

**MINUTES**  
**of the meeting of the**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS of SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS**  
**August 11, 2018**

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Nevada held a public meeting on August 11, 2018, at 8:00 a.m. at 4155 N. Rancho Drive #140 Las Vegas, NV 89130.

**1. Call to order and Roll Call**

Board Chair John Bentham called the meeting to order at 8:11 a.m. with a quorum present. In attendance were Board members Will Harty, Carrie Boehlecke, Travis Mizer, Gary McClain, Sarah McClellan, Cody Noble (8:15 a.m.), and John Bentham.

Also present was Executive Director John Barlow, as well as Principals Lee Esplin and Jenni Martinez. Academica representatives Crystal Thiriot and Gayle Jefferson were also present.

**2. Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no request for public comment.

The Board had a moment of silence out of respect for Dan Phillips and in recognition of his remarkable life and his passing.

**3. Possible Action to Approve the Minutes from the July 26, 2018 Telephonic Board Meeting**

**Member Boehlecke moved to approve the minutes from the July 26, 2018 telephonic board meeting. Member McClain seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.**

**4. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve a Policy and Procedure for Accepting Capital Donations**

Principal Lee Esplin addressed the Board and explained that Webster Orthodontics would like to make a sizeable donation (\$120,000) to the Sky Pointe campus, describing several items to which the donation would go. Mr. Webster had also requested to be the only orthodontic sponsor for the duration of his sponsorship, based on the fact that this type of exclusivity took place at other schools. Principal Esplin stated that, in speaking with Academica regarding the legalities, there needed to be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Ms. Crystal Thiriot addressed the Board and outlined the details of the MOU, including Mr. Webster's name on the outside of the gymnasium and his logo on the gym floor (which had already been completed). He also included the potential display of his logo on a refreshments trailer, should the school

obtain one; adding that he would be named as a sponsor for any sports programs. The sponsorship could be renewed each year for \$5,000 at the discretion of Sky Pointe. Discussion ensued regarding the various options for the future, as well as conflicts that could arise with other donors with whom the school had an ongoing relationship. Executive Director John Barlow addressed the Board and stated that Sky Pointe had received donations from Hansen Orthodontics in the past, but not at this level; however, Member Noble recommended that the school might want to consider at least notifying Hansen of the situation. Executive Director Barlow also stated that along with Hansen's donation, a banner was given to each school to hang in the gymnasiums, which had not happened across the board. Principal Esplin asked for clarification, as he had not received the banner. Some discussion ensued regarding donations from Hansen and how it might affect any agreement with Webster. Member McClain also suggested notifying Hansen of any agreement with Webster.

Member Bentham suggested a continued relationship with Hansen on the elementary side of things, with an agreement with Webster not to partner with additional orthodontists for the duration of his sponsorship. Member Harty stated that he did not think that would be fair to Webster with such a sizable donation. Principal Esplin stated that this donation would provide them with the money to move forward with several athletic programs, which made the Board's decision timely. Some discussion ensued that any motion might need to include a clause regarding the yearly folders printed through Hansen and a potential implied agreement with Hansen. Member Bentham suggested approving the MOU with the exception of Hansen Orthodontics, as mutually agreed to by both parties. Discussion ensued regarding various options for the agreement. Member Boehlecke and Noble urged transparency. Member Noble also stated that the MOU would need to be followed by an actual agreement.

The Board discussed how to determine the Policy, and whether a committee should be given the task of forming guidelines and a possible policy. Member Harty suggested tasking the Finance Committee with this.

**Member Noble moved to task the Finance Committee with determining a policy and procedure for accepting capital donations. Member Mizer seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.**

## **5. Discussion and Possible Acceptance of a Capital Donation from Webster Orthodontics to the Sky Pointe Campus**

Discussion for this item took place as part of agenda item #4.

**Member Noble moved to go forward with the acceptance of a capital donation from Webster Orthodontics with a caveat that Webster be notified of the folders provided by Hansen Orthodontics, and that Hansen be notified of the agreement with Webster. Member McClain seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.**



## **6. Discussion and Possible Approval to Submit an Amendment to the Somerset Academy Charter to Acquire the Lone Mountain Campus**

Ms. Thiriot explained that the Charter Authority was now requiring the Board to submit and amend when acquiring a campus, adding that they would need to do so in order to acquire the Lone Mountain campus.

**Member Harty moved to approve an amendment to the Somerset Academy Charter to acquire the Lone Mountain campus. Member Boehlecke seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.**

## **7. Academic Report and Executive Director Update**

Executive Director John Barlow presented the academic report for Somerset Academy, beginning with the preliminary data, which was broken out by campus for the first time. He stated that this data, as presented in the support materials, could give the Board an idea of what the star ratings would look like, adding that once the star ratings were received he would be able to give the Board a full report campus by campus. Member McClellan asked if the data could be compared to the previous year, to which Executive Director Barlow stated that there was a drop in all categories when averaged. Ms. Gayle Jefferson addressed the Board and explained the difficulties in gaging individual student growth.

