

TOWN OF MARLBORO
OFFICE OF THE SELECTBOARD
PO Box 518, Marlboro, VT 05344
marlboroselectboard@gmail.com

July 27, 2020

Degrees of Freedom
2582 South Road
Marlboro, VT 05344

Dear Degrees of Freedom:

Thank you for requesting the special meeting of the Selectboard on July 20, 2020. It was a valuable opportunity to hear from your design team about its vision for the innovative new program on Potash Hill. The meeting attracted 305 attendees and spanned three-and-a-half hours, so clearly there is a great deal of interest in your venture.

At our regular Selectboard meeting on July 23, 2020, we approved a motion to compile and share participant's questions submitted during the special meeting and via email in subsequent days. You are welcome to attend our regular meeting on August 13, 2020 at 5 p.m. to share any responses.

The Selectboard also approved a motion to request the services of the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD), a nonprofit trained in community-based facilitation and democratic engagement, to coordinate a mediated forum during this transitional time, and we hope you will participate. Through sustained and open dialogue, we believe the wellbeing of the greater Marlboro community will be better for it.

Sincerely,


Jesse Kreitzer, Chair


Julia von Ranson, Vice-Chair


Aaron Betts, Member

Attn: Seth Andrew
Marcellina Blow-Cummings
Meg Guilford
Tonia Kennedy
Basil Smikle
Jazel Smith
Chandell Stone

The following questions were submitted by attendees of the Marlboro Selectboard's special meeting held virtually on July 20, 2020, and shared with the Selectboard in subsequent days:

Martin Heck:

- 1) I would like to know the current business address of Democracy Builders Fund, Inc, registered in NY and also Democracy Builders Fund I, Inc registered in Delaware. And why the two different names?
- 2) Could I have some contact information for Degrees of Freedom?
- 3) Where is the incubation money for coming from?
- 4) How is Degrees of Freedom going to take care of the Marlboro College campus, estimated to cost \$1,000,000 per year?

“Telling Truth”:

(Questions for Seth)

1. Why has it taken 7 years after leaving Democracy Prep for you to start publicly reconciling with your role in perpetuating racist structures?
2. Why did you, Seth, hide all of the replies to your initial Medium essay barring the one positive review?
3. Why delete your Medium essay, but claim that anyone who wants to hear from you can reach out privately?
4. You've implied in your initial essay that those speaking out against you have hazy memories. Does this mean that your memories from DP are clear and therefore override anyone who submits to BNB@DP?
5. How did you select your majority BIPOC board? It seems now that you have perhaps created an echo chamber.
6. Natasha Trivers noted that your project is in no way tied to Democracy Prep, and yet you have an active DP staff member on your design team. How do you plan to continue to distance yourself and your team from the network that you started?
7. What experiences do any member of the board have that makes them qualified to run a higher education institution?
8. Jamie McCoy has publicly gone on record as a designer for Degrees of Freedom. As a current teacher at Democracy Prep, does she plan to recuse herself from this project, in a similar way to Princess Lyles, especially given Natasha's statement to the Boston Globe?
9. It would be great to get the most recent financials from Democracy Builders? I know that they said it takes 2 years allegedly, but is there any way to expedite that?

Shakira O'Kane:

- 1) Where should we send the recommendations?

Lynn Perna:

- 1) What is the status of accreditation w AOEd?

Amy Tudor:

- 1) Who is on the Degrees of Freedom Design Team?
- 2) Who is on the Board of Degrees of Freedom?

“Dario”:

- 1) Will the campus and the library still be open to Marlboro alumni and the community?

Jacob Seitz, The Berkeley Beacon:

- 1) Have the efforts to gain accreditation through the state of Vermont resumed?
- 2) Does DoF still hope to work closely with Emerson, as Seth previously stated?

