



MINUTES for the
Meeting of the Gateway Public Schools Board of Trustees
Wednesday, November 18th, 2020, 5:00 - 6:30 PM
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Board Members Present: Therese Arsenault, Beth Berliner, Allison Bhusri, Sapna Boze, Sara Byrne, Dan Carr, Elizabeth Colen, Katie Colley, Mark Felton, Sharon Gillenwater, Susan Masto, Harper Matheson, Sharon Olken, Molly Orner, Kevin Rafter, Laura Spivy, Dina To, Valerie Toler, Julie Wise

Board Members Excused: Cynthia Billops, Mary Plant-Thomas

Also present: Danielle Ciccarelli, Chad Foskhu, Chris Hero, Chanda Lockhart, Aaron Watson

Welcome and Announcements

Sharon Gillenwater welcomed trustees to the November meeting and began with announcements. She asked everyone to save the date of 12/9/20 at 5pm for the board virtual holiday toast and happy hour. She expressed thanks to Chad Foskuhl for all his work toward ensuring a clean audit, which the board will review later in the evening. Sharon also wished happy birthday to Valerie Toler and Mary Plant Thomas. After the Thanksgiving holiday, trustees should receive a letter summarizing their giving for the past year. The letter is designed to help trustees plan their giving for the rest of the school year.

Kevin Rafter asked trustees to send headshots to Chanda if they have not done so already. The committee has been talking about how to increase diversity and change how we have done things in the past. We would like the Gateway community, and the broader community, to get a better idea of who the board is, so we will put trustee photos on the website. There are some introductory materials about the board on the website which we are translating into Spanish. The committee will share messaging that you will be requested to share on your social media networks, especially LinkedIn. Chanda and Danielle Smith will help everyone with messaging. More to share in January.

Approval of Minutes from September 16, 2020

Sharon Gillenwater asked everyone to take a few minutes to review the minutes from October 21st, 2020 and note any changes. Mark Felton motioned to approve, and Therese Arsenault seconded the motion. The October minutes were approved, unanimously, without issue.

Public Forum

Sharon opened the floor for the public forum. No further discussions or motions were introduced.

Mission Moment - Mark Felton gave the mission moment, an anecdote that brings our mission to life. Mark has been part of the Gateway community for a long time as a board member, as the partner of a Gateway teacher, and as the dad of Gateway students. He spoke about reentering the Gateway Community as a dad when his son made the decision to return to Gateway after spending 9th grade at another school. His son expressed that Gateway has always honored him as a person, recognized his talents and challenged him; he realized that Gateway is the best place for him.

Executive Director's Report

Susan Masto gave the floor to Sharon Olken for the Executive Director's report. Sharon Olken started out by saying that she looked forward to reviewing her yearly 20/21 objectives with the board and expressed her

appreciation to Aaron, Chris and Chanda for all their efforts toward these objectives and with COVID planning and implementation. It really is a team effort. Sharon is grateful for Aaron and the work he is doing in his new role as Director of Schools and Partnerships; this allows her time to work on her goals and objectives. One of the most impactful changes this year, made possible by Aaron's new role, is that Sharon has been freed up to do outreach.

Sharon presented her objectives to the board and asked everyone to share their thoughts on which objectives seem particularly important and to share ideas that she can keep in mind as she prioritizes her work for the year. Trustees shared their thoughts and a discussion was held. Chanda mentioned that working toward equity and anti-racist work have always been at the heart of Gateway's mission, and this should be part of our communication with the community and stakeholders.

Sharon Olken gave the floor to Aaron and Chris, leaders of the Health and Safety Committee, for an update on navigating COVID-19.

Aaron began with an update on distance learning. Gateway received much feedback after last spring and has put into place the "2.0" model of distance learning. The schools increased synchronous class time which provides instruction and increases student engagement. Mondays at GHS and Fridays at GMS provide space and time for staff to plan and for students to get support. With this new model, students are able to get more individualized support and teachers have found that there is higher student engagement. As for challenges, distance learning is incredibly demanding and requires a lot more outreach to connect with students and families. There has been low engagement for some students, and it is harder to connect with some students, especially 6th and 9th graders new to Gateway.

Chris continued with an update on operational supports. We have been required to create health and safety plans for the district and the state. We have a closely monitored system for building access, and have received approval from the district to allow teachers to teach from school. We have procured PPE, installed signage all around the schools, and made building upgrades to prepare for return. To support employees, we have provided up to \$400 to upgrade staff home offices, and have supplied computer peripherals. We have been monitoring/coordinating with SFUSD, SFDPH CDE in preparation of the next phase, Phase 2, which would implement some in-person instruction.

