

Blue Oak Charter School
450 W. East Avenue, Chico, CA 95926
CHARTER COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

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Meeting ID: 817 9032 9892
Passcode: D2hh75
Tuesday, May 8, 2024 - 6:00 PM

Vision: To be a model for successful education of the whole child.

Mission: To nurture and deepen each child's academic and creative capacities using methods inspired by Waldorf education in a public school setting.

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The Blue Oak Charter Council reserves the right to take action on any item on the agenda.

AGENDA

OPEN SESSION - 6:00 PM

1. OPENING

- 1.1.1. Call Meeting to Order 6:03 PM
- 1.1.2. Roll Call of Council Members and Establish Quorum

Name	Present	Absent
Vicki Wonacott	X	
Kristen Woods	X	
Laurel Hill-Ward		X
Leanna Glander		X (On line)
Ryan Sanders	X	
Donna Kreskey	X	
Trisha Atehortua	X	

A board member questions the absence of “audience to address the council” typically on the agenda. During regular council meetings the audience has a chance to address the council at this time. However, due to the fact that tonight is not a regular meeting but instead this is a special meeting, this audience address to the council will come later. It is not a requirement at this time. Audience members will be invited to comment for a maximum time of three (3) minutes after the council has been presented with the details of the discussion outline.

1.1.3. Invocation - School Verse Read

“This is our school, May peace dwell here, May the rooms be full of contentment. May love abide here, Love of one another, Love of our school, and Love of life itself. Let us remember that as many hands build a house, So many hearts build a school.

2. BUSINESS

2.1. 990 Approval - Review of 990 by council members. This is a summary of the 2022-23 school year taxes. Kristen Woods motioned to approve. Trisha Atehortua seconds motion.

➤ Vote.

Name	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vicki Wonacott	X			
Kristen Woods	X			
Laurel Hill-Ward				X
Leanna Glander				X (on line)
Ryan Sanders	X			
Donna Kreskey	X			
Trisha Atehortua	X			

➤ Vote passes.

2.2. 2024-25 Budget Discussion / Action

Annie Gilbert, Charter Impact, shares a powerpoint summary of the current overall review of the budget through the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 2024. State Aid 397k (due to actual ADA of 217.6k) lower than budgeted of 243.66. Child Nutrition + 114k; title (10k); Other federal (25k). State SPED (22k); SB740 (\$36k); Other state revenue + \$377k Marin School Vendor System + 26k
Annie will look into the details of the Marin School Vendor to verify if this is one time or recurring funding and also what fund this represents.

State Aid-Rev Limit (forecast)	2,511,411	(budget) 2,908,486	(fav/unfav) (397,075)
Federal Revenue (forcast)	323,876	(budget) 244,096	(fav/unfav) 79,780
Other State Revenue (forecast)	1,340,159	(budget) 997,758	(fav/unfav) 342,401
Other Local Revenue(forcast)	84,296	(budget) 60,000	(fav/unfav) 24,296

Forecasted total revenue is \$4,259,742.
 Total revenue Budgeted 4,210,340.
 Favorable projection at year's end \$49,402.

Expenses -

Certificated Salaries (forecast)	1,570,727	(budget) 1,590,901	(fav/unfav) 20,174
Classified Salaries (forcast)	658,632	(budget) 643,281	(fav/unfav) (15,351)
Benefits (forecast)	685,522	(budget) 666,803	(fav/unfav) (18,719)
Books/Supplies (forecast)	197,430	(budget)106,200	(fav/unfav) (91,230)
Subagreement Svcs. (forecast)	154,919	(budget)72,096	(fav/unfav) (82,823)
Operations (forecast)	179,495	(budget) 170,064	(fav/unfav) (9,431)
Facilities (forecast)	667,500	(budget) 670,000	(fav/unfav) 2,500
Professional Development	262,046	(budget) 262,023	(fav/unfav) (23)
Depreciation			
Interest			
Total Expenses Forecast	4,376,271		
Total budget	4,181,368		
Total fav/unfav	(194,903)		

