Meeting Minutes

Kids Unlimited Academy
A Public Charter School
Board Meeting

Date: Jan. 30, 2024

Time: 7:30 a.m.

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1. Preliminary

Call to Order: 7:38 a.m. by Chair Jani Hale

Determination of quorum: Lisa Hutchins, Ryan Bernard, Ignacio Sanchez, Pat Barry, Jani Hale, Martha Ibarra

Absent: Greg Aldridge, Julia McFadden

Guests:

Staff: Tom Cole, Cass Weiland, Lindsay Ochs, Emmanuel Balan, Sarah Lemon

Approval of agenda (additions/corrections): approved

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2. Review and approval of minutes: approved in November for SIA grant requirements

3. Public comment: none

4. Student representative report: (3-5 min.) none

5. Business update — Cass Weiland/Pat Barry:

KDP presented the annual audit and stated there were no indications the school was not "in substantial compliance." KDP's intern, Eva Shipley, did advise the Board to be aware of the controls in place for financial reporting. The Board had no questions for her. She commented on the "great job to Cass and the team." Ben Cohn cautioned if KUA has technology contracts that they have to be represented as assets and liabilities, which can be more work. He also explained that if KUA were to expend more than $750,000 in federal funds, that triggers a separate compliance audit. There is no effect in the current year, however, because those expenditures were under the umbrella of the Medford School District, whose responsibility it is to be compliant. but it is appropriate to be aware going forward.

There was a reduction in revenue this year that needs to be addressed, said Pat Barry. With fewer students this school year, KUA had to give money back, which affected its cash position. Pat said the Board should wait to approve the budget while Cass is reconciling it. The Board finance committee met and asked questions. Pat invited members to join the finance committee.

6. KU Executive Director report — Tom Cole: Tom's report opened with a video of the "Whoville" family night in December. "It was a big deal … It built on a lot of the work that the admin group has been doing to engage families … I felt like this event was a massive reflection of what Kids Unlimited Academy is really about."

Tom wanted to talk about staffing and prefaced his report with the decision to close the White City campus. KUA was not able to grow physically despite the $25 million commitment from a donor. It was the first time that this investment had been pledged toward the historically overlooked area. Tom singled out County Administrator Danny Jordan and the Eagle Point School District for their inaction. The donor went with a real estate agent to the school district with plans that went beyond KUA's 250 student enrollment. The school district declined KU's plan to bring students from White City into Medford. The KUA White City Board voted this month to dissolve its relationship with the Eagle Point School District. A very committed group of people who have been on the White City School Board — parents, KU alumni — could be available to join the KUA Board. Many already are known to KUA Board members and work in health care, finance and other areas of leadership. KUA offered the White City students the opportunity to join the Medford waiting list. All of the parents who were at the informational meeting, about half total, registered that night for KUA Medford.

KU is working to restructure its systems around employment by trying to develop higher compensation and lift the expectations of what the job requires. He referenced teacher compensation elsewhere in the state, which creates "knowns" for KUA. "We have some amazing teachers and some amazing IAs," said Tom. But there is unreliability, like there is with other districts. Lindsay Ochs and Emmanuel Balan found some really inspiring candidates for PE teachers. KU also is looking at longtime teachers, in addition to new teachers. "Our hope is we can create a scale that is truly more competitive and perhaps more enticing for people who are perhaps looking for something different," said Tom. KU admin also is rewriting job descriptions to include communicating with parents as a priority.

Tom acknowledged the charter renegotiation with Medford school district for a five-year contract. KUA's ask is a 90% allocation and move away from the K-8 model to a K-5 model, which needs to be approved. KUA also is asking for special ed funds. Data indicates that special ed is at such a "dismal" place of productivity that it's actually "criminal," said Tom. There are three weeks at the start of the year when there is no service to special ed students at KUA because of the difference in Medford's contract, as well as other weeks when the district's calendar doesn't match KUA's. "There has been a definite wall that has gone up between the SPED department and KUA," said Jani Hale. She said she is hopeful that because KUA got Title I funds, it will also get SPED funds. "From the moment I got here, there was a SPED issue." It's "really blocked how we serve our kids." There has not been a consistent presence of SPED for longer than two years at KUA, said Tom. The aides that are appointed "babysit," Tom said. Principal Lindsay Ochs can see with the new classroom cameras that classrooms are dark when they should be serviced by Medford's SPED. We should be able to show parents that teachers are engaging students all day. Admin had some direct conversations with staff last week about their level of engagement and quality of their lesson plans.

