

Scattergood Friends School

School Committee Meeting Open Sessions Minutes 16 September 2023

Hybrid Meeting

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: Ruth Hampton (clerk) Roy Helm (assistant clerk), Monica Beals, George Bergus, Linda Corbin-Pardee, Kris Hilgendorf, Katie Jacoby, Alex Lippitt, Eric Stakland, Kent Tjossem, David Wilcox, Aaron Woolfson, Karen Greenler (recording clerk)

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

Regrets: Nancy Jordan, Matthew Gillespie,

The Clerk opened with the following:

"And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul" -John Muir

Welcome and Introduction to the School Committee meetings offered by the Clerk: Because we have deadlines and rules we cannot discuss items forever, although we still function as a Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Supporting the school is our main focus. If you need a decision or have a large topic for the discussion, please bring them to the clerk ahead of time. The clerk may remind us to stay on topic unless we deliberately choose to go off-topic. We all see parts of the truth and need to share this. Please ask for recognition to speak. We may have difficult discussions, so if one is upset, take some space, pay attention to your body, and maybe request a return to silence which helps us return to center. We hope to use these processes to bring our best selves to the meeting and to help the school.

MINUTE: We approve the minutes, open and closed, of the 25 July 2023 meeting.

MINUTE: We approved the SC membership of Monica Beals by email in August 2023.

MINUTE: We approve the slate of School Committee Sub-Committee members and officers as written.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Academic: We greeted Monica, focused on the Academic Report, and talked about what kinds of metrics would be used to evaluate annual goals. There was discussion about student retention from MS to HS and also about retention of teachers and staff. Correction: there are eight 8th graders, not nine.

Admissions: The change to an admission team makes it more complicated to find a meeting time! Jamie shared about one MS student who needed to be released. The number of inquiries for next year

is encouraging, and lots of appreciation was expressed for the marketing efforts. In looking at the pipeline, the team will seek to find out why students might be making choices other than Scattergood. If you have potential students in your meetings or communities, please pass names along to Jamie and Sam. The admissions team needs us on SC as feelers into the community. Tracking potential families is being done through a spreadsheet so all members of the admissions team have access to the information. Early admission numbers suggest that the team approach is paying off, though attention must be paid to burnout. The test will be: Can we roll out several admission letters in the spring and then pick up a couple of extra admissions in later spring and summer?

There was also a discussion of international students, who are down in numbers. Events of the last few years have disrupted international inquiries. Might we build a connection between Scattergood and U of Iowa? How do we get the international pipeline kickstarted and then maintain it? We all need to reach out to connections that we have. In the future, the HOS may visit various schools overseas. That work will need to be focused during the second half of the comprehensive campaign. The issue of student visas is critical/sensitive. It is driven by anomaly, and some effects are out of our control. Looking at meetings in other countries may provide a pipeline.

Development: Looked at follow-up from the reunion, noting alumni with whom committee members interacted and planning for follow-up. There is work to do on the annual campaign and the first major solicitation is underway, going out soon. School Committee members are encouraged to donate to the school in September, so we have 100% donations from SC, staff, and parents. This aids significantly in making donor asks. Contribute this month, it can be done online easily or one can become a sustainer, giving monthly. The reunion was well-organized and a lot of fun. Thanks to all who helped make it a success. Lots of alumni wanted to increase their involvement, which is good. (There were lots of compliments on food too!) Three to four years is the outlook for the next major reunion. Our newly forming alumni organization will work on that. Scattergood weekend seems to be more attractive to recent grads, while longer reunions may be more attractive to older cohorts

Spiritual and Community Life: The big news here is a new disciplinary system, which is intended to be student-guided (through the Dean's Advisory) and more restorative than punitive for daily infractions. There is a separate process for major rules violations. Furniture in the west dorm has been updated with furniture from Iowa Wesleyan, which is closing its doors. Seniors did a great job in leading much of orientation. The energy is very positive on campus.

Facilities: The committee went over the updates list from Eli and Matt. The gym roof is completed so we can proceed with the solar project, which has a lot of paperwork. Furniture in the west dorm is mostly done. Supports in science building are upcoming. Matt and Eli are trying to get some siding work done on the Instruction building; it needs replacing, especially on the south side. There has been difficulty in finding contractors for this medium-sized project. The current sub-contractor fell through and the contractor is working on a replacement. We would like to keep this contractor because of their relationships with subcontractors and their oversight of subcontractors' work. The siding is damaged, but nothing that seems to be dangerous to the integrity of the building. Insulation work would be rolled into the siding project which would help with wind and vapor barrier, and thus, energy costs. If it doesn't happen this fall, money will roll forward so it can be done next year.

Farm: The Subcommittee discussed concerns. One tractor has had work done, but the newer tractor has work still outstanding. Two farmers from Decorah will join the subcommittee as Associate Members and it will be good to get them down to school.