One-Time Funding Page from budget shared by Annie Gilbert.
 Column FY 23-24 the one time funding total for this year was \$849,038.
 Next year FY 24-25 the funding drops to \$532,896.
 Then FY 25-26 funding decreases again to \$284,428

The following fund sources will either decrease or not continue for 24-25;
 EEGB block grant will decrease from this years amount of \$25,446 to \$20,257 in 24-25
 CCSPP decreases next year to \$85,220
 CEI 70k (discontinued)
 ESSER III 92,325 (discontinued)
 ESSER III 9,498 (discontinued)
 MTSS 49,159 (discontinued)
 ELOP 308,103 (discontinued)

Budget Projection worksheet shared

Susan Domenighini

Current Projected Surplus for FY 24-25 60,565.00

Assumptions:

ADA Consistent with C/Y	217.62
COLA (cost of living adjustment in funding of .76)(¾ of 1 %)	+.76
Reduction of 1.0 FTE Teacher (Specialty)	79,170.65
Reduction of 2.0 FTE Interventionist	185,160.30
Reduction of .5 Handwork Specialists (2 specialists)	39,228.15
Reduction of Executive Director Salary	(5,817.00)
Reduction of 5 Paraprofessionals	96,556.80
3% Annual Increase for All Staff	<u>48,274.80</u>
total	448,390.70

Rather than saying this person costs this much I have done a program average to help make budget decisions based on costs and program.

There are two regular specialties programs that have full time staff. This year we have one teacher, Nick Meier, that has been covering his regular specialty position while also covering 2nd grade. He has offered to continue on with this for next year to preserve the games program. This has been a challenge that he has been able to meet with a little extra support. It is important to remember that specialties staff have significantly more prep time than regular classroom teachers as they must plan to support all students in the school. Nick is a multi-subject credentialed teacher with a Waldorf Masters Degree. He has been able to meet the expectations of both jobs and has received a small stipend for his extra work. I would need your approval to continue on with an agreement for next year, so he can continue to cover the specialty games position in addition to looping with his current 2nd grade class. Nick's unique ability to cover both positions has helped us cut costs this year. It is for these reasons, that the games position has not been added to the reduction equation as a potential cut as the position has already been reduced this year.

ELA/ELD and Math Interventionists positions were discussed and the need for these positions to continue on in some way. Total budget cut projection if all of the above recommended cuts were made would be \$448,390.70.

Other Budget Reduction Options;

Budget Options	
Music & Spanish (each)	79,170.65
Total Handwork (middle school/lower grades)	78,456.30
Half of total handwork	39,228.15
Average SPED Specialist	73,091.85
Average Interventionist	92,580.15
Total 2 Interventionist	185,160.30
Office Staff	185,691.00
Benefits	46,422.00
Total	232,113.00
5% pay reduction	11,605,65
Executive Director Pay for FY23-24	116,338.00
Budgeted for FY 24-25	110,521.00

The addition of the food services program has brought in a significant amount of revenue along with workload increase. However, the facilities program has not added any additional staffing costs. The workload has been absorbed by the current staff. We do not know exactly how much more revenue we have received as the program is in its first year. We do know that the revenue is outweighing the costs on a monthly basis.

Board member asks about staff being able to manage the additional stress and workload. This is addressed, due to the abrupt nature of suddenly having the full responsibility of running our own lunch program we did our best to manage. Our team learned how to run the program as we managed the daily process of providing students with daily nutrition. The learning has been ongoing but the staff we have has managed it well.

The other program that was started this year and were unsure of the expenses is the ELOP program. We cut costs in Administration last year while also adding the management of this program to Amanda Hurd, our Assistant Director. The ELOP has also covered up to 30% of building and utilities costs. It has also covered the additional cost of support in the administrative hallway this year while building upon this program and learning what this will look like for next year. CCSPP, ELOP & Food Service programs are currently programs that support themselves. All other funding is either State or Federal funding focused on instruction and students.

