

Meeting Minutes

Kids Unlimited Academy a public charter school Board meeting

Date: Nov. 28, 2023

Time: 7:30 a.m. (in person)

1. Preliminary

Call to order: 7:45 a.m. by Board Chair Jani Hale

Determination of quorum: Pat Barry, Ignacio Sanchez, Jani Hale, Greg Aldridge, Ryan Bernard

Absent: Martha Ibarra, Julia McFadden, Lisa Hutchins, Judy Farm

Guests:

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

Approval of agenda (additions/corrections):

2. Review and approval of minutes: approved as read unanimously

3. Public comment: none

4. Student representative report: postponed until Jan. 30

5. Business update — Cass Weiland/Pat Barry: Not sure how the true-up will pencil out with the decrease in attendance. The auditor's report will come at the next meeting. SSA grant will have a positive variance of \$20,000. It's just over \$500,000, instead of just under as indicated in the budget. "Things are going as well as could be expected," said Board Treasurer Pat Barry.

Board Secretary Greg Aldrige moved for approval of the financial report. Board Member Ryan Bernard seconded. The Board unanimously approved the financial report.

6. KU Executive Director report — Tom Cole: Recognized that we are in the new building, and we're still continuing to reconcile the cost. When it was first forecast, it was pre-pandemic. The strategic plan called for growth in student attendance. "Cost changed dramatically, as did labor shortages ... This building was close to double (the cost originally forecast). We're now sort of strategizing internally about how to utilize it." Admin plans to have an open house in January for people who were part of it. The Corrico Foundation was the main supporter. "The foundation was very generous with it." Principal Lindsay Ochs every day is in a "war room, trying to move pieces all over." There is an attitude that it's less important to show up to work. There doesn't seem to be a shift in morality coming about commitment to work. "We do

have some amazing staff that shows up,” said Ochs. “This is not a Kids Unlimited Academy dilemma,” said Cole. It’s also a Medford School District dilemma. The Medford School District is almost willing to have an open-ended document that allows for flexibility. “Let’s have a working document ... It feels very different.” The Medford School District is losing kids — massively. It would be super irresponsible to grow to the size of the waiting list and the buildings because the school can’t be staffed. There is a very strong desire from a lot of the younger students who want to go to St. Mary’s. It’s worth brainstorming collaborations for kids who are motivated academically. “Those public options are really struggling right now.” Middle school students who went from KUA to Medford middle schools say it’s been a tough transition because of staffing issues and behaviors. Kids need an option for something other than public education. Board Member Bernard said “good for St. Mary’s but bad for society.” He said there have been a number of inquiries, particularly from kids who went to Oakdale.

Cole said the voucher system will be probably one of the last options for Oregon. Other states already have adopted it. But one of the stress points is for special education because it doesn’t necessarily serve those students. “Does a voucher system truly have a lens of equity for those kids.” Oregon likely will be one of the last states because of how unionized it is. It allows for schools to get rid of kids whose behavior doesn’t meet the standards. “There’s some things we do that are amazing.” He cited Cheryl Graham’s hovercraft project, also the theater productions, starring kids who started with limited English. He said there are some kids that are doing “exceptionally well.” Cole said the issue is staff that don’t have stamina and are “triggered.” There were several teachers who didn’t last a full month. “The other schools seem to be doing a lot worse ... Either you’re a bully or you’re not,” said Board Member Ignacio Sanchez, basing his experience on a student at St. Mary’s, a student at KUA and knowing other kids at Medford middle schools.

7. KUA Principal report — Lindsay Ochs: Principal Ochs said she noticed the teachers who didn’t last didn’t have good teaching mentors. She reported on a successful movie night this month. She said the “riveting” Site Council meeting featured Graham giving a third grade math lesson. She said she’d never heard so much laughing at a Site Council.

In second grade, about 70 percent of kids are well below grade level. So they’re piloting a “walk to read” program, where the kids are taught at their grade level. “The behavior has improved so much in those classes because the kids are getting what they need.” One of the teachers was a convert to the new reading curriculum after resisting it. “It’s so cool we’re pressing kids to do what they can do.” They have to give it two years for kids to catch up. “You have to teach this curriculum,” she said. It’s non-negotiable. “Kindergarten as a whole is really smooth and looking really awesome right now.” Since she replaced a kindergarten teacher who left, there are virtually no behavioral issues.

Principal Ochs recognized Angelo’s Pizza for donating a bunch of pizza boxes for a math project. KUA got the PEEK grant to get a new PE teacher. KUA gets PE every day.

8. Board Chair report — Jani Hale: Today’s agenda was approved by the state so the Board could vote on the SIA grant agreement. Prior to December, teachers were assured that problematic behaviors would be handled in the behavior room. When Hale arrived, she “flipped the switch” and hired people who believe that behaviors are about the relationship with teachers. She said teachers admitted they left last year because nothing was being done about behaviors. Parents developed the school responsibility contract.

"We have to choose hope in this situation," and then continue on faith. She acknowledged that Oregon held onto COVID restrictions longer than other states, and it caused society to unravel. She cited a lot of good hires in school leadership.

Extending the SIA grant agreement comes with \$1 million from the state over the 2023-2025 biennium.

The first step, said Board Chair Hale is to approve the SIA annual report for the 2022-2023 FYE:

Board Member Bernard moved to approve the 2022-2023 SIA annual report, Board Secretary Aldridge seconded and the annual report was approved unanimously.

Board Treasurer Barry moved to approve the SIA ODE grant agreement for 2023-24, and Board Member Bernard seconded. Barry asked if they could have some discussion, seeking clarification why the expiration date was in September next year. Cass Weiland clarified the grant agreement was for one year, and it has to be done again. Weiland said it's not ideal for the two documents to be approved in the same meeting.

Board Chair Hale called for a vote. The motion to approve the 2023-2024 ODE SIA grant agreement passed unanimously.

A few other bullet points from Board Chair Hale: She wants to create "engagement" with the Board. She and Cole are looking for a concrete commitment from Board members. "That's our No. 1 goal is to really solidify our membership on the Board." Board Member Judy Farm has expressed a desire to resign, said Cole. If White City is to dissolve, said Cole, there is a strong group of people who could find membership on this Board.

Board Chair Hale broached the calendar that she created and the intent to have an executive committee. The committee are the core members, and they can bounce ideas around not in a public session. For example, the committee could determine if the Board wants to increase the numbers of members, and then they can bring that back to the Board. Board Treasurer Barry said he'd rather start with an active, engaged group rather than "begging" people to be on the Board. Consistent engagement is what the organization needs. Board Chair Hale said there has been a lack of expectations, and those now need to be stated. Cole said he doesn't want to have people on the Board who had never set foot in the building. Members need to see the families and engage. "How do you know a good school doesn't already exist?"

Board Member Barry made a motion, Board Member Bernard seconded to approve the calendar of meetings and the motion to approve the calendar passed unanimously.

9. Other business: none

10. Adjournment 9 a.m.

Executive Meeting - Dec. 12 - noon - 1 p.m. - Conference Room

Next meeting Board Meeting: Dec. 26, 2023, 7:30 a.m. in person - Conference Room

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Greg Aldridge', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Greg Aldridge, Secretary