

## Ledyard Charter School Board of Directors

### Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 8, 2023 | 5:00 P.M. | Ledyard Charter School

*This meeting was conducted via Zoom. The authority to conduct a public meeting in this manner was granted by Governor Sununu's 12th Executive Order issued on March 23, 2020.*

#### 1. Call to order and introductions

The meeting was called to order at 5:09 P.M.

Present: Lucretia Witte, Bethany Solomon, Wendy Kozak, Tom Puleo, Amie Bettle, Patrick Darley, Jim Leavitt

Via Zoom: Ben Beisswenger, Jonathan Masland

Absent: Ivy Schweitzer, Mike Harris, Justin Campbell, Aubrie Hetzel

A quorum was present.

#### 2. Public input

There was no public input.

#### 3. Consent agenda

Approve the [minutes from 2.8.23](#)

Motion by Bethany Solomon, seconded by Tom Puleo, and approved unanimously.

#### 4. [Executive Director's Report](#)

Wendy provided the report and the following are some highlights of the report shared during the meeting:

- LCS currently has 46 students as one was expelled based on the zero tolerance policy and will be replaced with one or two new students who have applied.
- LCS held their first dance which was a huge success which lends confidence for LCS to hold a prom for the seniors in the future.
- CCBA is attended daily and memberships are available for the remainder of the year and hopefully will carry into next year as well.
- 5 sophomores were accepted into HACTC, the highest number ever in an increasingly competitive program.
- The upstairs, non-rental space is being used for some classes allowing for more space.
- Engineering students are investigating city planning and having a bridge building competition.
- The commercial kitchen is complete, licensed and able to provide hot meals twice a day in coordination with the New Hampshire Food Bank.
- 3 new academic instructors are hired for the remainder of the school year.
- The Couch Foundation contribution of \$25,000 will go toward the kitchen remodel which cost \$35,000.
- Regarding donations: Wendy will hold a meeting with Bethany to discuss investment in a donor database.

- Wendy has been able to increase the hours of both the Fundraising Consultant and the Bookkeeper to assist as much as possible in maintaining accurate record keeping.

### **Federal Grant Audit**

- The DOE was alerted to a lack of documentation for some salaries reported in 2019-21. The DOE notified Wendy that any documentation that cannot be provided will need to be repaid. The anticipated cost is about \$50-60,000.
- LCS may need to acquire an additional line of credit to cover the cost of the DOE repayment.
- Lucretia stated that Wendy has been in nearly constant contact with the board chair regarding the issue verifying absolute transparency.
- Wendy stated that the problematic documentation is related to the former director who requested grants for an Academic Coach of which only one grant was legitimate, yet was submitted thrice in order to obtain additional funds. Wendy believes that this was not for nefarious purposes, LCS needed the funds but the former director was not accurate or creative in the submission of the request. Therefore, LCS is required to pay back the grant funds provided and which were not used for the purpose it was requested for.
- Lucretia stated that this is a financial situation that just has to be dealt with. There will be more solvency over the summer. Good records must be kept going forward to avoid this kind of problem again, which Wendy is doing.
- The DOE wants to do yet another audit for 2021-22.

### **5. Audit Update**

*As the audit was already discussed by Wendy and Mike Harris was not present, we moved forward on the agenda but inserted here are the notes from Mike Harris provided via email prior to the meeting for discussion:*

- The FY 22 audit was received this week and I believe that Wendy will send it to board members along with her director's report. It reports that Ledyard operated in the FY22 fiscal year at a deficit of about \$70,000. That is probably not a surprise insofar as covid grants ceased that year and we incurred the expenses of owning and operating the building. The audit is not easy reading. I would appreciate any comments by anyone who does understand it more readily, and I could be prepared for a more thorough discussion at the April board meeting, perhaps in the company of the main auditor.
- Wendy has also reported that the special audit of our federal grants demanded by the NHDOE continues. She anticipates that we will have to repay at least \$50,000 and perhaps as much as \$30,000 more. That will be difficult but is possible. Preparation of our response and options probably need to await further word on the audit.

### **6. Executive Director Performance Evaluation**

Lucretia asked if anyone was requesting a non-public session but was declined.

Lucretia Witte stated that the faculty, staff and board members were all invited to complete a survey used to conduct the analysis for determining the ED Performance Evaluation. The results of the survey were provided by Lucretia via email. Bethany stated that the process was highly transparent in all regards. Wendy Kozak performed very highly and is recommended for renewal.

Bethany Solomon made a motion to renew the contract, Tom Puleo seconded and approval was unanimous.

## **7. Finance Topics for this year**

### **Rental Space Update**

Ben Beisswenger provided the following updates regarding the rental space:

- We have confirmed with Moseley and associates
- We have documents ready to sign
- We would like to start the lease at \$2,466/month (\$16.50/sqft)

Ben suggested that if needed the utilities could be offered as included in the rent.

Bethany asked if this rate is reasonable for the area and Ben responded that according to the realtor that yes, it is reasonable.

