

Scattergood Friends School
School Committee Meeting
Open Session Minutes
06 May, 2017

Mission Statement

Scattergood Friends School challenges students with a college-preparatory curriculum, farm experience, a shared work program, and community living in the spirit of Quaker faith.

Present: Dan Schlitt, Ruth Hampton (clerk), Karen Greenler, Bob Winchell, Roy Helm, Russ Leckband, Lael Gatewood, Gail Nelson, Phil Henderson, Bob Winkleblack, Lucy Marsh, Rebecca Bergus, Shana Wagner

Regrets: Katherine Young, George Bergus, Lucy Hansen, Kent Tjossem, Ginny Winsor

Staff Present: Thomas Weber, Gabriela Delgadillo, Tim Schulte, Jen Jensen, Alicia Taylor, Cindy Oliverius, Catherine From, Lisa Kofoed, Mark Quee, Amy Weber

Guests: Geery Howe

Friends settled into silent worship in a timely manner. The clerk read an opening quote:

“Upon arising on a day where there is much to be done, dress slowly.”

~ Chinese saying

We met two new staff members: Jen Jensen, the new head of Admissions who joins us from (most recently) Central College in Pella and Lisa Kofoed, of West Branch, who is working on accounts receivable and e-tapestry.

Geery Howe has been working with Thomas and Gabriela to create a presentation for our strategic plan that would move us forward in our “for purpose” (a positive reframing of “non-profit”) organization. Thomas presented the PowerPoint and presentation which reviewed:

Our mission statement

Our current strategic goals (increase enrollment and improve financial sustainability)

Four current initiatives

- 1) create and refine Farm Immersion Program
- 2) develop and implement branding and marketing
- 3) make residence life more inclusive
- 4) facilitate ongoing community input into first three initiatives.

New initiatives

- 1) envision, design and construct farm ed facility
- 2) add livestock to enhance hands-on engagement
- 3) refine and expand independent studies and career exploration
- 4) improve and update student residential facilities.

All this should be done within the context of nurturing a strong learning community in which to practice our core values, develop individual understanding, curiosity, open-mindedness, collaboration, and problem solving skills. The presentation was met with enthusiastic response.

Some of the discussion is as follows.

It was asked if we have data about whether the farm is an admissions draw. The answer is not yet. Kelsh Wilson urged us to put other values front and center. The farm is important, but the thing to put front and center is our identity as an alternative school.

We looked at the new website (not yet launched) and its front page focused on the living labs, the ability to be yourself, and the amazing adventures (trips, etc.) It should be ready to launch soon. Kelsh Wilson has generously helped us beyond the terms of their contract.

This led to discussion about the difference between finding quirky but functioning kids and troubled kids that Scattergood cannot adequately serve. We need to be careful not to overpromise what we can offer. Alicia deals with these inquiries carefully. We discussed the homeschool market and the international market, both of which offer opportunities for expansion.

We discussed the “college-prep” part of the mission statement and whether that appropriately reflected what is most important and whether it was necessary in the mission statement. No decision was made. We usually review the mission statement in September. Alicia reminded us that the “college prep” label helps to distinguish us from those institutions that could be considered “therapeutic schools.”

Geery had several comments. He noted that while branding is important, it’s crucial to not let the brand become the mission statement, but to keep focused on our values. Regarding the web site, he acknowledged the crucial nature of the web site but reminded us that the connectivity (of the web) must be replaced by real human connection once the student is on campus. He also mentioned that the human connection must include the parents, who need to believe in what they are paying for. Core values must be lived values.

Geery also suggested that our strategic goals may be too broad. How will we measure progress, over time, not as a one-time snapshot? We need benchmarks. The work we are doing now is really about the 2020-2021 academic year. It takes time to put these ideas into practice.

A new area of diversity we may wish to consider is neurodiversity, Geery suggested. Neurodiversity is considering those who have what have been considered “learning disabilities” or those who might be “on the autism spectrum” as part of a healthy human spectrum of thinking patterns, with different gifts and abilities to contribute.

He talked about the need to hold both the clarity of the facts (e.g. of our difficult financial situation) and the faith in our mission together, at the same time, in the same scope of vision.

Finally, he suggested that day students are an essential part of our niche market and reminded us that the job of the faculty and staff is to help students have meaningful days, which result in a meaningful high school experience.

Other thoughts and comments included the place of alumni development as the big picture of the Preschool-Baccalaureate degree educational system and the need to recognize that education is changing as teachers are not so much purveyors of knowledge as facilitators of thinking tools.

Post brunch, we continued with our regular business. To make time for our discussions the subcommittee reports were kept brief, at the urging of the clerk.

Minute: We approve the minutes of March 18, 2017.

Admissions: We are about where we were last year at this time, expecting around 33 students next year. We have good summer camp enrollments coming in. There are many Afghan students who have expressed interest in coming, but they mostly do not have the ability to pay. Ann Wright, with Veterans for Peace, visited the school and expressed interest in working on this potential opportunity.

Academic: The committee worked with Gabriela creating a synthesis of the work she's done this year to present at IYM annual session. She has had many successful programs, like the required study hall for struggling students and initiation of the ISACS self-study. She has been influenced by the work of Tony Wagner's "Skills for the 21st Century."

Farm: The printed report is sufficient.

Student and Community Life: All is well, nothing to add to the report.

Facilities: There is money left in the 16-17 capital budget. When the 17-18 budget is added to that, there is roughly \$40K available for capital projects. Next year's priorities that are emerging to include

- 1) paying off the remainder of the balance left on the current van and purchasing a new 11-person van
- 2) replacing the roof on the south part of the art building
- 3) installing an egress window in the West Dorm apartment or perhaps enlarging the apartment and
- 4) purchasing a smaller supplemental water boiler for summer use.

Minute: We approve the proposed list of priorities brought forward by the facilities subcommittee for the 2017-2018 capital budget.

Consultation and Finance: It is worth noting that the proposed budget of the last two years and the expenses were very accurate. (The exception is technology expenses, which were half recouped in savings this year alone.) We have a clear picture of expenditures, but giving is down, which results in a significant end of year loss. We have currently received \$227K of our budgeted \$389K in donations. We have taken out \$90K on a line of credit, \$15K of which will be repaid in May.

Minute: We approve of the operating statement of April 21, 2017.

Head Report: Beyond the printed report, Thomas wants to talk to yearly meeting about the Diversity Leadership Conference, which was very inspiring. There will be more staff departures and hiring, but the details will come later. The planned 12 hrs/wk of mental health coverage from United Action for Youth will be a significant benefit to the school. We discussed the requirements for the staffing of the health office.

We proceeded into closed session.

Submitted by Karen Greenler, acting recording clerk

Next Meetings: July 25