Chris continued with the context and rationale for continuing distance learning. The context is what is going on in other SF schools, the SFDPH requirements, and upcoming cold and flu season, among other things. We communicate often with students and families to keep them updated on plans and developments.

Aaron gave background for why we are remaining in distance learning for now. There is a need to balance educational benefits with the benefits of being together at school. Right now, we are in a successful distance learning routine. Hybrid models bring sacrifices. We are a partner with SFUSD so what we do is largely influenced by what they are doing. For example, our facility belongs to the district and our specialists are employees of the district. We are also closely monitoring what our staff is ready for.

Chris went over how we may progress to Phase 2, and what it may look like. We have identified goals which emphasize targeted support for our most vulnerable students. We would like to offer small group activities to increase connection between students. We would also like to provide opportunities for interested staff to work in person with students.

Aaron said that, in order to do this safely, we are refining protocols and orienting staff. For example, students have begun working in the garden with Mr. Berthiaume. This has been a way to start small and learn from doing. We are looking at beginning targeted non-instructional support and small group activities in January.

Chris reviewed the preparations and protocols for Phase 2, among which are COVID testing, facilities prep, identifying and assigning roles and Phase 2 responsibilities, filing a reopening application, training, receiving faculty input and concerns.

Trustees had the opportunity to ask questions. From the discussion, trustees learned that the phased reopening will be aligned between the two schools; Gateway has counselors and mental health interns who are working hard to support our students during this time; Gateway has some extra funding for costs associated with reopening and precautions, and there are areas of cost reduction related to having our facilities closed. Gateway has been communicating with our greater charter network to learn from others' experiences with reopening.

Sharon Olken thanked Chris and Aaron for their presentation, and said she is grateful that Gateway has a stellar team to lead us through the challenges presented by Covid-19. Sharon then spoke with trustees about the Learning Policy Institute Report, *Teaching for Powerful Learning, Lessons From Gateway Public Schools* By Channa M. Cook-Harvey, Lisa Flook, Emily Efland, and Linda Darling-Hammond. The case study is a follow-up to a 2018 Learning Policy Institute report detailing how schools can foster achievement for all students, in particular those who need support overcoming stress and trauma. Gateway Middle and High were selected to be part of the study because they exemplify these practices and have a commensurate track record of student success. The 150 page report, of dense academic research, is being broadcast widely. Sharon shared the executive summary.

Development Update

Chanda shared her screen for the Development Report. She reviewed the luncheon income; we are ahead of last year's final luncheon net. In terms of 2020-2021 fundraising to date, we are at 54% raised of our goal, again ahead of where we were last year. Our End-of-Year appeal just went out to external donors and families. As part of the "We are Gateway" messaging, we included great stories about our students to show we are still Gateway in spite of not being on campus. She gave a quick update on our e-newsletter, [The Gate](#).

Chanda said that this is her last board meeting of the year before she goes on family leave. The Interim Director of Development, Ryan Hazelton, will start December 7th, half-time, and he will be full time starting in January. We are currently doing a lot of the preparation for the second half of the year, and we have a solid plan for Ryan to work from. Sharon will be spearheading Major Donors. Trustees can help with thank you notes for the Great Gateway Gathering and Triviathon participants, and notes for the spring appeal. All help is appreciated.

Finance and Audit

Susan Mastro thanked Chad and Chris for all their work on the audit and gave the floor to Chris for the financial update. State Prop 15, which would have updated commercial property taxes and provided billions of additional funds for public education narrowly lost (it needed 50% to pass). At the local level, Prop J (the replacement measure for Prop G) did pass with over 70% support. It is not clear how charter schools will participate with Prop J, as the language is not specific. We are hopeful that states will be part of the next stimulus package that will likely be passed early in 2021, which could delay or prevent state funding cuts. Tax revenue has been trending much higher than expected the last 6 months which could also mean the school funding cash deferrals could end sooner than later.


Chris continued with the audit and began by acknowledging Chad, who, yet again, brought us through with a completely clean audit during very challenging conditions. He turned the floor over to Kevin Rafter for the review. Kevin explained that reviewing the audit is part of the board's fiduciary responsibility. The auditors collect and review data to provide an opinion as to whether Gateway's financials are accurate. "Accurate" means the statements don't contain material errors, misstatements, or fraud. Annual audits are required of charter schools, and are a two phase rigorous process. We passed the school and financial audit with flying colors. The auditors found no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies and no adjustments. Chris reviewed the statement of financial position and the statement of financial activities with the board.

Vote to approve the audit:

Valerie Toler motioned to approve the audit and the audit was approved unanimously, without issue.

Adjourn meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 6:53 pm.

Signed:  Date: 1/30/21
Sapna Boze, Board Secretary