



Minutes
Executive Committee Meeting
December 1, 2021 | 7:30 am – 9:30 am

AGENDA

- Review and approve minutes from 9/8/2021 meeting
- Board membership
- President's report
 - Federal Funds update
 - Back to school topics
 - Office relocation
- Development report
- Membership report
- Program report
 - STEM Conference
 - School Leadership Conference
- Finance report
- Audit
- Rebranding update
- Executive Committee discussion
- Other business

MINUTES

Those present: Tim Benz, Brian Lynch, Michael Lamb, Joel Landskroener, Teri McCloughan, Wyayn Rasmussen

Meeting began at 7:39 AM

Motion to approve the minutes as written was made by Teri McCloughan, seconded by Wyayn Rasmussen.

President's Report
Enrollment Survey

We conducted an enrollment survey of all nonpublic schools in the state to get a sense of school enrollment numbers this year vs. last year. Reasons for doing this: to answer any possible questions from the media, as well as a tool to use when doing outreach to schools and the great community. No school names or cities were collected – these are just aggregate, general numbers. Schools that responded showed an average increase of 10% - 11%, or an average decrease of 9.5% - 10%.

Our membership billing lags by one year, so billing next year will be based on these higher numbers.

Possible reason for the increased numbers: public school families coming to our schools because of in-person learning, a strong school community, and reaction to mask mandates (pro/con.)

Question – have there ever been previous instances where nonpublic enrollment has dropped precipitously? Answer – yes, there was a large drop in 2008 (due to recession) –



and any large drop will have a 12-year effect on school population. The push for all day Kindergarten has also led to a drop in enrollment.

Question – will the current push for free PreK impact our schools? Answer – the national CAPE organization has been working on this issue. In the Build Back Better legislation, religious schools are excluded. PreKs are a huge feeder to nonpublic schools (especially Catholic and LCMS schools.) While PreKs are not our target customers (we are for K-12), we will keep an eye on this issue.

Official enrollment numbers from the Fall Report are published by MDE in February or March.

Question – have our schools reported any loss of learning due to the pandemic? Do nonpublics opt out of standardized testing? Answer – yes, our schools do test, although not necessarily using the MCAs. Anecdotal reporting shows that our schools did experience some loss of learning, but not to the degree public schools saw it.

Federal Funds Update

EANS 1 – funds are in stream now. School spending plans are due at the Department of Education today. There might be leftover funds when all funds applied for have been distributed; then the question becomes how these funds will be used.

EANS 2 – application for funds was approved two weeks ago. These funds are only available to schools with a 34% or greater free/reduced lunch population; in Minnesota, this means only 40 schools are eligible. The plan is to ask the department what the plan is to use all those unused funds, since there will be a large amount. The funds technically revert to the Governor, and the categories for using them are broader in the state.

Organization Name Change

A document with testimonials about the name change was distributed. We have had very good feedback on the change, including feedback received at the recent LCMS and MNSAA conferences. Our website has been renamed with a new URL and the old address redirected, paperwork for the Secretary of State and Campaign Finance Board (Lobbying) has been completed, and we have printed new stationery and envelopes ahead of the Fall Appeal. The new vibrant colors in the logo are particularly appealing.

Membership

Only 2 schools did not renew their membership for this school year. Our retention rate was 98.7%, and we have added 10 new schools so far this fiscal year.

Governance Update

Sumita Mitra is resigning from the board, due to her move to Florida. We have asked, and she has agreed, to stay on through the end of the calendar year.

Veena Lakkundi has left 3M to take a new position at Rockwell Automation. She is not moving out of state and will remain on the board and involved in the strategic planning process. However, with her company move we have lost an important 3M/STEM connection. She is working with us to identify replacements and we hope to have more news in April or May.

John McCall also resigned his position to focus on other endeavors.

We have pushed the Governance Committee meeting up to early December to discuss potential candidates for all open roster positions. If anyone has ideas or contacts that may be a good fit for us, please let Tim or Teri know.



