



## CHARTER COUNCIL MINUTES

**Meeting of January 4, 2012  
3:30pm YRCS – Conference Room**

Yuba River Charter School is a community focused on the development of our children. The primary responsibility for the governance of the affairs of the school falls upon the Charter Council, composed of teachers, staff, parents and community member(s). Regular meetings of the Charter Council are held the first Wednesday of each month. The Charter Council invites input from all constituencies of the school. For more information regarding the functioning of the Charter Council, see the Charter Council By Laws and applicable policies.

### **1. Call to Order – 3:36 pm**

CC Present: Carrie Reuther (CR) (until 5 pm after item 5h), Leila Barber (LB), Dan Martinez (DM), Kathy Eldredge (KE), Torrie Mudd (TM), Mariana Nielsen (MN), Robert Wallis (RW)

Absent: None

Guests:

Caleb Buckley (CB), Director

Susan Egan (SE), Business Manager (until closed session)

### **2. Public Comment – 3:36 pm**

This is an opportunity for members of the public to address the council on non-agendized items. Note the council cannot discuss or take action on non-agendized items at this meeting, but such items may be agendized for a later council meeting for discussion and/or action. Agendized items may either be addressed at this time or when the items come up for discussion and/or action. All comments are to be pertinent to the business of the board as determined by the chair. Furthermore, comments which reflect adversely upon personal character or motives are out of order as are those which reflect racial, religious, economic or political views. Such statements are grounds for summary termination of the privilege of address.

Melissa Seibold, Development Director, announced on behalf of the Ed Foundation that YRCS was successful in obtaining a \$350,000 grant for its new school building project on Rough and Ready in Grass Valley. The grant was written and defended by American Rivers Association on YRCS's behalf and will be used for pervious pavement and other improvements to the parking lot area to aid in handling runoff water. CC congratulated the Ed Foundation on this achievement and on this great first step in their fundraising efforts for the new school site. Melissa announced that other grants for the new school site are also in progress.



TM read a letter from a parent that could not attend the meeting regarding concerns about safety issues in the upper grades. The letter specifically mentioned the incident in which children in the upper grades were harassed on their return from a field trip in downtown Nevada city. It proposed many solutions to improve safety during such field trips, including ensuring that all supervising teachers carry cell phones, that there be an adult at the front and the back of the group, that children be provided safety instruction regarding interactions with strangers during trips off campus and in emergency situations, and further training for YRCS staff on safety/reporting issues.

### **3. Consent Agenda Action Items – None**

### **4. Discussion Items – 3:46 pm**

#### **a. The council shall discuss the Little Creek enrollment policy and priority status criteria.**

Several CC members expressed concern with a public school giving priority to students who can afford to pay for a private preschool. The concern is discrimination against less affluent families as well as those families that prefer to keep their children home during preschool years.

Other views expressed included the desire to have a preschool within the formal YRCS program that can serve as a feeder for the kindergartens. Having the priority enrollment is a very effective marketing and recruitment technique. Providing a core group of children for the kindergartens who already understand YRCS rhythms, verses, and culture is also seen as a benefit.

The priority for Little Creek students is one of several priorities in YRCS enrollment policy, coming after priorities for children of staff and siblings of current students. Even if all preschool graduates selected YRCS kindergarten it only fills 10 out of approximately 30 potential spaces in the kindergartens. In the past families who get their applications in before the first lottery deadline have almost always gotten into the kindergartens by September. It was pointed out that extremely poor families can attend our preschool by obtaining funding from assistance programs. It was also pointed out that two and a three day per week options are available that significantly reduce the tuition expense. The director of Little Creek and one of the kindergarten teachers are passionate about retaining the current enrollment policy.

When this issue was raised in the past, our attorney was consulted and we were advised that the practice is legal because we hold the license for this in-house preschool program.

It was decided that the faculty would again discuss this issue at the faculty meeting and report back to charter Council. Coming up with graphic or other ways to show families the various avenues for gaining enrollment in YRCS kindergarten could help families understand how to maximize their chances.



