

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS
APRIL 8, 2024**

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas held a public meeting on April 8, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at 385 W. Centennial Pkwy., North Las Vegas, NV 89084.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Board Chair Travis Mizer called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. The following Board members were in attendance: Travis Mizer, LeNora Bredsguard, John Bentham, Cody Noble, Sarah McClellan, and Renee Fairless.

Also present were the following principals: Lee Esplin, Jessica Scobell, Mindi Palomeque, Cesar Tiu, David Fossett, Kate Lackey, and Shannon Manning. JJ Christian, Somerset Inc. representative Suzette Ruiz, and Academica representatives Gary McClain, Ryan Reeves, Matt Padron, Nathon DeHoyos, and Marla Devitt attended the meeting.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

a. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 5, 2024 BOARD MEETING

b. APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- 1. SCHOOL FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**
- 2. APPROVAL OF INITIAL BUDGET FOR THE 2024/2025 SCHOOL YEAR**
- 3. APPROVAL OF CREDIT CARD AGREEMENT WITH NEVADA STATE BANK**
- 4. APPROVAL OF LOSEE CAMPUS BLEACHERS**
- 5. APPROVAL OF SKY POINTE CAMPUS FIELD LIGHTS**
- 6. APPROVAL OF SKY POINTE CAMPUS PERFORMING ARTS RISER, LIGHTING, AND ACOUSTIC SHELL**
- 7. APPROVAL OF LOSEE CAMPUS SEAL COAT**
- 8. APPROVAL OF CARPET ALIANTE, SKY POINTE, AND SKYE CANYON CAMPUSES**
- 9. APPROVAL OF SKYE CANYON CAMPUS BASKETBALL BACKSTOPS**

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA, AS PRESENTED. MEMBER FAIRLESS SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

4. ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. CAMPUS UPDATES BY SOMERSET PRINCIPALS

The principals of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas addressed the Board, providing updates and highlights from their respective campuses. Sky Pointe students Theo Sanders and Magnus Bingham addressed the Board to introduce themselves. Ms. Sanders, the thespian president and student director of

Addams Family, highlighted her four-year tenure in the program as a senior. Mr. Bingham, a freshman, served as the co-director of Addams Family, also with four years of experience in the program. They noted the diverse opportunities afforded to them during their involvement, such as acting, directing, stage management, and writing. They thanked Mrs. Jacobs for her support and recognized the school administrators for their backing. Ms. Sanders and Mr. Bingham invited the Board members to attend the Addams Family production scheduled for April 18th-20th. Board members asked questions about the production and expressed appreciation for the students' insights and invitation.

Principal Fossett provided an overview of recent events at the Stephanie campus, including SBAC testing, a STEM night, a literacy night, an art and leadership night, and a concert. Principal Palomeque reported that the intermediate grade levels at the North Las Vegas campus had completed the spring i-Ready diagnostics, with objective proficiency numbers aligning with Dr. Barrs' figures. She noted that WIDA testing was completed on time, and anticipation was high for the upcoming SBAC results to showcase students' learning progress.

Principal Scobell reviewed the Losee campus's achievements, which included a low number of teacher openings, success in basketball with the boys' high school team winning the regional championship and advancing to the State finals, and the middle school boys' JV team clinching the charter school league championship. The campus also held a pre-festival concert in preparation for an upcoming festival. Future events included a STEM night, an elementary writer's picnic, senior awards, and 8th-grade awards.

Principal Lackey reported testing had commenced at the Skye Canyon campus and noted that the campus raised nearly \$100,000 at the APEX event, earmarked for campus improvements. She stated that Skye Canyon student Payton Mruk was on the USA Hockey National Championship team, the Vegas Junior Golden Knights.

Principal Tiu shared highlights from the Lone Mountain campus including the middle school Battle of the Books team competing in Florida, participation in the Ron Clark Amazing Shake, the middle school quiz bowl team preparing for nationals, upcoming leadership day on May 8th, ongoing SBAC testing, and plans for 8th-grade promotion, which included recognizing the original kinder-cats.

Principal Manning announced that the Alainte campus had been recognized as a Governor Designated STEM School. Other recent activities included holding leadership day on March 6th, a successful color run raising \$48,000, hosting a military family breakfast, and preparing for the upcoming kinder-cub day on April 10th. The campus also organized a school-wide solar eclipse viewing and testing was set to begin soon.

