

Great Oaks Academy
Emergency Meeting
5/7/20

Call to order: HW at 11:08

Present: Paul McGlynn, Rich Penix, Briana Smith, Heith Wezler, Zac Holm, three members of the community

Paul: We are attempting to lease Mt. Olivet which is rated by the fire dept as an occupancy A for assembly. In order to lease there we need to change the occupancy to allow the school, which requires them to install a fire sprinkler system and fire alarm system. We set up a contractor to come in and give an estimate of the cost. The city was willing to work with us by allowing it to be done in phases over two or three years. The contractor estimated approx. \$100,000. There were some other costs that came along with that that could have raised it to \$150,000. In order for the city to approve, there was some insulation that would need to be sprayed into the ceiling of the second floor. Also the pipes servicing the church were too small to supply the sprinkler system, so new piping would need to be laid down. The church has determined that they cannot afford the outlay and couldn't be sure they could secure a loan for it. They decided they were no longer interested in continuing with the lease.

Rick Nelson (realtor) looked into two other buildings, one was a no, one hasn't gotten back to him. The discussion today is how do we proceed given the circumstances.

Zac: What is the deadline for the lease?

Paul: Lease aid application has to be filled out. Would need the facility secured in the next few weeks. End of May at the latest.

Heith: We have a few options. One: Stay the course for a few weeks trying to find something. Continue promoting, make an announcement about the building issue. Two: take advantage of the extension and put a pause on everything, picking up again next year.

Zac: What would restarting in the fall look like?

Paul: I would suggest restarting in January. The funds that are there wouldn't allow for starting in the fall unless we worked without pay.

Question from the public: Can we do both? Work through May and then pause?

Heith: We could but we are draining our funding.

Paul: The start up grant goes for 18 months. We started in Jan 2019, it's been 16 months. We have two more grants but they're dependent on our opening. We have to check with MDE if we can get an extension on the 18 months. We've gotten this far and have some traction with enrollment. We have some very excited, passionate parents. We currently have 20 fully enrolled students and five more that just need to fill out their packets.

Heith: If it weren't for Covid, we would be out of luck no matter what, but given the crisis, are they allowing for special circumstance extensions? Are they going to look at the term?

Paul: My best information is that if we want to pause our grant, and I think this is more for schools that are just starting, I don't believe that it was geared toward schools like ours that have already been at it for a while. I don't think MDE has any certain information.

Heith: There's not enough money to sustain another full time campaign starting next January. Do we know the amount left in the grant?

Paul: Not off the top of my head.

Briana: What about a temporary location while we found a permanent one? Is that too much of a hassle?

Paul: It's an idea. We need enough space and to meet the specifications to get lease aid. It has to be good enough to satisfy parents. We have to get started. Rick Nelson feels like he's scoured the area and can't find anything.

Heith: We haven't been very picky and it seems there's very little out there. I'm not opposed to the idea but where would we look?

Comment from the public: Melissa Joseph can send a list of possibilities.

Paul: Maybe that's how we find a place - through a parent. It has to be done in the next few weeks. It might be in our best interest to go for broke at this point. But I can see the wisdom of waiting as well.

Heith: I would agree with that impulse. Pausing and trying to restart next year has significant challenges. Paul's salary wouldn't be paid. We would be rehiring another director on a very limited budget to try to redo what Paul's been doing full time. What I want to know is do you have any other input?

Briana: I think we go for it. Let's consider some of the spaces we rejected before due to their being too small since we're now looking for short term.

Heith: I think JoJo's shut down, unfortunately. There may be some kind of commercial space that is coming available as an unfortunate side effect of this covid situation. That's something to think about. Rick probably knows more than I do about that.

Paul: I'll be calling Rick right after this.

Heith: Do we need to do a vote?

Paul: Not if we're moving forward.

Heith: Okay let's just get a consensus that we're going forward as we have nothing to lose. There's been a lot of challenges that are not unique to us but we've weathered them really well. Maybe we'll get through this too. Regardless I think this is something to feel good about and be proud of and when you run into a wall that you didn't put there you can't blame yourself.

Rich: I think the families we have enrolled are going to be very invested and that's a lot of people who might know of something. Let's be transparent and see if we can find something. Everyone understands unfortunate situations. Let's see if we can get the word out and try to find something.

Zac: Let's specify what is needed and that's a great idea.

Paul: I'll begin it today and call each family personally and tell them about the situation. I will be straightforward and see if they can come up with anything. We'll see where it goes. They really want this to work and so do I. We just need some place to be. Maybe we open at lower enrollment with fewer staff if that's what we need to do. There's such an energy in this community that once we open we will expand. We have a meeting in 11 days. We'll see what we can do before then.

Heith: Let's not put any spin on it but also be concise, no need to get into the weeds about MDE, Mt. Olivet or anything. Let's be positive and see what's out there. Didn't we already create a plan for 40 students enrolled? Let's dust that off too.

Paul: I have a meeting with Nick. One issue is that the spread of our 20 students is K-5 and that's a struggle. But maybe we do a one room schoolhouse and 2 teachers, 2 paras and me and we do break offs and we work collectively.

Heith: We will keep moving forward. Paul will call parents. What about social media? Do we continue to do marketing?

Paul: We need to make a formal announcement. Also, we need to change the address on the website. We can do that or pay the web guys to do it. After I make the calls that needs to change as well.

Heith: Let's keep up with getting videos made.

Paul: Let's give ourselves a week from today - Friday, May 15 - let's check in. All the parents are waiting to see the facility and that's what's preventing the next surge. I will get you an update by Wednesday of next week.

Heith: Let's open up to public comment.

Lindsey Guetter: If it does delay a year, we might not be interested because my son would be switching schools and then switching again. I don't know what other parents might think.

Melissa Joseph: Emailed Paul a list of places. I'm in the same boat as Lindsey.

Heith: If there are no more public questions or comments we need a motion to adjourn.

Zac Holm: Motion to adjourn.

Rich Penix: Second

Heith: Meeting adjourned 11:56