

# Willow Creek Elementary School

School Accountability Committee

Minutes for September 14, 2020

Meeting Held via Zoom

6:30 P.M.

Attendance: Mike Murray (parent, co-chair), Chris Domino (tech, secretary), Alex Barefoot (parent), Diana Price (principal), Sandy Hueser (office manager), Dennise ? (parent), Julia Prendergast (parent), Christina Nathanson (parent), Dana Sandberg (parent), Fan Yang (parent), Kaitlyn Bridgers (parent), Toni Pugh (parent, TA), Jen Woodrow (parent, PTO), Fiona Maguire-O'Shea (parent), Sandra Wiley (fifth-grade teacher), Kim Sluyk (parent), Sarah Grobbel (district administration)

1. Welcome — Mike Murray

Due to technical difficulties, we switched the meeting from Microsoft Teams to Zoom. A few people entered the meeting after the start, since it took time for them to find the new meeting invitation.

Once most people were into the meeting, Mike welcomed the participants, and we all introduced ourselves.

2. 4A & 4B Presentation — Sarah Grobbel, Assistant Superintendent of Career and Innovation

- a. Sarah was substituting for Karen Fisher, President of the Board of Education, who needed to attend the Board of Education held that evening.
- b. Our district's excellence is founded on decades of strong support from our parents and taxpayers. We generally pursue a budget and bond proposal every four years to sustain that excellence.
- c. The COVID pandemic has had an extraordinary impact on our funding. The state has reduced our budget funding by \$25 million this year, with a \$33 million reduction expected next year. The district has already made significant cuts: \$14 million reduction centrally; an all-staff salary freeze; furlough days (6 for administrators and 5 for teachers). Without an election, we will need to continue to cut, including reducing nurses in school and increasing class size.
- d. The district has placed two items on the November ballot: 4A (budget proposal) and 4B (bond proposal). The original proposals have been cut to the bare minimum in recognition of the economic difficulties the pandemic has created for our taxpayers.
  1. The 4A budget proposal will generate an additional \$35 million in operating revenue. The district will still need to make budget cuts, but this amount will preserve our teachers and nurses.
  2. The 4B bond proposal is for \$150 million, a large reduction from the original plan for \$300 million. Below are how the funds will be spent:

- a. \$88 million in maintenance for our current buildings and the construction of a new elementary school on the east side.
    - b. \$14 million for innovative learning environments. The 2016 bond paid for new STEM learning spaces for elementary and middle schools, plus the construction of the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus (CCIC). The 2020 bond will provide \$9 million for innovative learning spaces at our high schools and \$5 million for expansion of the CCIC. This campus has been so successful that some of our programs there have wait lists.
    - c. \$38 million for safety and security. The funds will provide for deadbolt locks on all our classroom doors, upgrades to fire and security systems, and technology upgrades for our infrastructure.
    - d. \$7 million for a new mental health day treatment center — an innovative public/private partnership that will let us help our own students here in the district.
  3. Together, these two proposals will cost \$1.65/month per \$100,000 in home value. The average home in Cherry Creek School District is valued at \$410,000; the cost for that homeowner would be less than \$100 per year.
  - e. For more information, see this website:  
<https://www.citizensforcherrycreekschools.com>  
You can also contact a member of our school's election committee: Melanie Adams, Christine Tokarchik, or Diana Price.
3. Approval of Minutes from March 9, 2020 — Chris Domino  
We postponed this item to the November meeting since the minutes for this meeting were too long to review online. The minutes will be sent out by email.
  4. District Accountability Committee Report — Chris Domino  
Everyone is welcome to join the first DAC meeting of the new year on September 30. The meeting will be by Zoom. If you wish to attend, Chris can send you the invitation.
  5. PTO Report — Jen Woodrow
    - a. PTO won't be able to do much this year, since we cannot meet in person. We are working on beefing up our communication efforts and increasing our funding. Funding is down this year because of our decreased enrollment, since some of our families chose the online elementary option.
    - b. Diana took the opportunity to mention how much she appreciates the parent support we are receiving.
  6. Nominations for Co-Chair — Mike Murray
    - a. Our committee is organized around two co-chairs. They serve staggered terms so that we always have an experienced co-chair who can help the new co-chair learn the job. Mike mentioned that at the moment, he was the only co-chair and asked if anyone was interested in the vacant position.
    - b. One of the participants asked what the position involved.