Ryan Bernard clarified that KUA's compensation has already improved for teachers. Tom affirmed and said admin now is going to outline expectations more clearly. The school also will dismantle the hierarchy of teachers and IAs, which are expected in some grade levels to do the grunt work. "We've got to develop a culture where people are inclusive … and build a colleague system," said Tom. "If we need our teachers at these events, we build that into their contracts." Cass asked isn't it the hope to move away from the step model pay scale toward something based on merit? When KUA created steps, the system backfired, said Tom. Fred Holloway is key to devising incentives for showing up to work. "Other companies have this," said Tom. Ryan echoed that workforce issues are not unique to KUA. Cass pointed out that Oregon paid leave has compounded the issue. The job description is not just going to be classroom hours. The school needs

to do what's best for working families, said Tom. Martha Ibarra asked if the school has pay incentives for bilingual candidates. Cass said there is a step for that in the pay scale.

7. KUA Principal report — Lindsay Ochs: Principal Ochs explained the recent middle school consolidation into cohorts. There is a single math and science teacher. The former building sub is teaching ELA/humanities combo. The school called families to explain the change. Principal Ochs is working closely with both teachers and said she's really grateful for both. She also checks in with the students.

She shared some preliminary iReady data, significantly improved from fall, including huge growth in the early grades. The classroom camera footage also shows that kids are engaged. "This model has been to fill in holes." Cheryl Graham has been intentional in setting up good processes for state testing, even among grades that aren't testing yet. She emphasized that she tells teachers who naysay the new curriculum that they have to give it time.

Vice Principal Emmanuel Balan presented data on behavior referrals, showing a contrast between positive behavior checks since those were introduced in December and the problem behaviors that are now decreasing. "We're not playing whack-a-mole all day long," he said. Lindsay shared the pride of a student who has been consistently referred for behavior and finally got a positive check. Pat pointed out that behaviors feel unsafe at Oakdale. "This is their safe place," he said of KUA students. Jani commented that a synergy is happening between teachers, parents, behavior and test scores. "This is what these Board meetings are all about," she said.

8. Other business

Ryan prepared a report on how to fill Board vacancies. Some positions are coming to term soon, but the KUA White City Board potentially could be absorbed. The Board can grow up to 15 members, and there are no limits to the number of terms members can serve. Ryan recommended filling a governance committee to identify new Board members and have a list of potential candidates. He proposes that during the March meeting, one of the agenda items is discussing new potential members. "I think that it's really important as a Board, when you move forward with having conversations … you want to have a strong sense that you're going to invite that person onto the Board." At the end of the March meeting, the Board should be able to identify four great candidates, he said, and in April and May, Tom and Jani could set up meetings to feel out Board candidates. By June, which is scheduled in the bylaws, the Board could know who it's bringing on, a schedule that tracks with all the processes already in place. He clarified that the Board can bring new members on whenever it wants.

Lisa Hutchins pointed out that the White City Board members don't need such scrutiny. But Ryan and Jani agreed that they want to "honor the process." Pat asked if the White City Board should be invited. Tom said he hadn't already extended an invitation because it wouldn't be appropriate without formal approval from this Board, and he didn't want to take for granted that Board's desire to remain involved. KUA Academy White City has the ability to allocate its remaining resources from its charter school to Medford's. "It's totally transferable," said Tom, explaining how preschool will be consolidated at White City. Pat wanted to know what assets would stay there. Pat said the earlier the better for soliciting KUA White City Board members. Tom said let's target March. Jani is on the KUA White City Board, too. Jani closed by sharing some good news of KUA alumni, their college plans, acceptance letters and scholarship awards.

Consent agenda

None

9. Adjournment 9 a.m.

Next meeting, Feb. 27, 2024, 7:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Greg Aldridge, Secretary