

Ledyard Charter School Board of Directors

Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 11, 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 5:01 P.M.

Present: Justin Campbell, Lucretia Witte, Mike Harris, Ivy Schweitzer, Jonathan Masland, Ben Beisswenger, Tom Puleo, Wendy Kozak, and Patrick Darley

Absent: Amie Bettel, Aubrie Hetzel, and Bethany Solomon

A quorum was present.

2. Public input

There was no public input.

3. Consent agenda

Approve the minutes from [12.14.2022](#)

Motion by Mike Harris. Seconded by Tom Puleo, and approved unanimously.

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

Please read the Executive Director's report and share comments/feedback with the board and/or the ED via email. In order to provide lunch for the students LCS spent more money but that was reimbursed. They want us to deliver food at lunch pre-prepared/catered. They have been getting party platters from the grocery store so it could be reimbursed. Only 20 kids ate the meals.

5. Financial Reports

Update from Mike Harris:

- Mascoma Bank Checking: \$33,500. Payroll for January is paid, so the checking account balance should last until the middle of February.
- \$15,000 will be owed when the kitchen work is completed.
- No money is due on the line of credit.
- Money Market account: \$26,000
- USDA Escrow Account: \$4,000
- NH state tuition check \$92,000 expected in late February or early March.
- The cash flow projection for the end of December projects a June 30 balance of about \$13,000. That projection is made without accounting for the balance due on the kitchen work.

The audit is due and going a bit slow. Mike Harris is working to get Bob Haines to sign off what is owed on the loan. He's been elusive, but Mike is meeting with him tomorrow and it will be finished in a few weeks.

New issue: Federal funds

A letter was received regarding the insufficiency of our documentation during 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-22. In 2019-20, LCS received \$60,491 in federal grant funds. In 2020-21, LCS received \$73,484 in federal grant funds. In 2021-22, LCS received \$45,676 in federal grant funds. In total, LCS received \$179,651 in federal grant funds during the time period being audited. These years have completed reports for every grant expense reimbursed, however current LCS staff are unsure if we will find the necessary documentation to back up these reports. Preliminary research shows that at least some of these reports do not have sufficient documentation on file. We have made small payments. A new bookkeeper is necessary in addition to rebuilding the kitchen. Regardless, a special audit is to be conducted. Of greater concern is the confrontational tone of the state administrator towards LCS. Going beyond means of compliance. Mike Harris spoke with the auditor and legal counsel and they are suspicious about the agenda targeting Charter schools. Eric Rowley will write a letter to Wendy to agree to conduct the audit. He disagrees with the level of the audit the State is requiring. Barry Schuster is prepared to summon assistance if needed. This bears watching as it's a serious matter but not yet worrisome.

- Auditors found \$1,498 lacking proper documentation during a preliminary audit of 2021-22 grant reporting so they decided to do a wider audit of time prior to Wendy moving into her current position.
- Disruptions to the cash flow could result and/or they may receive state funds belatedly due to the audit.
- Jonathan asked if there is a risk that we broke the law and Mike stated that there is enough concern in the tone of the State Administrator to feel threatened, which is why he is retaining legal assistance.
- Justin Campbell provided the backstory as follows: the NH Department of Education was determined by the Federal government to not be performing their bookkeeping adequately. This is why the state is tightening standards. Charter schools receive public money which irks some people, so this could potentially be the result of a political agenda. He is confident that we have cleaned up the bookkeeping.
- Jonathan asked if there is a risk that it was not handled properly and Justin indicated that we are straying into unknown territory here and they may want to have a non-public session.
- Jonathan suggests that we should spend some time internally to preemptively look at requirements.

6. Fundraising Reports

Lucretia stated that Bethany is traveling so she and Wendy presented the fundraising report. Their next step is following up with donors who contributed and outreach to those who haven't made a gift yet. Wendy stated that Jalaine Stanton has taken over the larger donors, like Dorothy Bryne. Patrick suggests follow-up with parents of students for donations. Lucretia indicated she would bring that back to the committee.

Update from Jalaine, the LCS Grantwriter:

- Wendy is handling the appeal information this year so I can focus my efforts on foundation funding.
- We have received a small award from Mascoma Bank for \$2,500.

- We have been selected as a 2023 Pennies for Change recipient. With this award, LCS will receive 20% of all Pennies for Change donations in April 2023.
- I submitted an application to the Cogswell Benevolent Trust for \$15,000. This is slightly more than what they typically give grant recipients. If we are chosen, I expect an award from \$5,000 to \$10,000.
- I also submitted an LOI (Letter of Intent) to the Cowles Charitable Trust. Our LOI was accepted, and we were invited to apply. I requested an award of \$20,000, and we should be hearing these results in January.
- I have completed applications to the New Hampshire Electric Co-Op for \$7,500 and the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation for \$15,000. Unfortunately, I do not believe we will hear anything until the spring.
- Sky Ranch Foundation has also accepted our LOI and has invited us to apply for their grant. The complete application is due January 31st, but awards are not announced until summer. I was hired a little too late to apply to foundations for their winter cycle. I have numerous foundations on my list to apply for their spring cycle. Most of these applications are due in March for a possible award in April.
- I have communicated with Dorothy Byrne of the Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation. Wendy explained to me that she was previously a big supporter of LCS. I am working on developing a new relationship with her. She did invite me to send her a new information packet. She expressed to me that I would hear from her after the holidays.
- Since I am new to the LCS team, I have been working to develop new funding relationships. Many of the foundations I am looking at have never heard of LCS. Since we are brand new to them, submitting applications for a “lower” amount is safer; that way, we can prove ourselves with reporting and project completion. In my experience, many funders will give more after some trust is developed.

