

*Great Oaks Bridgeport Monthly Board Meeting  
Wednesday, March 9th, 2022*

**Board Members Present:** Susan Briggs, Corey Sneed, Leticia Sepulveda, Christopher McMillan, Bob Carlson, Selena Morgan, Pamela Fraser-Abder, Diane Gordon

**Guests:**

**Board Members Absent:**

**GO-BPT Staff Present:** John Scalice, Latoya Hubbard, Ayanna Charles

**Foundation Members Present:** Ben Chan, Lauren Perkins

**Called to order at 5:21 pm by Susan Briggs**

**Review of Minutes from the February Meeting (Leticia Sepulveda)**

Leticia asked the board to review the February meeting minutes. A motion was requested to approve the February meeting minutes. The motion was moved by Bob, and seconded by Corey. Vote passed unanimously.

**Governance Committee Report - Susan Briggs**

Susan opened up her report by noting that the board has received a resignation letter from Tiana Verner and that she will no longer be serving on the board. Susan noted that in the DropBox that there is a self evaluation document to complete and to submit back to the board to be reviewed at the next board meeting. Susan stated that Ayanna will be circulating this self evaluation via email. Susan noted that this is something that was gone over with the board from Empire Charter Consultants.

Susan requested a motion to go into executive session to discuss a preliminary draft document regarding the evaluation/ evaluation process for the Executive Director. The motion was moved by Bob, and seconded by Leticia. Vote passed unanimously.

Susan requested a motion to move out of executive session and back into public session. The motion was moved by Corey, and seconded by Bob. Vote passed unanimously.

Susan requested a motion to approve the draft document relating to the evaluation/ evaluation process for the Executive Director that was presented in executive session. The motion was moved by Leticia, and seconded by Corey. Vote passed unanimously.

### **Executive Director's Report - John Scalice**

### **Head of High School Update - Christopher Pellegrino**

Chris opened up the High School by stating that GOBPT is close to wrapping up Trimester 2 while in the midst of college acceptance season. GOBPT is excited to see where our seniors are right now with 9 schools having offered acceptance to our students. Chris stated that he will be providing a more comprehensive look at the acceptances and where a lot of our students have landed launching the season to apply to other schools that they may be interested in. Chris stated that Jackie Perez (11th & 12th Grade Guidance Counselor) and Kazmira Thomas (Fellow Instructional Coach) will be working on amping up the experience behind students being accepted into college and or trade programs. Chris noted that Bridgeport Fire Department came in to give a presentation to about 15 Seniors who are excited to potentially join that program which would come with money towards potentially applying to schools.

Chris informed the board that the team is excited to resume hosting events such as Game Nights, Dances, SAT Day and Field Trip and more. Chris highlighted the cheerleading team that was student driven. The students had a petition and found a staff member to supervise (Stefanie Vargas- AmeriCorps Compliance and Operations Manager). GOBPT has also rejoined the Connecticut Invention Convention (CIC) with about 9-10 students participating in the data collection phase.

Chris noted that in preparation for Trimester 3 which is a primarily elective based with a total of 8 electives being offered. GOBPT has hired an AmeriCorps Fellow as the Art Teacher Taylor Reece who has jumped into the role by showcasing students' artwork on a bulletin board. Chris noted the newest electives, Robotics which was brought to GOBPT by Kay-Ann Hewell-Walker (Director of STEM Curriculum) as well as a Transition to College writing course which was recommended by a former student (currently a freshman in college) who brought a book to Chris' attention to assist in preparing current seniors with the transition to college.

Bob inquired if the Robotics Class was sponsored by an outside entity to give the teachers the tools that they needed, to which Chris responded that the kits were purchased for the students to use. John followed up by saying that this class was budgeted for as Kay-Ann brought this class to the curriculum as someone that has previously started and ran a Robotics class.

### **Head of Middle School Update - Denise Linares**

Denise opened up the Middle school update by noting that the theme of Trimester 2 coming out of a pandemic was to focus on bringing back the “normal”. The middle school team executed that by hosting a Door Decorating Contest, Dances and Field trips. Denise informed the Board of an Edmentum contest that was offered to the students which was based on student growth from Fall through Winter with the prize of a PS5.

Denise gave a staff highlight to Ms. Benedicte Kabongo who was a fellow that transitioned into a teaching position. Ms. Kabongo is teaching an enrichment course that is project-based and helping students learn a variety of skills in G-Suite and coding as well as becoming the coach of the newly formed MS GOBPT Basketball team.

Denise also showed the Board a video of the MS students drumming in Music Class. Denise stated that she is happy to report that students are enjoying specials outside of the academic classes.

### **Executive Director’s Report - John Scalice (continued)**

John opened the report by presenting the data from the bi-monthly update to the state by noting the attendance, discipline & academic performance of the school.

