

Board of Governors
Sobriety High School
Saturday, April 11, 2009
8:30 AM- 4:30 PM
Minutes

Members Present: Stan Hacker, Larry Schmidt, Chad Benesh, Paul McGlynn, Chet Johnson,
Bruce Santerre, Bob Doffing, Alan Braun
Staff: Mary Popelka, Barb Wornson, Debbie Bolton, Julie Wettstein, Judi Hanson, Dan Ondich,
Joe Covert, Hannah Cushing, Matt Nupen
Alliance Parents: Ingrid, Kim; West Parents: Joe, Jeanne, John
Guests: Sandy Schmidt, School Business Solutions

Welcome

Stan Hacker

Brief History

Barb Wornson

- Mission
- Assumptions – little or no financial support from the Foundation (letter from Curt Knutson), begin next year's budget with a lower ADM than projected this year, holdback is increased to at least 20% (it will affect our cashflow), no change in lease aid at this time.

Guided Conversation

- Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members
 - Board should define itself. We've adopted the Carver Model, to some degree, for middle of the road decisions and it empowers staff to do what they need to do.
 - The mission statement should define what does this organization do for whom and at what cost, but our mission statement doesn't define at what cost. We should keep that in the forefront. Board governs on behalf of those not seated at the table.
- Values driving the future of Sobriety High
 - Academics versus recovery - we need to focus on both, devise a model that keeps that in mind that we are doing both. We are not a treatment center and we aren't just a school. We need to balance academics with recovery in mind.
- Staff Concerns:
 - How do we create something that sustains good staff? When we go to work and feel we are generally providing for these students, but the less effective we are because we are spread thin is where we hit the wall. Am I hurting or helping?
 - We've already decreased staff. Are we truly promoting a good model with 60 students, is our quality going to change? Can we sustain our mission with less staff and less money? When we are spread so thin and if we can't reach students it hurts. And it weighs on you wondering if you have a job next year.
 - We have been in a financial crisis forever. This isn't a good model financially. Teachers feel used and abused and every year is a big crisis and the model won't change at all. We cut staff and remaining teachers pick up slack. The model isn't working. If I don't see radical change I won't feel satisfied because the financial model doesn't work at this time. We have to completely change what we are doing.
 - Our decisions stay the same because our livelihood is on the line. The board is reluctant to make decisions.
 - It would be nice to know this is what we are working on and this is what needs to be done. What are the absolutes and what is secondary and define that. It would be nice to have a definition, academics first supported by recovery or recovery supported by academics.

- People are having to act against their own best interest and you are around people that you have to work with too. We make adjustments instead of radical change. We look at reality and don't like it so we say lets choose this.
- There's been a conventional idea that we get our funding by the state, they give us lump sum per student and that doesn't get bigger, and that is to educate the kid based on standards.
- We need to do both academics and recovery, that is our mission, don't get bogged down with which comes first.
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- Parent Concerns:
 - It's a transition school for some, some need more recovery and some need more academics. There are concerns for losing good staff. How does the board hear and feel what we are saying?
 - What happened to get us to where we are today?
 - My daughter said that the stability has gone down, the best year was the first year, today its not like it was 3 years ago. We want what we had.
 - We came with mentality that we are concerned for those kids that are still in need of recovery, even when kids graduate we are going to stick around. I think recovery is what we are all about and academics is second. Students can't be successful in academics without recovery first. We need to make up our minds, what are we focusing on.
 - Marketing – why aren't we out there, you are a hidden secret. I found out from a child my son had known in middle school that was attending Sobriety High. I didn't find out from county; people don't know we exist. Where are those people in recovery that are willing to support us?
- Board Concerns:
 - Reality is that the Foundation has given over a million in the last 4 years, this year we are getting zero. Hard to provide services when staff is running thin.
 - What is role of Foundation? Funds aren't there. We can't commit to helping with any funds. The Foundation is striving to raise money. Its not that Foundation doesn't want to give, but they just don't have any money.
 - This is the last step for us to separate from the board.
 - The board should be supporting the Foundation in getting parents to the luncheon and supporting raising money. Before it was in the back of our mind that the Foundation would bail us out so we didn't make big changes, big change is scary and risky. The board really does try to see what is best for the organization as a whole, but the board doesn't make changes because it is tough.
 - Four different schools evolved in four different ways. We have four different models and we need one model.
- Sandy: what is the model, student to staff ratio, define a model and then decide how to fund that model.

Assumptions affecting our future

Sandy Schmidt

- Senate has 20% holdback from cash flow with no reduction in state aid. The house is looking at state reduction in state aid. The idea is that stimulus money is offsetting that, although stimulus money isn't helping charter schools except in special ed. Qcomp is still being talked about. We should apply as quickly as possible. Fund balance was \$120,000 and some is designated funds. We need to increase fund balance and we are going to hold our own, but we need to do better than hold our own.

Continuum of Program Possibilities

- Four Campuses – Two staff groups to rotate between schools (Stan's Proposal)
 - Two assumptions: onsite management is very important; having an overall director at University Ave is not effective. The best person to run the program is not a recovery person.
 - How do we get students to after school programs?
 - We need to hire people at lower salaries. We need a whole new salary structure.
 - Staff should be consistent and safe, when staff are bouncing back and forth it doesn't create

consistency.

