



## **Assabet Valley Collaborative Board of Directors Meeting**

August 10, 2020

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** James Cummings, Chair; Amber Bock, Vice Chair; Michael Bergeron, Brian Haas, Casey Handfield, Gregory Martineau, Brook Clenchy, Ernie Houle, Joseph Sawyer; **Also present:** Cathy Cummins, Mark Graziano, Ina Williams.

**Not present:** Marco Rodrigues, Gregory Myers, Jeffrey Zanghi

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

After a Roll Call the meeting was called to order by Chair James Cummings at 10:04 a.m.

#### **Vote to approve AVC's reopening plan**

Cathy Cummins presented an overview of AVC's work this summer to prepare for the start of the school year. She provided links to a one-page overview of the three models (in-person, hybrid, remote) and links to data collected via staff and family surveys. She also provided links to AVC's control plan and several training materials prepared by teams this summer. She reported that AVC has secured all the PPE (hospital-grade for close contact) and additional classroom space needed to physically meet the requirements of in-person learning. She reported that AVC will have purchased 70 chromebooks and 15 webcams to support remote learning as well. Additional training will be required for any of the models and AVC will be using the additional 10 days at the start of the school year to support this need.

Dr. Cummins noted that efforts this summer (through paid committee work across REACH, Evolution, and OSA) have been focused heavily on the acquisition of safety equipment and space - and the training of staff to use new equipment - to support in-person return. She noted that 100% of AVC's enrolled students are considered "high needs." She noted that REACH and Evolution are still moving forward with plans to provide a full in-person option for students. At OSA's reopening committee last week, a shift was made to focus on starting the year with a hybrid model with cohorts of students in rotation between in-person and remote.

Current staff survey data indicate at about 60% of AVC staff feel confident they could return fully, in-person. Of the 40% of staff who indicated that they will not or may not be able to return fully in-person - 60% stated their reason as loss of school/day care.

Family surveys indicate a high number (as high as 40% in some programs) of students may not attend in-person if offered. Programs will work with students' IEP teams to design remote or hybrid learning options for students.

Final plans are due to DESE on Friday, 8/14; reopening committees are meeting this week. Given the rapidly changing context, it is expected that AVC's plans will continue to evolve and change even after submitting a formal "plan" to DESE on 8/14.

Superintendent Houle inquired about transportation routes and ridership. Dr. Cummins noted the next agenda item would address some of those questions. She did note that on family surveys, there were many families (48%) who said they planned to transport their student without using district-provided busing.

Michael Bergeron motioned to approve AVC's plans that currently prioritize in-person programming at REACH and Evolution and a hybrid model at OSA and that also include designing part- and full-time remote learning pathways for students in collaboration with IEP Teams. Amber Bock seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: James Cummings (Yes); Amber Bock (Yes), Michael Bergeron (Yes), Brian Haas (Yes), Casey Handfield (Yes), Gregory Martineau (Yes), Brook Clenchy (Yes), Ernie Houle (Yes), Joseph Sawyer (Yes).

**The board voted unanimously (9-0) to approve AVC's plans that currently prioritize in-person programming at REACH and Evolution and a hybrid model at OSA and that also include designing part- and full-time remote learning pathways for students in collaboration with IEP Teams.**

### **Special Education Transportation Contract**

***One-year extension:*** Cathy Cummins reported that AVC and Van Pool came to the end of a 3-year contract as of 6/30/20 and asked the Board to approve a 1-year extension (as allowed in the current contract).

Michael Bergeron motioned to approve a one-year extension to the Special Education Transportation Contract between AVC and VAn Pool through June 30, 2021. Amber Bock seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: James Cummings (Yes); Amber Bock (Yes), Michael Bergeron (Yes), Brian Haas (Yes), Casey Handfield (Yes), Gregory Martineau (Yes), Brook Clenchy (Yes), Ernie Houle (Yes), Joseph Sawyer (Yes).

**The board voted unanimously (9-0) to approve a one-year extension to the Special Education Transportation Contract between AVC and VAn Pool through June 30, 2021.**

***Proposed Amendment to Contract:*** Dr. Cummins described that the current contract with Van Pool does not address "pandemic transportation." She described that the current "fixed route cost" model requires higher ridership to be an effective business model. Now that most routes will be limited to one or two students at a time, the fixed route model will not cover the costs of each route. In order to explore other models, AVC will need authority to negotiate with Van Pool (including special education and business leaders from the districts) to propose a short-term amendment to the contract.

Michael Bergeron motioned to authorize AVC to negotiate with Van Pool to propose a short-term Coronavirus-related amendment to the current Special Education Transportation Contract to be ratified by the Board at a future meeting. Amber Bock seconded the motion.

**Discussion:** Joseph Sawyer asked if AVC's spring MOA included the expectation that Van Pool provide documentation about profit/loss and regarding money received by Van Pool for PPP or other small business grants or relief. Cathy Cummins responded that the MOA included language that Van Pool would supply this information "if requested." Amber Bock stated that AVC should officially request this documentation as part of developing an amendment. Cathy Cummins also noted that this fall there would be an expectation that districts are billed only for services rendered; she also noted that because of

a recent merger with another company, Van Pool may have access to larger vehicles to support higher ridership.

A roll call vote was taken: James Cummings (Yes); Amber Bock (Yes), Michael Bergeron (Yes), Brian Haas (Yes), Casey Handfield (Yes), Gregory Martineau (Yes), Brook Clenchy (Yes), Ernie Houle (Yes), Joseph Sawyer (Yes).

**The board voted unanimously (9-0) to authorize AVC to negotiate with Van Pool to propose a short-term Coronavirus-related amendment to the current Special Education Transportation Contract to be ratified by the Board at a future meeting.**

**Vote to approve AVC FY21 Tuitions for 170-days**

This vote was tabled for the next meeting when AVC will submit updated school calendars for approval instead.

**Update - Purchase of 28 Lord Road Suites 267 and 285**

Mark Graziano updated the Board on the status of the purchase of Suites 267 and 285 on the second floor at 28 Lord Road. He said that Treasurer Peter Zona had been “shopping” for advantageous financing, the best of which is currently 4.25% interest for a 15-year note. AVC’s current fiscal standing continues to warrant this purchase. Mr. Graziano described that the next step in the process will be for Mr. Zona to attend the next meeting to propose mortgage terms for the Board to approve. Upon approval, a memo (drafted by AVC’s attorney) will be distributed to each school committee. This memo does not require school committee approval or to be submitted in a full open meeting as it services as “notification.”

Joseph Sawyer asked if 4.25% interest was a competitive rate given news of personal mortgage interest rates being much lower right now. Mr. Graziano confirmed that there is a difference currently between business and personal financing interest rates and that 4.25% was the lowest available after due diligence.

**Adjournment**

Joseph Sawyer motioned to Adjourn. Ernie Houle seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: James Cummings (Yes); Amber Bock (Yes), Michael Bergeron (Yes), Brian Haas (Yes), Casey Handfield (Yes), Gregory Martineau (Yes), Brook Clenchy (Yes), Ernie Houle (Yes), Joseph Sawyer (Yes).

**Meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.**

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Signing of Warrants will take place in person at 28 Lord Road; Mark Graziano will schedule with Board members who sign the warrants. AVC is also looking into digital platforms for this in the future.