



Rainier Christian Schools - Board of Directors
PO Box 58249
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districtboard@rainierchristian.org

GENERAL MEETING - BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND TOWN HALL MEETING REGARDING MERGER BETWEEN RCS AND RENTON CHRISTIAN

February 29, 2024 – KVE, 6:00pm

Type of meeting: General Board meeting with Directors and President, open to public.
Facilitator: Julie Franzen (Chair). Board Members: Dan Vander Pol (Vice Chair), Darryl D'Ambrosio (Treasurer), Garth Gill, Tim Sica, Rick Rosenkranz (Secretary).
School President: None; position currently open.
Board Members Absent: Mark Hargrove.
Special Guest: Randy McMillan, Head of School, Renton Christian.
Attendees: Approximately 80+ in attendance.

The meeting was called to order with an opening prayer by Garth Gill at 6:00pm.

Introductions

The meeting was opened with introductions by each board member giving their years on the school board and their relationship to the school (all but Mark Hargrove have kids or have had kids come through the RCS system). Randy McMillan also introduced himself.

Minutes Approval and Other Open Board Business

Approval of January 2024 General and Executive Board meeting minutes. Darryl D'Ambrosio made a motion to approve; Dan Vander Pol seconded. Minutes approved as revised/submitted by unanimous vocal vote.

Julie Franzen also reported on the Board decisions from the February 13, 2024, special executive meeting in which the merger with Renton Christian was approved (6-0 in favor with 1 recusal) and in which the Board voted to accept President Bruce Kelly's resignation effective February 26, 2024 (7-0 in favor).

Rick Rosenkranz followed this by sharing the Board's appreciation for Bruce Kelly's leadership of RCS over the past 6.5 years as he guided us through several crises (moving the high school, Covid impact, etc.) while also improving academic rigor.

Town Hall – Opening

The rest of the meeting was a town-hall format to share information about the approved merger between RCS and Renton Christian and answer any questions from the attendees. The



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Board opened the Town Hall by presenting a series of slides regarding the merger and answers to questions already received via email. Dan spoke about the shared vision of RCS and Renton Christian to strengthen Christian education in our area, to develop a regional Christian high school, and to ultimately see 100 students graduate every year, rooted in Christ and equipped to change the world. The guiding values behind the merger were shared: Guided by God, Christ-centered, honoring the people impacted, clear communications during the process, and rigorous academics and programming. Julie shared the timeline of the merger, from the initial discussions in October 2023 to the approvals by both schools in February 2024 to the fully-joined schools/campuses in the 2025-2026 school year. Rick Rosenkranz shared some of the shared heritage and vision: the 60 years that RCS has existed, the desire at one point to build our own high school but the changes that made that increasingly unlikely (flood plain changes, enrollment declines and corresponding financial issues), and the ultimate goal to have both RCS and Renton Christian feeding into a state-of-the-art high school that benefits every family that desires to have their kids graduate with Christian-centered values.

Town Hall – Email Q&A

The Board then transitioned to the slides that answered questions it has received via email.

Identity/Values

Q - As with any merger, loss of identity is a great concern. How are you working together to preserve the identity of each school?

A - With over 100 years of rich history between both schools, there are generations of parents, teachers, and leaders who have sacrificed and invested into the schools we enjoy today. Our shared intent is to keep the stories of each school alive as we go forward. Our organizational DNA is often seen in the founding values of the past. Honoring the significant investment of those currently on the team and those who served before will help celebrate our rich heritage. It was also mentioned that the ultimate name of the combined school district will likely change to reflect and honor both schools.

Identity/Values

Q - How will you ensure Rainier Christian's current school values will remain in place this coming year and when we are fully merged? We love all that this current school stands for and [that it is] truly is God Focused vs God and political belief.

A - Both schools are founded and centered on Jesus. We want each student to develop a personal relationship with Christ and develop a Biblical worldview. We want to inspire each student to have Godly Wisdom, Christ- like Character, and express God's love to one another. We also believe teachers are our secret sauce! When teachers are fully equipped and resourced it benefits everything. We highly value community and the parent/school partnership. We are



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more aligned than different in our values, and over the past several months, we have found how aligned our values truly are.