John provided the Board with a grant update stating that GOBPT was invited to re-apply for the Barr Foundation Grant. John went over the grant and how it has currently been supporting GOBPT by hiring 2 Curriculum Specialists and have implemented hybrid models of learning and student development. GOBPT was named by the Center of Reinventing Public Education as a School of Innovation 2021-2022. As well as being invited to present GOBPT for High Dose Tutoring Model at The Learning Agenda’s Barr Foundations Leadership Retreat in May. John noted that with GOBPT being invited to re-apply, if GOBPT receives this grant the focus would be on Career and College Readiness by showcasing no typical school academic activities and it being Self-Sustainable opportunities. John noted making these classes non-credit bearing for the state but a student requirement to graduate GOBPT.

John updated the Board on the current status of the mask mandate. John noted that the information received from the Department of Health was that Governor Lamont has lifted the state wide mask mandate and placed control on the schools. John informed the Board that GOBPT inquired, five (5) times with the Department of Health for clarity around the following questions : What specific data points are being reviewed to determine when the Bridgeport Department of Health will advise to lift the mask mandate?, What are the threshold data points for that decision?, What data would need to change from today for the March 31,2022 expected lifting of the mask requirement to be altered. This response to the email stated that

“There will be multiple data collection tools used to help aid the process. The health department uses State data, CDC guidance for counties, and information collected from multiple partners throughout the city. For further examples of data collected at the health department please visit our website and see data reports.” John stated that this information didn’t provide clarity around the specific questions that were asked. GOBPT reached out to the Connecticut Department of Health twice with no response to any question to provide clarity. There has been no communication regarding why the mask mandate is still in place or why the determination of March 31,2022 has been made. GOBPT is still in the process of reaching out to the CSDE and others for clarity around the mask mandate.

John requested from the board for Authority to have the student mask mandate at GOBPT changed into an optional mask allowance no later than March 31, 2022. Given the data points communicated from other districts of positivity rates under 3% for a sustained period of two weeks, the option to make masks optional for students (earliest date March 21, 2022).

Susan opened this up for discussion to which Corey responded that in his school district the mask mandate has become optional and that the results of the daily numbers that are coming out are showing the cases staying steady or getting lower, to which the remainder of the Board agreed. Susan inquired with the school & foundation teams as well who were also in support of this decision.

Susan requested a motion for GOBPT school leader John Scalice to remove the student mask mandate at Great Oaks Charter School to become an optional mask mandate no later than March 31, 2022, with the alternative being that If the school leadership is monitoring data points and that the positivity rates are under 3% the mask optional policy would go into effect at the earliest March 21, 2022. The motion was moved by Pam, and seconded by Leticia. Vote passed unanimously.

Corey inquired about communication to parents, to which John replied that communication will be sent out to parents with the option to provide feedback. Corey just wanted to clarify that it was being communicated that if a student didn’t want to wear their mask it wouldn’t be enforced at the school level, to which John clarified that this is more to allow families the option to decide amongst themselves if they would like to continue to wear their masks.

John informed the Board that this month’s Teacher spotlight focuses on Guidance Counselor, Jackie Perez. John stated that in addition to all of the work that she is doing with high school students around college applications, SAT’s and career pathways that she was asked to organize, administer and work with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This assessment measures academic achievement across the U.S., and compares it to other countries as well. John noted that for her efforts, GOBPT was informed on how organized, well

run, well delivered, and well structured the testing conditions and the site was from NAEP as well as how fantastic our students were to interact with.

### **Director of Operations Report - Latoya Hubbard**

Latoya opened up the operations report by giving an enrollment update noting that GOBPT's current enrollment is at 591 Students. This gives GOBPT 70 open seats for the lottery. GOBPT has currently received 73 applications total across all grades. Latoya noted that the operations team will be starting the phone banking process and keeping a close eye on the enrollment numbers.

Susan inquired about if the school had to apply for numbers, to which Latoya noted that the school didn't have to apply for enrollment numbers this year and that the school has a total of 661 seats.

Latoya informed the board with an operations team update due to our current Food Service Manager leaving after assisting the school in becoming in compliance and getting the school where it needs to be. Latoya introduced the board to Doug McClure as the new Food Service Manager who is coming to GOBPT with 30 years of experience, a previous Food Service Manager in Greenwich, working in international food service as well working at a non profit-Bowery Mission.

Latoya provided the Board with an update on the staff intent to return with about half of the surveys returned. The survey is showing that 75% of GOBPT staff intend to return for the 22-23 School Year.

Latoya also gave an update on the CIC Program. This program started with 34 student participants and are currently down to 9 students that completed the data collection. GOBPT was able to have 4 students able to be selected as state finalists. Latoya informed the Board of the criteria for the inventions to be utilized. The four finalists and their inventions are: Leyla Basneuva- The Artist's Glove, Cassondra Caldwell- The Slider, Cody Clarke- The Pillow Pocket, and Renei Hester- Portable Lather. The four students could also be eligible for the National competition The finalist showcase will be held on Wednesday March 16th at GOBPT.