**b. The council shall discuss the process for approving warrants for YRCS.**

Currently the procedure for approving warrants at YRCS is as follows:

- The business manager puts together a detailed line item budget coded to each specific use of funds and this budget is reviewed by the director.
- CC then reviews and approves the summarized version of the budget.
- The county chartering agency reviews and approves the detailed version of the budget.
- All future expenditures code to a specific line item. Expenditures exceeding the approved budgeted amounts are rejected by the payment system.
- All expenditures are approved by the Business Manager and entered into the accounting system by the Office Manager.
- A summary of all expenditures (warrants) is reviewed by the CC Finance Committee.
- In addition all records are annually audited by a professional auditing organization, are subject to financial audits by the county chartering agency, and are available for any CC member or any YRCS family to review by visiting the Business Manager.
- Once every few months, the finance committee recommends that all warrants be approved by the CC. This is done with no support documentation as a consent agenda item based upon trust in the above system.

It is recommended that all new CC members visit the business manager to review a sampling of financial records and see how the system works. The above procedure will continue to be used at this time as more detailed reviews of the records are extremely time consuming.

A recommended change in policy is that CC be provided with a copy of the detailed line item budget during the budget approval process.

**5. Discussion/Action Items**

**a. Shall the council approve minutes for 12-7-11?** LB 1st, RW 2nd - Passed unanimously

**b. approved as amended: Shall the council approve the playground improvement plan including the proposed design and a \$1,000 funding stipend from the general reserve contingent on a matching stipend from the parent Council reserve? (3rd reading)?** DM 1st, CR 2nd - Passed unanimously

The work on the playground improvement plan has begun with many games painted on the asphalt. CC is very impressed with how much can be done with so little in this community. We have received great feedback from the children. Further progress is enthusiastically encouraged.



**c. Shall the council discuss (2nd reading) and approve the Disenrollment Policy?** TM 1st, LB 2nd – Tabled

There is general agreement on the policy. This item was tabled pending a review of the forms associated with the policy.

**d. Shall the council discuss (2nd reading) and approve the Volunteer Policy?** DM 1st, CR 2nd – Passed unanimously

The new volunteer policy was approved by CC with a discussion about the increased requirements for fingerprinting and TB tests. PC was asked to consider a scholarship fund for those families for whom the cost of these tests is prohibitive, but they declined this time. CC will communicate the changes for volunteers in upcoming newsletters.

**e. The council shall discuss possible litigation between YRCS and Bitney Springs LLC and approve action as needed.** RW 1st, TM 2nd – Passed unanimously

SE presented an update on the litigation between YRCS and our previous landlord. The matters pertain to the flooding of the preschool which resulted in unusable space and a significant curtailment of our preschool program. The original suit came from the landlord. SE sought legal counsel at the Nevada County Courthouse and they recommended we file a counterclaim based upon the evidence presented. CC approved sending SE as the YRCS representative. Jim Inman will accompany SE as a primary witness of events surrounding the flood. The court date is set for January 25, 2012. The matter amounts to a few thousand dollars and will be handled by small claims court.

**f. Shall the council approve increasing HSA contribution for the 2011-12 school year?** KE 1st, MN 2nd – Passed unanimously with recusal from all teachers present DM, LB, CR

Because of fund-raising efforts during the Moondance auction and because state budget cuts weren't as deep as originally feared the Finance Committee is happy to recommend an increase in the HSA funds for full-time staff. A current contribution of \$1,000 has been increased by \$1,500 to a total of \$2,500 for the current school year.

**g. Shall the council approve the renewal lease for Old Dairy rental property?** LB 1st, RW 2nd – Passed unanimously

A new 12 month lease is approved with the same rent and the same buyout clause as in the original lease. A clause has been added to grant YRCS the right of access, if needed, during early construction. All indications are that the renters are happy and want to stay.

**h. Shall the Council approve the 2012 Charter "County wide benefit" renewal application?** DM 1st, KE 2nd – Tabled

The lengthy draft of the charter renewal application is completed after much work by administration and staff. After weeks of discussion with other charter



schools in the county that are also due for charter renewal, a strategy to best protect the Joint Powers Agency (JPA) was determined. The two home study charters in the county are applying to charter through a small local district while the other four charter schools in the county will ask to be chartered directly through the county. Five out of six of these schools, including YRCS, belong to the JPA.

Because CC members received the large document too late to review for this meeting, a special meeting is scheduled for January 11th to vote on this matter.