1. One co-chair is usually the Willow Creek representative to DAC and attends those meetings.
  2. Both co-chairs work with the principal to structure the agenda for the committee meetings and ensure that the public is represented.
  3. The co-chairs facilitate the meetings of the committee.
  - c. Currently the commitment is less than usual since we will only be meeting four times this year. Normally we meet almost every month of the school year.
  - d. Dana Sandberg volunteered for the position. Fiona Maguire-O'Shea seconded the nomination. We will vote at the November meeting.
7. COVID Response/Security & Safety — Diana Price
- a. Our soft start in the morning is working very well. Students come into the building as soon as they arrive (as opposed to waiting at the door). They hang up their coats, wash their hands, come into the classroom at their own pace, and sit down to work. It is a much calmer start to the day.
  - b. The students are amazingly good about following our safety rules and wearing their masks. We are washing hands before and after every transition (eight or nine times a day). The one thing that is a little hard is watching our distance. We have good classroom spacing and have put markers down on the floor in the hallways.
  - c. We miss having parents in the building, but we're very thankful to be in school. We will probably have a case and will need to quarantine a class sooner or later, but we'll cope and come back together.
  - d. Questions and Comments
    1. After thanking Diana for all that the staff is doing, Fiona mentioned that she is serving on the District Student Resource Officer Task Force that was formed this summer. The task force has about 50 people from all walks of life, including SROs, and is working to clarify what the role of SROs should be in the Cherry Creek School District. Fiona will be glad to keep us updated on what this committee is doing.
    2. A parent asked if there was any plan to do a hybrid schedule at the elementary level. Diana answered that there are no plans for hybrid; we have full-time in person and full-time remote options.
    3. Another parent asked why CCSD is in school when other districts are not. Diana pointed out the district website that explains the science behind our metric. The superintendent makes decisions based on that metric; it is the science and the data that drive decisions about being in school in person. We do have the full-time online option for those who feel their children are safer at home. Another parent thanked the district for putting out metrics that we can track; the clear guidance is very helpful. Being forthright with parents and explaining the "why" behind district decisions is really great.
    4. If a household has to quarantine, what is the plan for that family's child?
      - a. Diana said that our teachers are currently working on getting information onto Schoology, the district's preferred learning platform, and are practicing using Schoology during class time to help students learn to use the platform. You may have already seen your child

practicing logging in at home to make sure your home equipment works with our programs.

- b. Chris clarified that there are two possible scenarios in this case:
  - 1. If a student or a student's family member is sick with COVID, then the student stays home and does work through Schoology asynchronously; in other words, the student completes equivalent work posted online on his or her own schedule.
  - 2. If an entire class is quarantined because a student or the teacher has COVID, then the class works in Schoology on a synchronous schedule, with three hours a day of learning through videoconferencing and other hours beyond that of asynchronous work the teacher assigns.
- 5. Diana mentioned again that we are all thrilled to be in school together.

8. General Parent and Community Q&A — Mike Murray

- a. Chris asked if there is something the parents on the call need from us if and when we go to remote learning.
  - 1. Question from a parent: Is it going to be different than last spring? Is it going to be live?  
Answer: Yes, it is. Students will be live together on a Microsoft Teams call three hours a day, and specials will be part of the live section of the day.
- b. Question from Dana: Have you seen mental health impacts from COVID?  
Answer: Diana replied that she was expecting the students would need time to transition back to the classroom after five months out of school, but our kids are amazingly resilient and are thrilled to be back together with their friends. We do have a psychologist on staff, and we meet regularly to talk about any student having a problem.
- c. Question: What's the plan for parent-teacher conferences?  
Answer: They will be virtual, since we can't have parents in the building. Don't hesitate to contact your teachers if you have any questions.
- d. Comment from Diana: Since I can't see parents and they can't drop into the building to see me, I am working to communicate more by other means. I have added a weekly email to the Sunday Blast. POWER Time videos can give you a glimpse of what is actually happening in our classrooms. I have asked teachers to keep their websites up to date. Please email or call me if you have questions.
- e. Comment from Kim: I really like the new Sunday Blast. And a shoutout to Dr. Siegfried for the great metric. Everyone is doing a wonderful job!  
Reply from Diana: The Blast is really the work of our wonderful PTO volunteers.
- f. Question from Fiona to teachers: Have you found the students behind since they missed the last nine weeks of school?  
Answer from Sandra Wiley: There are a few gaps in understanding, but the kids are so glad to be in the classroom that they are growing by leaps and bounds.

9. Closing Remarks — Mike Murray

Thanks to everyone for attending, and we parents really appreciate not having the kids at home!

10. The meeting was adjourned at 7:41 P.M.

Next Meeting: November 9, 2020