

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
August 7, 2013 6p.m.**

Board Members Present: George Awad, Mike Barsanti, Rebecca Clothey, Brigitte Daniel, John Eagen, Tre Johnson, Nirva LaFortune, Krista Pfeiffer, Gloria Shabazz, Sheila Simmons (via phone), Elsie Stern, Dana Twyman

Board Member(s) Absent: Richardson Dilworth, Susanna Greenberg

Others Present: Richard Trzaska, Interim CEO; Thomas Scheid, in-coming CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Kareem Thomas, Lower School Principal; Kristen Long, Middle School Principal; Amy Leigh, Staff Rep to the Board; David Peterson, IT Coordinator; Jerry Santilli, Business Manager; Mike Danyo, Santilli & Thomson associate; Megan Steelman, Compliance Manager; Claiborne Taylor, Board member-elect

Call to Order

Elsie called the “annual” meeting to order at 6:13pm.

Approval of Minutes

The June meeting minutes were approved; Gloria abstained because she was not at the June meeting.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

New Board Members

Elsie asked Mike to give a summary about the two board candidates. Mike explained that the Governance Committee met with each candidate and were impressed with both. Claiborne Taylor has an education background. Barbara Dundon was the Executive Director of Need indeed for 20 years. He noted that according to the bylaws a 2/3 vote is needed to elect board members. Both were elected unanimously. Mike administered the oath to Claiborne; Barbara will be sworn in at the October meeting. Elsie had all the board members introduce themselves to the new board members.

CEO Report

Rich reported that our annual giving has increased this year; with an increase of donations via the internet. He noted that our maintenance crew and cleaning service have been working hard this summer. Some tasks completed include: installing hand dryers in student bathrooms, painting in many areas, changing to cost-effective bulbs, starting to clean out the basement and more. We will also be adding an additional air conditioner unit in the computer server room to prevent over-heating of the equipment.

Rich reported that according to the “raw” PSSA scores for 2013, we don’t meet AYP. However, Pennsylvania has requested an AYP waiver; if that is approved then there will not be AYP. Instead a performance index will be used. Our middle school students with IEPs made gains and there are gains in other areas as well. We did hold summer school this year and it was a great success. Tr. Tienne and Tr. Odamis coordinated it and it was overseen by the two principals. Rich reported that he has been orienting in-coming CEO Tom Scheid over the summer and that he feels he will do a fine job. Rich thanked the board for the opportunity to work at ICS. He said he feels the school has made gains. He

said he feels the principals are doing a great job and that the board is supportive. He announced that he is donating the building of a ga-ga pit for the playground. It will be completed by the beginning of the school year.

Mike asked Rich's thoughts on whether the PSSA scores showed overall progression. Rich said that while our Middle School students with IEPs showed growth, overall he did not feel there was as much growth as we had expected.

Finance

Gloria asked Jerry to review the financials. He noted that there are very few negative variances. We are running ahead of budget and will most likely end the fiscal year at the projected budget expectations. He noted that the Food Services budget made a small profit and that to break even in food services is a good accomplishment. There was an increase in breakfast participation of students who qualify for free meals.

He noted that there are no unusual disbursements, other than that we made two payments to our medical provider during May due to a timing issue. George moved the resolution; Rebecca seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Elsie noted that charter schools are a year "behind" district schools in regard to finances. So our program will not be reduced at all this year and we have this year to plan for next year's financial impact.

Gloria reported that a good accounting standard is to keep a fund balance in case of emergencies. The Finance Committee is proposing to classify the fund balance. The plan is to start the discussion tonight and to vote on this issue at the October meeting. We want to make it clear that we have plans for these funds. We want to be sure we have a regular cash flow and that late payments, etc would not affect the running of the school. The recommendations are:

- 1) keep enough for two months of needed cash
- 2) set aside an amount for capital repairs and replacement
- 3) set aside funds for a potential subsidy shortfall
- 4) set aside funds to help meet out Middle States Accreditation goals
- 5) set aside funds to explore possible school growth/expansion

Gloria explained that some of the designations are mandated due to bonds and laws. Others are at the discretion of the board; she encouraged interested board members to attend the next Finance Committee meeting. Jerry noted that we want to be very clear with all stakeholders as to how we plan to use these funds. Mike asked about the plans for capital repair and replacement; he asked if the school has a sense of the timeframe of when things will need to be replaced. Gloria said she's not sure if we have that, but can plan. Mike suggested a Systems Replacement Audit; he will forward the information to Gloria. George asked if these funds would be locked in; Jerry said the board could make a change to the designation if they feel it is needed.

