SYRINGA MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

Board of Directors

Strategic Planning Meeting Minutes

APPROVED 8/17/26

Date: July 12 2026

Time: 3pm – 6:30pm

Location: Board Chair home

Meeting Type: Special / Strategic Planning Session. Joint meeting of the Board of Directors and Parent Council

Board Members Present: Brian Vanderwyst (Board Chair), Chris Alexander (Director)

Staff Present: Christi Thompson (School Director), Michele Harris (Teacher)

Parent Council Present: Paige Bruce (Parent Council Chair)

Guests: Michele Oliphant (prospective Board member)

Meeting called to order by Board Chair Brian Vanderwyst. 3pm

1. Parent Council Governance Structure

The Board discussed the relationship between Parent Council leadership and the Board. The Board agreed that the Parent Council Chair will serve as a non-voting liaison to the Board — similar in structure to the existing teacher liaison role — rather than as a voting Board member. Governing documents will be updated to reflect this liaison structure.

2. Parent Council Budget & Communications

The Board approved a Parent Council operating budget of $4,500 for the 2026–27 school year, to be tracked through the school's general ledger. The Board affirmed Parent Council's core purpose as community-building, with fundraising as a secondary function. Parent Council will provide a standing monthly update to the Board (highlights, budget status, and plans for the coming month), and will serve as the single coordination point for parent volunteer requests and classroom-level communications going forward.

3. Family & Community Communications

The Board approved a coordinated monthly family communications calendar, rotating outreach responsibility among the Director, Parent Council, Board, and Teaching staff on a weekly basis, to reduce redundant or uncoordinated messaging to families. Each group retains full editorial control over its own communications; the shared calendar is used only to coordinate timing and topics.

4. Fundraising & Communications Coordinator Position

The Board reviewed and approved the scope of the paid Fundraising & Communications Coordinator position for the 2026–27 school year, focused on the Ecothon, the Spring Raffle, monthly community-partnership events, and general school social media and communications. A hiring committee was formed, including the School Director, a Board member, and a prospective Board member, to conduct candidate interviews. Compensation will be structured as a 12-month stipend, consistent with the school's academic-year staffing calendar.

5. Fundraising Program Updates

- Farm Stand and the Spring Bake Sale will move under Parent Council coordination for the coming year.
- The Book Blast will be discontinued; the school will continue to hold two annual Book Fairs (November and February).
- The Spring Raffle and Art Gala structure will be adjusted to more directly connect raffle ticket purchases with art-raffle entries.
- Pizza Day will not continue in its current form this year, pending identification of a parent volunteer coordinator.
- The Board discussed increasing a local business sponsorship request and affirmed continued outreach to community sponsors.

6. Financial Update

The Board reviewed the current fundraising outlook against the school's operating deficit-reduction goal for the year and identified securing approximately $20,000 in additional matching and sponsor funds as a near-term priority.

7. Volunteer Engagement

The Board discussed approaches to recognizing parent volunteer participation and affirmed the school's current approach of encouraging — rather than strictly requiring — volunteer hours, in order to remain accessible to all families regardless of schedule or circumstance.

8. Board Development

The Board agreed to dedicate time at the August meeting to board member recruitment, clarifying the Director's role and reporting relationship with the Board, and revisiting the school's mission statement. Board members will bring a draft mission statement to that meeting for discussion.

9. Guest Introduction

The Board welcomed Machelle Kelchner, a prospective future Board member, who observed the meeting and participated in discussion of fundraising and volunteer-engagement topics.

Next Meeting

Monday, August 17, 2026 — 6:00 PM — Syringa Mountain School.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.

Minutes recorded by: Chris Alexander