

**Independence Charter School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
December 12, 2012 6p.m.**

**Board Members Present:** Lauren Ayala, Mike Barsanti, Rebecca Clothey, Brigitte Daniel, John Eagen, Susanna Greenberg, Nirva LaFortune, Gloria Shabazz, Sheila Simmons, Elsie Stern, Naomi Wyatt

**Board Member(s) Absent:** Derrick Johnson, Tre Johnson, Dana Twyman

**Others Present:** Richard Trzaska, Interim CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Kareem Thomas, Lower School Principal; Kristen Long, Middle School Principal; Amy Leigh, Staff Rep to the Board; George Awad, Parent & New Board Member; Ebru Erkut, Parent; Monika Kreidie, Development Associate; Dana Spadotto, Teacher; Jerry Santilli, Business Manager; Mike Danyo, Santilli & Thomson associate; Megan Steelman, Compliance Manager

**I. Call to Order**

Elsie called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm. and noted that the focus of tonight's meeting will be on getting an update on the budget planning process, as well as fundraising/development efforts.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Gloria moved the minutes; Rebecca seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**III. Nomination of New Board Member**

Elsie announced that board member Derrick Johnson has resigned due to relocating to another state; he will, however, remain active on committees this year. She then introduced ICS parent George Awad, who is being nominated to finish out Derrick's term on the board; the term ends in June 2013. She explained that George brings a lot of the skills similar to those Derrick brought to the board. Lauren asked what will happen in June. Mike explained that these few months will not "count" as a term, so he'd still be eligible to serve for two terms from June 2013 forward. George was approved unanimously and Mike administered the oath of office.

**IV. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**V. CEO Report**

Rich reported that Middle School Counselor Anne Hall recently told him that the program called "A Better Chance," which matches students with private schools, is accepting more students from ICS this year than from any other school. Rich noted this is an example of the types of opportunities made available due to the hard work of our staff and students.

Rich announced that teacher recruitment efforts for next year will soon be getting underway and that we are continuing to work to have a more racially diverse staff. Principal Kareem and Teacher Tienne will be representing ICS at the Delaware Valley Education Consortium (DVEC) teacher fair in Aston, PA in March. Teacher Shavon and Teacher Odamis will be representing ICS at the nemnet minority career fair in Livingston, NJ in February. ICS is also registering with the Minority Faculty Applicant Database (MFAD), where we will be able to disseminate job postings through an extensive network.

Rich announced that Dean Andrea has returned from her maternity leave and that Teachers Luz Angela and Scott will be returning after the winter break from their maternity/paternity leaves. Sometime in January, Teacher Ali and Maestra Kate Marquez will be going out on maternity leave. Teacher Ben Steele, who has been an ICS Classroom Assistant and did his student teaching at ICS this fall, will be Teacher Ali's long-term sub; Maestra Natalia Gladwin, who has been Teacher Luz Angela's long-term sub, will be Maestra Kate's long-term sub.

Rich asked Kareem to give a Lower School update. Kareem reported that the first grade had more than 100 people participate in their Family Literacy Night and thanked the first grade team for all their efforts that went into planning that wonderful event. He also thanked the third grade team for their work on their successful family potluck night. Rich asked Kristen to give an update on this year's International Human Rights Day (IHRD). Kristen explained that this is ICS' fourth IHRD. She gave a brief history of ICS' celebration of this day. Four years ago, a group of teachers came to the CEO to let her know that they would be participating in the "Day without Gay" by which gay and lesbian people and supporters would not come to work to help bring attention to how much would be missing without them in the workplace. ICS responded by starting our IHRD, which included age-appropriate films relating to human rights issues, discussions and activities. It is now organized by ICS' Global Education Team and each grade delves into different human rights issues. Kristen circulated the informational letter that was sent home to parents (attached at the end of the minutes).