Alice Grossman:

- 1) Why do you believe in the punitive, no excuses model as your educational philosophy? Why does this work? I guess the educational model that we have been accustomed to at Marlboro College was very different in feeling. It was a participatory democracy where individual expression was important.
- 2) How does the punitive model deal with individual expression?

Ariel Poster:

- 1) Could you please provide contact information for the board of DoF so we can reach out directly with any questions?

Sharoan Cohen:

- 1) Where are the schools that Seth started internationally and what is their status?
- 2) What will happen to the campus while DP acquires accreditation?

“Susan's iPhone”:

- 1) What is happening to the campus until 2022? How will it be maintained for the next two years? Winter plowing?

Adrian Segar:

- 1) Whom have you identified to be on your board of trustees thus far? Can they be reached out to?
- 2) What, if any overlap, will there be between all of the Boards of the various Democracy Builders Initiatives? For example, we see that the Current CEO of Democracy Prep Natasha Trivers is ALSO the Emeritus of the Creo College Prep Board.
- 3) What percentage of your board members do you plan to bring on from the greater Marlboro/Vermont community?
- 4) What are the target demographics of your program? What percentage of your board members are you planning to have match the demographics of the student base you plan to serve?
- 5) What formal salaried role are you planning to take on at the college/program?
- 6) What formal evaluation process does the Board of Trustees plan to use for YOU? Please share the document that describes this evaluation process?
- 7) What formal structures for community, student, and family input are you going to have? Please share the document that describes these structures?
- 8) What is the budget for your first 5 years of operations? How are you planning to raise this capital?
- 9) What is your growth and sustainability strategy, given that there have been multiple ventures you have abandoned or could not sustain, including AlumniRevolution
- 10) Who will oversee the initial hiring and staffing?
- 11) What percentage of the staff do you plan to bring on from the greater Marlboro/Vermont community?
- 12) Founding a College Program requires a high degree of integrity. We are in possession of emails from your time as CEO and Founder of Democracy Prep that indicate you are willing to ignore students' wishes as well as standard practices of colleges/universities. How do you respond to

the criticism that you do not possess the level of integrity required to found and lead a college program?

Lauren Olitski Poster:

- 1) Will Degrees of Freedom work with local county and state organizations around progressive education, anti-racist and social justice issues.
- 2) How does Seth's organization plan to work with the collective supporting Black N Brown at DP to repair past harms.
- 3) What steps is he taking to insure he will provide a safe and anti-racist space for students at Degrees of Freedom?
- 4) Will Seth include two Marlboro residents to be on the Degrees of Freedom board, chosen by the select board?
- 5) When will he have a student and faculty handbook and will it be posted on the Degrees of Freedom website?
- 6) Will Seth provide transparency around funding sources including any federal or state grants including reporting requirements?
- 7) Will he provide a list of board members including compensation, terms of office, and year joined?
- 8) Will he provide transparency around growth and sustainability for the campus as well the institution?
- 9) Will he work with local organizations that may want to continue educational and cultural activities on the campus?
- 10) Will he continue to allow community use of the trails?
- 11) Will students and staff integrate with our town community, as much as they may choose, thus allowing for the school to truly become a part of Marlboro.

Lissa Harris:

Requests from Coalition for Black and Brown Students in Marlboro, VT (these requests came directly from the questions posed by Black N Brown @ DP):

- 1) That at least 2 Marlboro residents be on the Democracy Builders Fund board, chosen by the select board.
- 2) That the student and faculty handbook be posted on the website and accessible to the public.
- 3) That yearly dollar reparations be given to Black N Brown at DP to distribute to families as they see fit
- 4) Access to budgets for the 1st 5 years of operations
- 5) Transparency around funding sources including any federal or state grants and any reporting requirements
- 6) Full transparency around student and staff recruitment
- 7) Full list of board members including terms of office and year joined
- 8) Full transparency around growth and sustainability plans
- 9) Full transparency around formal structures for community, student, and family input
- 10) Description and documentation of formal a role for Seth Andrew including an evaluation process from the Board of Trustees