

Scattergood Friends School  
School Committee Meeting  
Open Session Minutes - 14 March 2020

**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:** Laël Gatewood, Charlie Johnson, Bob Winkleblack, Lucy Marsh, Rebecca Bergus, Roy Helm (acting clerk), Kent Tjossem, Debbie Galusha, Ann Robinson, Tom Wahl, Alex Lippitt, Karen Greenler

**Regrets:** Bob Winchell, Dan Schlitt, Ruth Hampton (clerk)

**Staff Present:** Thomas Weber, Amy Weber

Friends settled into silent worship in a timely manner. The clerk read a message:

*Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared. -Buddha*

**MINUTE: We approve the operating statement of January 18, 2020.**

**MINUTE: We approve the minutes, open and closed, of January 18, 2020.**

We discussed the situation of Ruth's father, Roy Hampton. We were glad to learn that he is doing better than yesterday, recovering from sepsis. We also heard about the wedding of Thomas and Amy's daughter, which was a joyous occasion.

The acting clerk asked that we let the clerk know about our intentions for next year. Do we intend to stay on School Committee? Are we content with our sub-committee assignment? For Yearly Meeting positions, the YM Nominating Committee will fill vacancies, but we are encouraged to suggest to the clerk any names that occur to us. We have needs for members with business and legal backgrounds. Also needed are those who can forge connections with new constituencies and partnerships to serve on the Development sub-committee, and those with skills in communications and marketing.

**Spiritual and Community Life** – Lucy and Sonja spoke. As the report indicates, the community is doing well. The concerns around Covid 19 are paramount right now.

**Farm** – Tom and Mark spoke. Mark has adapted some budget request lines to more accurately reflect costs, but otherwise things are rather quiet. Mark is working with a grant that will allow Scattergood to plant more fruit and nut trees.

**Facilities** – Kent and Matt spoke; the report stands.

**Admissions** - Rebecca and Dilek spoke; the report stands. Thomas added that the budget's increase from \$30K to \$60K has enabled new projects and there is hope that next year's HS student body could be in the low 30's, while the MS enrollment is expected to be around 10 students.

**Academic** – Charlie, Lael, and Sam spoke. Beyond the report, they discussed the ISACS material on Covid 19. They also discussed possible integration points in the middle school and high school curriculum, with that of the farm program and individual projects. There was discussion of the possible need for a second adult to be present with the MS program as well as if the toilet availability was adequate. Both Thomas and Charlie believe that the program as outlined will be well within community standards for these concerns; the topics will be considered.

Thomas talked about a current idea that the MS students take a very active role in the livestock management on the farm, with daily care, pregnancy checks, etc. Dana is very interested in shepherding this program and it would not only provide a wonderful learning lab, but also give the MS students an unique opportunity to give back to the community with their labor.

**Development** – The subcommittee has not met. Kendall’s report is strong and she is working on language for a calling campaign script. It was noted that the increased proposed budget for visitation is critical for successful development.

**Curriculum and Finance** – Charlie, Ruth, Karen, Thomas and Kim met. They discussed the operating budget and the current cash flow. The school has not yet used any of the line of credit, but that will be necessary later this month. There is an increase in the current year’s expenditures in admissions and professional services, due to the cost of a full audit and unexpected legal fees to help the school align with current labor standards. We are expecting to finish the year about \$100K in the red. A bequest of about \$50K has been received. The HOS, clerk, and Development Director met to discuss how best to use these funds and it was decided that about \$10K would go to admissions and the remaining \$40K would provide seed money for a campaign for the sprinkler system and dorm updates.

**MINUTE: We approve the operating statement of March 14, 2020.**

**HR** – The data from the Head performance study showed a slight decline in performance from past years. Thomas noted that he has not been able to work at the level of previous years and we noted that one year is not indicative of performance over the many years Thomas has been head. Much appreciation for Thomas’ work was expressed. He has led the school ably and lovingly and we shall miss him very much.

**Head of School** – The ‘20-‘21 proposed budget is an early rough draft. Kim started the process in December asking the administrative team to think expansively about what their programs could really use. This draft budget is the result before the trimming process begins. Sonja has advocated for aggregating several activities budgets under a Dean of Student’s budget that can be more carefully managed. The administrative team will now work through various scenarios with different enrollment/tuition income. The proposed budget that is brought to the committee for approval in May will be far more conservative than this draft. There may be need of an interim conference call with Consultation and Finance or with the full committee to discuss the various options.