Rich noted that the presentation about student achievement will be given at tomorrow night's PTA meeting. He also gave an update on his meeting today with Doresah Ford-Bey at the Philadelphia School District. He said it was a very positive discussion and it sounds like ICS would be considered for expansion and/or replication, because we have a good reputation for high performance. However, in order to do that we would need to sign our current charter. He said that with expansion and/or replication there would be a possibility of having to work within a certain catchment area. Rich said that we were not planning expansion/replication for next school year, but that would probably be something for the new CEO to work on with the board. Some people asked for the reason that ICS did not sign the current charter renewal under which we're working. Elsie explained that the reason we didn't sign was due to the School Reform Commission (SRC) overstepping their authority with some of the items to which they wanted ICS to agree. George asked when we need to sign. The answer was that we need to sign before our next renewal.

Rich noted that the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys' basketball team is getting off the ground. Over 20 boys turned in paperwork, but some are having a problem getting the required physical. The coach is Teacher Kate Bowes; her assistant is Classroom Assistant Ismael Rodriguez. We will also have a girls' intramural team starting soon. Our mascot, chosen by the student body is the griffin; the colors are scarlet and black. We'll be selling clothing with the logo on it.

Rich reported that we're applying for funds to consider replication and that tonight the board will be considering a resolution to purchase a student van. The van would be used for various school-related, student events, as well as for staff to use for work purposes.

Rich reported that the administrative team met with a representative from Springboard today in regard to a summer program. Rich clarified that research shows that the summer drop off of student achievement has a lot to do with parent involvement. Lauren said she was a Better Chance scholar, but wants to know how parents hear about the program.

She feels ICS needs to contact parents well ahead of time. Kristen said that Counselor Anne Hall spends a lot of time on high school applications and helping students get into programs such as this. Lauren said she thinks we should give information to parents early in their children's middle school years to give their children the possibility of this great opportunity, no matter to what grade they are going. John said that he will get Rich information about a physician who may be available to conduct the physicals. George asked about the insurance for the van; Jerry said we'd get a rider added to our insurance and anyone who would be driving it would need a driving record check. Rich extended holiday wishes to the board and gave them a token of his appreciation.

## **VI. Finance**

Gloria asked if anyone has questions about the financial statements; she explained that they are always about two months behind due to the time it takes for processing. Lauren asked if it's still less expensive for us to have a nurse through Bayada and not to hire our own nurse; Jerry said that it is still less expensive. Elsie asked about the Linton's expense; Jerry said that is the regular monthly expense. John moved the disbursement resolutions; Rebecca seconded. The motions passed unanimously.

Gloria explained the budget adjustments. There are three:

1) Qatar grant (moving to a different line), 2) McLean grant (moving to a different line) and 3) changing a defunct curriculum position to a new special education position, which was filled in the beginning of the year. Jerry also noted that some funds were moved to provide a small holiday bonus to staff.

At 6:50p.m. Elsie announced that the board will be going into an executive session to discuss a confidential personnel matter. The board returned from executive session at 7p.m.

Amy asked about the CEO search line item that says \$70,000. The cost was announced as \$30,000. Jerry explained that covers all the costs budgeted for the search, including transition costs. The resolutions passed unanimously. John moved the budget adjustment resolution; Nirva seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Sheila moved the van resolution; Lauren seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Elsie read a new resolution: *Be it resolved that the ICS Board of Trustees hereby approves the reinstatement of the salary grid, effective 12/31/12 and approves an increase of 3% for all non-teaching staff, also effective 12/31/12.* John moved the motion; Rebecca seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Elsie asked Jerry to give an overview of the budget process. Jerry explained the involvement of Santilli & Thomson in the charter school community. He introduced Mike Danyo, who will be helping with the ICS day-to-day activities at Santilli & Thomson. He explained that this is a 5-month process, which involves decision-making at various levels. The plan is to have the school's mission driving the budget and not the other way around. Jerry and Elsie clarified that we are not anticipating adding additional students for the 2013-2014 school year. Elsie noted that several years ago it was agreed that the CEO could fill classes up to 24, but could not go over that without board approval. She explained that we can already bill through the state for over enrollment.

