

Scattergood Friends School
School Committee Meeting
Open Sessions Minutes 11 May 2024
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, Linda Corbin-Pardee, Kris Hilgendorf, Katie Jacoby, Alex Lippitt, Eric Stakland, Kent Tjossem, Aaron Woolfson, David Wilcox, Nancy Jordan, Karen Greenler

Staff Present: John Zimmerman, Sam Taylor, Sonja Spondheim, Matt Gauder, Mark Quee

Regrets: Matthew Gillespie, George Bergus

We opened *with a moment of silence and the Clerk shared the following:*

"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt." -Margaret Atwood

Minute: We accept the open minutes of March 16, 2024. (There were no closed minutes.)

Academic: Discussed retention, in particular the exceptional 8th to 9th grade retention. The May term topics are very interesting. There seems to be a solid application of ideas being put into practice academically and it's a joy to see this movement in the school and with the students as well. Teacher morale is also good: last year only one teacher left, and this year one teacher is going to grad school but staying in the dorm. Clearly, these things speak to the health of the school.

Development: Talked mostly of Comprehensive Campaign. Discussed a recent estate gift, which was considered by the Gift Acceptance Committee.

Minute: We approve the recommendation of the Gift Committee to use Toni Tripp-Reimer \$25,000 estate gift for the Comprehensive Campaign.

Development, cont.: The Steering committee for the Comprehensive Campaign has worked hard on the campaign's framework and estimates are now coming back. The new air conditioning system can use either splits (electric) or geothermal (non-electric). The latter qualifies for tax credits for any of the work that is attached to the geothermal (like wiring.) plus additional fundraising potential with geothermal. Geothermal appears to give greater energy savings, and is more ethical/educational.

Minute: We approve the Comprehensive Campaign's Steering Committee's recommendation of proceeding with the plans for a geothermal heating/cooling system for the campus. The next step of the process, a written design proposal, will go to C & F and then to the full School Committee for final approval.

Admissions: The subcommittee met without staff and discussed subcommittee restructuring. Middle School numbers: 12 contracts signed (4 returning, 8 new) 4 likely additional students for MS, for a probable total of 15 (16 is max). High School numbers: 27 solid HS returning and new students and 6 maybes for a total of 27-33. Combined total 39-48. Max HS number depends on boarding/day split and we are not near that number now. Currently, we are looking at a 40 max for HS in dorms, so we are growing at a doable pace.

Farm/Facilities: Blended Farm and Facilities subcommittees met, which worked well, bringing facilities up to speed on farm projects. We reviewed the Facilities Capital Upkeep Budget and greatly enjoyed this year's senior project.

Minute: We approve the 2024-2025 Facilities Capital Projects Budget.

Comprehensive Campaign contains 3 parts = 1) Annual fund \$250K per year x 3 years 2) Capital projects for \$2.5 million, 3) Hickory Grove initiative with a goal of 50 participants for estate planned giving.

Spiritual and Community Life: The main topic was subcommittee restructuring, which is discussed below.

Consultation and Finance: Solar Rebate was higher than expected, about \$200K which allows us to pay down a significant portion of the debt on that system. There would be approximately \$90 left on the loan.

Minute: We approve using the net rebate money from the installation of the solar system to pay down the debt on the installation of that system.

C&F contd: C&F plan to meet monthly for much of the year. They will work on an investment policy in June to be brought to full SC in July. The Focus program doesn't increase the overall budget appreciably. Staffing increases will bring small rise in costs, but healthcare costs are \$100K higher. The budget adds funds for alumni association (Friends of Scattergood) and for SC of \$2500 each, which will be set up separately by the Foundation, so that budgets can be carried over from year to year. It was suggested we reduce the Annual Fund goal in the future, as another Capital Campaign for staff housing will need to happen relatively soon.

Minute: We have reviewed the Operating Statement.

Minute: We approve the 2024-2025 Operating Budget.

For reference these are the 2024-25 Tuition Rates. There was no increase from the year before.

- *Middle School Day \$13,500*
- *High School Day 19,000*
- *High School Boarding \$37,000*
- *International \$42,000*

Minute; We approve the 2025-2027 Tuition proposal rates as outlined below:

2025-26

- **Middle School Day \$14,250**
- **High School Day \$19,500**
- **High School Boarding \$38,250**
- **International ---- freeze at \$42,000**

2026-27

- **Middle School Day \$15,000**
- **High School Day \$20,000**
- **HS Boarding \$39,500**
- **International --- revisit this**

Heads report: Both accreditations (ISACS and the FCE Membership Renewal Process) are completed. We were visited by Jane Fremon and Peter Gaines of FCE and had an informative and uplifting panel discussion with them.

