

Baxter Academy for Technology and Science

Board of Directors Meeting

5:30 to 7 p.m., Tuesday, September 8, 2015

54 York Street, Portland, Maine

Directors Present: Chair Kelli Pryor, Vice-chair Allison Crean Davis, Treasurer Peter Montano, Secretary Peter Morrison, Ruth Dean, Kim Gustafson, Christian Sparling

Guests present: Carl Stasio, Executive director; Michele LaForge, Head of School; Heather Neal, business manager; Dan Amory, attorney; Jonathan Amory, teacher and curriculum architect

Agenda item
<p>I. Opening items</p> <p>Board Chair Kelli Pryor called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.</p> <p>A. Minutes</p> <p>Secretary Peter Morrison made a motion to accept as written the minutes from the August 11, 2015, meeting. Allison Crean Davis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p>II. Finances</p> <p>A. Audit</p> <p>Treasurer Peter Montano introduced the new business manager, Heather Neal, to the board. Peter and Heather updated the board about her transition into the role. Heather is loading the school's student information into the DOE's reporting system, MEDMS. Now that the billing system has changed from Baxter directly billing each district to reporting its enrollment to the DOE, it is necessary that the reports be in a new format. One charter school's forms went from 100 lines to 400 lines.</p> <p>The school's annual audit was completed last week. The final report will be issued soon, but Peter Montano reported that all seemed to go well.</p> <p>B. Federal Grant</p> <p>Executive Director Carl Stasio reported on the status of a new federal grant application. Maine's governor chose not to authorize certification for SEA grants in the state. But Baxter can apply through the federal Charter School Program for a non-SEA grant of up to \$250,000. Wendy Betts, one of the school's parents, will be working with school leadership to write that grant. She has a strong track record writing grants. The due date is October 6. Infrastructure for the grant is in good shape. The prior grant writer had first option after doing the 2014 grant on contingency; she has opted out.</p>

C. Enrollment

The target is to have 320 Commitments to Enroll by October 1. Head of School Michele LaForge reported that the school currently has spots to offer to reach that number. Kate Driver, the guidance counselor, and Michele will be making offers throughout the month of September, as necessary. Michele says Baxter is on track to meet its enrollment target.

III. Policies

A. Intellectual Property

Attorney Dan Amory has been working with school leadership to draft an Intellectual Property policy to suit the unique needs of a school founded on the idea that students and teachers will be constantly innovating. The plan would institute a school-wide process for student work and will include provisions for faculty contracts. A community-wide meeting will be held to discuss the proposed policy. The board will adopt the policy at a subsequent meeting.

B. Tech

Michele LaForge reported on her research about what other local school districts do to cover repair/replacement of student-used technology. Most schools have tech fees for repair/replacement because optional insurance fees, paid by parents on their child's school-issued computer, aren't universally purchased. Without insurance, any damage or loss of the computer is the sole responsibility of the parents. This year, as budgeted, Baxter will follow the lead of other schools and institute a universal user fee to keep the cost down and eliminate high cost to families in the event a computer needs to be repaired or replaced. This helps families, Michele told the board.

The board deliberated on the cost to parents. Michele reported the fees and policies from various schools, such as Poland Regional, Windham, and Greely. She recommended a sliding scale for \$60, \$70, and \$80 to adequately cover the specialized laptops issued to Baxter students as part of the STEM programming, as well as to align with the school's budget.

Peter Montano made a motion that the board endorse the development of a tech policy inclusive of a use fee, consistent with policies in neighboring districts in the state of Maine, stipulating that there be reasonable accommodations for families with economic challenges, and that they may contact the guidance department for a waiver. Peter Morrison seconded. The measure passed unanimously by full board vote.

C. Snow-day learning

The board asked for an update on the school's progress toward a snow-day learning plan that would allow Baxter students to work from home when winter weather makes it impossible to hold school. Baxter faces the challenge of transporting students safely across a landmass four times the size of Rhode Island. Last year, students participated in snow-day learning and documented their work and tied it to standards. Michele says she is encouraged by the feedback from the students and excited about developing this

innovative strategy in the coming year. The board recalled, too, that during the school's monitoring visit by the Charter Commission, two members encouraged school leadership to continue to innovate this kind of learning and share with others how it is working.

IV. School Year 2015-16

A. Report from Head of School

Michele showed photos from the opening days of school and reported that everything is going well, though the school is still in start-up mode, which remains challenging. This is the first year with all four classes in the school and with two locations. The new Congress Street space is working well, as is the flow back-and-forth between 54 York and Congress. This is also the first year with more extensive use of public transportation as well as three contract buses. Most of the lines are going very well, and the school continues to troubleshoot where it is not yet working smoothly.

V. Facilities

A. Satellite space

Carl Stasio reported that occupancy permit for the new space on Congress came through at 4:20 p.m. the Friday before classes started. The architect, Nancy Barba, and school attorney, Dan Amory, both did stellar work.

B. Timeline for long-term talks

Kelli Pryor reported that work will start in two weeks on the process to get all of Baxter under one roof, preferably in a building with a longer-term lease.

Peter Montano moved to adjourn the meeting. Peter Morrison seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 7:40 p.m.

VII. Public Discussion

VIII. Executive Session, if necessary

Next meeting: 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 13; 54 York Street