Jerry reviewed the annual budget, showing all the funding sources and expenses. He cautioned that the School District of Philadelphia has a massive deficit. He noted that we usually would get a bit of an increase in the per child allotment each year until last year's cut. It is now anticipated that for the next several years, the funding will remain

level. The fiscal cliff scenario could affect schools, because federal funds would be cut. Another discussion is the possibility of getting funding cuts for special education services. ICS spends 54.5% in the classroom (staff, materials, therapy, special education and other things in the room). He said that although there is no minimum requirement in Pennsylvania, he'd like that number to be closer to 60%. Jerry noted that it is very unusual for a school the size of ICS and with its poverty rate to not lose money on food services; ICS is actual in a "break even" situation.

Jerry noted that ICS has benefits compatible with the school district, as required. Jerry anticipates that the book budget has been cut a lot over the last couple years. Brigitte asked if that's due to e-books, etc. Jerry said the reason was budgetary. He said that e-books, etc. would also require hardware, etc. He said he doubts we can cut the book budget more. Jerry reviewed the PSERS (state pension) contribution chart and noted that next year the school's contribution will go to almost 17%. Jerry said Gloria will save these documents in the Drop Box. Jerry explained that we've tried to self-insure where possible in order to curb costs. He said that an issue for next year will be salary. He noted that ICS has very competitive bond rates with a triple B minus rating, which is very favorable. We are not eligible to refinance until our tenth year with the bond. John asked how Jerry feels the SRC will correct their financial situation. He said they will probably have to open the contract in order to make changes. Elsie encouraged board members to consider joining the Finance Committee. She asked everyone to put the March 13<sup>th</sup> at 6p.m.conference call on their calendars, which will be a closed executive session.

## **VII. Fundraising Report and Overview**

Rich introduced Monika and noted that she does a lot to bring money into ICS. He noted that he appreciates the effort that she makes. Monika reviewed the handouts that were circulated. She said she feels a lot of commitment from the board this year. She said we fundraise in two major ways: through families and through applying for grants. We are trying to bring together all the fundraising efforts in the school -- PTA, Take Flight, etc. - - to figure out how to help each other and create a strategic fundraising plan. She said the annual campaign has already raised funds through some new parents. She said the Qatar Foundation feels very positively about ICS. They want to figure out how they can support ICS. She discussed ACE Insurance, who used to give to use through EITC. One of our parents met with them and said they are considering funding us again. We can get EITC money from more than one company.

Monika thanked Nirva and Derrick for their work on the annual awards ceremony. This year's will again be at the Racquet Club on March 7<sup>th</sup>. She reviewed the recommendations for awards. The Dream Maker award will go to ICS' Founding CEO & Principal Jurate Krokys. The Global Citizenship awards will go to John Fry from Drexel University, the Economy League and ACE Insurance. Monika asked all board members to get friends to buy tickets to the event, find sponsors, etc. We want to especially get people who are not already familiar with ICS. Ebru suggested that we offer the opportunity for parents to buy tickets for teachers; Monika said that did happen last year. Elsie thanked Monika.

Mike introduced the idea of a travel fund as a legacy for Jurate Krokys. We don't want to call it an endowment, because that can restrict its use. Instead, it would be a board-restricted fund, which would give it flexibility. The thought is to be able to start using the funds relatively quickly. We'd use a certain percentage of funds and promise to replace them, so that it's a continual fund. We'd want to announce the first gifts to the fund at the March event. The fundraising group would start a list of prospective donors, including major donors. Lauren asked about the timing of the fundraising. Mike said we'd be looking to new funders for this and/or donors who could afford to do both. We

would look to people who would want to give a gift to honor Jurate. This would be a fund which would be on-going. Mike said money would be drawn from the fund in two phases. Some money would be used initially and then once we have a substantial amount raised, we could limit it to a percentage being drawn each year. Rebecca asked for what the money could be used. Mike said the hope is that it would be up to the CEO's discretion with possible board approval. Mike noted that we probably would not want to designate it for only a certain type of travel. He said he wants to give the administration flexibility. Naomi asked whether we can use some of our surplus to seed this fund. Gloria agreed to ask Jerry. Mike said if that works, maybe we could make it a challenge grant type situation. Mike said the model would be a little like a scholarship fund. Elsie said there seems to be consensus that we want to move forward with the fund.

