

Minutes of The Greenspire School
Board of Education - Special Meeting
April 20th, 2016
Unapproved

I. **Call to Order & Roll Call:** Vice-President Raymond Minervini called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was held in the Conference Center at the TBAISD. Present: Meagan Batdorff, Gina Aranki, Raymond Minervini, Tara Ward. Matthew Missias was late. Absent: Kurt Sanford.

II. **Changes or Additions to the Agenda:** None

III. **Public Comment:** Minervini opened the meeting welcoming the audience. He gave a brief background for the discussion, and referred to the documents that were handed out to the audience. Shawn Collick, parent, spoke to the special relationship that students and faculty have at Greenspire and questioned how that is going to be preserved if the school grows even larger. Board members spoke to the financial situation and those impacts on planning. Tim Donn, parent, questioned what the strategic plan of Greenspire was and whether it is on track. He also asked what the budgetary analysis was that created the numbers. Where is the data? It is hard to give input without more information. The Board discussed how expenses outgrow the pace of State pupil funding. Eric Breithaupt, in the absence of Kevin Kelly, read new estimates on a slow growth projection. Discussion took place on whether there are enough students to warrant building another building. Next year's wait list numbers are lower than expected and the school would not want to be in a situation where there is a new building to pay for and not enough students to fill it. Scott Huiskens, parent, spoke to the difficulty of finding one right person to hire that will keep the ratio of teachers to students low and how difficult it is to scale the program. Paula McIntyre, parent, asked if fund raising was incorporated into the projections as a possible revenue stream to keep the school small and support the staff. Minervini responded that this would be the only other way to keep the school small. Christie Shore, parent, discussed the ability of the school to garner parent support and suggested using small spaces to help with growth. Peter Payette, parent, asked if the fund raising amounts were kept the same in the future budgets. What is the downside to the slow growth model? The Board will have to look at those numbers more closely. Peter Payette also mentioned that the parents are scared and that he feels that the school is in a fragile state and the idea of rapidly expanding is not ideal. Ward spoke to the pressure of growth to satisfy financial concerns but that otherwise there is not pressure to grow the school. Michele Worden, parent, asked about the no growth scenario and expressed how a \$5,000 or \$10,000 increase could cover the deficit. Batdorff also commented that a no growth scenario is fragile, a small decrease in students would have a huge impact on the school and budget. Shawn Collick, parent, brought up the point that what we are teaching the students about the environment and then going against that by tearing up the land and using it to build another building. Scott Huiskens stated that the while the parents would prefer no growth, that is not an option. If one or two students leave, the wheels fall off and that is not a way to continue into the future. The issue becomes how to manage the risk of expansion, and determining what steps to take. Shawn Collick asked about just adding on a room or two to either building instead of a whole new building. Yvette Ringsmuth, parent, spoke to the new slow growth model and taking it back to the teachers and finding out how we can accommodate that slow growth. She liked the slow growth idea

and keeping the intimacy of the school because that is what makes it special for her. Discussion ensued of how many students are in each pod, how the atmosphere would change with increases in students and how teachers are hired to account for student increases. Missy Huiskens, parent, spoke to the changes each year and how she mourns the loss as the school change. It is still a great school, but different. Michele Worden, parent, spoke to the idea of creating a teacher training site as a way to decouple the connection of the number of students to the budget. She also brought up the idea of using fund development as a way to help. Renting facilities was also brought up as another source of revenue. Missias asked what the ideal Greenspire is. Missy Huiskens stated that it is the intimacy, culture, community, connection and the humanness of it. Yvette Ringsmuth and Wynn Jones, parent, also added that it is the connections the students make and the growth they have over the three years that makes the school so special. Sarah Payette, parent, brought up the ecological impact that our school is having on the commons in a negative way. Minervini stated we need to identify the essential elements of the school to keep the core identity and balance that with the fiscal responsibility. The group discussed using parent volunteers in the school in a consistent manner. Scott Huiskens stated that he felt the Board's job at this point is to develop an interim plan so that the school can remain solvent without a large debt but also undertake a long term detailed analysis to find the sustainable population that the school needs to have. If we can do that and maintain the core of the school then that is what needs to happen. Shawn Collick stated that instead of trying to grow the middle school, maybe look into starting a high school and the new building could naturally be filled with current students. Peter Payette said the Board needs to think about building something enduring so that future boards don't have to keep answering this same question about growth. He stated that what everyone likes about Greenspire is its small size so what needs to be figured out is how small it can be to make it work. Michele Worden spoke to only having revenue from the state and being able to find other revenue generating sources: curriculum sales, edible schoolyard, etc. Batdorff said that growth doesn't mean it has to be a loss; there are small schools that aren't working well also. Tim Donn stated there must have been a business plan in place and strategic planning is necessary, maybe made up of teachers, parents, and Board members to do the work and find answers. Minervini stated that that work has been done and is an evolving idea over time. Some circumstances change and can't be scripted out long term. Batdorff commented that the growth pattern has been a little different, but that the first few years are always difficult. Parents stated that they would like to help but have little information. Minervini stated that from the feedback they have received, the Board needs to provide additional information to the community showing what the conditions are so that the discussion can be continued. Scott Huiskens also mentioned that there are a number of committees that parents can volunteer for as well. Michele Worden addressed Missias' question about what is valued about the school, and stated that she and other parents are looking for experiential hands-on learning and Project Based Learning and that a loss of these would be detrimental. Shawn Collick closed by re-stating the importance of the staff and school environment, and how that allows for proper child development and related how it has helped her child.

- IV. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn by Aranki, second by Ward, voice vote; 5 ayes, 0 nays, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:13 p.m.
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Eric Breithaupt
Recording Secretary