Strategic Planning Process

A brief recap of our process to date:

Phase 1 of the planning process was focused on the membership journey, which we feel was successfully completed. We have great member retention and strong relationships with new and current members. As we worked through the name-change process, we refined our talking points. More people “get” us now, and the role we played and service/grants/information we provided to schools during the COVID pandemic were key for our members.

Phase 2 of the process will focus on resource development. The prework for this phase consisted in our name change and rebranding and refining and crystalizing our communications and our story. Eight Moon was helpful to us in this process. Going forward, our plan is to start with a small committee consisting of board members, industry, and partnership contacts. The issue we will address is how do we expand our pie-chart to include multiple partners: members, corporate partners, foundations, and other sources of philanthropic dollars. We currently rely too heavily on a limited number of funding sources, such as 3M and Xcel Energy. Membership covers just 20% of our budget. The bulk of our revenue is from contributions, program revenue and sponsorships.

When we look back over the last 3 years, we have received and distributed fewer dollars for STEM grants with little to no loss of membership. Looking at this from a member standpoint – what would excite them besides just STEM? Advocacy? Programs like We Share Solar or partnerships with corporations like Boston Scientific?

Suggestion – Have board members look at their networks and relationships with foundations or donors and find a way to connect them with MINNDEPENDENT. Note that we should also ask this of the President’s Cabinet.

Question – memberships, foundations and partnerships have all been referenced in this discussion. Is the idea to include them all? Answer – yes to foundation/philanthropic giving. As for corporate partnerships – we can be a resource to funnel corporate dollars to our network. And members – are they connected to individuals who are supportive of our mission?

Discussion – We need to spend time bringing clarity to this phase; need to figure out the objectives for each of these 3 buckets and all board members need to be able to speak to them.

For a nonprofit – fundraising is important (just as earnings are important to corporations.) But in the corporate world, strategic objectives never include discussion of earnings.

Strategic objectives are about what the customer wants/needs. We need to figure out how to talk about our objectives without bringing up fundraising first.

There needs to be a strategic plan in place before a capital campaign starts. What are the pieces?

Discussion – Is there a point when we don’t do STEM anymore? What is the *next* STEM? Can our professional development/convening and connecting/advocacy take on an equal footing to STEM?

Would talking about developing the next group of leaders be appealing to foundations? “Leadership always accelerates.” From the Xcel Energy perspective: they need STEM experts, but they also need leaders. And even better, leaders who know STEM.

The leadership process works outside of MINNDEPENDENT’s scope, but once a leader is identified, we can help them get to the next level.

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Conclusion – Goals of steering committee: 1) for each of the three buckets (membership, foundations, partnerships) be crystal clear about the objectives for each. Perhaps start with three and distill down to one. 2) What do our customers want under each of those buckets? 3) Who IS the customer for each bucket? Create/design a customer for each.

Question – We have 3 key points in our tagline. Does the resource development angle change within programming, partnership, and public policy?

Discussion - Could MINNDEPENDENT be a connection/platform to build relationships (perhaps utilizing technology?) Example: how could we connect colleges with members? The relationships are important.

Like when we added grade schools to MINNDEPENDENT membership. High schools are also our biggest member “donors” because they have larger enrollments. We hoped high schools would stay, even if they accessed fewer services, because the relationships with grade schools would be important. They attend the School Leadership Conference, our most important offering of the year.

Question – How to stay relevant? What does “good” education look like five years from now? What are other educational models to prepare future leaders. Use these discussions in the leadership bucket.

MINNDEPENDENT is the platform that can raise schools to the next level; without MINNDEPENDENT some schools wouldn’t have a support network.

Ahead of the next planning meeting, Tim and staff will put together a “funding pie chart.” During the first meeting, the committee will discuss who is the customer in each bucket and crystalize the objectives for each bucket.

Further Business

- Our second PPP loan has been forgiven.
- Membership dollars are over budget, given our better retention rates and 10 new members.
- We will return to Ruttger’s for the School Leadership Conference next year.
- The Executive Committee recognizes the renewed and reinvigorated interest in our organization

Adjournment

There being no further business brought forth, Joel Landskroener moved to adjourn, seconded by Wyayn Rasmussen. Meeting ended at 8:55 AM.

Wyayn Rasmussen

2/16/2022