**i. Shall the Council approve the substitution plan proposal for Director dissertation absences?** LB 1st, TM 2nd – Passed unanimously

CB has asked for approximately 21 days leave between now and the end of the school year to work on a doctoral dissertation that will focus on studying the best method for operating a charter Waldorf school. CC supports CB in this effort but encourages him to carefully plan his days off and minimize the time away from school as much as possible. The finance committee recommends this proposal at an approximate cost of \$4,800 for substitute support. CB presented a resume from Shana Maziarz for review. She will act as substitute on the days he is out of the office and will generally lead the response to emergencies and work on administrative functions and special projects, perhaps including some grant writing. Any serious issues such as student suspensions will be delayed until CB's return. CC will reevaluate how this solution is progressing at future meetings. It was confirmed that the policy states that, with approval, staff may use some sick days for this type of personal activity. It was also confirmed that this policy is in effect for all full-time staff at YRCS.

**j. Shall the Council discuss the Spring 2012 action items from the Strategic Plan – Leila Barber?** discussion item

LB performed a review of the recently approved strategic plan and pulled out items due in the near future for CC discussion. In general there has been great progress towards goals. Items that require further discussion or action are described below.

- Much progress has been made toward creating a biodynamic farm education program including progress on our new school site and an active program with the Woolman school. All grades have gone to the organic farm at Woolman at least once this year. CC encourages this relationship and its expansion.
- It was acknowledged what a great job Melissa Seibold is doing in keeping track of community events in which YRCS participates. It is unclear whether she has had time to create a formal calendar of these community events including identifying critical due dates for registrations.
- YRCS has done a great job of generating positive stories about our school in The Union. CB is planning an article in a national level Waldorf related publication. Parent volunteers will be solicited to add to these successes.



- The strategic plan calls for a program to showcase science accomplishments. LB will bring this up at a faculty staff meeting for suggestions. Another suggestion was to combine this goal with the goal of more articles for The Union, such as showcasing a botany block with photos of artwork and children's essays.
- Doris Rainville had volunteered to organize articles regarding Waldorf methodologies for our newsletter. LB will follow up.
- A new routine section of the newsletter is being considered called something such as a Volunteer Corner or perhaps Volunteer Kudos to showcase all the many wonderful projects that are completed for our school by dedicated volunteers.
- Another item in the strategic plan is to provide more videos of parent education events for those parents that are unable to attend when originally presented. RW agreed to help SE locate this material, obtain permission before posting it online, and get it into a format for online viewing.
- Another upcoming strategic plan item is to begin to organize our volunteers by skill set in a searchable database. The first step to this task was undertaken and the data has been gathered. Work will now proceed on how to best organize this data. Potential solutions discussed were to get an intern to enter this data or perhaps Shana Maziarz could do some work in this area during her substitute hours.

## 6. Reports

### a. Director – Caleb Buckley – to include updates on Bldg. project, enrollment, and teacher's evaluation

- The success of the Ed Foundation in obtaining the grant for the new school's parking lot was a major achievement in the past month.
- The building project has had only minor progress in the past several months as issues with access and funding were resolved, but funding is now available and the project is starting back up.
- Budgeting is progressing for the Special Education program. This school year has a very light case load for Special Ed, but indications are that next year will be more like an average year.
- CB described the incident of upper grades children being harassed by a drunk person on their return from a downtown field trip to the Nevada city Theatre. The teachers immediately engaged the person to separate them from interactions with the children during the walk. Immediately upon return to the YRCS campus a few minutes later, the police were called. The police arrived within minutes. Their sirens could be heard before the phone was hung up. They took the person immediately into custody. The entire incident did not last but a few minutes. However, it revealed several things that could be improved with downtown activities at YRCS. Recommendations included that all teachers



on downtown excursions carry cell phones so they may immediately call for assistance. That adults always lead and follow a group of children. The incident will be discussed at a faculty meeting including a discussion of how and when to call for assistance and how to best interact with authorities in such situations. Additionally, education of the children is being considered for things such as avoiding engaging with strangers. This training would likely vary by grade levels. CB has already sent a letter home to parents describing the incident and asking them to speak with their children about safety issues as they walk to and from school and recommending that an adult be present with a group of children whenever possible.

- Three teacher evaluations were presented and discussed during closed session.

