.

Good morning,

Thank you for your time last evening. I think we are all looking forward to moving forward in a more positive direction. Unfortunately, it is clear that in spite of the pay increase (which normally would have brought about positive feelings) there is low confidence. It appeared to me from last night that staff are feeling apprehensive moving forward at this point.

Although this board is comprised of many new members it is the current board where frustration is directed and this is typical in business. It appeared to me last night that the staff need more than a statement from the board of 'lets move forward.' The fact that the 501c is also now in question, appeared to bring on another level of frustration for the staff. I always try to give suggestions when I offer feedback and I did not last evening. With respect, I want to take the opportunity to now. I have worked quite a bit in school systems to help assist them in implementing positive change and hope that possibly there might be a good idea in here somewhere.

I believe there were many opportunities that could have been taken last night to begin healing this community that were overlooked. That is unfortunate but there is always the opportunity to repair. I

think if this board takes a few small steps that it could really guide this school to actually move forward.

1) I wonder if the Board might consider releasing a statement to the staff, and possibly the parents, outlining some of the steps that can be taken to improve our knowledge base and response. Have you thought about writing a letter to the staff, and possibly the parents, outlining steps you are willing to take to improve communication and trust? I understand that board may not want to offer an apology (liability, etc) but a letter summarizing the intent to move forward...for example:

-All members agreeing to listen in to the webinar might be a great thing to reiterate.

-Possibly a Board member acting as a 'fact checker' since it appeared at times there is information that is then retracted when specifics are inquired. This does not help rebuild. At the next meeting, or even during the meeting, the person could attempt to access the information in question so there are not clarifying questions left 'hanging in the air.'

-improvements that will be taken in regards to communication. I heard positive feedback regarding Roberta's message on Sunday night. I would certainly welcome one of those each month reminding parents of the meeting and possibly a quick summary of the agenda. If with this system, we do not pay per call, it is not overused, that could be a wonderful, easy avenue to show that the board is working on increasing communication. I understand posting on the building should be enough but this is, again, an example of a way that the current board can send a message that you are making changes to improve.

-Having the minutes either attached to the newsletter or posted in the office as a protocol that moves forward.

2) I wonder if as an entity, you would consider (if you have not already) sending a handwritten note to each staff member, again, not apologizing if you do not feel you can due to liability, etc, but to just state that they are appreciated. A note with a message such as,

"The board thanks you for your service to this school. It is committed to moving toward a future where there is trust and transparency between the staff, parents and this board. We hope you decide to continue this journey with us toward new beginnings."

and it could be passed out with a seedling plant. I think something along this line would be a great way to begin healing. There will be those that will overlook the gesture but I do think the larger community will see if as an offering sent with positive intent. There are many other ideas I am sure, but I do think it would be time well spent. I would be more than willing to assist in this if time is a concern. I would donate the money for the plants, pick them up, and hand out the notes if this is something you all agree you would like.

3) At the beginning of each meeting, and having posted at each meeting, an expectation of the ways communication are helpful. I do not agree with the disrespect that was spoken from a parent last night. I think to have a reminder and then to be able to reference back to that might be helpful. It would be a simple posted statement (or written on the top of the agenda that can be passed out) for all to see stating that all communication would be appreciated at the appropriate times (name when they are) and in a respectful manner.

Again, I thank you for your service to this school. I offer these suggestions from a place of respect but to also encourage each of you to think about ways that this board can improve moral and spirit to this school. I am willing to put the time into executing them or others that you have thought of.

FW: Note to the Board

Best regards,

Lisa Spurling, LCMHC
Certified School Guidance Counselor