Collaborative Leadership

Q - What role will Rainier have in the decision-making process and ongoing leadership of Renton Executive Leadership Team of New Life?

A - The leadership teams from both schools are committed to collaboratively joining together. Over the next 12 – 18 months all stakeholders will be engaged in developing our aligned school.

Leadership

Q - As the schools become larger in the years to come, will it have its own committed oversight?

A - Accountability is very important. Renton Christian has multiple layers of accountability to ensure its success. The Head of School reports to the Lead Pastor of New Life Church. Randy McMillan is also accountable to the Northwest Ministry Network. The school board and New Life Elder Council provide oversight and wisdom, especially in finance and theology. ACSI and ECFA accreditation provide best practice guidance and annual reporting. Accountability to and collaboration with all these groups build a high structure of oversight and protection.

Governance

Q - How many Renton students/families attend New Life? Rainier has families from many church backgrounds.

A - Similarly, so does Renton Christian! Renton Christian families attend over 125 different churches, which shows our faith diversity. Another data point: Only 39% of students attend either New Life Church, New Community, Highlands Community, Churchome or NW Life Church.

Governance

Q - Does Renton present a doctrinal conflict?

A - Renton Christian teaches from a non-denominational or inter-denominational approach. We focus on the core tenants of Christianity, not on the nuance of doctrine that led to the denominational variety. There is no doctrinal conflict with our school's statement of faith. In fact, our statements of faith are the same. Rick Rosenkranz added that this was one of his concerns regarding the merger process but has come to believe it's less of an issue and one that is overcome by the merits of the merger. He also shared that many of the issues and concerns that have been raised are the same as many of the Board members, and that the Board



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wrestled through many of these issues/concerns as we continued through the process, ultimately concluding that the benefits far outweighed the concerns.

Finances

Q - It is possible to look up Rainier's 990's and cannot find anything about Renton's finances online. Rainier's 990 shows a healthy balance sheet with +\$6M net assets. This implies a leverage going into the combined schools rather than a rescue. Is this correct?

A - We are not looking at this as a financial rescue. Instead, we will be stronger together. During our due diligence period we examined the finances of each other's school. Rainier Christian has a strong balance sheet and Renton Christian and their parent organization, New Life Church, has both a strong balance sheet and strong operational cash flow. Renton Christian & NL are accredited with ECFA (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability) and has an independent financial audit annually. Dan added that our financial concerns are not related to a healthy balance sheet (we own a lot of our property) but are related to declining enrollment and related cash flow issues.

Shared Personnel, Facilities and Services

Q - How will you meet the challenges of four campuses compared to one?

A - Rainier Christian is experienced in the multi-campus model. New Life has multiple church campuses and a well-developed shared services model. Randy was integral in developing these systems while he was an Executive Pastor at New Life. We will build on the current district office team from Rainier Christian to fully resource each campus. Each campus will have a fully empowered leader with strong supporting systems and a collaborative school-wide leadership team.

Continuity

Q - Will volunteer hours still be required? Any idea on how many hours?

A - Parent involvement helps students to reach their full potential in who God made them to be. Current requirements are 15 hours per parent at Renton Christian and 15 hours per family at Rainier Christian. We will continue to invite parents to be involved with their student's educational experience. Specifics will be collaboratively aligned over the next 12-18 months.

Continuity

Q - Renton tuition is higher than Rainier for some grades. As we merge, will the tuition increase? If so, what are the added benefits to justify the increase? i.e. Facilities, sports, academics, etc. We are interested in the overall cost/value.

A - As we align together as one school, we will align our tuition rates. The most important value in determining tuition rates is teacher compensation. Our teachers and staff are our biggest



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resource and largest expense. We want to fully resource our teachers! Additionally, as we join as one, there will be opportunities to strengthen and expand programs and student support.

Continuity

Q - Will Camp Casey still be used for 6th grade camp? Does Renton Christian have a similar camp?

A - Both schools have a camp for 6th grade students. As we align over the next 12-18 months, we will collaboratively develop a plan for these important components of our school.