## **XI. CEO Search Update**

Elsie asked Susanna to give an update on the CEO search. Susanna said that the consultant is very happy with the way the pool of candidates is coming together. He said 100% of candidates have had significant administrative experience, more than 50% have charter school experience, and several are bilingual. We are also doing whatever possible to ensure there is a diverse group of candidates. Elsie clarified that the Search Committee is the group that reviews the initial group of candidates. The meeting dates are tentatively set for the afternoons of January 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. Elsie said she and Susanna are coming to the professional development day on January 2<sup>nd</sup> to give an update to staff. Susanna said there is basic information on the ICS website. Amy recommended that an update be put in the next newsletter. Susanna said we are on schedule.

## **XII. Housekeeping**

Elsie said that Monika will be in touch with board members regarding the March 7<sup>th</sup> event. The main board focus for the next months will be on the budget. Elsie asked committee chairs to send out their agendas in advance.

John moved the Keystone Staff resolution; Gloria seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **XI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20p.m.

### **Handouts circulated prior to this meeting:**

Agenda

October 2012 Financial Report

September & October 2012 Disbursements

Fundraising report

Award Nominees

Human Resources Committee report

Student Van information sheet

Staff report

Development/External Relations report

### ***Human Rights Day letter to Parents/Guardians:***

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We are pleased to inform you that Independence Charter School will be commemorating International Human Rights Day all day on Monday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

As a charter school, we have the opportunity to be innovative and to provide students with great experiences that will enrich their learning and their preparation for adulthood. A commemoration of International Human Rights Day is important for Independence Charter since our mission is to prepare students to be citizens locally and

globally. Being knowledgeable of universal human rights contributes to safekeeping our own rights while being aware of our fellow human beings around the world—an extension of our own neighborhood.

Our teacher committee has prepared a wonderful whole day experience that will include activities and lessons about universal human rights and the showing of some award-winning films. All films have been previewed by the teacher committee and are appropriate for the grade level where they are being shown. Films will act as prompts for discussion about human rights abuse and protection whether locally or on the other side of the globe. Please review the list of films attached here.

Be sure to ask your children about their day on Monday. We are sure they will have much to say.

Sincerely,

Kristen Long & Kareem Thomas, Middle and Lower School Principals

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Film Title</b>
<b>KINDERGARTEN</b>	The Ant Bully
<b>FIRST</b>	How To Train Your Dragon
<b>SECOND</b>	Ruby Bridges
<b>THIRD</b>	The First Grader
<b>FOURTH</b>	Rabbit Proof Fence
<b>FIFTH</b>	To Kill a Mockingbird
<b>SIXTH</b>	War Dance
<b>SEVENTH</b>	Which Way Home
<b>EIGHTH</b>	The American Violet

**Independence Charter School  
December 12, 2012  
Resolutions**

ADOPTED

**1. September Disbursements:**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves disbursements from the month of September 2012 in the amount of \$417,366.36

**2) October Disbursements:**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves disbursements from the month of October 2012 in the amount of \$393,190.60

**3) Budget Adjustments:**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves the attached 2012-2013 Budget amendments.

**4) Van Purchase:**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves the purchase of a Van to be used exclusively for ICS business at a cost not to exceed \$40,000.00.

**5) Keystone Staff Designation:**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby awards ICS Keystone Staff status to ICS employee Jennifer Jutzi.

**6) Salary Freeze Melt**

Be it resolved that the ICS Board of Trustees hereby approves the reinstatement of the salary grid, effective 12/31/12 and approves an increase of 3% for all non-teaching staff, also effective 12/31/12.

**Resolutions DEFEATED: None**

**Resolutions TABLED: None**