Member Mizer requested that the principals extend invitations to all Board members for upcoming campus events.

b. SURPLUS SPENDING PLAN

Mr. Gary McClain addressed the Board to review the surplus spending plan. Over the past few months, the surplus spending plan had been developed to determine how funds would benefit the system. The top priority remained maintaining a 120-day unrestricted cash reserve to cover bondholder covenants, SPCSA requirements, and essential needs like technology, curriculum, and the reserve study items. The second priority was allocating 1% of the gross revenue to the Staff Performance Bonus Pool, with any excess going to priority three for Board-approved capital projects. Any remaining funds were added to

the Staff Performance Bonus Pool as priority four. Mr. McClain noted the contributions of Members Noble and Harty in developing this plan.

Member Bentham asked about the distinction between the bonus pool and retention bonuses. Mr. McClain clarified that the bonus pool rewarded current-year performance and merit, while retention bonuses were budgeted separately. Member Bredsguard inquired about principals' inclusion in the bonus pool. Mr. McClain explained that the Board funds principals' bonuses through operating funds, not the 1% surplus allocation. Member Noble suggested two options: allocating bonuses from the 120-day reserve, with surplus replenishing it, or creating a separate principal bonus plan managed by the Board. Member Bentham stated that he preferred separating principal bonuses from the surplus policy.

Member Mizer asked about Mr. Goodsell's thoughts on the plan. Mr. McClain explained that although he hadn't received feedback, both Mr. Reeves and Mr. Goodsell prioritized protecting the unrestricted cash reserve. Member McClellan sought clarification on the implementation timeline. Mr. McClain confirmed it would take effect immediately upon surplus distribution in June. Member Noble agreed with the prompt implementation and suggested keeping principal bonus discussions distinct from the surplus policy to avoid confusion. Members Bentham and McClellan praised the proposal as a long-awaited solution to enhance staff compensation and school success.

MEMBER FAIRLESS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE SOMERSET CASH SURPLUS POLICY AS WRITTEN. MEMBER BENTHAM SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED TO APPROVE WITH A VOTE OF FIVE TO ONE, WITH MEMBER MIZER VOTING IN OPPOSITION.

c. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF NEW ELA CURRICULUM FOR STEPHANIE CAMPUS

Assistant Principal Jennifer Steele addressed the Board to explain the curriculum request for the Stephanie campus. The campus had conducted extensive research to ensure alignment with Nevada academic standards and engagement for students from K-8. She noted that the curriculum aimed for vertical alignment to maintain consistent rigor across grades and incorporated interdisciplinary elements such as science, social studies, and health standards. Critical thinking was fostered through thought-provoking discussions and Socratic seminars, promoting respectful dialogue among students. The needs of diverse learners, including EL and special needs students, were addressed through scaffolding and tailored differentiated instruction approaches. Assistant Principal Steele stated that funding was sought from both current and upcoming budgets to provide teacher training and materials ahead of the school year. The cost would be \$144,000, representing a saving compared to alternative options. The decision was informed not solely by cost considerations but also by firsthand observations of the curriculum at Joe Mackey Elementary, confirming its suitability for meeting educational goals.

Member Bredsguard inquired about the absence of a phonemic awareness and phonics component in the curriculum. Assistant Principal Steele explained that while supplementation was necessary, they already had phonics and phonemic awareness curricula in place from the previous year, thus avoiding the need for additional teacher training. Member Fairless sought clarification on the curriculum's alignment with other Somerset schools, to which Steele reviewed the differences, noting that the other campuses utilized CKLA. She emphasized that collaboration still occurred on shared standards and intervention programs.

Member Fairless questioned the curriculum's rigor for middle school students, to which Assistant Principal Steele confirmed its presence and progressive increase over the years. She noted that the writing component entailed gradual buildup throughout the week. Member Mizer questioned the decision to

consult with a CCSD school rather than another Somerset campus, to which Principal Fossett clarified the reasons behind the decision, including discussions with external consultants. Member Noble expressed concerns regarding campus uniformity and the adoption of disparate curricula. Assistant Principal Steele reviewed the benefits of the curriculum in enhancing teacher buy-in and student engagement.

Member McClellan asked for insight on the curriculum from other Somerset principals. Principal Esplin acknowledged that he could not speak to the curriculum specifically. He had discussed collaboration with Principal Fossett. He stated that each campus moved to CKLA individually and noted that it was difficult to transition to a new curriculum. Being able to collaborate with another campus was helpful during the transition. Member Bredsguard asked about professional development plans without the option to collaborate with other Somerset campuses. Assistant Principal Steele stated that the professional development would be provided by the curriculum company at the start of the summer, which would allow teachers to become familiar with the curriculum over the summer.

