

## **Minutes of the Meeting**

### **The Davidson Academy Governing Board**

**May 26, 2020**

These minutes are not yet approved and are subject to revision at the next meeting of the governing board.

#### **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Governing Board was called to order at 2:04 p.m. by Board member Mark Herron. Mr. Herron explained that Board Chair Bob Davidson was traveling and had ask Mr. Herron to chair this meeting.

Due to the current State of Emergency declared by the Governor because of the COVID-19 virus, and more specifically the Governor's Directive 006, section 1, this public meeting was held via videoconference with no physical meeting location.

Mr. Herron extended congratulation on the behalf of the board to Dr. Kristen McNeill on her appointment as the Superintendent of the Washoe County School District. He also acknowledged the good work of the Academy Director and her staff in transitioning to an online platform on very short notice in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and the invaluable assistance in doing so provided by the Director of Online Learning and her staff.

#### **A. Roll Call**

Roll call was completed by the Chair of the Meeting, Mark Herron. Bob Davidson, Roger Davidson, Mark Herron, Annette Whittemore, Richard Trachok, Brian Krolicki, Lauralyn McCarthy Sandoval, Marc Johnson, and Kristen McNeill were present. Jhone Ebert was not present. Academy Director Colleen Harsin, the Director of Online Learning Stacy Hawthorne, VP of Finance and Administration Karin Dixson, Technology Manager Ben Brown, and Governing Board Clerk August Reich were present.

#### **B. Welcome and Introduction**

Mark Herron welcomed Board members and members of the public in attendance.

#### **C. Public Comments**

There were no comments from the public.

#### **D. Approval of the Minutes for Meeting of February 18, 2020**

Mark Herron requested approval of the minutes for the meeting of February 18, 2020 under Tab 1 of the Board books. Motion was made and seconded for approval of the minutes as submitted, there was no discussion and the motion carried unanimously.

## **E. Approval of Agenda**

Mark Herron requested approval of the Agenda as submitted to the Board. Motion was made and seconded for approval of the meeting Agenda. There was no discussion and the motion carried unanimously.

## **F. Reports**

### **1. Academy Director**

Ms. Harsin referred to tab 2 of the board book to display the proposed calendar for the 2020-2021 school year. This calendar follows the university's schedule and has been reviewed and approved. Ms. Harsin explained that a possible change to this calendar could be the length of class sessions. This change would occur to better facilitate online learning. Richard Trachok asked if the Davidson Academy and the University have been coordinating regarding the fall semester. Ms. Harsin told Board members that they have been working together and have had great communication. Marc Johnson explained that the University's scheduling office is working with the Davidson Academy to provide them larger spaces to help ensure social distancing practices for testing. Dr. Johnson then explained that the University plans on having classes being in person for the second summer session and will be working with Ms. Harsin to communicate how this information will impact the Davidson Academy.

Ms. Harsin referred to tab 3 to discuss the request for Emergency Program of Distance Education. The Davidson Academy began remote learning the week after spring break which was in line with the University's decision. Ms. Harsin told Board members that the Davidson Academy did not miss any days in session. Loralyn McCarthy Sandoval asked how online learning went with the students. Ms. Harsin explained that the possibility of distance learning was a topic of conversation the week prior to spring break which gave students the opportunity to bring supplies home with them. Ms. Harsin shared feedback from the community explaining that the transition to distance learning was seamless but brought additional issues. Due to this hardship Academy students were given the opportunity to withdraw from courses that were not required for graduation, audit courses that were not required for graduation, and have the choice to go to a pass or fail grading format. This created an opportunity to continue the rigor in schoolwork while maintaining a fair grading scale. Ms. Harsin told Board members that in collaboration with the online campus the Davidson Academy was able to successfully provide online instruction. Marc Johnson told Board members that the university courses being conducted on zoom are not meant to be an online course. Johnson further explained that surveys suggest that students do not feel distance learning is an equal substitution for in person instruction.

Ms. Harsin referred to tab 4 regarding the pupil enrollment and attendance audit. This audit has been initiated and the documentation has been submitted. More information regarding the audit report will be included in the next meeting.

Ms. Harsin referred to tab 5 to present the class of 2020 Post-Secondary plans. The virtual graduation ceremony went well and provided an opportunity for people to observe from a far. Ms. Harsin explained that there may be a portion of students who defer their enrollment, but these decisions will be made on an individual basis. The Board was also presented with a list of schools in which the 23 graduates were accepted to attend. Mr. Krolicki asked what the students attending the University of Nevada, Reno plan on studying. Ms. Harsin explained that both students are STEM focused but neither have declared a major at this point.

Ms. Harsin referred to tab 6 to discuss the Presidential Scholarship. Emhyr Subramanian was selected as a finalist for this scholarship along with two other students from Nevada. Ms. Harsin told Board members that the Davidson Academy does not always graduate a Presidential Scholarship Finalist and that Emhyr represents the school very well.

