

HILLCREST CHILDREN'S CENTER BOARD MEETING

November 15, 2023 6:15 pm, zoom only

Called to Order 6:20 pm

Attendance:

Board members: Jessica Simonsen, Kate Demarest, Brandi Zeman, Nora Matell, Mike Ebell

Other Parents: Matt Jardin, Joanna Jardin, Mary Burnell, Jazon Burnell, Heather Fricaud, Katrina Eggers, Cam Eggers, Ruby Jones, Siobvan McIntyre, Steven De Loose, Henry (?)

Staff: Sam, Yvonne

Approvals:

Agenda approved, October minutes unfortunately not ready.

Taking notes: Nora Matell

Director's Report: (interim director – Sam)

Enrollment

- 1 infant opening, will probably be filled very soon
- 1, possibly 2 preschool openings
- In Jan will have one toddler opening & likely two in young preschool (Polar Bears)

Staffing

- Ms. Carmen is back, a few staff have left (Ms. Ashleigh, Ms. Jane) and a few staffing changes especially Ms. Katarina to Belugas
- o Lynx: Sera
- o Baby Belugas: Mua, Katarina, Hannah, Emma
- o Otter: RaeAnn, Yelvi, Tyler Joe
- o Mammoth: Yovanie, Jim, Danny, CJ
- o Polar Bears: Yvonne, Zoey, Carmen, Gail
- o Slippery Salmons: Yvonne/Brandi, Mercedes, Tyler, Yasmin
- o School-Age: Tyler
- o Cook: Chef J
- o Office: Sam, Cheryl, Jennifer
- o Staff Coach/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant: Sam

Food Program

- Back using reusable dishes, Chef J has worked with teachers on how to wash/sanitize dishes in the classrooms
- Seems to be working pretty well so far!

- Now phasing out disposable cups in the staff room, have provided all staff with reusable cups – they will be still using disposable plates due to no water in staff room

Staff Trainings

- Inservice day was canceled because of the weather. Planned to have a staff training to implement family style dining. Chef J will do it one classroom at a time.
- It's apparently a lot of work to do it correctly as far as documentation for the food program. This will start late November / early December.

Board Committees

Advocacy (Nora, Ruby, Michael)

- Proposition 14 Implementation Team is getting started, several parents (Nora, Jessica, Ruby, possibly others) have applied as well as Christina – advocacy committee will be tracking this team regardless of whether we're on it
- The \$7.5M from the state that was allocated by legislature has been given to CCPO and will be used as ROOTS awards for staff. This is apparently something that each staff applies for but in past we have helped out, will probably do the same
- State Childcare task force is approaching first report

Finance (Brandi is chair)

- Committee meets every Monday before board meeting, let us know if you want to join
- Over budget by about \$77,000 for year at this point
 - o Will likely be a loss but hopefully less than this
 - o Largely due to tuition increase not happening until September
 - o Also a few openings in classrooms that will be getting filled
 - o Closely monitoring this to try to be over budget by as little as possible
 - o Seeing positive trend with expenses coming down
 - o A few grants that have been applied for – GCI modernizing technology, and garden program

Annual Fund (part of Finance)

- Have posted why we give stories on website
- Goal tracker made
- Sam working with parent Kate O'Brien to make a Mail Chimp to send out Why we Give stories, etc.
- We would like a couple more Why we Give stories
- Grandparent ask discussion – we had talked about mailing out crafts, seems difficult, more recently talking about making videos of kids
- Heather has idea of sending letters home with families to send to grandparents
- Jessica has idea maybe with a link or QR code
- Maybe families can have something to text out with something from each classroom
- Jessica and Ruby will work on something videoing kids within the next week and editing

- Sam will check photo release, send Brightwheel asking for parents to reply if they object (Kate says this may not be necessary depending on the photo release form)
- Once completed, will send to families to send out to grandparents

Facilities (need chair)

