



Assabet Valley Collaborative Board of Directors Meeting
March 25, 2022
Minutes

Present: Michael Bergeron, Amber Bock, Kirk Downing (9:19 am), Brian Haas, Ernie Houle, Greg Martineau, Marco Rodrigues, Joseph Sawyer (9:13), and Jeff Zanghi

Also Present: Cathy Cummins, Hien Burnham & Suzanne Pomerleau

Absent: Jay Cummings, Casey Handfield, and Gregory Myers

CALL TO ORDER

Amber Bock, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Michael Bergeron motioned to approve the minutes of January 28, 2022. Ernie Houle seconded the motion. The Board voted (7-0) to approve the minutes of January 28, 2022.

Michael Bergeron motioned to approve the executive session minutes of January 28, 2022 and to then release them. Jeffrey Zanghi seconded the motion. The Board voted (7-0) to approve the executive session minutes of January 28, 2022 and to then release them.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Cathy Cummins began her report by introducing the principle of Sankofa - a term she had learned from Kiesha Lamb. The substance of Sankofa, a principle derived from the Akan people of Ghana, is the need to learn from the past in order to grow. Cathy is starting her report today with the term in mind - at this point in AVC's equity journey, there is a need to reflect back on what we've been learning so far and carry that learning forward and into our next steps. She shared that she had begun coaching work with equity coach, Cyndi Weekes Bradley - who had recently met with the Board's Chair and Vice Chair. Future steps will need to include strategic planning and learning from the Board of Directors to each classroom. Cathy then reviewed a presentation she had shared with the Board one year ago - reviewing the elements of human-centered design and the predictable stages of racial equity. The setbacks AVC has faced related to equity goals are common but not insurmountable. AVC will need to carry forward the lessons learned and wins from the last three years and use them to be strategic moving forward.

Cathy's report then provided updates on gathering input from staff across AVC in filling leadership positions, finance cleanup, transportation, and general program updates. She noted that we have waitlists for students in REACH 1 and OSA that are pending filling some key positions. She provided an update on the status of filling several positions through the robust work of hiring teams across AVC. Cathy noted that the FY23 budget development was underway. Some notable impacts - the lease for REACH classrooms will increase significantly and the costs for the Evolution renovation project will be incurred mostly in FY23. The RFP posting for general and sub bids for the Evolution renovation has been submitted and will be complete for the Board to award a contract at the next meeting. FSP is currently collaborating with Northborough Public Schools to submit a grant to Metrowest Health Foundation to fund the addition of individual clinical support to students. Cathy noted that both she and AVC's treasurer are due for evaluations to be completed by the Board. Amber Bock and Mike Bergeron will be in touch regarding these.

Cathy presented to Board members proposed Policy revisions submitted by the Sick Leave Bank Committee. The bank was established 10 years ago and now has a healthy balance. Board members discussed the proposed language and requested that the committee strengthen the language in the policy related to qualifying reasons for use of the bank - specifically, consistent with events that would qualify for FMLA. Greg Martineau will ask his district's HR leader to provide input. A revision will be presented to the Board for approval at the April meeting.

Cathy noted that in addition to the Sick Leave Bank, many other policies at AVC are in need of updating. She also noted the awareness that member districts need AVC to start an elementary therapeutic program in the near future.

Priorities for next year will include continued work toward achieving our equity-centered goals, filling of open positions with quality staff aligned with AVC's mission and vision, stabilization of finances, strengthening of policies and systems, and plans for growth. It was noted that Cathy should be accountable for these shifts but that she will not be able to do it alone.

FINANCE UPDATE

Hien Burnham shared a projection for year-end FY22 - introducing a new format for this report. She requested feedback on the new format. Hien noted that it has been difficult to project transportation because of so many revisions and moving parts. She will know more at the next meeting. Current projections show that AVC may have a healthy surplus at year end due to reductions in expenses. She cautioned that the projections reflect incomplete data; AVC has not paid transportation invoices for several months, for example. Next month the projection report will be more accurate. Hien reviewed the accounts receivable aging report; Boston Public Schools continues to owe AVC \$136K from prior fiscal years; she noted that we have made progress with the BPS accounting team.

She noted that AVC had recently enacted a \$279K penalty on Van Pool for noncompliance with the contract and that she will hold that penalty amount in a liability account until it is fully resolved.

Hien is continuing her work going through every detail of AVC's finances very carefully; transportation continues to be the most difficult to gain precision. She noted that the financial picture during the last two years had not been clear enough for Cathy or the Board to make informed decisions about finances and she will work to change that for the better.

Hien asked members if they had any questions or feedback. Members asked questions regarding the VanPool penalty, and also asked clarifying questions regarding the smaller deficits within programs that were previously projected. Amber thanked Hien for her hard work on her scrutiny of the budget.

Amber informed members that they needed to enter into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body.

ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ernie Houle motioned to enter into Executive Session for the purpose to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation and not to re-enter Public session, thus adjoining the meeting from Executive Session. Mike Bergeron seconded the motion. A roll call vote was collected: Michael Bergeron, Amber Bock, Kirk Downing, Brian Haas, Ernie Houle, Greg Martineau, Marco Rodrigues, Joseph Sawyer, and Jeff Zanghi voted (9-0) to enter into Executive Session for the purpose to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation and not to re-enter Public session, thus adjoining the meeting from Executive Session.

The Board entered Executive Session at 10:21 am. The Board adjourned from Executive Session at 10:58 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Pomerleau
Administrative Assistant