

# the Ecology Learning Center

## Board Agenda

May 20, 2026

5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

**In attendance:** Josh Kercksmar, Leza Packard, Jennifer Albee (notetaker), Lauren Giroux, Malcolm Campbell (virtual)

**Guests:** Beth Alma

**Board Update:** Donyse Babin has resigned from the board due to personal circumstances - she loves ELC and wishes us all well.

**Mission Moment:** Gideon Ilung (math teacher) discussed how he enjoys finding ways to explain content and concepts to students. This is his first year teaching (geometry and Algebra II) and Gideon already feels ready for next year. Leza recognized Gideon's patience and calm presence.

### Consent Agenda:

The board is at an impasse because we do not have quorum. Malcolm notes that we can still discuss agenda items with those present and then vote via email re: **the following - Josh will send an email to all board members asking for a yes or no vote:**

- To accept the consent agenda
- To re-elect Randy Fox for 2nd term as board member
- To accept the FY 2027 Budget

**UPDATE:** The board voted via email on the 3 items that did not have quorum:

- Accept Consent Agenda: 7- yes, 0- no, 0 abstention
- Re-elect Randy Fox for 2nd term as board member: 6- yes, 0- no, 1- abstention
- Accept the FY 2027 Budget: 7- yes, 0- no, 0- abstention

All items pass with board approval.

### Financial Strategies & Discussion:

- Finance Committee Report (available at [April Treasury Report](#)) shows that metrics are all acceptable - Leza notes that the budget is in good shape compared to last year (a real squeaker)
- Three year budget plan is due in June 2026
- Budget Presentation prepared by Lauren is at [FY27 Budget Review 05.20.26.pptx](#) and the budget is at [FY27 DRAFT Budget](#)

Notes from the presentation include:

- No major changes on the expenses side have been added since the finance committee meeting last week
- State subsidy to ELC will increase due to growing enrollment
- Potential program budget income is reduced (Cliff rentals and events)
- Overall increase in income is 8%
- Budget anticipates a 7% increase in expenses

- Note that staff benefits are being split differently in the budget across teams (for instance, admin benefits are being rolled into Regular Classroom Expense line, slide 3) - the 27% increase is a reallocation, not a steep increase
- There is a proposal in this budget beginning Jul 1, 2026 to increase salary for teachers and ed techs that aligns with or exceeds RSU and meets an average in the three local school districts (RSU 71, RSU 3 and MSAD 49)
- Josh notes that Special Ed number seems high - there will be an increase of two special ed teachers and ed techs, including the hire of experienced teachers at a higher payscale
- Budget shows a small net income of roughly \$22,000

#### **BUDGET RISKS:**

- Aging facilities
- Unstable grants funding
- Future risk re: key administrator salaries being well below current market rate (including head of school and director of operations) - need to look ahead re: future/succession planning
- HOS average for other charter schools is more than \$40k more than Leza's current salary
- Operations Director role isn't as easy to quantify since ops are handled differently depending on size of school, other roles, etc.
- Wage increases for admin team is currently budgeted at 1.8% to match increase of state subsidies

#### **BUDGET OPPORTUNITIES:**

- Focused grant application approach
- New Cliff management/approach (where pay is tied to success in the role / commission)
- Successful parent group fundraisers

#### **BUDGET GAP:**

- Think of this item in the presentation as funds are not secured
- Incoming state dollars are known - the gap is funds that ELC needs to raise ourselves to hit budget income
- Budget gap was 8% in past fiscal year, and only 60% of that unsecured income has come to fruition
- Budget gap in the coming FY 27 year will be lower - 7%
- This metric will be tracked in the coming year as a gut check for future fiscal / budget planning

Malcolm notes the realities of our charter school - per student funding is less than public schools, we can't ask local taxpayers for more money, grant funding is difficult to access, and development efforts are critical to fill annual budget gap - how does the board become more active as a fundraising entity / support team for Leza so she can seek higher sources of income generation? We see aspirational budget items for the coming fiscal year, and every year we will need to nickel and dime in order to pass a balanced budget - state funding alone will never meet our income needs.

Josh reintroduced the question of hiring a grant writer - Leza notes that we may have a staff member who has a percentage of F/T role to teach an elective course or work grant cultivation. The grant writing skillset is beyond writing and includes knowing the field and building relationships. Malcolm notes that an in-house option

could create momentum that a professional grant writer might not - he is happy to help a teacher work on grants and will touch base more with Josh when he returns from NZ.

### **Executive Director Report:**

- NWEA, SAT, Accuplacer results
  - There are still outstanding NWEA tests that need to be completed - broad strokes are that math scores are not as good as we hoped - in short, student proficiency continues to be lower in math than in reading
  - Effort is going into math below proficiency through a 1:7 ratio or less in math curriculum
  - Students who qualify for McKinney-Vento (unaccompanied/inadequate housing) score equal to or higher in all areas of proficiency and growth
  - Three faculty members - Grace, Dylan and Kate - are joining Kayla and Leza to create an Academic Leadership team - this group will coordinate with the board Academic Excellent committee to get performance metrics up
  - Review director report at [5.20.26 Board Meeting Director's Report](#)