Continuity

Q - Will 6th grade be kept in elementary school? Or bumped to middle school like surrounding school districts?

A - Right now, we will keep all campuses consistent with the grades and families they currently serve. We will collaboratively develop a long-term plan as we fully align our school over the next 12-18 months. We will have a major update by the end of this school year and further clarity prior to next year's enrollment season.

Continuity

Q - What's the plan for the existing Rainier Christian campuses?

A - There will be no change to the campus locations for the 2024-2025 school year. Over the next few months, we will determine the location plan for the 2025-2026 school year and beyond. We will be one school with multiple Christ-centered, fully resourced campuses. There is no intent to sell any campus. Instead, we want to invest in them to facilitate the growth we believe God will bring our way. Julie added that the property at Black Diamond Camps where RCHS/RCMS are located is leased and subject to change prior to the new high school being completed.

Continuity

Q - How do you plan to ensure that current Rainier Christian will be welcomed into Renton Christian by a) ensuring there are no unnecessary enrollment fees. b) provide an opportunity for Rainier Christian Families to tour the school and meet staff then c) help children acclimate when the transition occurs?

A - As we align together, all families will be considered current families regardless of the campus they currently attend. We will collaboratively develop school wide opportunities to build relationships and have a strong relationship with their local campus and the school as a whole.



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Continuity

Q - How will you ensure and secure staff in the coming year given the churn we have seen thus far and what typically occurs during a merger?

A - Our teachers and staff are the biggest resource of our school. We will build relationships with them and partner with them through resources and support. This strong partnership will help build and retain a strong team. The contract renewal process for next year is already in motion. Julie added that she acknowledged the last few weeks have been tough on staff and that the Board has been trying to help alleviate some of the stress by meeting with them and providing updates on the process.

Sports

Q - When (and at what grade) will students from Rainier be eligible to play on Renton sports teams? Renton has basketball starting in 4th grade; will Rainier students have this in the coming year?

A - As we align together as one school, we will align our athletic teams. Athletics is one of the many conversations we will collaboratively address over the next three months. We will have an update on this by the end of the school year. Our schools joining together should expand athletic opportunities, not constrict them.

Town Hall – Live Q&A

The Board then opened the floor to questions from the audience.

Renton Christian High School

Q – How viable is the Renton Christian High School plan, especially for current 8th graders? Later in the Q&A, Sigrid Jones asked what the funding plan was for the high school.

A – Randy described where they are in the building process – for instance, the property has been purchased, and will likely even have a football field – and they are shooting for opening in Fall 2027. Garth Gill added that Renton Christian has many 8th-graders that currently go to various different places for high school; now they can be guided towards the RCS high school until the new school is built. Randy then shared a bit of the high school funding plan toward the end of the Q&A.

Renton Christian “Test-In” Process

Q – Renton Christian has a test-in process. What is that, and will it apply to RCS students?

A – Randy said that the test-in process is done as an evaluation tool to see where students are at academically, not used as a pass/fail “can or can’t attend” test.



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Special Needs

Q – How does Renton Christian handle special needs students?

A – Randy said that it was difficult for them to facilitate one-on-one dedicated staff for high needs, but they do well with kids that don't require a lot of individual attention. Details will be worked out if a change is needed to address something specific.

Budget for Teachers

Q – Will there be a budget for RCS teacher resources so they won't have to buy class materials themselves?

A – Randy said that Renton Christian teachers are given a \$250 budget and anticipates that will transfer over to RCS teachers.

Middle School

Q – Will the new high school also house a middle school? Later in the Q&A, Kevin Reid said that middle school feels like it's just "tacked on," and asked how Renton Christian might help the RCS middle school integrate into Renton Christian.

A – Randy said the plan is for high school-only campus. In terms of helping RCS middle school, he said that Renton Christian middle school has a rich tradition and he is hoping that at some point there a middle school will have its own dedicated campus.

RCS President Opening

Q – Does the RCS Board plan on hiring a new President given the changes coming?

A – Julie answered that the Board does NOT want to run the school but we have not yet finalized what our solution will be.