- I'm working with Cam Brown to see if he will send "leads" even if he isn't our agent

Lucretia brought up the idea of turning the space into a student-run thrift store. It would need to clear \$2500/month to be doable and still provide the income required to cover expenses. Beth suggested high-end items would be required to make this possible. Tom Puleo suggested he may have an interested tenant and Johnathan Masland suggested a pop-up shop as a test to find out if it would be feasible. All agreed that finding a paying tenant was optimal and should be sought at this time. Therefore, Lucretia provided Ben the authorization to sign the contract with the realtor from Moseley and Assoc.

*The following are notes provided by Mike Harris, via email and prior to the meeting, on topics open for discussion:*

#### **Contribution to Staff Retirement Funds**

The board has overseen the creation of individual retirement funds for every current staff member, and it has made contributions of 3% of their respective salaries in each of the past two years. The agreement has been that the board will vote on the contribution and the percentage in June of each year and that the contributions will be dependent on the overall fiscal status of the school as well as the fiscal outcome of the concluding year. The total contribution each year has been about \$8,000.

Lucretia stated during the meeting that the contribution to the staff retirement funds is typically 3% of their respective salaries. This will be voted on at the end of the school year.

#### **Cash and Cash Flow Projection**

We currently hold \$120,000 in cash because the NH tuition payment of \$94,000 was received on Wednesday. The cash flow projection, however, is down to about \$10,000 for the end of June. It has dropped a bit because of the payment for several non-budgeted expenses in February, e.g. the kitchen.

## **Tuition Agreements with Sending Towns**

Justin Campbell was unavailable for the board meeting today so he will be reporting on this on a future date.

## **8. Presentation of the Proposed Budget**

The proposed budget was sent out via email by Wendy Kozak on March 3, 2023.

Total Revenue from tuition, federal grants, donations and credit card rewards is \$739,886.

Total Expenses amount to \$700,951.

- Wendy stated that she recently conducted the annual staff evaluations and concluded that each member will receive the usual annual 2% increase and should additionally receive a 3% cost of living increase.
- Jonathan Masland suggested a 5% cost of living increase and Bethany Solomon indicated that LCS needs to pay back the DOE. Lucretia agreed and stated that Wendy can run the numbers to find out if a higher cost of living increase or an end of year bonus would be possible. She asked the faculty present for their views.
- Patrick Darley stated that he is willing to forego an increase if the expense would be too high but, of course, would appreciate an increase. He feels he is speaking for the rest of the staff in saying their dedication to the cause of LCS and the students outweighs financial incentives. Jim Leavitt agreed.
- Jonathan Masland asked if there is a possibility of attaining another Mascoma loan to cover the salaries and expenses. Lucretia said she would speak to Mike about this.
- Agreement was unanimous that the current budget would be approved so contracts could be signed with the expectation that Wendy will research an adjustment in cost of living increase could be made via salary or through bonuses and reviewed in April or May 2023.

*Comments from Treasurer Mike Harris provided via email prior to the meeting*

Wendy has prepared a budget, I have reviewed it, and she will send it to board members. It includes expenses of \$686,000 and an anticipated surplus of about \$40,000. Staff salaries include the small step increases of the pay grid plus 3% COLA increases that Wendy was asked to input. There are no major new programs or expenses. Although it includes a final surplus, it does not include payments on the Haynes loan or for the federal grants matter. I suggest that the budget does essentially work in great part because we have reduced staffing to include only one administrator.

Motion to approve budget by Tom Puleo, seconded by Bethany Solomon and approved unanimously.

## **9. Presentation of the Faculty/Staff Evaluation Protocol -- Wendy Kozak**

A non-public session was not requested.

Lucretia asked Wendy how the faculty and staff are evaluated. Wendy stated the following methods were used:

- A separate rubric for each position.
- Day-to-day observations.

- Evaluation of teachers included examination of their planning, preparation and curriculum, variety used in teaching, enthusiasm, management of the classroom, and how they approached one-on-one student advising.
- Individual meetings with staff members.
- Evaluation of goals.

## **10. Fundraising Report**

- Bethany Solomon provided the fundraising report. She indicated that foundations are hit-or-miss and locating individuals as donors is more effective.
- We need to create a donor database, which she said she will discuss with Wendy.
- She hopes to engage community members to put into the database.
- She would like to find local organizations aligned with philanthropy such as the Lions Club and Greek organizations at the University.
- These organizations could sponsor a fundraiser or put the word out about LCS.
- She stated that personal connections are ideal so that shared values can be determined.
- She said her goals include getting the database up and running and hold two conversations with Wendy about this.
- Patrick Darley contributed that he was involved in Greek life on campus and can reach out to his contacts, but Bethany recommends going to the Greek life board instead and move on to contacts after they provide approval. Patrick also suggested the Rotary Club and the American Legion. Jonathan Masland suggested the Upper Valley Business Alliance.
- Tom stated that Greek organizations are also good at providing charity in the form of labor. He also requested tips on how to talk to individuals about becoming private donors. Bethany agreed to assist.
- Bethany stated she will not be able to attend the April board meeting and she is happy to provide coaching so improvements can be made in fundraising for the fall.

**At this point in the meeting the zoom feed inadvertently ended and the attendees available via video were no longer present. Therefore, a quorum was not sustained and the meeting had to be adjourned.**

## **11. Adjournment**

Next meeting: 5pm on April 12, 2023, Via Zoom

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 P.M.

*Minutes submitted by Amie Bettie, Secretary*