

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2009 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Becky Baehr, Anyabwile Banko'le, Rona Buchalter, Rosina Miller, Kristin Nocco, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez

Board Members Absent: Eric Cramer, Nicole Perkins Kilcullen

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Michael Farrell, Amy Leigh & Kelly Nelms, teachers; Mike Thomson, Santilli & Thomson; Nannette Johnson, PTA Liaison; Robin Kohles, Owner's Rep

I. Call to Order

Co-President Pam called the meeting to order at 7:07pm.

II. Approval of Minutes

The February minutes were approved unanimously.

III. CEO Report

Jurate reported that she will be working with Pr. Stephanie so she can report at Board meetings on parts of the CEO report that are more germane to her position. At the April PD Day we'll be having turnaround training, benefits update, and will get staff feedback on a draft 2009-2010 calendar, etc. Jurate will bring a proposed calendar to the April Board meeting. Kristin reported that the parent survey will be available on-line in the computer lab on Report Card Day and parents will be given a free Dress Down Day pass for each of their children if they complete the survey while at school on Report Card Day. She also said the Parent Board seat recruitment letter will be available at that time also. A letter from a parent will be on the reverse side of the description. Pam asked if we should specifically recruit Enhanced program parents, since they are not currently represented on the Board. Kristin said she disagreed, because we need to make sure the candidates are interested---no matter which program their children are in. Rona suggested that our Parent Board reps may also want to talk about the position several times a year to increase the presence and awareness. Jurate noted that we did not receive the EPIC grant, but it was a great opportunity to gather statistical information about our students' performance; the information will be used for many future purposes, such as Middle States Accreditation.

IV. PTA Report

Nannette reported on behalf of the PTA. The theme of the last meeting was "A Healthy New Year." Ideas on healthy eating were shared. Pr. Stephanie announced that our Rosetta Stone language program will be available for parents soon. She also said that "Operation Parent Patrol" (having parents supervise the playground for play after school) would be starting soon. Parents should contact Pr. Stephanie or Robin Kohles to get more information. Pr. Stephanie explained this would be for days when we don't have clubs. Parent volunteers would probably wear some type of identifying vests. Pam clarified that all the children would have a parent there; Pr. Stephanie confirmed that is the case. It will start on Fridays and then may expand to Wednesday also. Rona clarified that we need to be clear that this is for ICS students only. Jurate said there will also be training for the volunteers. Andrea asked if teachers can send out an announcement. Amy asked what the sign out system would be; Pr. Stephanie said this would only be

for parents who are with their children. The Family Trip to Mexico (summer of 2010) still has openings. The roller skating party at JAMZ is coming up on April 1st. ICS Chili Cook-Off is coming up on March 22nd. On April 22nd there will be an Earth Day event; this will be headed by Conswelia McCourt. PTA nominations and elections are also coming up; nominations are welcomed.

V. **Teachers' Report**

Andrea asked if there were any questions about the report. Becky stated the HR Committee will be discussing the bicycle commuter legislation and said that this could cost ICS money. Andrea stated that an e-mail came in from a teacher after the report was circulated to the Board and asked if she could raise it. Andrea asked whether it's okay to ask the Board directly rather than go through administration. Pam said that's okay, but the Board will not address questions at the meeting, they will be sent to the appropriate staff or committee. Andrea said the question was whether the Board could elaborate on the salary and prep discrepancies between lower and middle school teachers. Pam asked the HR committee to look at these questions.

VI. **Development Report**

Leonora noted that we received a small grant for HIV/STD education and that we just submitted a \$25,000 grant application for library needs for global studies. If this grant is received it would include a variety of items, including technology. Pam asked if Leonora wrote the grant; Leonora explained we had an outside person write it, while Leonora provided the information. The June wine tasting event will be held on June 19th (not the 12th). Leonora also passed around copies of a new brochure that is focused on fundraising; it is not designed for prospective parents.

VII. **Construction Update**

Robin reported that the lockers will be delivered before Spring Break, so they might be installed on weekends, instead of during Spring Break. The window guards and attic installation will still happen over Spring Break. The Water Department is working with us regarding Phase II of the playground upgrades (paving, etc); we will be offered lower water rates as a result of this. Pam mentioned that one of the 6th grade classes is working on a project like that, so we'll probably be able to integrate them into the plans. Kristin asked what the update was on the community bulletin boards. Robin said those there will be a glass case to post public information and there will be another one in the playground area to post updated information specifically for ICS parents; it would be something that could be changed easily (possibly like a white board).