Subcommittee restructuring proposal: School Committee's role is to look at the wider perspective and the longer range of time, both forward and back. We work on policy, governance, and finance. Operations are the purview of the administration and staff.

Spiritual and Community Life Subcommittee: The SCL subcommittee had concerns with the proposal and wants to keep the perspective of maintaining community life in their focus. We don't necessarily have a large role in community life, except as needed or requested. How do we make sure we aren't losing something important? There would be an added focus of maintaining/enhancing the relationship with the YM and SFS in any case.

Shifting focus isn't a comment on the past...it's not doing "better" but doing things differently, given current needs. FCE wants us to have a spiritual life committee, focused on both explicit and implicit Quaker values, being sure that we live up to our mission statement. Is there a place for the committee to consider community life issues that are not daily operating tasks? Is this part of community life a part of the school's spiritual life? Or is it necessary to make sure we articulate the need to support the school's community life concerns? Perhaps the proposed ad hoc committee on the relationship between IYMC and Scattergood (SAGE, below) works with the SCL committee, with the ad hoc committee looking at structure and systems, while the SCL would look at the impact of changes and ways to implement more connections with the school. There may be different sets of Associate members to work on the two factions of this subcommittee: Community Life support group with Sonja, and Spiritual Life group (also with Sonja) to connect the students with the YM. We want to not lose the focus on the school.

The SCL subcommittee will meet with Ruth and John and report back. There needs to be more discussion about how to stay present and support the school while staying in our governance lane. The changes are experimental and process-oriented at this point. They are not fixed until we declare them fixed and we change the handbook.

The Trustees' Subcommittee will help make the clerks' roles more manageable, as there needs to be more people involved in those tasks. It is more inward-looking but necessary to the livelihood of the School Committee. This subcommittee would focus on a combination of taking care of ourselves and connecting to the larger world.

Admissions and Academic Subcommittees: Can these be combined with a more strategic focus? How often does this group/these groups need to meet? There was concern about pausing the Academic subcommittee function since it provides oversight and support to the main function of the school. Admissions is different from other subcommittees because it is so integral to the financial health of the school. We need to distinguish what needs permission from SC and what parts of the Admissions work are just reporting: keeping School Committee in the loop. Policy changes come through SC, but the school's internal committee oversees admissions.

It would be good to have regular training on admissions/outreach and how to talk to prospective students and families. This could be part of the Trustees Subcommittee. Perhaps Admissions could meet 3 times a year? SC needs to remain aware of admissions because it has been the Achilles' heel of the school in recent years. Another option is that admissions reporting fold into special C & F meetings to which appropriate parties are invited. These could happen in the second half of the academic year, when admissions numbers are more relevant.

Restructuring is about expediency and better use of SC and staff time, and this needs to be kept in mind as we go through the process.

Structure and Governance Exploratory Committee (SAGE). This is the working name for an ad hoc committee to look at the business structure and formal relationship of the School and the YM, including legal, financial, governance, risk management issues, etc. The committee would also consider how we have these conversations, lovingly and openly, with the YM. This committee needs to include IYMC members, but it needn't be only IYMC. It will help to have a strong Spiritual Life Committee to help with this transition since there will be many questions about changing our current, long-standing structure.

Next steps on restructuring: Ruth and John will meet with SCL subcommittee and put together a proposal. Farm and Facilities will combine. We will set up a Trustees' subcommittee to oversee the work of SC. We will continue to consider the structure of Admissions and Academics subcommittees. Suggestion: The full SC has a check-in on academics each semester, with a reporting time from Sam and Jamie. Other information comes through the Head's Report. John and Jamie can meet with Ayana Dewer (associate member), then can Admissions be streamlined into C and F as part of their regular work? We have set up an afternoon session in July with IYMC to begin the SAGE conversation. John, Ruth and Roy will send out a proposal, we can converse by email and have something for approval in July. In May 2025 we revisit any changes to assess and evaluate.

Dates for this year's School Committee meeting: Jul 23 (Tues of IYMC), 2024.

2024-25 School Committee meeting dates:

- **September 14**
- **November 2**
- **January 18, 2025 --- Zoom only**
- **March 15 --- Zoom only**
- **May 10**
- **July 22 (Tuesday of YM annual session)**

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Greenler, Recording Clerk