



AFRI Board Meeting Minutes

Achievement First

12/4/2024 5:30 PM EST

@ 206 Elmwood Avenue Providence, RI 02907

Attendance

Present:

Members: Maryellen Butke, Janelle Clarke-Holley, Nicole Pollack, Macky McCleary, Brett Smiley, James Wiley

AF Staff: Tiffany Bostic (remote), Amy D'Angelo, Laura Etkind, Ketki Harale (remote), Mary Heilmann, Charmayne Joseph (remote), Kevin Lohela, Lisa Margosian, Omar Mayyasi (remote), Shannon Miller, michael Rabin, John Sharkey

I. Call to Order (Presenters: Mayor Brett Smiley)

Mayor Smiley called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

II. Public Comment (Presenters: Mayor Brett Smiley)

There were no members of the public present.

III. Executive Session: Rhode Island Growth and Personnel Update (Presenters: Michael Rabin, Charmayne Joseph)

Before going into executive session, Mayor Smiley welcomed new board member Janelle Clarke-Holley to her first meeting. Maryellen Butke shared that the board has added two new members and is actively pursuing two other candidates for board membership. There is a list of about eight potential candidates being considered for future recruitment. The next steps involve follow-up discussions with interested candidates and a review of board composition planned for early January.

The Mayor then asked for a motion to enter into executive session to discuss Rhode Island growth and a personnel update, inviting all AF staff present to join. Nicole Pollack motioned, Maryellen seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

IV. Board Approvals and Resolutions (Presenters: Brett Smiley)

The board exited the executive session. Mayor Smiley introduced the first resolution approving the previous board meeting minutes and asked for a motion to approve. James Wiley motioned, Macky McCleary seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

Previous Meeting Minutes

BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from October 1, 2024.

Mayor Smiley asked for a motion to approve the resolution pausing AFRI growth. Macky McCleary motioned, James Wiley seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

AFRI Growth Resolution

WHEREAS, Achievement First Rhode Island is committed to growth within the region and providing educational opportunities to as many scholars in Providence as possible,

WHEREAS, Achievement First Rhode Island recognizes the that the current conditions of the region present challenges for growth and expansion,

WHEREAS, Achievement First Rhode Island initiated the Greenlight Process to determine the best path forward and to bring recommendations to the Board of Directors,

WHEREAS, during the October 1, 2024 Board of Directors meeting, Achievement First Rhode Island recommended maintaining Envision Elementary School as a kindergarten through fourth grade dual campus school and not opening a fifth grade,

WHEREAS, during the October 1, 2024 Board of Directors meeting, Achievement First Rhode Island recommended maintaining Promesa Elementary School as a kindergarten through fifth grade school and not opening Promesa Middle School until it has a guaranteed facility,

NOW THEREFORE IT IS RESOLVED that the Achievement First Rhode Island Board of Directors pause all growth and expansion plans in the region,

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that the Achievement First Rhode Island Board of Directors revisit this decision annually to determine whether conditions have improved and support further growth.

Mayor Smiley introduced the resolution to approve leasing a lot next to AF Providence High School. Maryellen Butke motioned, Mackey McCleary seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

Plenty Street Resolution

BE IT RESOLVED, that AFRI be, and hereby is, authorized and directed to lease from Urban Land Development, LLC, a Rhode Island limited liability company (the "Landlord") certain land containing approximately 36,000 square feet located between Plenty Street and Wesleyan Street in Providence, Rhode Island known as Plat 44, Lots 266, 267, 268, 286, 287, 388, 289, 290 and 730, as more particularly described in that certain Lease Agreement by and between AFRI and Landlord previously delivered to the Board for review (the "Lease Agreement");

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that AFRI be, and hereby is, authorized and directed, to execute and deliver the Lease Agreement substantially in the form previously delivered to the Board, with such changes thereto as deemed necessary or advisable by any member of the Board (each an "Authorized Person") (such necessity advisability to be conclusively evidenced by the execution thereof);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each Authorized Person, be, and hereby is, jointly or severally, authorized and directed, at any time and from time to time, to do all such things and acts and to execute and deliver all such applications, documents and instruments in writing and to expend such fees for and on behalf of AFRI as may be necessary or advisable in order to give effect to and, generally, carry out the intent of these resolutions including, without limitation, to execute and deliver any instruments and documents required in connection with the foregoing, in the name and on behalf of AFRI, on such terms and conditions and in such form deemed necessary or desirable and approved by such Authorized Person with such changes, modifications and amendments thereto as such Authorized Person may in such person's discretion approve, which approval shall be conclusively evidenced by the execution and delivery of such applications, documents and instruments in writing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all actions previously taken by any Authorized Person in furtherance of the foregoing resolutions are hereby ratified and confirmed.