VIII. **Committee Reports**

A. **Finance**

Rosina reported that there is no report due to no meeting taking place since the last Board meeting. She welcomed Mike Thomson to the meeting. Mike reviewed the balance sheet, stating it is very strong and that the \$118,000 deficit budget to actual is mostly due to timing. Rosina stated that Jerry stated that although we have a fairly large excess right now, he expects that most of that will be spent this year, but that he expects us to have a balanced budget.

Rosina moved the expenditure motion; Becky seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Kristin asked why WINGS shows on the budget; it was explained that won't be moved until the next budget adjustment. Jurate stated that Jerry said schools will also be getting some funds from the federal stimulus package. The general categories are a small amount for technology, IDEA, renovations, etc.

Pam asked why there's such a big difference in the tutoring budget amounts. Jurate and Stephanie stated that was because we have more kids receiving tutoring this year. Rosina explained that since the proposed budget wasn't ready for the Finance Committee to review before this meeting, Rosina asked Jerry to prepare a budget assumption sheet. Mike reviewed those assumptions. He explained that Santilli & Thomson is recommending that all its schools look at ways to save on health benefits, since it seems very likely there will be changes in the Philadelphia teachers' contract. Jurate explained that we may also need to raise the full price cost of lunch from \$2.25 to \$2.75 Jerry states that is due to understaffing projections. Rosina asked if only one new Middle School teacher is enough since we will have two more 8th grade classes next year. Jurate explained that due to our currently being up to our maximum projected enrollment, this is actually one more teacher than was originally planned. Pr. Stephanie added that we are also looking at whether or not we might be able to combine the current 5th grade immersion groups into a combined group for 6th grade. Rona asked if we have specific numbers related to these assumptions. Becky asked Mike whether we really anticipate that 3% will be the real increase; Mike said they like to be conservative to be sure.

B. Board Development

There was no report. **Pedro** said the committee is looking for more referrals for nominations. The national charter school training will be happening in Washington, DC. However, the same person who is presenting about reading financial statements is also presenting in Philadelphia at the state charter school conference. Pam suggested that the Board should have Jerry do that first; Pam asked Jurate to set that up for 6p.m. before a Board meeting. Kristin asked if the nomination sheet was on the website yet. Pedro said he'll work with Megan on that. Rona asked whether we may be looking at people for both the governing board and a fundraising board. Leonora explained that for the fundraising board we're looking for people who will be able to connect the school with significant donors. Pam clarified that the fundraising board also has a higher financial commitment than the governing board. Pam stated we also have to be clear about that in our communication regarding the Parent Board seat and the other Board seats, as well as for what skills we're looking.

C. Curriculum

Pam reported that the committee has a resolution to present. Pam asked whether there are any questions about the FLAP grant or Middle States accreditation. Rosina asked when our charter school renewal will be. Jurate said this year's renewals were due in December; we have not yet been told when ours will be due. Rona moved the Global Education motion; Rosina seconded. Pam explained that the committee feels the need to change from the term World Cultures to Global Education to reflect the difference in approach to building global citizenship. The change would require all of us to be consistent with our language. Becky stated she is in favor of the change, but would like to make a friendly amendment to insert the definition at the end of the resolution; Pam agreed. Rosina thanked the committee for gathering this information, since it seems so right for the school. Becky said she feels this is what the original founders were trying to say. Pam said the Task Force will be developing a sheet evaluating how we teach global education. Andrea asked whether we'll be teaching the named languages whether or not we receive the FLAP grant. Pam said that we will; we will be dropping Japanese and adding Chinese in its place. Rona stated that makes sense, since Chinese is more likely to be offered in high schools. Jurate said there seem to be a lot more opportunities for Chinese language, such as a Confucius group. We will be adding Swahili as the additional language in Middle School. Rosina seconded

the friendly amendment. The amended resolution passed unanimously. Pam publicly thanked Donna Sharer for her research on this matter.

