

August 6, 2020

This August 6, 2020 Special Meeting of the Board was held by teleconference pursuant to Executive Orders N-25-20 and N-29-20.

Approved Special Meeting MINUTES

The meeting called to order at 4:10 p.m.

Roll Call –

Board Members: Heather Fraser Hurtt, Chair, G’anna Burke, Jennifer Huetter, Stephanie Parmely, Stephen Quadro.

Board Members Absent: Adrianna Wray.

Guests: Amala Easton, Caleb Buckley, Bonnie River, Anna Rainville, Ryan Miller, Sarah Miller, Naomi Suster, Katina Varvos, Brandon Marshall, Megan Willety

Flag Salute/Quote/Moment of Silence – Caleb Buckley read the Caring Virtue Card.

Public Comment

Anna Rainville spoke about a concern about a return to in person education due a lack of proper safe guards she’s observed in the community. Although she wants nothing more than to teach in person, she believes distance learning is the most responsible option.

Ryan Miller spoke about agenda item 7, the CDPH waiver, he supports distance learning model and believes it exemplifies the virtues that we hold at GVCS.

Sarah Miller spoke about item 7. She supports distance learning for families that don’t feel comfortable returning to school.

Naomi Suster spoke about item 7. She doesn’t feel the board has used qualified health officials to inform their decisions on the return to school plan. She believes she has no choice but to withdraw her child.

Katina Varvos spoke about item 5. She requests reopening the schools with flexibility to staff concerns. She is concerned about closures effects on mental health. She would like to see GVCS capitalize on their outdoor space.

Bonnie River read a letter in support of opening in a distance learning model in September.

Brandon Marshall spoke about agenda item 6. He is in favor of opening in a distance learning model until parents and teachers can agree. He will be working off hours to support his children during distance learning.

Megan Willoughby spoke about item 5. She knows the board and school have the students interests at heart. She has concerns about parents being back at work and being able to supervise their children’s education and special ed support.

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Distance Learning at GVTS Fall 2020/21 – The board approved distance learning at Tahoe until the requirements for safe reopening are met, at which point the board will meet to approve a plan for safe reopening. (Ayes: 5, Noes: 0, Abstain: 0)

Distance Learning Plan for 2020/21 – The Board approved the Distance Learning Plan for the 2020-21 school year and will review again on August 19th. (Ayes: 5, Noes: 0, Abstain: 0)

CDPH Education Waiver Process – The Board tabled the discussion and voting upon the California Department of Public Health’s Education Waiver Process for GVRS, GVOS, and GVTS. TABLED (Ayes: 5, Noes: 0, Abstain: 0)

In Person at Meetings – The board discussed in-person meetings, official GVCS gatherings, and facility use during Distance Learning.

Financial Consideration – The Board discussed current fiscal implications for our schools and resulting financial impacts of the proposed State budget.

Recitation of the Motto of the Social Ethic

The healing social life is found
When in the mirror of each human soul
The whole community finds its reflection,
And when, in the community,
The virtue of each one is living.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Amala Easton.

Heather Fraser Hurtt, Chair

Date

RYAN MILLER

I understand that there have been some developments at the state level that are potentially rendering Agenda Item 7—the CDPH Education Waiver Process—somewhat moot, at least at the moment. That said, I know that there are parents at our school who have been pushing for a return to in-person learning, and who will continue to do so. Given that the issue is still on some future table, and that the sentiments behind wanting a waiver do not go away even if the opportunity does, I would like to say this: In conversations my wife and I have had with other parents—both virtually and in person—we have heard the phrases: “We will be fine, even if we get the virus.” “I refuse to live my life in fear.” and perhaps most shockingly “Tell me why I should care about your health.” This is not a paraphrase. The implication is that only people who are afraid are advocating community-wide caution—in social distancing, in wearing masks, and in supporting a distance-learning model at the moment—and that the only person who matters is you. Asking “Why is your health my responsibility?” does not line up with any virtues of which I am aware. In approaching this school year, I have become increasingly sad at the realization that my son, a Laurel Tree student with Mr. Lacoste, will not get to have the same experience his two older sisters did with the play *Sir George and the Dragon*. As I’m sure most—if not all of us—know: in that play, a community faces a common threat that could come for any of them at any time. In developing a safety plan that requires great sacrifice, not one member of the community, from the queen and king down, says, “We will be fine. There’s little chance of us getting hurt by this, so tell us why we should do anything to protect you?” I am not talking about the merits of the plan itself, but of the spirit of the community. All were willing to sacrifice. My hope is that our Golden Valley community will choose the same and remember the virtue of courage, as well as the knight’s parting lines: “each kind word sets me free, each kind deed makes me strong.” It is a kind deed, for example, to wear a mask in public—even if you are not concerned about your own health. More broadly, many of us limit or avoid screens, but it is a kind deed to adapt to them for a time, to protect as much as possible every member of our community. At the end of *Sir George and the Dragon*, the princess—the child on whom the brunt of the sacrifice fell—is the one who tames the beast with the very item that previously constrained her. She does not wither away due to her ordeal. She comes back stronger than before, and the entire community benefits in turn. Our brave and true children are resilient (coach Rainville), every one of them is valuable, and they will do the same, because kindness wins in the end. Please, as we approach this coming school year, I ask this of the board, our staff, our Golden Valley families, and everyone in our community: Model kindness. Let’s show our children that we should care about each other’s health. Together, we can fight for the right and conquer all the wrong.