V. CEO Agenda Overview (Presenters: Lisa Margosian)

AF CEO Lisa Margosian provided highlights and insights into the presentations to be shared throughout the meeting.

VI. Academic Update: RICAS Results (Presenters: Amy D'Angelo, John Sharkey)

Amy D'Angelo presented the RICAS state test results. The state test results showed flat, mixed, and slightly down results, consistent with expectations due to new curriculum adoption. AF Students are performing better than students in the state overall but we are not all satisfied with the disappointing educational performance metrics. John Sharkey, Chief Academic Officer shared that in light of these results he is now spending two days a week in Rhode Island in order to help drive changes in teacher practices that will hopefully lead to better results.

Mr. Sharkey discussed the results of the first interim assessments of the school year. Elementary math is going up by 7% year-over-year, which is good, it's consistent, and while we would like to see more, it is moving in the right direction. Unfortunately there was a 14% drop in elementary ELA and a 9% decrease in math and science. The team is implementing interventions to address the instructional gaps identified, particularly in second grade, to improve future performance. A full day of principal cohort development is planned, focusing on planning meetings, observation feedback, and scholar work analysis to enhance leadership skills. The goal is to achieve a 50% improvement in proficiency by the time they reach the second interim assessment which requires sustained intensity in their educational efforts.

VII. Mission Moment (Presenters: Laura Etkind)

Laura Etkind, Managing Director of Special Services in Rhode Island, shared a story of a special education student, highlighting both the program's strengths and the student's hard work and determination over the years.

VIII. AFRI State of Special Education (Presenters: Tiffany Bostic, Mary Heilmann, Laura Etkind)

Tiffany Bostic, Chief of Special Services, led an introduction of AF's Special Education Services in Rhode Island. She noted that 12% of the population in Achievement First Rhode Island are students with disabilities, and 100% of these students are served in an inclusion environment with their general education peers, which is known as the least restrictive environment. AFRI operates as its own local education agency (LEA), responsible for approving IEP eligibility, writing IEP goals, and conducting progress monitoring for students with disabilities. She mentioned a significant performance gap of over 20% between students with disabilities and their general education peers, which is concerning as the goal is to be within 10%.

Mary Heilmann, Associate Chief of Special Services shared that AF's 12% of students receiving Special Education Services is lower than the host district's 19%. Ms. Heilmann discussed an overrepresentation of special education identification, particularly among marginalized groups, which aligns with national trends. Post-COVID, there has been an uptick in referrals and evaluation requests, especially in speech and language. It was noted that when students are identified for special education and placed in settings like small classes, their educational outcomes often decline. Ms. Heilmann emphasized the importance of guarding against over-identification while ensuring students receive the support they need. She mentioned that historically, students with disabilities have faced disproportionate suspensions, but currently, this is not happening in Rhode Island schools, indicating a positive trend in maintaining instructional time.

Ms. Heilmann shared that the challenges with teacher effectiveness also impact the special education students. The organization is focusing on improving teacher skill building and recruitment strategies to attract strong talent, particularly for special education roles.

Ms. Heilmann highlighted that AF Rhode Island operates as its own Local Education Agency (LEA), which allows for unique opportunities in the scope of special education services. She mentioned that case managers are responsible for weekly communication with parents regarding their child's progress and homework, indicating a structured approach to parental involvement. This includes sharing strategies and materials to help parents support their children at home.

IX. Finance Committee Report (Presenters: Omar Mayyasi, James Wiley)

Omary Mayyasi, Interim Chief Financial Officer gave the finance committee report. The financial results for the first quarter showed higher revenue driven by title and MLL

allocations, and underspending due to open positions. There has been an increase in total assets due to a loan drawdown and a payment for housing aid, which will be used for capital projects. Liabilities increased due to the loan drawdown, and there is an outstanding construction invoice affecting accounts payable.

X. Adjourn (Presenters: Brett Smiley)

Before the meeting adjourned, Ms. Margosian highlighted AF's 25th Anniversary Summit .The celebration is set for May 29th and 30th, with an expected attendance of a thousand people, showcasing students and alumni as part of the event. Participants were encouraged to mark their calendars for the event and make every effort to attend, indicating the significance of their presence at the celebration.

Being no other business, the Mayor asked for a motion to adjourn. Janelle Clarke-Holley motioned, Maryellen Butke seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained. The meeting adjourned at 7 pm.