Dress Code

Q – Renton Christian has a dress code. Will that transfer to RCS students?

A – Randy answered that there is no plan for that to transfer a dress code to RCS in the next school year. The Boards will have to figure out what to do in the future, however, regarding this topic.

Renton Christian Governance

Q – How does Renton Christian governance work, like their Board vs. Elders? How does the Renton Christian School Board get elected?

A – Randy said that the School Board reports up through the Church Board, and that the Church has ultimate oversight. Regarding the School Board make-up, current voting members



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are all parents, and are usually asked to join. The RCS Board will govern RCS separately until fully merged with Renton Christian.

Renton Christian School Board Meetings

Q – Are Renton Christian school board meetings open to the public like we do at RCS? Later in the Q&A, someone asked how parents were going to collaborate with Renton Christian if they can't do it via a school board meeting.

A – Randy said that they do not have open board meetings, instead relying on various other communication channels to disseminate information and hear concerns. Julie added that we primarily use our open board meetings to share information and that we have Executive sessions that are closed when needing to discuss issues deemed not appropriate for public dissemination. Later in the Q&A, Randy reiterated that Renton Christian has many avenues for allowing voices to be heard and really doesn't see it being an issue.

Transportation

Q – Will the transportation system/program change?

A – Randy said that they hope to have a more robust transportation system to cover all campuses, but that likely won't happen before September 2024.

Security

Q – What levels of security will be in place at the new high school? Will we see an increase at our own RCS campuses?

A – Randy said that they treat security as very important and even have a security guard on staff. He proceeded to go through some of the security features they will have in place at the new high school. Randy also said that he will strive to increase security at all campuses, likely in some sort of phased-in approach rather than all at once.

Enrollment

Q – Given the enrollment decline at RCS and the increase Renton Christian has experienced, are there some lessons-learned to share that RCS can apply?

A – Randy said that they place a great emphasis on academic programming, making sure it is top-notch, and they like to make sure they are providing a wide-breadth of options. The added-value turns into good word-of-mouth, which leads to growth. They've grown eight years in a row, and he would imagine that when some of that programming transfers over to RCS we might see some growth too.

Fundraising/Boosters



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Q – Will Renton Christian be open to current methods of RCS fundraising, such as the Golf Tournament?

A – Randy said that future approaches will be examined and determined, but that for next year all athletics will remain under the RCS banner and fundraising efforts will remain in effect.

Merger Experience

Q – Julie asked Randy to share some of his experiences with mergers.

A – Randy described some of his experiences, along with mentioning he has a person who has experience in doing well with real-world mergers.

Teacher/Student Ratios

Q – What is the Renton Christian student/teacher ratio?

A – Randy said that their ratios are lower than state guidelines through robust in-class teacher assistant staffing, which brings their ratio down to about 1:9 teacher/student. This helps tremendously in helping teachers build relationships with their students.

Renton Christian Gym

Q – Will RCS be able to use Renton's gym next year?

A – Randy said that if scheduling allows it, they will try to let RCS use it. But he did caution that it is often in use with various school and church activities.

RCS Preschool Worries

Q – Are RCS preschools safe from cuts? What about Maple Valley, since it is so close to Renton Christian?

A – Randy said that it is his opinion that preschools feed the whole system and keep it healthy, so in his mind they are vital to maintain. Regarding Maple Valley, Randy said that next year nothing changes, and that over time they will look at the best use for that property.

Shop Program for High Schoolers

Q – Bill Dipple asked if there would be a shop program at the new high school since he thinks it's critical as a high school program.

A – Randy agreed and said that a Shop is part of the high school building plan.

Maintenance Issues

Q – Bill Dipple said that there are major maintenance issues that need to be addressed across several RCS campuses. Who on the RCS Board is playing the Bruce Kelly role and can sign checks and work these issues?

A – Dan said Bill could contact him directly.



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Tim Sica closed the meeting with prayer at 7:35pm.

Next General Board Meeting: Monday, March 18, 2024, at 6:00pm, location – MVE.
Google Meets will be used to provide an online/remote option.