Greetings board members and valued educators.

We would like to convey our utmost respect and value for the work that you all do and for your commitment to the Waldorf education we intentionally chose. We recognize the hard work everyone is doing during this difficult time. Following the last board meeting, we also want to politely appeal to you as our leaders, for we feel you are not hearing our main concerns about distance learning.

Many of you had wonderfully positive and loving things to say about how we will get through this together and make the most of distance learning. We agree that we will get through this and we want to collaborate together with our Waldorf community. However, we also want to stress that for many of us, a distance learning model of any kind *cannot be improved upon or made better*. Nationwide, the complaints have been made that it is insufficient, very difficult for parents, and detrimental to children. We are also confused by the board's response to distance learning, given that distance learning is in direct contradiction with Waldorf values. No amount of computer-based learning will meet the needs of our children during this time. Without direct instruction and supervision from the staff at school, the onus of the social, emotional, physical, and educational needs of the future generation falls on us parents. The detriment of remote computer-based education is well documented especially in the social-emotional aspects of learning that as a Waldorf community we value so highly.

We do not mean to belittle the enormous effort our teachers put forth this spring to translate impromptu the educational information they were teaching into forms we could attempt at home. We appreciated their work and the resources they provided were tools that some of us (not all) were able to use. We also valued the individual contact offered by teachers sporadically for our children to try and help them feel some sense of connection and comfort. We want to work together to keep that connection for our children so that as soon as they can return to school, we can send them and support the teachers in the difficult task of dealing with their dysregulation. We also hope teachers will support us (both those that will return and those that do not feel comfortable) in acknowledging that mandated remote learning, particularly for elementary age children is not an adequate response to this difficult time. Please don't feel we value our teachers less but more. Their services are ESSENTIAL and cannot be provided fully remote much like the other brave workers (from grocers to doctors) who have been providing in-person services through the pandemic. Let those teachers that choose to go remote in the many venues providing that service, we request board support for those teachers that know our Waldorf values and education are needed in-person now more than ever.

We want to continue with our commitment to Golden Valley but there are difficulties with remaining enrolled at GVCS. We do not want to withdraw from our school and give the Teachers Unions the excuse they are looking for to eliminate charter schools that allow valuable teaching models accessible to ALL families. However, this leaves us in an awkward position. We are paying for a service via taxes that we are not actually receiving. Homeschooling parents receive money to educate their children in the home. We are foregoing this monetary support by supporting our school and remaining enrolled. Many of us will have to pay extra money because we are essential workers who CANNOT work from home and cannot leave our children unattended the entire school day. For many of us this also impacts our ability to financially

support our school. These are the best-case scenarios, and clearly show that educating children is an essential service (like dentistry or physical therapy) that cannot be done fully remote.

We ask the board and our school support us in the following ways:

1. Take a stand with us against mandated distance learning as the only viable option for this fall. Governor Newsom's plan does actually allow an EXCEPTION for elementary schools to currently re-open if a request is made by the district superintendent or equivalent for charter schools ("A waiver of this criteria may be granted by the local health officer for elementary schools to open for in-person instruction. A waiver may only be granted if one is requested by the superintendent (or equivalent for charter or private schools), in consultation with labor, parent and community organizations. Local health officers must review local community epidemiological data, consider other public health interventions, and consult with CDPH when considering a waiver request." We strongly urge our board to appeal with us and have our executive director Dr. Buckley request that our TK-6th grade programs be allowed to open, possibly under an outdoor school model mentioned in our own re-opening plan and similar to past pandemic education solutions. This also follows the footsteps of our private counterparts (schools like Sacramento Waldorf, the Catholic Diocese and Guidepost Montessori in Folsom) who have already appealed for a waiver to immediately re-open their elementary programs in-person under a cohort based, outdoor model with appropriate safety measures in place. These schools and we believe Golden Valley as well should model balancing the safety concerns of COVID-19 with the safety concerns of long-term distancing of children and families. Let us be one of the frontrunners who advocate that the critical needs of in-person learning should be available to more than the extremely privileged who can afford private education.
2. Until a physical opening, encourage our school and teachers to support us (parents and caregivers) who are in the trenches with the children. We do appreciate and value the resources the teachers provide such as lesson plans, learning tools, pre-recorded videos and optional contact points (both individual and group), but we as the "moderators" of the care and instruction will need to be the ones that ultimately determine how and when these tools can be utilized for the benefit of the children. In addition to our roles as parents to the next generation, we are now also the impromptu teachers managing, in many cases, our other children, and essential jobs.

Let us model for the rest of California how important socialization, physical instruction, and emotional attunement are. Is this not our culture as a Waldorf community? Please stand with us as our board of trustees and our larger Waldorf community. We value you. We value our teachers. We look forward to the day when we can place our precious children in your physical care once again.

Respectfully,

Allison Harrington, Psy.D. (parent Laurel and Poppy classes)

Timothy Harrington, Ph.D. (parent Laurel and Poppy classes)

Resources:

CDC Return to School:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/reopening-schools.html>

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April M. Bean
Blake A. Bean

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Respectfully,

Briana Sandbaaken
Preston Sandbaaken

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