Elsie thanked Gloria for taking the lead on this.

Executive Session

Elsie noted that the board will now go into a brief executive session to discuss a confidential matter.

The board returned at 7:15p.m.

Elsie explained that the board has to approve all new hires. Elsie asked Rich to read the new hire resolution. Elsie asked about where Teacher Erika Saunders is teaching. Rich explained that she is looping up to third grade with students who she had in first grade. John moved the motion; Dana seconded. Gloria asked for some of the reasons why teachers have left. Rich and Kristen explained that several left for career changes (winemaking, doctorate program, staying home with children, etc). Elsie suggested working with the PTA to help introduce the new teachers to the ICS community, not just their individual classes. The motion passed unanimously.

Briefing on Education & Politics Landscape

Elsie noted that the board wants to get better educated about the educational landscape in Philadelphia in order to advance our mission and vision. She asked Tre to give his brief presentation as a start. Tre explained that this situation changes very frequently. He acknowledged that he knows others in the room may have more or conflicting information and encouraged them to voice what they know. (*Power Point attached to minutes*) Highlights included:

- almost 25% of Philadelphia students attend charters; this means the population at traditional public schools and parochial schools are decreasing.
- fiscal mismanagement
- 3,8000 layoffs
- in 2012-2013 there were 237 traditional public schools; 2013-2014 will open with 200
- even if funds are found at the last minute, it puts stress on families
- if the City agrees to a 1% sales hike, where will those funds specifically go?
- as it stands now, traditional public schools would need to start with just teachers, a principal and possibly security staff
- there are about 34 days until the new school year begins; the union contract expires at the end of August

Brigitte asked if there's an inner circle with whom Dr. Hite is working. Tre said he's working with the Philadelphia Schools Partnership, some charters, etc.

Board Goals

Elsie read the draft of the board's goals. The main goal will be supporting the new CEO as he transitions to the position. Elsie asked members to review these goals and send ideas for additions. Nirva suggested adding transparency in communication between the PTA and the Board's parent representatives. Elsie suggested that she would like the board to engage in a similar dialogue as the staff have started regarding race and privilege. Krista suggested adding something in relation to AYP, etc. Elsie explained that in addition to the board's goals, each committee sets goals for their committees.

Farewell to Interim CEO Rich

Elsie asked Kristen and Kareem to give their presentations to Rich. Kristen said she's learned a lot from Rich about operations, things to never say, etc. She said the mural was her favorite contribution from Rich's tenure. She noted how important it is to have lots of different perspectives. In addition, she credited him for bringing in school spirit through our new Griffin mascot. Kareem said that he also learned a lot from Rich as a mentor, who encouraged him to think outside the box and to resolve issues for himself. Elsie noted that in addition to the staff seeing there are all different perspectives that a CEO brings, our families have seen that also. Elsie thanked Rich for having a calm demeanor amidst some trying situations. She noted that he got upset with one parent for having low expectations for our staff. The board gave Rich a life preserver as a symbol for what he's done for us. In addition, he was given a Griffin hat and golf shirt for

wearing in his leisure. Rich noted he has enjoyed his time at ICS and was privileged to follow in Jurate's footsteps.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06p.m.

Handouts circulated prior to this meeting:

Agenda

May 2013 Disbursements

Ga Ga Pit Photo

**Independence Charter School
August 7, 2013
Resolutions**

ADOPTED

New Hires

Be it resolved that the following individuals be offered full time positions as listed for the 2013-2014 school year under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS contract:

Michael Bonitatibus: Middle School Fitness
Anne Brooks: 7th Grade English Language Arts
Sweta Gandhi: 6th Grade Math
Leeanna Lennon: 3rd-5th Grade Spanish FLES
Emily Magee: Middle School Math
Dana Newsome: Middle School Spanish FLES
Boris Pacheco: 4th Grade Spanish Immersion
Keriann Painter: 2nd Grade Spanish Enhanced
Katarzyna "Kasia" Pater: Middle School Math/Science
Yineth Romero: 2nd Grade Spanish Immersion
Sophia Seifert: Middle School Science
Gaja Stirbys: 1st Grade Spanish Enhanced
Hope Willoe: 1st Grade Spanish Enhanced
Anne Zumbo: 6th Grade Special Education/Math

May Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves disbursements from the month of May 2013 in the amount of \$416,518.48.

Resolutions DEFEATED: None

Resolutions TABLED: None