



**Assabet Valley Collaborative Board of Directors Meeting**  
**Virtually**  
**January 28, 2022**  
**Minutes**

**Present:** Michael Bergeron, Amber Bock, Kirk Downing, Brian Haas, Ernie Houle, Gregory Martineau, Gregory Myers, Marco Rodrigues, Joseph Sawyer, and Jeffrey Zanghi

**Also Present:** Cathy Cummins, Hien Burnham, Nicki Goncalves, Suzanne Pomerleau, and Aldo Tortorelli

**Absent:** Jay Cummings and Casey Handfield

**CALL TO ORDER**

After a roll call: (Michael Bergeron, Amber Bock, Kirk Downing, Brian Haas, Ernie Houle, Gregory Martineau, Gregory Myers, Marco Rodrigues, Joseph Sawyer, and Jeffrey Zanghi) Amber Bock called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mike Bergeron motioned to approve the minutes of December 17, 2021. Marco Rodrigues seconded the motion. A roll call vote was collected: Michael Bergeron, Amber Bock, Kirk Downing, Brian Haas, Ernie Houle, Gregory Martineau, Gregory Myers, Marco Rodrigues, Joseph Sawyer, and Jeffrey Zanghi voted (10-0) to approve the minutes of December 17, 2021.

**FINANCE UPDATE**

Nicki Goncalves welcomed Hien Burnham, new Finance Director, to her first official Board meeting. She informed members that she has been transitioning with Hien and that this will be her last Board meeting. Cathy added that she has requested proposals from other collaboratives to provide mentoring to Hien; so far she has started meeting with the business manager at READS Collaborative - a similar collaborative that also uses the same financial software. AVC will plan to contract with a trainer from Visions to provide in-depth training to Hien along with other members of the central office team. Hien has also met with Auditor Dan Schaffner, and will continue to learn with him. Hien has begun cross training on payroll with Jenn Medina and will be working closely with Ina Williams on Transportation. Nicki noted that the central office team has been energized by having Hien join the team full-time. Hien Burnham said that in her first three weeks she is making a smooth transition with Nicki and noted that there is a lot to learn. She is looking forward to working with the team and the Board moving forward. Amber welcomed Hien, and said the Board is glad to have her on full time at AVC. She also said she respects Hien's transparency and honesty.

Nicki apologized to members that she had not shared the financial documents prior to Wednesday. She noted that she had met with Vice Chair Mike Bergeron and Cathy in late December week to discuss what should be presented to the Board in the future. She acknowledged that a revision Mike had requested to reflect the \$400K renovation expense differently in the FY22 budget had not yet been made as she needs support from Infinite Visions to make the adjustment. She mentioned that the material in the FY22 budget update looks a bit different this month, with Program totals, and running at a deficit. She shared that this report does not yet reflect the billing that will be going out in the next few days for tuition, physical therapy and music therapy services, and Transportation. The report is currently showing a deficit of approximately a half million dollars but that is what was anticipated. She informed members that the \$400K budgeted for the Evolution space renovation may not be completely used and we will need to discuss what impact it will have on the budget. She also informed members that AVC received all the monies from the summer 437 grant that she submitted which was for \$200K.

We are also using agencies for filling gaps for Admin and CNA positions which ultimately have a higher fee going through the agencies.

Nicki shared the aging receivables report and is looking for potential ways to collect on funds. She has reached out to Boston, who owes about \$103K from FY21. They have had some transition which is part of the problem. Most of the outstanding invoices are from non member districts.

She showed payments for the last month in her warrant report. Large payments have been for transportation and will make sure the budget is in alignment over the next month. She is also making sure most everything will be cleaned up before she leaves. She will also make herself available if needed when it is time for the audit. Transportation is showing a large payment but some of the districts have not been billed for these months.

Cathy noted that the FY22 expenses vs revenue will take shape differently due to staffing shortages which has led to a pause on new intakes at OSA and REACH 1. In some cases staffing shortages will result in much lower expenses due to unfilled positions; in other cases staffing shortages will reflect an increase in expenses (i.e. where AVC hired agency staff at a higher cost), and that revenue will be lower in places where the pause in intakes has resulted in serving fewer students than originally projected. Overall, referrals to AVC programs have been strong with a waitlist at OSA, Evolution, and REACH 1 and 2. At the next meeting, Cathy noted that she and Hien should be better able to demonstrate the net impact of the staffing shortages and revenue projections for FY22 and leading into FY23 - including unexpected facilities and temporary agency costs, unfilled positions, and unexpected revenues (ESSER, 437, CSHS grant, EPSLA reimbursement, etc.). The timing of the Evolution renovation project will also have an impact; originally costs were captured solely in FY22 and the timing of the project is now expected to start at the end of FY22 and complete during FY23; she noted this would be discussed further in the Facilities update.

