

LIONSGATE ACADEMY
District #4183
BOARD SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

June 3rd, 2014 6:00pm

Lionsgate Academy 3420 Nevada Avenue N. Crystal, MN 55427

TO: Nicole Cleland, Ryan Weber, Meg Fuller, Tracy Klug, Christine Peper, John Barker, Ali Thorstad, Darren Johnson, and Kurt Nisi.
Others: Diane Halpin, Executive Director; Rachel Boyack, Special Education Coordinator; Ron Berger, Director of Finance

FROM: Ali Thorstad, Chair

Call to order: 6:00 pm, Ali Thorstad, Chair

School Mission Statement:

The mission of Lionsgate Academy is to provide a transition-oriented and personalized learning program focused on secondary high-functioning students on the autism spectrum that supports their full potential, participation, and self-determination within their school, family, and community.

To this end, Lionsgate Academy will create an educational environment that will model best instructional practice and research-based techniques so that the graduates will--to the fullest extent possible--live independently, be involved in further education or gainful employment and develop meaningful relationships with others.

Comments from Community Members: Public Comment is an open forum portion of the meeting and is an opportunity to present an issue, concern, or other statement to the Board of Directors. Individuals wishing to address the Board must sign up prior to the Call to Order and will be allotted three (3) minutes. Total public comment will be limited to twenty one (21) minutes.

- A. Wendy Fields – son is in AIM and has had great experience there and at LGA. Has concerns about managing two campuses apart from each other.
- B. Lynn and Tyler Olson – Tyler is a senior hoping to go to AIM in the fall. Has heard great things about the program. Believe N. St. Paul location would stretch staff and resources too far apart and upset a new program. Students at LGA need strong transition program.
- C. Drake Willis – Building ops manager. Has seen AIM evolve and work in spaces that are not ideal. Landlord of N. St. Paul location understands Autism and supports the mission of LGA. Hasn't seen anything parallel in quality to the N. St. Paul location.
- D. Mike Ramsden -- Organizations that are successful do long term and short term planning at same time. Not sure if N. St. Paul is long term decision, aligned with LGA's strategic planning process and balanced score card. LGA parents need details in order to maintain confidence in the system, to make sure we know why we're doing something and where we're going.
- E. Lorelei Carrey – Son is finishing up 10th grade. Currently commutes from the East Side. Any change is big to our families, but there are people on the East Side who need something like LGA. Important to have AIM in a space where it can flourish, and it can never become what it's intended to be if it has to keep shifting.

Approval of the agenda: Ryan, 2nd Nicole

Model:

1. Proposed relocation of AIM and Setting IV programs
 - A. Ron
 - a. Refer to "Lionsgate Academy: Relocating the AIM Program" Powerpoint presentation
 - b. In its history, AIM has been housed in 3 locations, none ideal.
 - c. LGA needs both a transitions and a therapeutic education program, which must be co-located.
 - i. We must serve the needs of every student that comes to LGA, regardless of available space.

Lionsgate Academy's Authorizer is:

Novation Education Opportunities, 3432 Denmark Avenue Suite 103, Eagan, Minnesota 55123
Phone 612-889-2103 Fax 612-870-1200 email executive.director.neo@gmail.com <http://www.neoauthorizer.org>

- ii. Oak Grove Church not suitable for many reasons.
- iii. AIM would be housed in new location next year, with the intention of planning for a Setting IV program the following year.
- d. Admin. has worked with CBRE to review 149 properties. 147 were not viable. A space in Crystal and space in N. St. Paul were further reviewed, and are compared on “What Did We Find” slide.
 - i. Amount of space to be rented is flexible in both locations
 - ii. Crystal location has traditional landlords/real estate broker. N. St. Paul landlords are Partners in Excellence, which works with children with ASD.
 - iii. Photos of both facilities can be viewed in above presentation
 - iv. Ron recommends N. St. Paul location

B. Discussion

- a. Price for Crystal location could be negotiable but will still be more expensive than N. St. Paul.
- b. Kurt: We must find a space, but not immediately. It is possible to maintain status quo another year. Worried that we’re moving too quickly.
- c. Ali: We need to service every child and give students the amount of therapeutic education they need while maintaining the general education curriculum. We need additional space to do this. The Board is tasked with caring for not only current students but also students in the future.
- d. Board members and parents raised concerns of maintaining separate programs on one site. Ron responded that the N. St. Paul site has three separate entrances. While the Crystal location has one entrance area, the students would then split into different spaces. In both locations programs would be separate.
- e. Diane noted that LGA is not a traditional local school, as there are people who travel from all over the metro area.
- f. A parent shared that she had planned on sending her daughter to AIM, and was surprised to receive the email about the possible AIM move only two weeks ago. A number of parents remarked on the quickness of the process and the effect the location change may have on students who weren’t expecting it. Others noted that quality of the program was more important than location to them, and that they would drive wherever necessary to get access to the learning and education available at LGA.
- g. Ron explained that home to school transportation would be provided for all AIM students.

C. Move to Board Discussion

- a. Ali emphasized the need to seek a long term lease because it’s more financially responsible.
- b. Darren discussed the importance of maintaining communication with parents and making sure they had access to information about the advantages and disadvantages of the locations.
- c. Meg said that it is important for families to know what the plan is as soon as possible.
 - i. Christine commented that Ron’s Powerpoint presentation was very informative and would be helpful to parents.
 - ii. Meg voiced that the sooner the board decides, the sooner Admin can plan for new space.
- d. Kurt noted again his concerns about the distance of the N. St. Paul location. He advised the Board to take two weeks to further engage parents and get a better sense of who is in support of the move. He urged that it is important that parents feel their input was sought and considered.
 - i. Christine agreed that it is important that people feel their voices were heard, and that families might not have known that the board was considering making a decision tonight.
- e. Meg voiced that if the Board sought more parent feedback, a phone call would be preferable to an email survey.
 - i. Other Board members agreed.
- f. Ali asked if there was a consensus to make a final vote on June 17. The Board agreed.
 - i. Board agreed that Administration should make phone calls to current AIM families (that will be attending next year) and current juniors and seniors.
 - 1. More detailed information will be sent in an email.
 - 2. Admin. will ask:
 - a. If families need more information
 - b. If their intention to attend AIM would change based on location
 - ii. Ron will outline what information to email parents.

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1. At next board meeting, will open first for comments from community members.
2. John and Tracy agreed to help Ron with parent email.
3. Ron will send out email tomorrow (6/4), and Admin. will begin calling Friday (6/6).

Motion to Adjourn: 8:32 pm, John, 2nd Meg

Next Meeting: June 17th, 2014, 6:00 PM

DRAFT

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