## **2. Director of Online Learning**

Ms. Hawthorne referred to tab 7 of the board book to discuss updates for the Davidson Academy Online Campus. The online campus has seen 260 applications for the 2020-2021 school year which is a 65% growth from a year ago. The deadline for applications was on April 15, 2020. Ms. Hawthorne explained that the online campus had to make adjustments to the application process because the March SAT was canceled. The adjustment allowed for a wide variety of assessments to be submitted which led to a larger number of applications. After reviewing the application 95 students were invited to assess. The online campus accepted 32 new students and an additional 7 students to the Explore program. The Explore program is for students who are not quite yet ready for the Academy but may be ready in the near future. Ms. Hawthorne explained that the online campus is still assessing students, and the total number of students enrolled will not be confirmed until the end of June.

Ms. Hawthorne told Board members that there is a shift in where applications are coming from. In 2019 a quarter of applications came from public schools while in 2020 over half of applicants came from public school students. In contrast, there was a decrease in the percentage of students coming from private schools from 2019 to 2020. Ms. McCarthy Sandoval asked if the numbers were down as well. Ms. Hawthorne responded by saying that both the number of applications and the percentages were down from private school students. Mr. Krolicki told the Board that he believes that the comfort level of online learning will likely lead to an increase in applicants for the next school year. Ms. Hawthorne stated that the year-over-year growth has been about 50% since year one. This is because the Davidson Academy Online campus has been specializing in distance learning for years, and the platform is different than what most people envision online education to be.

The Davidson Academy Online campus had a senior night which celebrated the first two graduates from the online campus. Ms. Hawthorne told Board members that the summer retreat was canceled. This summer the Davidson Academy Online Campus is offering a health and fitness course which is required for graduation. Ms. Hawthorne informed Board members of a new welcome website that includes valuable information and has helped increase communication within the community.

### **3. Media and Outreach**

Ms. Hawthorne referred to tab 8 of the Board book to discuss media and outreach updates. The Davidson Academy was recognized on the Public Elites List that ranks schools based on their challenge index. The online campus is hosting a series of webinars talking about best practices in online learning. Some examples of these webinars are special education, world language, humanities, and social emotional learning.

### **G. General Business**

1. Board member and Chief Financial Officer for the Davidson Academy, Mark Herron, referred Board members to Tab 9 of the Board books for a copy of the audit engagement letter of April 27, 2020, from Holthouse Carlin & Van Trigt LLP for the fiscal year 2019-20. Mr. Herron indicated that there is one change in the letter from the previous year that includes information on data privacy along with a nominal increase in fees of \$750. Mr. Herron advised that Holthouse Carlin & Van Trigt has completed the audit for the Davidson Academy in past years, knows the structure of the school, audit requirements of the State and can meet the timeline on completing the audit. Meeting Chair, Mark Herron requested approval of engagement of auditors Holthouse, Carlin and Van Trigt; motion was made and seconded. There was no further discussion by the Board; and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Board member and Chief Financial Officer for the Davidson Academy, Mark Herron, referred Board members to Tab 10 of the Board books for a copy of the Notice of Public Hearing, the Minutes from the hearing on May 11, 2020, and the Tentative Budget for the 2020-2021 school year. Mr. Herron noted that Karin Dixon, Controller for the Davidson Academy, was the person primarily responsible for drafting the tentative budget and that the state-mandated forms were utilized. He confirmed that the required public hearing for presentation of the budget had taken place on May 11, 2020, in a virtual setting. There were no comments from members of the public submitted. Mr. Herron commented on the current year's budget stating that with two months remaining this year's budget is within 2% of budgeted amount on payroll, health insurance cost increases have been modest, and there have been no unexpected capital expenses. Mr. Herron explained that this year's budget will not need to be revised by the Board.

The tentative budget was drafted using an estimated enrollment of 155 students for the Reno campus and 65 students attending the Online campus. The total tentative budget is \$5,863,000 which is an increase of \$700,000 year-over-year. The majority of this

increase came from the online program with the main costs being increases in wages and benefits. Mr. Herron told Board members that there is an increase in revenue coming from higher enrollment and a larger donation from the Davidsons. Mr. Herron explained that due to COVID-19 that there are some worries regarding the budget but is confident that management will be able to stay within the budget. Mr. Herron explained that Academy has formed a professional employee organization (PEO) in Arizona, named Online Resources AZ, LLC, to act at the employer of online personnel who do not live in Nevada. This will allow for the flexibility to employ the best staff and avoid various potential compliance issues. Mr. Herron requested approval of the 2020-2021 final budget; motion was made and seconded. Brian Krolicki asked why the guidance and college advising amount grew so much.. Mr. Herron explained that this category includes a new position, a staff member who will coordinate student services such as IEPs and Section 504 plans. Mr. Krolicki also asked how COVID-19 may impact the contributions from the State of Nevada and if there is currently a plan in place if the funding is reduced. Marc Johnson stated that as of now there is uncertainty and there will be a significant reduction in revenues for higher education. Mr. Krolicki explained that this organization is fortunate to have the resources to help avoid major issues. Mr. Herron explained that this organization is cost conscious and will monitor the situation closely. There was no further discussion by the Board; and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Director Harsin explained to the Board that at an earlier meeting they had voted on approving candidates for graduation. After that vote, another student decided to graduate during this school year and the Board needs to vote to approve her for graduation. Ms. Harsin advised Board members that Kaely Smith has completed all of her requirements for graduation. A motion was made and seconded. There was no further discussion by the Board; and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **H. Public Comment**

There were no comments from the public.

#### **I. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board in public meeting, motion was made and seconded for adjournment; motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted by August Reich, Clerk of the Board