

Scattergood Friends School Committee Meeting

Open Minutes 21 January 2023

Conducted via Zoom

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.

Members Present: Roy Helm (assistant and acting clerk), Laël Gatewood, Kris Hilgendorf, Katie Jacoby, Nancy Jordan, Alex Lippitt, Eric Stakland, Kent Tjossem, Matthew Gillespie, David Wilcox, Karen Greenler, George Bergus, Aaron Woolfson

Staff Present: Sonja Spondheim, Matt Gauder, Sam Taylor, Ethan Huelskamp, Mark Blackman, Kim Jones, John Zimmerman, Jamie Newton

Regrets: Ruth Hampton (clerk), Linda Corbin-Pardee

We opened with a period of silence. The Acting (Assistant) Clerk, Roy Helm, shared the following message:

Squirrels are common animals which hold a great deal of significance within a number of traditions. When we see squirrels, it is an opportunity to appreciate their virtues and learn from the wisdom that they have to share with us. Squirrel symbolism is tied to energy and balance. Squirrels are uniquely capable of applying their energy to both hard work and care-free fun. If you see squirrels often, it may be a sign that you need to relax and take life less seriously. Alternatively, it can be a warning against procrastination. Squirrels know that fun must come after the work is done.
~ Garth C. Clifford

MINUTE: We approve the minutes of the 5 November, 2022 meeting.

MINUTE APPROVED BY EMAIL: We approve the Gift Committee's recommendation that we allocate the Autenrieth Estate gift as follows: Of the \$789,000, \$700,000 will go towards the Comprehensive Campaign as the campaign's first major gift. \$80,000 to be held in reserve until the end of the fiscal year with up to \$15,000 of that possibly being applied during the remainder of the current fiscal year for marketing purposes. And \$9,000 dedicated to staff appreciation in the form of a \$300 bonus to each full-time staff member (or portion thereof to part time employees) with the remainder going to staff gatherings such as the end of semester party or the retreat day lunch catering.

Committee Reports

Academic Report: The subcommittee believes the academics are in good shape. ISACS' self-study is offering opportunity for self-reflection. The school's student experiential learning provides rich opportunities for the whole community. Question regarding math scores: Sam shared that scores have improved from last year, that math scores are not low, but lower than reading/writing which is to be

expected as it plays to the strengths of our students and the school. Also, there are plans to tighten the math curriculum and clean up the scope and sequence of that curriculum.

Development Report: We are nearing a transition point in comprehensive Campaign; the feasibility study almost ready, should be in place for reunion this summer. All SC members, alum or not, should consider themselves invited to the reunion. John and Ethan are about to engage in some major asks, with Ethan doing a lot of travelling in the coming semester. While we are asked by ISACS not to change the Mission Statement during the self-study and visit year, it is time to augment the mission statement to highlight the life preparation that Scattergood offers, beyond academic preparation. It's currently more generic that might be useful and will be addressed after the ISACS study.

Admissions Report: Increased funding offers new opportunities. We will ramp up marketing and admissions work. Question: What can we on SC say about these new opportunities? What is our messaging? We can use the "Scattergood is Growing" tagline. It is ok to share with individual friends, but not publicize our new income streams until we have the budgeting plan in place. We can say we have received a generous gift and increased Measey Foundation money, which can help us find the right students. Ethan is focusing on diversity in recruiting, as well as looking for more Quaker students and reaching out into farming communities. Mark and Ethan are formulating a plan to train alumni to attend some education fairs.

Facilities Report: The subcommittee needs some guidance about timing and sequencing of work described in the report. It would be helpful to get an assistant for Matt. What needs to happen before solar work commences? Answers will be coming soon and we should be able to move forward this summer.

Farm Report: Things seem in good shape. Mark's report can stand as written.

Spiritual and Community Life: Discussion in the subcommittee focused on two items. First, the slip system, a mechanism to help students learn about limits and consequences, sometimes seems to be more punitive than educational. Changes may be forthcoming; various options of accountability are being investigated. Second, the sub-committee discussed mental health support for students. About 1/3 students have individual therapists; many use telehealth. One student suggested that SC members come to campus to see how the community works. John would be happy to coordinate visitations with SC members either near a SC meeting or on volunteer days.

Head Report: Most staff is planning to return next year, which is wonderful. Overall, staff is feeling positive about the direction of the school.

Consultation and Finance: We have good cash reserves. The school is looking for new hybrid vehicle that will be more widely useable. The van is paid off. The position of Payroll Clerk has been posted. Kim is looking at various investment options so cash isn't sitting in regular account. Before the Measy news, we were doing well financially, but the Measy money really solidifies this status. The relief is palpable.

Financial News: A number of things developing lately. The Measy Trust is a fund, managed by Haverford College, that supports Quaker schools around country. We have been getting about \$200k/year to date. They said they hoped to increase that and have adjusted the algorithm for disbursements. This year they sent us a check for \$590K, in addition to the year's traditional disbursement. We can count on that

\$600K being renewed annually. When the new letter comes out, Kim will share it with the SC, but the change should be permanent. The money needs to be used on students and student-facing projects, not capital expenditures.

State legislation is being fast tracked in Iowa to authorize widespread usage of vouchers for any student wishing to attend an in-state private or independent school. Students might receive \$8-10K that would otherwise go to their public school to spend on school of their choice. If this passes the legislature, and there is every reason to believe it will, then Scattergood becomes a more viable option for Iowa students. This is a morally complicated, since Scattergood supports public education, so we are not lobbying for the legislation, but should be ready to accept students and know how we will structure tuition if the law passes. John is very clear that he will work hard to maintain a good relationship of mutual support with West Branch Public Schools, and public schools in general. Also, it is important to carry on the tradition of refusing money that comes with intrusive requirements.

John has put together a first draft proposal for spending question from Measey, outlined in this Google Doc:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rc3lVlM7laDyc1zo3Wmn9I7590BcjuQPIF2UFIVuT0/edit>

Keeping income from the voucher program revenue neutral keeps us safe in the future, given possible changes in law that increases entanglements. It should also be made clear that the voucher program will help students, not the school. We discussed some early thoughts about how to integrate voucher money into the tuition structure. This will need more seasoning and consideration once the language of the legislation is finalized.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Greenler
Recording clerk