Some discussion ensued regarding the various campuses scores and growth rates, including the difficulties in comparing campuses, even those within the school district. The Board expressed some disappointment that Somerset seemed to fall within the average range, agreeing that this was not an acceptable course. Ms. Thiriot stated that most campuses had surpassed the surrounding district schools the previous year, and that this would be data they would analyze for the 2017/18 school year as soon as it was completely available.

Executive Director Barlow explained that each year the students were graded on an increasingly higher level as they progressed by grade level, where different rubrics applied to each grade level. He did express concerns with how the star ratings would come in based on the preliminary data, and was already in conversations with the SPCSA if they did receive a one or two star rating at any of the campuses, and the path they would follow. Some discussion took place regarding intervention approaches taken with those students needing additional help and ways to help the staff through curriculum workshops.

The Board discussed attendance and the ways the school's hands were tied by statute, in that truancy was often not much of a deterrent to those choosing to take their students out of school for whatever reason. Ms. Thiriot stated that Somerset had received 8/10 for attendance as a system for the elementary schools.

Principal Jenni Martinez addressed the Board and asked if there was additional funding and support due to the increase of IEP and ELL students at the North Las Vegas campus, to which Executive Director Barlow added that there was also very little space available for the support they do have. Discussion ensued as to possible options with a promise from the Board that this issue would be addressed.

## **8. Evaluation of Executive Director John Barlow**

Member Bentham read the receipt of evaluation for Executive John Barlow into the record.

Executive Director Barlow reviewed the self-evaluation as presented in the support materials, and explained some of the improvements that had been made based on the previous year's evaluation, including some of the changes. He stated that some of the schools had chosen to abandon the Leader in My program due to the high price tag. Member Noble asked if the program had been a mandate from the Board, to which it was agreed that it was never voted on by the Board. Member McClain expressed concern that the individual principal's autonomy sometimes interfered with the seamlessness of Somerset as a whole, which really spoke to the long term strategy of Somerset. Executive Director Barlow asked for guidance from the Board.

The Board continued to discuss what separates Somerset from a district school, especially when some campuses were struggling in differing areas. Member Bentham redirected the meeting towards the Executive Director evaluation, while stating that these items did need to be part of the Board's strategic planning.

Executive Director Barlow reviewed the ways in which he could improve, especially in communication, which was hampered in part by the ways the State disseminated information.

Member McClellan suggested focusing on the campuses that were struggling, and Member Bentham confirmed that if it would take additional people, that was what they needed to do. Member Boehlecke stated that they should take a look at successful schools and learn from them.

Member Mizer asked how the campuses could be assessed if not by some sort of metric, to which Executive Director Barlow stated that there was so much more to evaluating a school, including the climate. Member Boehlecke stated that it was difficult to judge a school based only on data points, even if it appeared that this was the only logical way to assess. Member Harty agreed that there needed to be some way to measure the school's success as well as Executive Director Barlow. Additional discussion ensued regarding a quantitative way to rate the school while incorporating the school's climate. Member Noble stated that it was difficult to hold Executive Director Barlow to a metric if he had not been given the tools to be successful.

The Board and Executive Director Barlow agreed that it would be prudent to request assistance from Somerset Florida, where affiliation fees were being paid and help had been offered. Ms. Thiriot offered to contact the Florida group and request its involvement.

Member Harty stated that it would be difficult to give a pat on the back to the system as a whole if the star ratings come back low; additionally, Executive Director Barlow should determine what ways in which the Board could support him in his position.

Some discussion took place regarding the issues with the school's financials, in that the Authority used government accounting which could negatively impact the school, even though they were financially sound; which presented a problem when funding was needed in various areas.

Member McClain encouraged Executive Director Barlow to work on the communication piece when working with the Board, even if it was just a short email giving the slightest bit of communication



and assuring the Board that any given issue was being addressed. Some discussion continued in regards to how much communication the Board needed on a daily basis and where to draw that line.

Discussion ensued regarding the procedures for adding items to the agendas, whether it should be with the Board Chair or the Executive Director or Academics. Member Noble suggested that this needed clarification as items requested by the Board Chair had been removed at times. Ms. Thiriot stated that the final agenda should always be approved by the Board Chair.

**No action was taken on this item.**

**9. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Somerset Academy Strategic Planning**

Ms. Thiriot stated that there was a site available for purchase by Somerset if they chose to do so. Some discussion took place regarding the pros and cons of making this purchase. The Board did not feel that it fit Somerset's needs at that time.

The Board agreed that a strategic planning meeting/retreat should be planned in the immediate future. Member McClain asked what kind of prep work would be done for this meeting, to which Member Bentham stated that a survey of sorts should be sent out to the Board and Executive Director Barlow to ensure that vital components were not overlooked.

**10. Member Comment**

There was no member comment.

**11. Public Comments and Discussion**

There was no request for public comment.

**12. Adjournment**

**This meeting was adjourned at 11:41 a.m.**

Approved on: 10/16/18

  
Secretary of the Board of Directors  
Somerset Academy of Las Vegas