

the Ecology Learning Center

Board Agenda

January 21, 2026

5:31 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

In attendance: Josh Kercksmar, Tia Poulin, Leza Packard, Malcolm Campbell, Randy Fox, Donyse Babin, Margaret Micolichuk.

Prospective Board Members: Jennifer Albee, Lauren Giroux

Guests: Beth Alma, Doug Lakin, Esther Williamson

Mission Moment: Doug Lakin, Woodworking Teacher and Outdoor Programs Instructor

Mr Lakin shared his progression of roles at ELC since its inception. He is now co-leading the monthly trips that the students take and woodworking, where he insists that they use handtools. He instructs the high school and Bridge program students. Which supports the students' learning about simple mistakes, corrections, and developing the ability to master what they are working on. Mr. Lakin views woodworking as an opportunity to craft the world you want to live in. It is an opportunity for the students to try something new and problem-solve. Lastly, Mr. Lakin works in facilities. This week's problem was that the heating was on automatically, and it was set to the incorrect month and year. This allows the building to be warm when students and staff are in the building but cooler when they are not. This has been corrected.

Consent Agenda:

- Minutes: [12.17.2025 Meeting Minutes](#)
- Executive Director's Report ([1.21.26 Board Meeting Director's Report](#))
- Governance Committee ([12/03/2025 Governance Committee Meeting Minutes](#))
- July/August Treasury Report ([Finance Committee Report to the Board 26.01.14](#))
- Dropout Prevention Committee ([Drop Out Prevention Committee 11/17/25 Notes](#))

Motion to accept the consent agenda by Malcolm Campbell, seconded by Randy Fox; Unanimous

Bridge Program Financial Report through Q2

- Presentation by Esther Williamson, Bridge Director / Questions & Discussion
 - Esther reviewed the Bridge program Q2 Financial Report
 - Income is frontloaded so it appears to be a lot at the beginning, but it evens out throughout the year. $\frac{2}{3}$ of the income has been collected even though we are only $\frac{1}{2}$ way through the year.
 - This allows for time to fill the vacancy should a student leave
 - The grant money is from the award last year, but it was split over the three-year grant period.
 - Estimates \$8,000 to 12,000 in resources that are not expensed until the end of the year.
 - Expenses: Staff costs have increased due to the need for more staff with the increase in student count. The Ed Tech is now coming in extra this year. Also added technical support. Bridget from Waterfall Arts has come in to teach drawing.
 - Approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the students in Bridge require special education support.

- Planning for an increase in rent for the Barn Raisers space.
- Esther believes they will end with a credit at the end of the year.
- Plan to go on a winter camping trip at the end of February to Flagstaff Lake.
- One student left over Christmas break due to a change in family circumstances. One student came this week to consider joining the program.
- “A lot” of people have expressed interest in joining the Bridge Program next year.”
 - Approximately 35 families have expressed interest
 - 9 families are graduating from the program this year
- Identified future concern: What will the plan be when ELC stops leasing the Annex?
 - May would be the month she needs to know about a space other than the Annex. She is flexible about when in May.
 - Esther is scouting locations in Unity.

Executive Session:

Motion to enter Executive Session for Board Matter under 1 MRSA 405.6A at 6:11 pm by Tia Poulin, Seconded by Randy Fox; Unanimous

Motion to exit executive session at 6:13 pm by Randy Fox, Seconded by Malcolm Campbell; Unanimous

Motion to approve Lauren Giroux and Jennifer Albee to the Board of Directors by Josh Kercksmar, Seconded by Randy Fox; Unanimous

Facilities Committee Charter:

- First Reading of [Facilities Committee Charter](#)
 - Reviewed by the board.
 - Can the second reading be done via email and vote that way, so we do not have to wait another month?
 - Yes, we can do that. Second reading to come via email in approximately 10 days due to the Epicenter timeline
 - Leza will check with the commission tomorrow that an “emergency meeting” wouldn’t need to be posted 7 days prior to the meeting. If this is the case Josh will initiate the “emergency meeting” for a second reading and vote via email.
 - Beth Arnold has stated she is open to being the Board member on the committee
 - Doug and Christina will also be on the committee
 - Josh will connect Beth and Christina
 - Comment: There is an existing Facilities Committee Charter already in policy. Why was it changed?
 - We removed the requirement of two board members and decreased it to one board member.
 - Some of the duties were altered as well, involving facilities acquisitions and combining operations with the committee responsibilities.
 - The concern is why we aren’t using the current committee charter so that we can have a committee that has been needed.
 - There have not been two board members able to sit on the committee. This has been addressed in the new Charter.

- Comment: Can we start organizing the committee now and officially meet once the charter is approved through the email 2nd reading, and vote? - Yes

Financial Strategies & Discussion:

- The finance committee would like to change the committee meetings and board meeting schedule to accommodate the need to get financials, review them and create the documents for the consent agenda and board review.
 - The new meeting schedule for the rest of the school year will be as follows (all meetings are on Wednesdays at 5:30pm):

February:

Finance-9th
Board Meeting-11th
Governance-25th

March:

Finance- 11th
Governance- 18th
Board Meeting- 25th

April:

Finance 8th
Governance 15th
Board Meeting 29th

May:

Finance 13th
Board 20th
Governance 27th

June:

Finance 10th
Governance 17th
Board 24th

- Audit was completed and was satisfactory
- Federal Grants for special ed will be invoiced on the regular agenda
- Foundation Grants have not been able to identify:
 - Leza has identified Onion, Sewall, and Davis Foundation grants, all three of which we're working on.
- Cliff- The amount of money needed to raise has decreased because we have not paid to bring in talent. But that means we are not generating as much revenue with bigger performers.
 - Workshops do seem to be performing with revenue
- Fundraising: December was good, but \$22,000 from a single donor will not be repeated
- Sprinkler system- was broken into 3 payments with zero interest
- The current projected shortfall is \$55,000. Compared to last year, it was \$13,000.
 - Solutions in the past have been the line of credit and borrowing from the Bridge program. The budget required fundraising to meet the gap that has not been met.
- Reminder that all Board members are asked to donate to ELC. There is no required amount; we may discuss changing that in the future. This is the time of year to give.

Executive Director Update:

- ED brought up that other charter public schools do not do their annual or mid-term performance reviews with the entire board, but only in the Governance Committee.
- Progress report on AY26 SMART Goals- Leza reviewed the goals around Fundraising, Strategic Leadership of teaching and learning set last spring.
 - So far, goal one has been met for Strategic Leadership of teaching and learning
 - Having NWEA testing at every grade level allows for consistent data collection over time.
 - Added link to all Board Agendas have the link to the data
 - Fundraising- several goals have been met
 - Raised \$44,450
 - Added a significant donor who donates monthly
 - Weekly check-ins with bookkeeper
 - 68% of funds have been received
- Discussed her efforts with the Cliff and working with Manager to set and meet the goal for 3 year succession plan.

Executive Session:

Motion to enter Executive Session for Board Matter under 1 MRSA 405.6A at 7:19 pm by Randy Fox, Seconded by Tia Poulin; Unanimous

Motion to exit executive session at 7:38 by Randy Fox, Seconded by Tia Poulin; Unanimous

Discussed the desire for the board to move this topic to the next meeting to give it the time and attention it deserves. The next board meeting agenda will allow more ample time for the executive session.

The Board recognized Alan McCready for his contribution to ELC and the community.

Motion to adjourn by Randy Fox, seconded by Tia Poulin; Unanimous

Adjourned: 7:53pm

PLEASE UPDATE YOUR CALENDAR WITH THE CHANGE IN COMMITTEE AND BOARD MEETING DATES.