E. Human Resources

Becky reported that the committee will be adding the previously mentioned items to its agenda (bicycles, etc). There are no plans to revisit the teacher pay scale this year. The HR committee has not yet had a chance to review its portion of the Strategic Plan. The next meeting will be on March 27th and we'll plan for our meeting with staff to talk about possible changes in health benefits. Rona asked whether there have been any more follow up discussion with Bob (Benefits Consultant); **Becky** said Bob is still looking into the questions the committee posed to him. **Becky** said that bills for hospitalizations can be submitted (as opposed to proof of payment), but can probably not be submitted for ER visits. **Becky** reviewed the sheet that was attached to the minutes, that shows various possible plan changes. Pam asked if there would be any actual cost increases paid by staff; **Becky** confirmed that no increases are planned. Rona clarified that the committee is trying to figure out which could be least burdensome, yet still save some money. **Becky** stated Jerry doesn't anticipate that the increase for IBX will be 3% (as indicated in the budget), but will probably be much more. Therefore, some savings needs to be found. Pam stated that the school is still required to have similar benefits as the district. **Jurate** clarified that we want our staff to know that the school district has the benefit of a large number of employees who can negotiate for better medical insurance deals. We're trying to find savings, so we won't have a deficit. We don't want to wait until the school district finalizes their plans, since we want to be able to give out contract offers in April. Rona emphasized the need to be in communication with the staff. **Stephanie** stated we want to have presentations before Spring Break. We might plan them for after school, as opposed to the Professional Development Day. **Becky** stated we're trying to find a process that will be as seamless as possible. **Pedro** asked if there's been any information made available as to staff utilization of prescriptions, etc. **Mike** said most brokers are anticipated about a 15% increase in the cost of medical benefits.

IX. Public Comment Period

Rosina stated that when someone sends a message to the feedback e-mail, the Board Secretary should respond to acknowledge that it was received and shared with the Board. One comment was e-mailed from ICS parent **Michelle Hamilton** regarding non-ICS use of the playground. Pam asked that administration update the school community if/when anything changes. Pam asked **Megan** to forward that e-mail to **Jurate** and **Anyabwile**, as Secretary, can acknowledge the messages.

X. Old Business

Rosina stated that a small group of board members met to review the Strategic Plan. Pam asked the Curriculum & HR Committees to give updates at the next meeting as to where they are in regard to the goals in the Strategic Plan. **Kristin** suggested that we need to be sure to keep Facilities on the plan, since we may choose to build an addition or something like that in the future. **Pam** stated that we'll have a Strategic Plan update period during the April meeting. Pam stated we'll need to decide if we want to extend the plan for one more year, while working on accreditation or whether to re-open it. Pam stated all committees need to review whether or not they are meeting their requirements.

Several Board members are registered for the April Pennsylvania State Charter School conference, which will be held in Philadelphia. The Board sessions are held on Sunday. **Jurate** stated our school is one of the tour schools for this year's

conference. Pam stated the Pedro is going to the national conference in Washington, DC. Pam will be going for one day, but someone else can go for the rest of the time.

XI. New Business

Pam asked about planning a Board retreat. Becky suggested waiting until after the new Parent member is elected in June. Pam encouraged all Board members to review the requirements for Middle States Accreditation. Pam asked Jurate to present an overview of that process at the next meeting and what decisions the Board has to make in order to get the process going. Jurate stated the first step is to start a steering committee; we need to decide who should comprise that committee. Pam stated each Board member needs to think about what each of them can bring to the process. Jurate stated teachers and parents will also be integral parts of this process. Kristin stated that one thing to be discussed at a retreat is for each person to discuss their strengths and skills. Rona suggested that could also be done in a less formal atmosphere. Pam stated that this type of get-together is to get connected as a Board and understanding our roles; no deliberation of any kind takes place at those events.

XII. Adjournment

Pedro moved to adjourn; Rona seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda

Minutes from the February 2009 meeting

CEO report

Teachers' Report

PTA Report

Construction Update

January financials

2009-2010 Budget Assumptions

Development Report

Development Brochure

Curriculum Committee Minutes

Human Resources Committee Minutes

Independence Charter School

March 11, 2009

Resolutions

ADOPTED

1. January Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of January 2009 in the amount of \$336,162.58 as presented to the Board.

2. Global Education

Be it resolved that the ICS BOT adopt the term “Global Education” as the guiding framework for ongoing development and evaluation of curriculum programs and policies. “Global Education” places an emphasis on the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and values needed by all citizens to thrive in an interconnected world.

Since the Global Education approach best captures the underlying values of our original mission and vision, the ongoing dialogue and resource development of organizations that seek to promote the ideas of global citizenship and global education (including but not limited to Oxfam International) will provide the tools and guidelines needed for the future growth of Independence Charter School.

**Resolutions
DEFEATED
None**

**Resolutions
TABLED
None**