Board member asks about the ELA/ELD program - I thought I heard earlier in the meeting that the reading program supports between 10-15 students? How many students does the Math program support? Both programs support all students except kindergarten. With the exception that the EL will support kindergarteners when the need is present. There are between 10-15 EL students. The programs work in the classrooms, support teachers, and perform assessments. Clarifying questions are asked. Which of these programs is essential to the Waldorf Program? It is said that the classrooms are the core of the program. At other similar public Waldorf schools the teachers support handwork, and music within their own classrooms. It is not the positions that are critical to Waldorf, it is the program. If we can develop a program that can be supported by less staff then that might be more sustainable. Classroom size is discussed. In the past years budget planning classroom size has been a factor. Including aides in the classroom has been based on 30 students in the classroom. Classroom size currently runs from 20 to 28 students. We are still providing full time aides in some of the classrooms that have only 20 students. This is not cost effective. There are other limits due to special education students and TK students. Ratios of students to adults is a legal requirement.

Open the floor to public comment - 3 minute limit for each participant.

Sarah Eblin, Middle School Handwork Specialist, has her own public comments along with reading other comments from supporters of the program.

Alicia Trider, Parent. Expressed concerns and outrage at the proposed budget cuts and recommended rework of proposal before decisions are made. Teachers are the beating heart of the school. Without Teachers there is no school. Why do we not see cuts to office staff? Why is the director making six figures when no one else makes that kind of money? A school can run without office staff. A school cannot run without teachers. Why are we not cutting custodians?

How are we going to retain students if we do not have the things that make us a Waldorf school?

Max Erwin, Parent. Things that are most central to a school are the teachers and the things most important to the Waldorf program are the specialties. We should be focused on retaining as many staff as we can that are working directly with students. Retention of classroom staff, aides the people that work directly with students, should be supported and emphasized. Recommends considering that administrative costs be on a shoestring budget.

Paige O'Connell, Parent. Shares the sentiments of others that spoke before her. If specialties go then we may have to switch schools. Asks if other categories can be looked at to balance the budget? Office staff, other areas like health benefits can those be looked at? Can we look at ways to increase enrollment or revenue in other ways? What are best practices for other schools? Have we looked at other schools? Are we overstaffed, are we understaffed? What is mandatory to our program, like the SPED program? Recommends that 3% cost of living raise be eliminated in favor of teachers keeping their jobs.

Kate McDonald - 4th grade Teacher & parent. Concerned with the cuts so close to the children that affect their everyday lives. We are cutting things like specialties and interventions that impact the children's everyday lives. The enrichment and love that students get from these other classes are so valuable. Would like us to look at other options that may exist. What is our plan for teaching children to read if we are to do away with the ELA/ELD program specialist? Who will teach the children to read? What will happen to our school if we get rid of specialties? What makes us different from other schools?

Elizabeth Nail, Paraprofessional and parent. Concerned about the accelerated math program. That program enables children to prepare for a different level of math in high school. Her own child benefitted from this offering. The thought of retaining students is a concern if we are eliminating programs that are integral to the school. Where do we want our focus to go considering the sustainability of the school?

Amber Pierce, Parent and Parent Council Secretary. Expresses concerns around duplication of efforts. Can we look at what people are doing and if they are doing the same jobs? Can we look at redefining job responsibilities? Can we give a choice of reduction of hours as opposed to cutting a position? I know when we go up for Charter Renewal we are valuable for our program so preserving that would be good. Handwork and Music are core programs that should be retained.

Natasha Fisher, Parent. Concurs with other speakers that all of the teachers are important, not just the classroom teachers. Her child was so upset at the thought that her Handwork teacher might be cut she cried. Concerned with the cuts being so close to students. It isn't realistic that we would choose to put on one classroom teacher to teach music and handwork; they can't give our students what they fully need. Why are we not talking about cutting in other areas? Hoping that another look is going to take place.

Lisa Batten, Parent. Spoke about her own child and classroom bonding. Taking away the aid would be a huge disadvantage to the teacher. Would like cuts to come from other areas, not the classrooms.