7. Governance Committee Report

Justin Campbell stated that there is not much to update at this point. He will have 3 first-read policies to share next time.

8. Education Committee Report

Tom Puleo provided the Education Committee report. He thanked Amie for organizing. We met yesterday to add focus to the committee. He wishes to put the “mission” back into discussion. He looked at the mission statement and will propose some minor changes and will post it for feedback.

Wendy suggested that there are three areas to work on:

1. Amie: Website clean-up and revision
2. Ivy: connections at Dartmouth and suggests a partnership (library, classes, theater, museum).
3. Tom: health care aspect to propose for next year’s orientation to get parents more involved. Sign kids up for healthcare if they don’t already have it. Have a representative from Medicaid present or provide materials for enrollment. Parents have a negative relationship with the medical system. Tom asked if bylaws say what our involvement could be with school? Conflicts of interest? Justin Campbell

responded that the school where he works did something regarding healthcare and it has grown and flourished. A barrier was transportation, this should be considered. A School Nurse would facilitate transportation and build great connections. Mike stated that this was an admirable agenda and he is very impressed.

9. Update on Lease of the Upstairs Space - Ben Beisswenger

[Proposal for Upstairs Rental Space](#) | [Lease Proposal LCS November 2022](#)

Ben Beisswenger provided the update regarding the lease. The Objective is to get the right person in that space. Several items need to be handled:

1. Find a professional realtor: Cam Brown, Chip Brown, or one of the potential tenants, Megan Mosley, is a real estate agent. He will write up his thoughts and make a recommendation.
2. The space for lease needs to be cleaned and made more attractive. He would be happy to put some money towards it.
3. Advertise the space on small business forums. Wendy noted that there is at least a dumpster's worth of stuff to throw out.

Additional remarks from Ben and others regarding the lease, the space and a realtor:

- Ben said that he will help with the clean up and Mike Harris agreed to support and help clean up the space as well.
- Jonathan asked if there were any plans about getting money back from Cam regarding a refund. Cam was paid \$5k but LCS did not get anything out of it and the money should be refunded. Ben will work on the refund. However, he noted that no money can be refunded by the Tegans.
- The lease does not require an official termination as the space was not occupied.
- Megan Mosely, our former prospective tenant and a local realtor offered to act as the realtor at no fee and Ben agreed to discuss this with her.
- When asked about the effect of the loss of the rental space income Mike Harris said that income was to be used for paying off the Bob Haines loan (\$30k/year) borrowed when the building was purchased. \$120k is currently owed with 3.5 years to pay it off (2025) but may now take longer. The interest rate is good at a fixed 7%.

10. Tuition Update

Justin stated that our increases are conservative, costs are low and we have not increased. He expects to have good news to share at the next meeting. Mike Harris stated that Mascoma and Lebanon are rounding upward. Wendy hopes to attract more Lebanon kids. Justin said that LCS is cheaper than anywhere else as an alternative for students. Lucretia noted a modest increase with maintaining quality and says we are lucky to have Justin's expertise.

- Tuition has never been raised for sending towns.

- Justin and Wendy have reviewed the numbers and feel that \$6,000 per student is a reasonable ask based on the cost of educating students. Currently, sending districts pay between \$0 and \$5,000 per student per year in tuition.
- Justin will be reaching out to our biggest sending districts, Lebanon, Mascoma and Hanover, to let them know that the tuition will be increasing.
- Once those districts are on board, Justin would reach out to our smaller sending districts. Finally, the information would be posted on our website.
- Going forward, we think tuition should increase every year, tied to inflation.

11. Executive Director Preliminary Evaluation

- Justin and I formulated an ED Performance Rubric based on Wendy's job description.
- We shared this rubric with the board for feedback.
- We then formulated the revised rubric into a survey, which we shared with staff and board members.
- We used the survey feedback plus our own experiences to understand Wendy's performance to date.
- We had a meeting scheduled with Wendy on 12/13 to provide a snapshot of the initial feedback, which we will reschedule for the New Year.
- Wendy's job renewal conversation will be held in February 2023.

Lucretia stated that our intention was to define a metric of success for Wendy's job description. We hope to gather input about her performance for more perspective. Our goal is to support her to be the best leader she can be. Board and staff are welcome to complete it and provide feedback.

Please complete the evaluation prior to February and Wendy's renewal next year.

Jonathan asked if we have already decided to make Wendy the permanent director and Justin said the evaluation would be completed first and decided in a non-public session.

12. Adjournment -- Justin Campbell

Next meeting: February 8, 2023 (via Zoom).

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 P.M.

Ivy Schweitzer took notes on behalf of the Secretary, Amie Bettle, who completed the submission of the minutes.