

**Baxter Academies of Maine Board of Directors Meeting**  
**Tuesday, September 9, 2014 – 5:30 PM**  
**54 York Street, Portland, Maine**

Board of Directors Members Present: Allison Crean-Davis, Kelli Pryor, Peter Morrison, Ruth Dean, Peter Montano

Guests: Carl Stasio (Executive Director), Michele LaForge (Head of School), Shanna Guevin (Business and Operations Manager, arrived at 5:55 pm), Parents of current students: Wendy Betts, Lori Bolduc, Dawn Hartill, Liz Oken, Tracie Tynes

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm.

Board Secretary Peter Morrison made a motion to accept the August 12, 2014 board meeting minutes. Allison Crean-Davis seconded the motion. The board minutes from August 12, 2014 were unanimously approved by the Board of Directors.

Board Chair Kelli Pryor gave a Chairs Update:

The normally scheduled board meeting in November needs to be rescheduled because it falls on Veterans Day. Kelli made a motion to change the November board meeting to Monday, November 3 due to the originally scheduled date of Tuesday, November 11 falling on Veterans Day. Ruth Dean seconded the motion. The proposal to move the November board meeting to the 3<sup>rd</sup> was unanimously approved by the board.

Michele LaForge gave the Head of School update. It included:

The beginning school days at Baxter have focused on student community building and a mentoring program. The first two weeks, referred to as "Baxter Foundations," have included students being involved in workshops, human skills development, building relationships within Baxter as well as external community relationships.

New Baxter faculty member, Heather D'Ippolito, has been tasked with coordinating the mentoring program for Baxter students.

Michele also reported that Baxter currently has four student-teachers and a fifth-year student from Bowdoin College, Ben Rosenbloom, assisting the students and staff.

Carl Stasio gave an Executive Director's report:

Carl proposed that Baxter accept a formal board policy reflecting the board's adherence to the Freedom of Access Act (FOAA). This policy reads:

"The Board and its members shall satisfy their obligations under the Maine Freedom of Access Act ("FOAA"), which is applicable to governing boards of public charter schools under 20-A M.R.S.A. § 2412(5)(C). Generally, FOAA requires that the Board provide advance public notice of its meetings and conduct its meetings in public,

subject to specific exceptions under which the Board is permitted to meet in executive session. FOAA also requires individual directors to obtain FOAA training and, subject to certain exceptions, to disclose any documents or records they create or obtain during the course of their Board service to any member of the public upon request. “

*Legal Reference: Title 1, MRSA, Sec. 400mmmn et. Seq.*

Peter Montano made a motion to accept the policies as written. Kelli Pryor seconded the motion. All board members approved the motion to accept the FOAA policy as written.

Carl Stasio gave an update on facilities. Last year there were 127 students occupying the top two floors. Five new classroom spaces in the basement will open on Monday of this coming week (9/15). This year there will be 231 students occupying the three floors of the building at 54 York Street. There is no additional space here in this building, and administrators will be monitoring how the student body functions and flow as the renovations come online. In 4-6 weeks, they will have a better indication of the amount of additional space needed to supplement 54 York Street. School leadership will continue to connect with partners in the community – real estate developers, schools, etc – to explore other possibilities for space.

Parents appeared before the board to discuss how transportation has evolved this year as the school continues to assess how it can serve students/families in this catchment area of 4,500 square miles.

Several parents spoke about their experience with transportation/busing at Baxter. The majority of parents who joined the meeting had used in the past and/or still need transportation to and from the Lewiston/Auburn area. Several of these parents are using a temporary shuttle from Lewiston to the Baxter bus stop in Lisbon, and are very interested in having this service continue. A parent had mentioned that the decision to cease the Lewiston bus stop this year angered and hurt parents as they counted on it and felt that it was promised to them. She felt that last evening’s problem-solving meeting (with Baxter’s Executive Director, Head of School Michele LaForge, and Board Chair Kelli Pryor) was productive—that they came up with proposed solutions for Lewiston/Auburn riders this year.

