

Steamboat Springs Education Fund Board & Grants Commission
October 3, 2017
5: 30PM
BOCES Board Room

Education Fund Board Directors present included Sam Jones, Kandise Gilbertson, Alissa Merage, Jeanne Mackowski, Cristina Magill, Jill Brabec, Norbert Turek, Jay O'Hare, Chris Johnson, Jon Wade and Adam Alspach. Grants Commission members present included: Stuart Handloff, Jenny Maxwell, Paul Barry, Beth Wilhelm, Courteney Famulare, Katie Armstrong, Susan Petersen and Amber Delay. Also present were Linda Thomas (SSEF accountant); advisors Bob Logan (Soroco) and Brian Hoza (HSD); Rim Watson (Soroco); Mark Ryberg and Tim Miles (SSSD); and Christy Sinner (HSD). Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes.

- **Call to Order:**

Sam Jones called the joint meeting of the Steamboat Springs Education Fund Board to order at 5:30 PM.

- **Public Comment:**

There was no public comment.

- **Board and GC Representative Comments**

Jenny reported that a sub-committee is working on reviewing the grant application questions to eliminate redundancy and streamline the applications. She also reported on the visits that SSEF Board and Commission members had made to schools to discuss and promote Innovation Grants.

- **Advisory Board:**

Sam reviewed the function of the advisory board and stated that dialogue between the EFB and advisory board members would generally occur during this time slot of future meetings.

- **Board and Commission Orientation**

Sam reviewed the structure of the EFB and the GC, the funding source for the Education Fund and presented a summary the funds that have been granted over the years. He stated that the allocation model serves as a guideline for the allocation of funds, and is based on historical funding. It is not prescriptive. Sam reviewed the SSEF mission statement and the ballot language that voters approved to provide funding for SSEF. He noted that the ballot measure called for funds to be spent on "educational purposes" without further specificity. Sam described the three different types of grants awarded by the SSEF: District, Community Group and Innovation. He also reviewed the roles of the EFB, the GC, the advisors, and the applicants in the process. Regarding accountability, he stated that the grant recipients should focus on the outcomes to assess a programs' success, rather than only cataloguing the outputs (what was purchased, the number of kids served, etc.).

Sam stated that in an effort to include the districts in the decision making process regarding the community programs that are supported by the SSEF, the districts will be given the opportunity to rank the Community Group Grant applications.

Sam reviewed the by-laws, the MOU with the City and the policies and procedures (currently being revised). He also described grant application review process.

- **Grant Writer Annual Report**

Karla Setter, the grant writer whose salary is funded by the SSEF, reviewed the spreadsheet (included in the meeting materials) detailing the grants she had applied for and the amount of grant funds awarded, broken down by district, since she took the position in 2011 (except 2015-16, which was inadvertently omitted). In the 2016-17 year, her efforts resulted in \$1,151,634 in grant funds going to the school districts in Routt County. The spreadsheet also includes a detailed breakdown of the specific grants. Karla highlighted that 10 district positions are fully or partially funded by grants she has written. There was a discussion of whether it would be appropriate for Karla to work on grants for MVMCS.

- **SSMS French**

Sam reviewed the error that resulted in \$7500 being requested for SSMS French. In 2016 the SSEF funded one section. In last year's grant cycle, SSSD had requested funding for a second section of French. Although the narrative portion of the grant application was correct in requesting two sections, there was a mistake in the budget: \$7,500 was requested for the new section only instead of \$15,000 for the existing section and the proposed new section (two sections in total). Sam noted that, if approved, the additional funding would be taken from this year's accounting, as last year's accounts are closed. The additional section of French is currently in progress.

MOTION

*Norbert moved to increase the 2017-18 budget by \$7500 to cover the additional section of French at the Steamboat Springs Middle School. Alissa seconded the motion. **The motion carried unanimously.***

- **Innovation Grant teacher stipends**

Sam reviewed the PowerPoint presentation that he and Jenny had made to the SSSD Board regarding the proposal to include teacher stipends in the Innovation Grants. He offered that the idea behind the proposed stipends was to create an incentive for teachers to apply. He noted that the stipends would be capped at \$800 (net) per teacher, which with benefits would cost the SSEF \$960 per grant. He reviewed the process through which teachers would be paid using the school district process for compensating additional hours worked. Sam noted that the teachers would fill out a log of their outside-of-class hours, which would be reviewed by their principal, as well as by the SSEF.

