

Valley Inquiry Charter School

April Special Meeting Minutes

April 24, 2024 | Zoom Meeting, 6:30 PM

Board Members

Board President & Chair	Cammi Menager
Vice Chair	Terry Rohse
Treasurer	BJ Foster
Secretary	Vacant (BJ Foster as Temporary)
At-Large	Stephen Staten
At-Large	Ed Austin
At-Large	Vacant
At-Large	Vacant
At-Large	Vacant
Non-Voting Member	Gary Etchemendy, Principal

Instructors/Staff/Other:

Miss Colby
Miss Taylor
Miss Jessie

Meeting Agenda Minutes

6:32pm Call to Order
Cammi called to order.

6:33pm School Leadership
Cammi: We are meeting due to continuing conversation surrounding our goals of moving forward as a school. Recent pressures have impacted this timeline, and we need to decide matters of school leadership, staffing and building issues going forward.
Terry: We should open to community comments before we make our decisions (no comments made while awaiting feedback).
Terry: Very thankful for the job Gary has done, and do not want this taken as a reflection of his role, but want to propose we move forward with recruiting a charter principal.
Gary: There is a leadership-focused administrator TSPC license which might be a better fit than saying specifically "principal".

Terry motioned to hire a charter administrator to lead the school for the upcoming 2024/25 school year, Ed seconded motion.
Vote: 5 Yes / 0 No / 0 Abstain.

6:41pm

School Staffing

BJ: There are consequences of our decision to move forward with a direct hire administrator. Having a mixed environment of charter staff and school district staff creates difficulty with being able to have all staff come under the new charter leadership structure.

Stephen: Keeping a mixed environment creates disparities between staff. Aligning that environment by moving toward all charter direct hire staff allows more flexibility for staff, administration and the board. This would be a step toward that direction.

Ed: Is this a new idea?

BJ: No, moving toward an all-charter staff has been our direction for many years.

Terry: We have discussed this direction for some time. Circumstances now are pushing us along a little more quickly than we had been moving.

Cammi: We will also need to talk about building ownership issues. We have been treated very well by the district in our use of this building, while we're trying to grow toward independence.

Miss Colby: Compensation and benefits might not be able to be matched.

BJ: We will need to look at compensation package and see what we can do.

Miss Jessie: As a current charter employee, making roughly 10k less per year than same pay scale than district employees. Wages currently not competitive, don't get benefits. Feels strongly that this is not sustainable, not keeping up with cost of living, which might affect the quality of teachers we attract. Many teachers may not want to stick around if compensation isn't similar.

Cammi: We will be evaluating the data and comparing with other charters, still waiting to get more data for that comparison.

Terry: We have been considering this for a while and appreciate the feedback. Our employees are extremely important to us.

Gary: If district employees were to stay with district, it would mean five new teachers all at once along with a new administrator. That is a huge undertaking.

Taylor: Talking about moving toward charter employees, wouldn't stay as charter, doesn't feel charter would be able to match. Legally can you move to do this? Thought charter specified replacement via attrition.

Terry: We could motion to move toward charter staff without specifics.

Gary: Want to move toward charter staff, is that enough of a motion?

BJ: We should go into executive to make sure we discuss feedback before any motion is made, but district will need to know the specifics of what our plans are to be able to incorporate them into their staffing plans.

7:05pm

Executive Session

7:30pm

General Session

Cammi: Thank you all for your patience while we discussed these matters.

Parent: Will IEP be affected? Student is doing very well with current resources.

Cammi: No, IEP unaffected.

Gary: That help is provided and funded separately from the school's direct funding and would not be impacted.

BJ motioned to have a fully direct charter hired staff for the 2024-2025 school year, Terry seconded motion.

Vote: 5 Yes / 0 No / 0 Abstain.

7:34pm

Building Ownership

Cammi: Last year wasn't easy, and we very much value our teachers. Should we discuss the issue of our continued presence in this building tonight or leave it for next meeting? We have a use agreement in place, so possibly could wait.

BJ: We should at least decide on exploring options so we can have a more robust discussion at the May meeting; appears that nothing currently prevents district from selling building we use should they choose to do so.

Terry motioned to explore options for our continued presence in our building or what other options we may have, BJ seconded.

Vote: 5 Yes / 0 No / 0 Abstain.

Stephen: We're committed to looking at the issue of salaries that was brought up, and we really appreciate the input and comments to help inform our discussion prior to these decisions.

Parent: When considering building options, will the possibility of a middle school be kept in mind?

Stephen: Definitely part of the equation for him personally.

BJ: Our charter is a K-8 charter. It was the intent of our school to be K-8 when the school was started, and on the cusp of realizing that goal, the economic recession hit and dashed plans. Our recent efforts also were set back by financial issues, but the goal of the Board is to implement our charter which is as a K-8 IB school.

7:40pm

Meeting Adjourn

Next Board Meeting: Monday, May 13, 2024, at 6:30pm. This meeting will be held in-person at Valley Inquiry Charter School.