Shawn VonRotz, Parent & Instructional Aid. Worried about Handwork being cut. It is a valued program and she can't believe it's being considered as a cut. Worried about aides being cut as they are a greater support that people may realize. Mentions Sarah Eblin's middle school handwork as so valuable to her son. She has eight children that have gone through this program.

Mike O'Connell, Parent. Communicates appreciation for Administration, the Board, Faculty and the tough decisions that need to be made in good faith. He echoes the sentiments of those speakers before him. He hopes that our efforts continue to have a focus on recruitment so that we can build and maintain this community.

James Fisher, Parent. Everyone before him has covered the emotional impacts and soft aspects of what these decisions will mean. He gives a financial perspective on how decisions like these can become a death spiral for the school. What you are looking at cutting are all of the key differentiators that make parents want to send their kids to this school. If you don't have these unique programs why would anyone choose this school? You will no longer have the thing that makes you different. We as a community already struggle with enrollment and if we do these things proposed then that will only get worse.

Sheila Moss, Teacher. Comments in chat in support of Handwork, Claire Fong.
More comments in chat from Amber Pierce regarding increasing revenue ideas.

Emails from community members are read by Susan Domenighini.

Tara Ayala, Parent. "Don't cut specialties!!"

Claire Fong - Offers a reduction in her hours as opposed to cutting the program completely.

Public comments close at 7:40pm.

Board members discuss concerns. Total budget needs to be reviewed. Discussion that there is not enough information is being presented to make decisions. Decisions must be made tonight for the sake of staff members waiting to hear if they are going to have positions secured for next year. This review was not done at the Finance Committee Meeting this is the first look at the proposed budget cuts. The Finance Committee voted in 2017 for these decisions to not be made at those meetings. Multiple reasons were given. The main reason is that the Finance Committee is comprised of mostly staff members due to low parent involvement. This presented many conflicts of interest and strained negotiations due to discussing the personnel and the positions of actual committee members. It was decided that the Charter Council would be the best place where these discussions would take place.

Board members look at line by line budget allocations and discuss other areas that cuts can be made. Board asks for staffing norms data to determine if we are understaffed or overstaffed in certain areas. Other sources of revenue discussed, including grants that are not certain at this time. Difference in job duties and allocation of responsibilities of office staff, at this charter school as opposed to a typical district school is discussed. Is it possible that the office is overstaffed? How many are full time? Do we need to have both a nurse and a health aide? Discussion of summer hours potentially being cut for office staff. Questions regarding necessity of office staffing and custodial staff, and FTE's.

The board is asked to consider the office staff as essential support. The teachers cannot do their jobs without the support of the office staff. Everyone in the office supports the students daily in one way or another. The office is the place students go. Without office staff the students will stand in the hallway or at the back of the classroom when they are having issues the teacher cannot manage. These are painful and difficult decisions that need to be made with all of the available information.

The board is asked to consider that when Covid revenue was received, it was for the purpose of supporting students and teachers in the classrooms. This revenue therefore was used to increase staffing in the classrooms. Board is asked to not disregard the need to make the necessary reductions in this area now that this funding is no longer being received.

One board member responds to the board for clarification. Here is what I am hearing; We have an office staff that is tight compared to a lot of schools, and have consistently taken on increasing work to support things that are actually bringing revenue into the school, such as the food services program. We have made wonderful use of covid funds to increase paraprofessionals and interventionists in the classroom. That is the money that is going away now which is what is causing a large part of the problem with the budget. Looking at the cost of the current office staff, cuts will not come close to what is needed even if you eliminate all of the staff. Listening here today it sounds like you already have a lean office staff that is working hard. There are a lot of things that happen in the office that because they are being done well, and being done efficiently, you may think that you can cut them.