- Good start for us, but does it have to be this radical? We provide consistency now.
- One Campus (Barb's Proposal)
 - Concern about transportation with getting on train or bus, what would schedule look like?
 - We need to look at our student population and where they are coming from and Minneapolis may not be the location for us.
 - Parents don't want to expose our students to public transportation.
 - Realistically can we get 200 students to one site?
 - I don't know that we can vote on Wednesday, what are the cost savings with staffing, what are costs of starting new model and what the savings are in new model?
 - If we visualize this model is it workable for next year. We could build a new facility and lease it back.
- Let's meet later than Wednesday to think about things and think about costing it out. At the meeting on Wednesday we'll have open discussion and set date to have a vote.
- Sandy will price out our models for the board meetings.
- We need to know what our budget is next year. Perhaps freeze salaries – if we move forward as is we are going to run negative \$80,000.
- We aren't maintaining at current level with curriculum and supplies and facilities.

Stakeholder groups to consider and generate Ideas

- Parents
 - Liked two campus model for short term. Recommend student board has student focus, advisory board has school focus. What is plan for recruiting students, what will full time director be doing in the summer, what summer school this year would look like, could it be test model for single campus, instead of one school end up with 2 schools (East & West).
- Teachers
 - (Stan's Model) - Reducing consistency of staff. With only 2 recovery people will it cover recovery and crisis and disservice to students. Program director might be able to help, modest cost savings, step towards consolidating campuses, does it offer \$185,000 in savings, like work coordinator positions and positive intervention in schools, not jack of all trades, separation of duties.
 - (Barb's Model) – Asked who here would like to be at one school and everyone agreed, organizational structure for students and staff, probably not 200 kids, organizational great sense, how do we retain current population in one setting, (shuttling??), easier to do outreach to treatment centers with one school, everything would be easier to do, greater access to electives and core curriculum and can communicate with each other, house would work very well and has been used in other schools and gave good energy, check into specialty charter schools to see what their enrollment is to decide, cutting 40% staff and saving 60% staff so we are retaining good teachers, location will be incredibly important for safety issue and be in safe neighborhood so can't leave school.
 - General issues – to retain quality teachers and you need to pay them, create turnover of staff for lower salary staff, layoffs and rehiring would create negative vibe, turnover staff results in lower ADM and inexperienced staff causes disorganization, grant writers, endowment, charging fees for stuff.
- Recovery staff
 - All like one school model for same exact reasons as teachers, have we really looked at turning over every stone for money and keep looking for it, we need to keep our staff, be really clear what everyone's role is to create structure
- Board
 - One campus next year is not viable option but it is a long range thing to look at, close one campus, what would fund balance look like and amount of money that would need to be reduced and/or generating revenue and give to Barb and faculty and dollar amount in reduction in expense or revenue and arrives at fund balance that is comfortable to the board.

Group Core Ideas

- Tuition fees or service commitment in monthly installments, close one campus – 2 would do Stan's plan and one stays the same, least disruption to students, staff, parents, long goal is 2 campuses, 4 classes doesn't save teachers time for collaboration and prep, keep 6 six academic staff – 3 per school - one semester rotation – 90 minute blocks – switch teaching staff and keep recovery director at school for consistency. Recovery director would be assistant principle. Executive director would spend a week at a campus. Look at whose lease is up first and looking at consistency and patterns of campuses to determine which one closes. Work experience person wouldn't be full-time. Parents are really concerned with the 3 hours of instructional time.
- We would like to have long term goal of one campus, keep multiple options to get to that point. One option would be to go to two campuses where there is space (Maplewood and Alliance). Check out the leases. Look carefully at technology situation because we are paying a lot of money, make sure online is staffed appropriately to use as marketing tool. We need to be fully staffed in 4 core areas. Look at bonding through CDA. Look at job corp model. Executive Director will bring recommendations from the staff to the board, get board to commit to a long-term goal in 5 years or sooner and then fill in the gaps after. Don't put a bandaid on the problem. There is still work with the online courses.
- How do we retain and recruit students, utilize parents more, charge fee, should have our own grant writer, staff is doable, we support moving to one campus, but don't have staff movement, board has to decide chain of command, who is hiring and who is firing, who is evaluating, when are we issuing contracts for next year and needs to take place soon. No one knows who is making final call. What is contract length for recovery directors? Work on improving communications within organization. We need to figure out if we are cutting staff or cutting salaries – decide which route we are going to go.
- Long term and short term. Short term, cost out two options, fiscal year 2011 for long term. Next year, 4 site – 2 campus team to see if that's cost worthy. Cost out closing one campus for school with lease up – depending on when lease is up. Long term, 2 sites with Barb's staffing model for FY 2011. What is cost of shuttle run one way – to maybe one or 2 sites if we shut down a campus.

Summary and closure

One Campus – long term strategy; 5 year plan, multiple options to get there, suburban based, solves onsite license teacher, maintain I-tec, marketing and recruitment, shift of leadership from recovery to administrator, cost benefit analysis

Stan's Plan – transition to one school or long term option, without staff movement, scheduling, concrete implementation and how would that look, solves onsite license teacher, maintain I-tec, marketing and recruitment, shift of leadership from recovery to administrator, cost benefit analysis

Other Ideas – 2 campuses, 3 campuses, parent fee, grant writer, maintain I-tec, marketing and recruitment, HR process (priority, salary structure, layoffs, contracts, staff/student stability), consistent curriculum, Barb will present 3 models to the board with staffing contracts, communication across all campuses, come up with negative \$185,000

Barb will have discussion with staff regarding the 3 ideas and get feedback and ideas.

Adjournment