Susan noted that it is fantastic to see all of the amazing things that GOBPT has been recognized for.

## **Finance Committee Report – Corey Sneed**

Corey opened the finance report by going over the vendor approvals that have been vetted through the RFP Process for March: Enrollment Marketing Photographer- Andrew Carr; new vendor, Jones Awards which is a previous vendor that is now becoming an invoiced vendor; Adventure Park- Student Field Trip; Roller Magic- Student Field Trip; Fairfield University -Tuition Assistance for 2 teachers currently enrolled in the TESOL program. Tuition assistance previously approved in FY 21-22 budget under ESSER grant.

Pam inquired about what services these teachers are providing the school. Latoya replied that these are the 2 English language learner teachers. Latoya informed the Board that these teachers are required to be certified to teach this program. Susan inquired as to why this is being brought up at this time in the year to be approved. Latoya replied that these were 2 fellows that transitioned into teaching positions and started this program in February. These teachers were provided with a temporary certification due to the national teacher shortage.

Susan looked for clarification around why this has to be approved, to which John replied that this money was set aside for this purpose and now that a vendor is obtained for this purpose that it has to be approved by the Board.

Corey resumed the discussion in regards to new vendors with Crown Castle being a WiFi vendor that it was selected as a part of the RFP process that produced three bids with Crown Castle presenting the most cost-competitive proposal for a high quality of broadband for the school with a 3 year renewal contract for this existing vendor.

Corey requested that the previous list of vendors be approved as a slate. The motion was moved by Leticia, seconded by Pam. Vote passed unanimously.

Ben gave an update on our dashboard and noted the current cash balances. Ben noted that the next time the Per pupil funding is April 1, 2022. Ben noted that GOBPT was funded based on 652 students. Ben continued to say that through the efforts of the school, Corey and the foundation that there is a revised budget that will need approval. Corey commented on the dashboard that the school continues to maintain healthy operating procedures in regards to reserves and continues to trend in the right direction. In regards to looking forward and forecasting trends with enrollment numbers. Corey noted that GOBPT should start to consider as the school is moving ahead and starting to do the FY23 budget and moving forward because we have a larger enrollment goal. Corey recommended starting to look at the budget from an average basis as opposed to maxing out the budget at 661 students so that GOBPT doesn't find itself faced with potential shortfalls. Ben noted that back in June everyone approved things based on the foresight the Board had at the time. Ben highlighted that the Title funds were

bigger, there was ESSER 2 and ESSER 3. Ben noted that a budget for payroll was talked about in the event that a teacher leaves or a new teacher is hired later in the year than the actual salary cost or expense wouldn't be the full annualized salary. Ben noted that over the course of 7-8 months we have seen how that affects the school in usually a favorable amount which allows the school to recoup against the budget. Ben noted a few negatives such as an increase in tutor fees as half will be paid up front to increase recruiting efforts and an increase in cost of finding and recruiting fellows in this tight labor market the foundation is spending more money to find the people needed to staff the fellows.

Susan inquired about the increase in fees which Lauren clarified that the fees are the same and they are accelerated. Ben clarified that the fees are the same however the timing is being shifted forward.

Ben noted that the budget has a lower interest expense as the principal is much lower and that we have a potential higher grant for this fiscal year that we are waiting on the landlord to finalize. Ben noted that we will see an increase in the net income but as a public charter school we have to keep an eye on these numbers so as not to have the numbers get so high that the school is not spending the funds received. Corey noted that because of the surplus we can work with the foundation this year to assist with recruiting efforts but this will have to be reviewed on an annual basis and not a firm commitment. Ben noted that this leaves a lot of grant funding still available to the school in the next 2 years.

Ben went over the rent numbers noting that the numbers were flat for the first 2 years and it escalates at 2% per year from the base rent from year 1 & 2. Ben noted that Corey and Jeff have been negotiating back and forth and have sent over a lease document amendment for them to sign off and agree to showing a 1% increase and a payment for the square footage adjustment as a concession there is a 1% increase every year after that. Which means that this current year GOBPT will have to pay more this year due to the square footage adjustment. Ben noted that instead of pre-paying 3 months at a time GOBPT will now be paying month to month.

Corey requested a motion to approve the FY22 revised budget. The motion was moved by Bob, seconded by Pam. Vote passed unanimously.

### **Nominating Committee Report – John Scalice**

John opened up the report by noting that minutes were taken and will be available on the website along with the meeting times. John noted that it was an introductory meeting to get to know each other and to set the table for the mission of creating the ability to take a little bit more control over that process.

Susan requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Bob, seconded by Pam. Vote passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:51pm