Ms. Suzette Ruiz addressed the Board and stated that she did not know about the Wit and Wisdom curriculum; however, in Florida, the Somerset campuses use the same curriculum. Member Fairless stated that Jessica Barr could provide a checklist of important considerations for curriculum and suggested that the campus refer to the checklist to ensure that it would meet the considerations. Discussion ensued regarding collaboration among campuses and the timeline of curriculum changes among all the campuses.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO ACCEPT AS PRESENTED. MEMBER BREDSGUARD SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED TO APPROVE WITH A VOTE OF FOUR TO TWO, WITH MEMBERS MIZER AND NOBLE VOTING IN OPPOSITION.

Member Bentham asked the campus to meet with Jessica Barr before changing the curriculum.

h. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESIGNATION OF WILL HARTY

Member Harty thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve with them for ten years. He stated that he loved the Somerset community. Member Mizer thanked Member Harty for his service and for his financial knowledge. Member Bentham stated that Member Harty had been the heart and soul of the Somerset board for years and thanked him for the financial foundation he helped secure. Member Noble thanked Member Harty for the value he brought to the system. Mr. McClain presented Member Harty with an award for his service to the Board.

i. APPROVAL OF EMERITUS STATUS FOR WILL HARTY

Member Bentham stated that the emeritus status was proposed for members like Will Harty, who provided such institutional knowledge to the Somerset system.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO APPROVE WILL HARTY AS THE FIRST BOARD EMERITUS MEMBER. MEMBER MCCLELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

Mr. McClain honored Will Harty, presenting him with a jacket as the inaugural emeritus member of the Somerset Board, recognizing his service from January 14, 2014 through April 8, 2024.

d. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF SKY POINTE CAMPUS SCOREBOARD

Mr. McClain explained that the request was to approve a "not to exceed" amount of \$24,748 for the exterior scoreboard at the Sky Pointe campus. With only one bid received thus far, if the Board approved

this limit and designated a member to grant final approval, he would proceed with soliciting additional bids.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO ACCEPT AS PRESENTED, WITH THE FINAL COST NOT TO EXCEED \$24,748, WITH MEMBER MIZER DELEGATED TO GIVE FINAL APPROVAL. MEMBER FAIRLESS SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

e. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PLAYGROUND SURFACES FOR LOSEE AND SKY POINTE CAMPUSES

Mr. McClain stated that the request was to approve a “not to exceed” amount of \$80,000 for four playgrounds across two campuses. He noted that he was working to secure bids that would ensure the safety of the students and the longevity of the product.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO APPROVE NOT TO EXCEED \$80,000, WITH MR. MCCLAIN TAKING THE LEAD, AND MEMBER MIZER WITH FINAL APPROVAL. MEMBER FAIRLESS SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

f. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF SKYE CANYON CAMPUS EXTERIOR LIGHTING

Mr. McClain stated that there was very little exterior lighting on the Skye Canyon campus. While bids had been received, the request lacked fixture specifications. The aim was to replicate the fixtures used in the addition to ensure consistency across the campus. The proposed "not to exceed" amount would be \$50,000.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO APPROVE, NOT TO EXCEED \$50,000, WITH MR. MCCLAIN TAKING THE LEAD AND MEMBER MIZER SERVING AS THE FINAL APPROVAL. MEMBER MCCLELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

g. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LONE MOUNTAIN CAMPUS MPR LIGHTING

Mr. McClain stated that the Lone Mountain MPR lighting would be changed to abuse-proof LED lights. While a firm proposal had been received, it lacked controls. Principal Tiu requested a control feature with three zones. The request was for a cost "not to exceed" \$36,000. Member Bentham inquired about the lights' dimming capability. Mr. McClain confirmed they would be dimmable with the control feature and zones.

MEMBER NOBLE MOVED TO APPROVE AS PRESENTED, WITH A NOT TO EXCEED OF \$36,000 WITH MEMBER MIZER HAVING FINAL APPROVAL. MEMBER BENTHAM SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

j. INTERVIEW OF BOARD MEMBER CANDIDATES

1. BEN DOUGLAS

Mr. Ben Douglas addressed the Board and reviewed his personal and professional experience. During the introduction and interview session he relayed the following information:

- His family began at the North Las Vegas campus when it first opened. He played a key role in establishing the PTO at the North Las Vegas, Sky Pointe, and Lone Mountain campuses.
- Sky Pointe leadership asked him to apply, and he had a deep affection for the Somerset community, as well as a strong passion for serving the community.
- He had a masters degree in accounting and had experience with non-profit organizations.

- He had two sons who attended Somerset schools.
- He would like to see a policy setting a timeline for purchase requests by principals.
- He created financial packets for board meetings for non-profit organizations.