Nicki shared that she saw the Governor's proposed budget, and it looks like there is a potential increase for circuit breaker reimbursements. This will be a benefit for AVC. She also suggests that we continue to track COVID expenses as there may be additional funds available down the road, like the ESSER grant. Nicki is also looking into the 274 grant and the 290 grant to see if AVC will be eligible.

### **EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTOR REPORT**

Cathy Cummins referred to an email she had recently sent Board members regarding the need to close some AVC programs due to COVID cases among staff and students: OSA closed one day and REACH 1 and 2 both closed 4 days due to high COVID rates. With these closures, combined with other past or future weather or facilities-related closures, she is concerned about the impact on the ability to make up days at the end of the year. She reported that case rates have been moving in the right direction now and all programs have been able to reopen and remain open.

Cathy provided an update on the activities of multiple hiring teams who have been working to fill the following immediate vacancies: 2 teachers at Evolution, 3 paraeducators in REACH 1 and 2, a teacher and administrative assistant at OSA. Because these are current vacancies, tending to the work across programs has required creativity and flexibility; agency staff have been filling most paraeducator positions; paraeducators have stepped up to substitute for teachers, and some central office staff have covered the front desk at OSA, subbed in classrooms, and have filled in for job-coaching.

Cathy also acknowledged the hard work of the nursing team who have been working hard to maintain and expand our COVID mitigation efforts through continued pooled testing and now including the implementation of the home-testing protocols and testing kit distribution for staff and students. This has been a tremendous contribution to AVC's continued efforts to operate safely, and one example of efforts to build shared leadership. This has been possible by adding a full-time float nurse position this year and providing stipends to nurses for picking up leadership tasks in addition to their daily nursing duties or paying supplementally for hours required outside of work to complete leadership/coordination tasks. She noted that the nursing team has expressed interest in AVC hiring

a nurse leader consultant to support long-term learning and sustainability. A request for proposals has been developed but not yet fulfilled.

As an update on Transportation, Cathy noted that AVC has not yet paid for transportation since July though a payment will be processed soon following receipt of revisions requested. She noted that the new contract which began as of November 1 includes the implementation of penalties for noncompliance with elements of the contract including CORI/Background checks and quality. She noted that AVC will be monitoring compliance and preparing to enact penalties upon review of invoices received if needed; the goal, however, is compliance and improved quality. Cathy stated that Van Pool continues to have a driver shortage that continues to impact access to transportation for a number of students. She said that there is a meeting scheduled with Van Pool, AVC Business and Special Education leaders on February 17.

In other updates, Cathy noted that Facilities Rentals at Lord Road have resumed for Conference Room C. Most notably, weekly Saturday rentals to a local nonprofit for Citizenship classes has been a great opportunity for AVC revenue and for AVC staff to earn extra cash.

### **FACILITIES DIRECTOR REPORT**

Aldo Tortorelli gave an update on the completion of the OSA mold remediation and the HVAC condenser repair which took longer to replace than expected. Both of these expenses were directly related to vandalism that took place outside of OSA; an insurance claim has been processed and covered most of the expenses. He also shared that he is in the process of working with the Evolution team to make adjustments to the Evolution renovation project (kitchen, bathroom, training room) in an effort to bring down the overall costs. He noted that a meeting with the architect will take place in mid-February and will include a review of prints from the engineers to go over layout and insurance and construction requirements. The Board had approved a FY22 expense of \$400K for the project; Aldo noted that the timeline for the project will likely get started in FY22 but will be completed in FY23, though he is not yet sure of the timeline. He said we will better know the timeline once we are able to finalize a RFP to be posted.

### **ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Ernie Houle motioned to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of voting on prior Executive Session minutes and not to re-enter Public Session, thus adjourning the meeting from Executive Session. Jeffery Zanghi seconded the motion. A roll call voted was collected: Michael Bergeron, Amber Bock, Kirk Downing, Brian Haas, Ernie Houle, Gregory Martineau, Gregory Myers, Marco Rodrigues, Joseph Sawyer, and Jeffrey Zanghi voted (10-0) to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of voting on prior Executive Session minutes and not to re-enter Public Session, thus adjourning the meeting from Executive Session.

The Board entered Executive Session at 9:45 a.m. The Board adjourned from Executive Session at 9:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Pomerleau  
Administrative Assistant