Sarah noted that many Innovation Grant applications are submitted by groups of teachers. Jenny proposed that the cap could be \$960 per grant (rather than per teacher). Beth expressed concern that the stipends would reduce the amount of SSEF funding that would go directly to the kids. She offered that the teachers who are innovative would rather see the additional money going to classroom projects and not to them. Courtney suggested that additional time would be more important to her than money for extra work, and offered that a half-day sub to allow for work on the implementation would be more valuable. Christy Sinner stated that the incentive to the teachers would be a benefit to the kids through the innovation. She added that she would rather have the teacher in the classroom, however, than covered by a sub. There was a discussion of whether the money would be for the time to research the project and apply for the grant, or for the additional time that implementation of the project would take. Jill questioned whether the incentive would actually achieve the desired goal. She offered that other means would be more effective at encouraging innovation (improving the timing of the application, better explanation of what is wanted, etc.), and suggested that the stipends to teachers could backfire on SSEF by seeming to violate the "student-facing" element of the mission. Norbert offered that the prospect of a possible future stipend was unlikely to lead to more applications. Courtney offered that feedback should be given to unsuccessful applicants. Jeanne offered that some other form of recognition and support for successful innovations might be beneficial. She said that the goal is to spark innovative thinking. Kandise noted that innovation in education is cyclical, and that in some years there will be more great ideas than in others. Jon offered

that there might be some other type of award than cash to the teacher. Jenny stated that the idea was also to show respect for the additional time and effort that a new project might take. Courteney noted that innovation is context-based, and might look different in different districts. Amber suggested that help with the grant writing might spur more applications. Norbert suggested that the barriers to applying should be reduced.

- **Financial Report**

Linda reviewed the financial reports, as included in the meeting materials. She noted that the September deposit was down 9% in comparison to last year. She added, however, that July’s deposit was up by 26%. Fiscal year-to-date deposits are up 8.42%. Sam reviewed that there is a two-month lag, such that July’s tax receipts are deposited with SSEF in September. He also noted that the SSEF sets its budget for the year in March, with much of the fiscal year remaining. As a result, the SSEF will begin this year with over \$300,000 in “extra” funds. He also described the cash flow cushion that is retained to ensure that a balance is available with which to pay invoices when they are submitted.

Jeanne asked if the City might be able to provide information on the causes of very large year over year fluctuations. Jon offered to track the trends to allow for better predictions.

Paul asked if there was any contingency plan to provide the districts with a “soft landing” in the event the ballot measure to renew the ½-cent sales tax fails. Sam noted that the funding expires in December of 2019. The plan is to ask for renewal in 2018, so that if it fails there would be another opportunity to ask again. Sam added that the SSEF could not manage the amount of money needed to provide a soft landing.

Linda noted that the SSEF audit is underway. Sam said he would report to the City when the audit has been completed.

- **Committee Reports**

- Communications – Jeanne said that work on the new website continues. She said that she hopes to share a communications plan with the EFB at the November meeting, and stressed the importance of establishing consistent messaging going into the school district bond/mill levy election. Jeanne presented a draft FAQ document about the SSEF. There was discussion of the changes in how SSEF funds have been used over the years. Jeanne noted that the ballot language has remained consistent with each renewal. She asked everyone to review the document and provide feedback. Sam noted that a campaign committee will be needed to sponsor the ballot measure.
- Governance – Norbert stated that the policies and procedures should remain a living document that changes as needed, and should cite, rather than restate, the by-laws. He urged anyone with contributions to the policies and procedures to send them to him for inclusion, and noted that this will help to preserve the institutional knowledge of the organization.

- **Meeting Minutes – September 6, 2017:**

MOTION

Jay moved to approve the EFB meeting minutes of September 6, 2017 as written. Cristina seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

- **Agenda Items for November meeting**

- Policies & Procedures

- By-laws
- Audit and tax returns
- Systems and processes for grant application review
- I3SEED grant update
- Rescissions

- **Other business**

Cristina urged EFB members, and particularly new members, to attend GC meetings when applications are being discussed.

- **Adjourn**

MOTION

Jon moved to adjourn the meeting; Cristina seconded. The EFB meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.