

Scattergood Friends School
School Committee Meeting
Open Session Minutes
17 January 2026

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: Aaron Woolfson, Katie Jacoby, Roy Helm (acting clerk), Alex Lippitt, George Bergus, Eric Stakland, Nancy Jordan, , David Wilcox, Monica Beals, Kristin Hilgendorf, Kent Tjossem, Linda Corbin-Pardee

Regrets: Ruth Hampton

Staff Present: Matt Gauder, Sam Taylor, John Zimmerman, Sonja Sponheim

Friends settled into silent worship in a timely manner. The clerk shared with us:

“Be a bush if you can’t be a tree. If you can’t be a highway, just be a trail. If you can’t be a sun, be a star. For it isn’t by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are.”

~Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Minute: We approve the minutes of our meeting on November 8, 2025.

Reports

Development

Admissions and advancement numbers are included in the Development report, since Sam is doing all of these. Admission numbers increased over last year. Focus continues on screening of student needs prior to admissions as this leads to less students leaving. John and Sonja are more proactive, when needed, in asking students to leave before problems intensify, which affects the whole community. Stability and balance of community is important to continue to attract more families. Sam is sending student contracts for next year.

Facilities & Farm Work is progressing and repairs are being made.

Planning for major systems includes adding a/c to the kitchen and dining room. There will be a walking tour of campus an opportunity to discuss strategic and master planning on Friday afternoon of Annual Sessions.

There has been some miscommunication in receiving a farm report from Mark and John will clarify this with him.

Consultation & Finance

Strategic planning/SWOT/Mission Statement --- May meeting will be with Chris Searle in person!

Aaron would like to speak with a point person on C&F to discuss options for accounting/bookkeeping and a forensic analysis. It was suggested that Linda, Chris Searle, Aaron, John, Erik and Alex will coordinate a meeting as soon as possible.

G&A offers accounting modules and John will be gathering information on options. Appreciation was shared for the SC’s breadth of experience to help shepherd this process. C&F will share Chris Searle’s summary of the C&F’s meeting re: numbers.

The position description for business manager is posted <https://www.scattergood.org/about/employment/>. It will need strategic recruiting. If a person is hired without experience/little experience, they will need mentoring but with that, they will become a valuable employee. Finding the right fit for the SG community is key. John will prepare a recruitment letter to send.

Minute: The School Committee directs the HOS to take steps to secure the school's financial data and records by acquiring and utilizing a Scattergood owned Quickbooks Online account.

ISACS Webinars We briefly discussed ISACS webinars, members are encouraged to take advantage of these.

Head of School

Students, staff, and the whole community are stepping up.

Financials – our books are not conducive to what we need, and how we think about the budget. A forensic analysis of the current books, the transition from desk-based to online books and prior years is needed to get an accurate picture of our financial position.

January staff retreat: SWOT analysis with John

Threats: AI; competitors with clearer missions (e.g. ICON); political realities; shrinking middle class; shifting focus on day students; too much reliance on endowments; and, staff overworking.

Opportunities: Our ability to teach about the ethical use of technology; focus program; resilience and flexibility; sound dampening from freeway; become leaders of sustainability; ability to collaborate with other schools and organizations, an ability to define ourselves.

The current mission statement is the “what” we are and led to asking what is the “why.” The Staff suggested, “We believe the world needs a place of safety, kindness, and respect that inspires the growth of students and staff to be more human and to be able to live in community with each other and the land/natural world.”

Next steps: The Strategic Plan ad hoc and Campus Strategic Plan ad hoc Committees are beginning their work. The goal is to have a first draft of the broad parameters of what we want to do at the May SC meeting. The committees will begin work with the Iowa students soon. The goal is to have a detailed final proposal in 2027.

Chris Searle will be in Iowa for the week prior to and including the May SC meeting.

John will be networking to gain insight/advice/visioning/resources as we move forward with the strategic plans. John believes this is an opportunity to move forward now and will invigorate the community.

The acting clerk moved the meeting into closed session.

Katie Jacoby, recording clerk

Next Meetings:

- March 14 (*Zoom-online only*)
- May 9 - with Chris Searle on campus!
- Saturday, July 18 (*Zoom-online only*)
- *Yearly Meeting annual session dates are July 22–26, 2026*
 - *Maybe SAGE hosts a session about Scattergood on Thursday of Yearly Meeting*
 - *Scattergood Reports are read morning session of Friday, July 24*

Proposed SC Dates for 2026-27 ---- Up for approval in March

- *September 19, 2026 (home game, sorry)*
- *November 7*
- *January 16 or 23 (online only) 2027*
- *March 20 (online only)*
- *May 8*
- **July TBD** --- *Saturday the 17 (online only), OR Tuesday the 20 (hybrid)*