When I look at the FTE's for paraprofessionals and teachers you are very much overstaffed compared to a typical school. Looking at the rough numbers for a school with a 217 ADA and with 8-9 full staffed paraprofessionals is a lot. No matter what, any decision is going to be difficult and miserable. Where we need to get is a balanced budget and last time we met we couldn't do that and now we are meeting again and we can't do this. We are running out of time. We have to make a decision. The longer we put this off it's going to get worse. We are making people wait to be told whether or not they have a job next year. The board is asked to look at numbers tonight and make a decision tonight.

The board discusses information that they need to come to a decision at this meeting. The board asks to see the most up to date information on our budget sheet line items. Annie Gilbert provides the budget document for review so line items and budget categories can be discussed. Board goes through each budget category and line items to determine where cuts can be made to balance the budget. The following information is determined.

The specialties are critical to our program. If we can preserve these positions for next year then we are preserving the program. At least three quarters of the music program is funded by recurring grants. It seems a fiscally wise decision to make to vote to preserve the music program. Handwork is too valuable to cut completely as it represents a critical piece of SEL work with students and is vital to the Waldorf curriculum. The loss of intervention will put additional pressure on the teachers. Moving forward the question becomes how do we make sure that we are still supporting students that need this intervention and also increase test scores. Difficult discussion regarding language position reduction discussed. Online language courses discussed as an option.

Board discusses being worried about kids learning in schools and making decisions based on what is best for the kids as opposed to what is best for the adults is difficult work. In a perfect world no one would lose their job. Students would get their needs met and we would have adults not losing their jobs. When we are faced with these decisions as child advocates we must always put student learning first. From a test score perspective if you are going to move something online, you are going to get better results moving language online than you will moving all of the student intervention online. Students that are at risk such as a student that is struggling with reading, being asked to follow instructions for reading independently on a computer is not a good solution and there are a lot of negative results that will come from this. In theory the online language addition is intrinsically motivating for students to follow. Multiple languages could be offered to give a choice to students. We would have to examine the assessment requirements. Concerns about not meeting the expectations of our LCAP and also requirements for language in schools are voiced.

We have just under 15% sped students, 37.3% not at grade level, and 26% low-performing students. Approximately 60% of students need sped or intervention service, and 60% of all students are not meeting ELA standards. SPED would likely be below grade level.

Kids that are already at risk for academics putting them online is not a good solution. Putting languages online is also not a perfect solution but it is less problematic than online intervention.

All budget expense line items are reviewed and discussed in detail during which board members amend the current proposed reductions and vote to approve the budget.

BOCC Recommendation for budget reductions:

Spanish	\$79,170.65	
Interventionist	\$92,580.15	
Executive Director 5% decrease	\$5,817.00	
3% reduction (no annual pay increase)	\$48,274.80	
Paraprofessionals	\$69,519.00	
Office staff 5% reduction	\$11,605.65	
Other classified / facilities staff - 5% reduction	\$14,552.00	
4400 Non capitalized equipment budget reduction	\$5,000.00	
4302 school supplies budget reduction	\$5,000.00	
5101 Nursing contract reduction	\$10,000.00	
Goal	\$423,642.70	
Total	\$341,519.25	
Difference	\$82,123.45	

Board asks the Administration to return to the next meeting for a review of actuals. Motion to approve the current budget with reductions by Kristen Woods. Ryan Sanders seconds the motion.

➤ Vote.

Name	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vicki Wonacott	X			
Kristen Woods	X			
Laurel Hill-Ward				X
Leanna Glander				X(online)
Ryan Sanders	X			
Donna Kreskey	X			
Trisha Atehortua			X	

➤ Vote passes.

3. NEXT MEETING - Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 6:00PM

4. ADJOURNMENT - 10:42pm

Minutes Taken By: Maggie Buckley

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Name	Present	Absent
Vicki Wonacott		
Kristen Woods		
Laurel Hill-Ward		
Leanna Glander		

Ryan Sanders		
Donna Kreskey		
Trisha Atehortua		

➤ Vote.

Name	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vicki Wonacott				
Kristen Woods				
Laurel Hill-Ward				
Leanna Glander				
Ryan Sanders				
Donna Kreskey				
Trisha Atehortua				

➤ Vote passes.