Consultation and Finance: Our short form shows positive numbers across the board, largely due to gifts. We have a bit more cash on hand. Meeting our monthly expenses, and having a regular, steady income is important. Families who full-pay at the beginning of the year are helpful but this cash influx will taper off in October—but by then Measey money should come in. Educational Savings Account or ESA money comes in during fall and spring, but not all in one chunk. Several families are taking advantage of the ESA opportunity. A cash flow squeeze is likely to happen in October/Nov before the Measey money arrives, then again in February/March. The amount of Measey money is still unclear. They will send a letter right before the payment. ESA reporting needs to be handled carefully because there is discontent within the Quaker and larger community about the politics of this program. We won't post names but we will post total numbers (about \$22,000 for this year in ESA monies.)

(Off-topic, but important) Did the reunion make or lose money for the school? We had more money come in than was spent, but the final reckoning isn't complete. If there's excess money it's designated money for future reunions. We may use those funds to help an alumni association get started, though an alum association should seek other sources of income. To consider: It might be best to have a firewall between the school and the alum organization because it allows the association to do some things that can't be done by the school but are a benefit to the school. This will be discussed in Development and in the fledgling alumni association meetings.

Quotes are coming from the bank for a loan for the solar project. We are looking for a new attorney since our previous one has retired. Beyond the school lawyer on retainer, we also use an Iowa lawyer who knows Iowa law, as well as the PEO which looks at our paperwork. We must get the '22-'23 audit completed, and we are looking at a new firm for that. After disruptions in the last few years, we are back on track with auditing, every 4 years. (A full audit will happen next year.) We also need a shorter compilation audit annually. The full audit costs about \$40K and the annual audit costs about \$20K.

We broke for Brunch and photos.

HOS: The energy on campus is great, with things instituted in previous years now bearing fruit. There is a resurgence of school pride, which is important. The low enrollment and COVID years undermined pride. This year's seniors were heavily impacted by COVID-19, as will likely be the case for some years, in different manifestations, given where students were developmentally in those pandemic years.

We have had visitors, including teachers, and an Americorps volunteer who uses stories to build bridges across groups to increase our ability to see each other. Working with the MS has been great for John, especially as he now has a son in his acting class. Theatre is a time sink for John, but a worthy one, as it connects him with students in an important way.

Nine students are using ESAs; five are new. Some returning families were able to qualify. We expect this number to grow, especially with families on the financial "bubble" who might be hesitant to ask for Financial Aid. Because it goes to a third-party payment organization, it allows the school to maintain its integrity regarding some of the less desirable state laws. It's a mixed bag; it's problematic in terms of harm to the public school system, but beneficial to many of our students, since many state laws could be harmful to them. We want to make our Scattergood education available to as many appropriate students as possible, the ESA accounts allow us to welcome more students to campus. Rather than engage in political lobbying about state educational policy, Scattergood intends to continue doing what we do best, at least for now.

Handbook updates are in progress; Leo retired and we are shopping for a new lawyer, but the handbook needs to be reviewed ASAP. Stay tuned.

Solar panels: When we were exploring this, we initially thought we'd go with installer-based financing culminating in a "lease to own" option. We've had advice that it might be better to take out a short-term mortgage. Savings from energy costs would be larger than the mortgage payments, so we should be able to pay the loan off in a reasonable time, hopefully, sooner than the mortgage terms, maybe over 5-6 years after the capital campaign is complete. The new well and AC updates must be paid for upfront; whereas the solar system could be paid a bit more slowly. There are no specifics yet.

MINUTE: The school intends to take on a bank loan for a solar array that will be of a length that is shorter than our expected energy cost payback. We allow Consultation and Finance subcommittee and Facilities subcommittee to approve the plans and they will then bring the proposal to the full SC by email for final approval.

Do we need to expand our grid, to accommodate the solar system? We don't want to overbuild the grid, but want to build to anticipated need. We can look at AC ductwork or geothermal, and other different features, which have higher costs initially, but quicker payback. Once we decide on a path, then the system can be scaled effectively. We should check on the stability of the regulatory environment with the proper state regulatory agency to ensure that net metering is as consistent as possible. Our priority for this year is completing the solar tech and loan documents. After that is the sprinkler project (mandated) and well project (tied to sprinklers) and the third priority is bathrooms and AC. Lots of big projects are underway. The good news is that we are still within the timeline that Dwight Schumm worked out with us, including construction starting summer of '24. This will require an extension from the fire marshal, which we think will be given, due to the status of the documentation and preparation and noting that our capital campaign couldn't start realistically during COVID-19. We may include the farm in a solar expansion, but not at this time. Questions: Is placement on the gym roof adequately accessible? Can we include the farm's energy needs in our initial array, rather than selling excess energy back to Alliant?

MINUTE: We reaffirm the School's mission statement and non-discrimination statement.

The clerk transitioned us into closed session.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Greenler
Recording Clerk