A parent from another bus line mentioned that Baxter had been helpful for carpooling connections and public alternatives, such as the Lakes Region bus. The Lakes Region Bus travels from Casco to Portland, and takes approximately 45 minutes. The Lakes Region Bus runs early enough in the morning to get students to Baxter at the start of school. Additionally, there is a punch card for discounts for students (less than \$2 per trip). The bus stop for the Lakes Region bus stop is only 0.25 mile away from this student’s house.

A question was raised whether there is another community bus starting in Freeport and ending in Portland. A parent thought that this bus would possibly start in the Fall of 2015.

The board and the administrators thanked the parents for the feedback and comments, noting that the school had been working on transportation throughout the summer, and was trying to balance the ridership on the bus lines to meet the needs of families and to stay within the budget. The work done now will help with transportation this year, but will also prepare the school to work together in coming years as enrollment shifts again and bus routes adjust to new numbers and geographical distribution. The entire Baxter community needs to take opportunities to make it work – carpooling, utilizing other community buses, seeking donated bikes. Going forward, the Exit 80 stop in Lewiston will be included in the regular Baxter bus route one from Monday, September 15. This change should help most if not all families for the duration of this year.

The revised bus routes planned for Monday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, are as follows:  
Bus 1 – Lewiston Exit 80 – Topsham – Freeport – Yarmouth - Baxter Academy  
Bus 2 – Gorham – Wind – Gray – Falmouth - Baxter Academy

Parents asked specific questions about the routes, and Kelli Pryor said there are still some details to work out with the bus company, but the revised routes will be starting on Monday (9/15/14). Baxter will continue to review and investigate all of the ways the school can work together to keep transportation smooth. For example, one of the buses may eventually go out to Marginal Way each morning to pick up commuters (students and staff) at the Park & Ride.

Michele proposed the possibility of a Flex Friday project in which students work to get a Lewiston/Auburn public bus to Portland. It would require work in and around logistics, advocacy, politics, cultural mindfulness and outreach. Allison Crean Davis noted that in other public schools, there are departments devoted to this [transportation] and suggested Baxter might consider a working group that can work on this – even when transportation is going well – to stay abreast of predicting and preparing for the school's transportation needs. Michele had suggested bringing in a parent advisory group to assist with this and to be able to plan for the upcoming years. Parents in attendance thought that a transportation committee with parent representatives distributed over the catchment area would be a great idea.

Allison left the meeting at 6:30 pm. She thanked the parents for coming and their help in problem solving.

Kelli asked the parents if they felt the board and the administrators had addressed everything. One parent thanked the board for all the work and for responding to their needs. Another thanked the board for the cooperation and hard work.

The board then moved to the Chair's report:  
Kelli reported that the final Charter Commission (CC) report has been distributed. This report is the culmination of the CC visit on June 12<sup>th</sup> during which a commission team

reviewed the school's performance indicators and evaluated its performance against its contractual commitments. The report gives commendations and recommendations. (See here on the website).

Board will set up opportunities for the current board to meet two new board candidates. The goal is to vote on new board members at the October or November meetings.

Michele gave an update on the Renovations and Facilities. The security system has been added to the basement. The school passed its certificate of occupation inspection last week.

This week, epoxy is being applied to the floors on Monday through Wednesday. Thursday and Friday, the crew will be completing final details, such as drop ceilings, and will be cleaning. Students and faculty will occupy the space on Monday, September 15<sup>th</sup>.

There was a question regarding the date of the first fire drill. Michele responded that it will be performed once everyone is occupying all the regular classrooms.

Peter Montano gave the financial report.

Baxter's first financial audit was two weeks ago. Auditors are still working on the report, but Peter does not anticipate any surprises. Baxter should have audit results in the next few weeks (hopefully by the next board meeting). Baxter finished the fiscal year with a good cash balance.

Michele updated the board about the billing for sending districts. The guidelines for district billing are different from last year, and Baxter is seeking clarification on which date to use for determining Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 invoices. There was a meeting at the state level today to clarify.

Kelli opened the meeting for public discussion.

Peter Morrison and Peter Montano thanked all parents for coming and taking the opportunity to send their child to Baxter. There was no other public discussion.

Peter Morrison made a motion to adjourn at 6:50 pm. Ruth Dean seconded, all board members approved.