2. MATT HURLEY

Mr. Matt Hurley addressed the Board and reviewed his personal and professional experience. During the introduction and interview session he relayed the following information:

- He was a Las Vegas native. He had five children, three attended Somerset schools and two more would when they are old enough. He had a vested interest in the school and its operations.
- He had been a CPA since 2019, with experience in various industries, including casinos and escrow for a title company. He preferred public accounting, specializing in general commercial and benefit plans, with some experience in government entities. He had expertise in reading and interpreting financial statements and would be able to assist with budgeting and financial management.
- He received an email from the Sky Pointe campus about the vacant board position. Both his wife and work partner encouraged him to apply. He would like the opportunity to gain board experience, appreciates the direction of the Somerset system, and wished to contribute to its ongoing progress.
- He had experience working with significant budgets, including one exceeding \$400 million, and feels confident in his ability to assist the Somerset board in reviewing financial performance and budgets. While he had not worked directly with bonds, he had worked on bond audits.
- He would be able to meet the time commitment for board meetings and finance committee meetings.
- He felt that the board's role in a school would be to guide its direction, review the budgets, and ensure that salaries were competitive to retain talented teachers.
- The discussion on curriculum was conducted professionally and straightforwardly. Despite the board's split decision, members did not become upset with each other. Given that his children attend the school, he had a vested interest in thoroughly researching the decision to be presented to the board. He recognized that his role would be to serve the Somerset system as a whole rather than solely advocating for his own children.
- He was willing to advocate for what was right rather than what was easy, following careful consideration of all perspectives. Additionally, he was prepared to make a long-term commitment to the board.

3. MATT MORRIS

Mr. Matt Morris addressed the Board and reviewed his personal and professional experience. During the introduce and interview session he relayed the following information:

- He had two children at the Stephanie campus and had seen great things in their education. He wanted to be more involved in the education system. He had work experience in education policy.
- He was willing to commit the time needed to serve on the board. His understanding of the legislative process would be beneficial to the board.
- He found the curriculum discussion fascinating and appreciated the board's ability to engage in such meaningful dialogue. The principals were able to voice their opinions, and board members posed insightful questions. The innovative approach of charter schools enabled the board to listen to the presentation and deliberate on the potential impact the decision could have on the school.
- Regarding principal autonomy, he stated that some decisions were better left to individual campuses, some were better as a system, and some were state-wide decision.
- He appreciated that some board members also had children attending Somerset. He recognized the unique perspective that would bring to serving on the board, especially in discussions where objectivity was crucial despite personal connections. As an attorney he was trained to take emotion out of decisions.
- He understood that commitment and longevity was crucial to a successful board. A long term commitment would allow him to see long term results of decisions the board made. He stated there was no bad opportunity to be as involved as possible. He appreciated the role charter schools played in the education system.
- He would be direct in a decision making role. It was possible to disagree without being disagreeable and it was important to have the conviction to do the right thing for the system.

k. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Each Board member spoke to the qualities that each candidate would bring to the Board and weighed in on his or her chose of candidates. Discussion ensued regarding the number of candidates that could be elected to the Board, noting that the bylaws allowed up to nine members.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO OFFER MATT HURLEY AND MATT MORRIS POSITIONS AS BOARD MEMBERS. MEMBER FAIRLESS SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

l. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF BOARD TREASURER

Mr. McClain stated that, with the resignation of Will Harty, the treasurer position was vacant.

MEMBER BENTHAM NOMINATED MATTHEW HURLEY AS THE BOARD TREASURER. MEMBER FAIRLESS SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

m. APPROVAL OF 2024/2025 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Mr. McClain stated that the meetings would remain on Monday nights, noting that the schedule was tentative.

MEMBER NOBLE MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHEDULE. MEMBER BENTHAM SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

5. LONG RANGE CALENDAR/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. McClain stated the next regularly meeting was schedule for June 3rd; however, the meeting would likely be held in May to approve the bids for the campus improvements. He noted that the Board stipulated that multiple bids be sought for the IT contract before the current contract expired. He would begin that process in order to have a new contract in place with sufficient time to make a transition if a new company was selected. Member Bentham asked Mr. McClain to involve the principals in the search.

6. MEMBER COMMENT

Board members welcomed the new members and thanked the principals for their work and dedication. Member Bredsguard noted that she had attended the Aliante leadership day and enjoyed seeing the passion of the campus parents. Member Bentham reminded the members of the National Public Charter School Conference June 30th through July 3rd. Member Fairless complemented the Losee basketball team members for their behavior at the State basketball tournament. Ms. Ruiz wished the schools good luck on the upcoming testing.

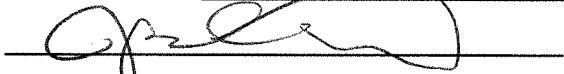
7. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

8. ADJOURN MEETING

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:35 P.M.

Approved on: MAY 20, 2024



**Secretary of the Board of Directors
Somerset Academy of Las Vegas**