**b. Business Manager – Susan Egan**

- Filed for an extension on taxes.
- Still waiting to hear regarding final approval of 501(c)3 status, which typically takes approximately 6 months.
- Because the building project is again officially underway the state has now started the construction clock on the funding. Construction must be completed by 2015.

**c. Parent Council - Caleb Buckley**

- A big topic of discussion continues to be the \$6,000 available in reserve funds.
- The PC chair Mark Dahlstrom has developed a budget based on last year's expenses.
- Interest for parent education in Eurythmy has been expressed with a possibility that Cynthia Hoven, a renowned teacher from Steiner College, may visit to present materials and potentially hold routine after school classes.

**d. Ed Foundation – Robert Wallis**

- Since there was no meeting in December, there is nothing to report.

**e. Faculty – Leila Barber**

- The winter concerts were successful.
- Everyone is eager to get busy after the winter break.

**f. CC Chair – Torrie Mudd – to include update on Survey follow up and Director's evaluation process**

- Current work is progressing to perform the annual director evaluation.
- Survey results almost ready to go out.

**7. Closed Session: 7:00 pm**

The Council invited in guest: Caleb Buckley (CB): LB 1st, KE 2nd - Passed unanimously with teachers leaving the room when their own evaluations were presented

**a. Teacher evaluations were presented for Ron Charles, Dan Martinez, and Leila Barber.**



**8. Reconvene and Report out of Closed Session 7:45 pm**

**a. the council heard and discussed the teacher evaluations.**

**9. Next Meeting Agenda Items**

**a. Special Meeting January 11, 2012 at 7:45 am**

- Shall the Council approve the 2012 Charter "County wide benefit" renewal application?

**b. February Meeting**

- minutes for 12/1/11 special meeting and 1/4/12 meeting
- Disenrollment Policy and forms
- discuss possible ways to showcase YRCS science achievements to the community
- discuss the Spring 2012 action items from the Strategic Plan – Leila Barber
- CB to report on Nevada City School District's opinion on whether with retrofitting we could the potentially use the auditorium for ball sports.
- Review CB time off and substitute effectiveness.
- Closed session: more teacher evaluations

**c. Future Meetings**

- none identified

**d. Action Items**

- Interested CC members to review detailed budget and or list of warrants and Business Manager's office.
- Business Manager to present detailed budget during budget approval process.
- MN to forward copies of the forms associated with the disenrollment policy to SE.
- SE to update the disenrollment policy with references to all associated forms and send copies of new policy and forms to CC members for review.
- MN to include the following items in the next CC newsletter contribution:
  - expanded volunteer requirements for fingerprinting and TB test
  - request parent volunteers to document inspiring events at YRCS with either photos or essays that may be shared with The Union or in our own newsletter.
- SE annually to organize a reduced price or free event for TB testing of volunteers
- DM to contact Woolman to set up a continuation of our visits to their organic farm for the upcoming school year.
- LB to talk to Melissa Seibold regarding creating a formal community events calendar.
- LB to add to the faculty staff agenda a discussion of potential ways to showcase science achievements.





- LB to follow up with Doris Rainville regarding potential articles on Waldorf methodologies for the newsletter.
- CB to investigate adding a regular volunteer section to the newsletter.
- SE to talk to Krissa Connelly, the office manager, regarding the status of the SHINE committee and their newsletter submissions.
- MN to ask Melissa Seibold if she has video recordings of recent parent education event to send to RW for formatting for online distribution.
- TM to include a question in the upcoming survey about requests for specific parent education events.
- LB to discuss status of volunteer database with Melissa Seibold.
- LB to add to the faculty staff agenda a discussion of the recent concern with the student harassment during a walk through downtown.
- CB to consider a training program for students on how to handle themselves during downtown walks.
- TM to respond to parent concern re downtown safety.
- MN to review existing hiring policy to determine if examination by the CC is necessary this year.
- TM to review existing Director Evaluation policy to determine if examination by the CC is necessary this year.
- TM to investigate whether she has any PC materials such as binders to provide to the PC to help them formalize their processes.
- TM to develop questions for the director evaluation survey and distribute to CC members for review.
- TM will write a summary of last year's survey results for the newsletter.

**10. Call to Adjourn – 7:45 pm**

Respectfully Yours,

Mariana Nielsen  
Charter Council Secretary