- Nothing new, working on Fire Alarm system installation
- Fierce Fire (Justin): \$49,000 - a signed contract, Brooke will be taking the lead with Sam for winter installation, we've gotten them first part of the payment
- Company came out and did measurements, they're working on building plans
- Expecting them to be back in touch very soon

New Business

New email Board@hillcrestak.org is up and running, we are monitoring it but not every single day

Weather Closure Policy

- Thanks to families for weathering this storm
- We needed to implement a new fair policy, this fell to the wayside with the budget this past year hence the surprises this week
- Sam's thoughts: He struggled with last year where we had staff nearly getting in wrecks or stuck in neighborhoods trying to get to school, now we have many families with multiple Hillcrest employees so if vehicles are out of order it's a big issue. He wants to remind parents that staff can see messages in Brightwheel so when messages are heated it is a morale killer for staff.
- Historically we didn't close for ASD closures, tried to remain as open as possible – Jessica notes that last year this resulted in high turnover with staff
- Previously we followed Muni for closures, but now they're not closing in the same way post-COVID because they're frequently doing remote work days – and People Mover would just stop running but not announce it
 - A long time before Hillcrest had followed ASD but many closures were really just for Hillside and didn't affect Government Hill, so that's why Hillcrest stopped following ASD
- What closure policy is safe, fair, etc. for families and staff?
- In past, staff haven't been paid for snow days
 - This time paid staff for online trainings that were needed, though not full days
 - Should we pay staff? (question from Mary)
- Mary also mentioned that messaging may have been part of many families' anger – more frustrating when it sounded like Hillcrest was just following ASD policy, much more understanding once understood it was about staff safety – maybe suggests using JBER (because it is close)
- Sam notes that JBER's policy may not relate to Anchorage roads unfortunately
- Jessica notes that Sam was out of town, board hadn't had this discussion in advance as we should have
 - Possibly delayed start?

- Katrina notes that there are road rankings of “hazardous” as well as “fair” and “difficult”, she works for organization that will give paid leave for staff that don’t come in for hazardous conditions but for the others they can choose to take PTO or not
 - o Jessica has the question about what to do about limiting kids if there aren’t enough staff
 - o Katrina also notes that any frustration was mostly related to the way closure was communicated as based on ASD and felt like it was a policy change without parent input
- Joanna suggests a potential staff carpool list for picking up staff that don’t have cars that are as capable
- Sam notes that trying to sort all of this out with parents and staff for carpooling and which roads are hazardous, etc. – all overwhelming to do in real time
- Jessica noted that this all happened while Sam out on PTO and so chain of command was not clear for making the decisions
- Heather notes that we probably can’t fully follow another organization’s policy, also suggests a spreadsheet with families saying what they’re willing to do pickups and drop-offs, also maybe we need to do a separate meeting for this
- Steven notes that there are a lot of great ideas but we maybe need a more set in stone policy
- Some discussion about ASD’s policy maybe not being the best to follow because they are paying attention to kids walking to school safely
- Jessica suggests a survey for opinions or maybe a separate meeting
 - o People are starting to leave because they need to get kids to bed! (7:45 pm)
- Sam appreciates the feedback that getting the detailed explanation was helpful to people
- Mary notes that a note out to parents saying that we’re not just blindly following ASD policy would be appreciated
 - o Can take ASD policy into account but a lot based on conversations with staff, etc. (which is what was what was happening, but wasn’t clear to all families)
- Kate notes that we need to put time into a written policy, also that if we’re going to do some sort of staff-parent driving matching it needs to be a phone tree or something like that can be implemented outside of director
- Sam will send out a note to families that asks for feedback via email to board

Community Comments:

- Sam notes that some parents helped with shoveling and knocking snow off trees today

Upcoming closures

- o November 23/24 Holiday closure
- o December 2 Parent Day Out
- o December 25 Holiday closure
- o January 1 Holiday closure

Close, no executive session 8:04 pm