Thomas reported that the usual student discontent of winter does not seem to have materialized, with all continuing students wanting to return. (One student may not be invited back due to mental health concerns.) But the healthy attitude bodes well for retention. The goal is to replace the five graduating seniors with 15 new students.

There was discussion about other revenue streams and about the effect of the market downturn. The summer program is another stream, and though the program appears to be shaping up quite well, the revenue it might produce is not significant in terms of the whole budget. On the other hand, the market downturn could affect the funding that comes from outside sources, like the Measey Foundation.

Middle School and summer staffing: The middle school plan is a bit gangly and awkward, but it is coming along and has adequate support from the Iowa City community to move forward. There are 10 firm commitments now and fresh calls are still coming in. It’s a high-quality group split between full-paying students and those with considerable scholarship need.

Thomas is working with Sam to restructure staffing assignments to harness the strengths of current staff. The school is still looking for a math teacher but encouraged generally about next year’s staffing.

Kaitlyn Savage is in charge of the summer program and has been doing conservancy programs with kids for some time. She seems capable and is reinvigorating and relaunching the program. She is working closely with Dana Foster and Karen Huff. Promotion is vigorous and ahead of last year.

Sam, Jessica, Sonja, Harold, and Thomas have formed a Covid 19 response team. They have been working diligently to keep abreast of the current advice and thinking regarding this fast-moving pandemic. NAIS and ISACS are providing helpful resources and schools are sharing ideas and tools. At this point, the plan is to reopen after spring break on 3/23, but with an option for students who do not wish to return to use online and distance ed resources.

(Note: Since the School Committee meeting, the Iowa Governor urged all students to close until mid-April. Scattergood will remain closed after break until April 19, using online options for learning.)

Staff has been asked to reconsider travels and consider changing plans. Thomas will be driving Amy to her new position in Seattle, but will stop short of Seattle itself, turning around and flying back from Spokane. He intends to get tested upon his return. One idea floated was to ask everyone in the community to put together a spring break journal, listing the places they've been and events they attended, to allow tracking of possible vectors. There are immune compromised individuals on campus, as well as Alicia being pregnant, so this concern is being taken very seriously. It is noted that Scattergood itself is rather well isolated, if the disease is not brought back by those who leave for spring break. Still, sanitizer stations are being set up in many places, including getting into the van and before signing back in to campus.

It was noted that there are legal obligations to consider, as well as financial ones, whether one keeps the school open or if one closes it. Prepare for the worst-case scenario is sound advice and the committee will consider various quarantine and isolation options. Thomas offered that it would be ideal for the administration to work in concert with the School Committee if closing becomes a serious option, but we agreed that he ultimately holds the responsibility for this decision. If possible, he'll contact the clerk or other members of the committee.

**Head Search** - George reported that we have had 23 applicants, 10 of whom merited double phone interviews. Of this group, 6 withdrew due to salary/benefits and 2 are only seeking interim positions. The remaining two have been brought to campus. Colly Bell is a head of school in Virginia and John Zimmerman is the Dean of Students at Princeton Friends School. There is a third potential interviewee who has not been able to commit to a visit. The results of the visits were not yet compiled but would be reported to the committee soon. It was mentioned that we didn't want to wait to extend an offer if we had someone we wanted, as that person might take another position in the meanwhile. There was also a brief suggestion that an interim Head of School might be able to help the school move forward, while extending the timeline for finding a permanent head.

There was discussion about the offer by Mara Strickler to revamp the library and archives. Lael agreed to follow up on this item.

**MINUTE: We appreciate Mara Strickler's bringing forward a concern for the state of our archives and library and urge the formation of a working group to bring forward a proposal to address these concerns.**

Next steps: We will reconvene via Zoom on Friday, 3/22 at 10:00 to review the Head Search report and Covid 19 updates and whether it is wise to extend spring break. The body is comfortable with this, and is content to allow decisions to be made, even without a quorum, if necessary. Roy and Karen will work on a self-evaluation for the May meeting.

"Life is an incredible page-turner." -Thomas Weber

The clerk adjourned the meeting without closed session.

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Greenler, Recording Clerk