

**Independence Charter School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
October 14, 2009 7:00 pm**

**Board Members Present:** Becky Baehr, Rona Buchalter, John Eagen, Eli Lesser, Kristin Nocco, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez, Elsie Stern

**Board Members Absent:** Rosina Miller

**Others Present:** Jurate Krokys, CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Jerry Santilli, Business Manager, Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; William Loskoch, Kelly Nelms and Michael Farrell, teachers; Robin Kohles, parent and building rep; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Cristina Vea, parent & PTA Liaison; Rickie Sanders and Isaura Thibault, Community Members

**I. Call to Order**

**President Rona** called the meeting to order at 7:10pm. Rona reported that Krista Pfeiffer sent the board a thank you note for designating her as a founder.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Elsie moved and Pedro seconded the approval of the September meeting minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously with one change: the meeting ended at 10p.m. (not a.m.).

**III. CEO Report**

**Jurate** reported that the principal is now on maternity leave, so Jurate is taking on most of the responsibilities of the principal's role. One of the executive directors of the Asia Society gave a presentation at Monday's professional development day. Jurate reported that the part-time family liaison position has been working out very well. That position is funded by stimulus funds. ICS is up for renewal during this year. Jurate circulated a timeline of that process. ICS appears to be in a very good position for renewal. From reviewing the last renewal it is clear that ICS has met many of its goals. Renewal includes looking at records, financial paperwork, etc. The School District is hiring a consultant organization to come in to observe schools for the charter renewal. They will be coming sometime during November. They will be visiting classrooms and possibly reviewing more records. We have not yet received a checklist. Jurate circulated a document about the renewal process. If we want to add any changes (i.e., a high school, etc), that would need to be done via an addendum. Therefore, the board will need to make that type of decision sometime during the next few months. The School District is saying that charter schools need to request increases in enrollment at the time of renewal. There does not seem to be any vehicle to consider opening up a high school, since virtually no new charters have been submitted recently. We may, however, consider adding on 9<sup>th</sup> grade and then adding through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. We could also consider replicating our school, starting with K-1<sup>st</sup> or something like that. The actual writing of the renewal document will be written by ICS staff. The application is due December 18<sup>th</sup>, so the board will need to vote on that at its December meeting. There is a special meeting with the SRC and charter school CEOs on October 20<sup>th</sup> at 5p.m. to discuss the issue of enrollment caps on charter schools. Jurate clarified that PA state law does not allow for caps on charter schools. Rona asked staff and parents to pass the word along about the October 20<sup>th</sup> SRC meeting and the City Council meeting from 4p.m.-6p.m. on October 26<sup>th</sup>. Jurate reported that the Community Relations Community is looking at venues for 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation, helping with CCRA open house, Philadelphia Cares, the family survey and other events.

Kristin circulated 2008 parent survey information (the same that she had circulated via e-mail last weekend). Rona asked Kristin to give a brief overview. Kristin reported that almost 300 surveys were received. She thanked Dave Peterson, the Community Relations Committee and the Curriculum Committee for their help. She stated the dress down day tickets definitely helped to get parents to complete the survey. More lower grade parents completed the survey, but there was a good representation from both programs. The survey showed a very involved parent group. Discipline and bus transportation came up as two main areas of concern. Becky suggested that if there are areas we can't address (i.e., bus transportation) maybe we should remove it. Others suggested keeping it and passing the information on to the School District. Many parents said they find out ICS information through their children's backpacks. Ninety percent of the families surveyed said they have access to the internet, so we may want to better advertise the ICSinfo listserv. One area of concern with middle school parents was students being able to keep homework organized. Pedro asked what the concerns were about discipline. Rona stated it was just a general question about how discipline is handled at ICS. Eli recommended that Leonora might want to add an extra sheet to her development packet that includes some of the survey results. Kristin explained that would need to be done by hand, since it's hard to combine areas from the Survey Monkey survey. Eli also noted that it would be good to look more closely at whether parents who are willing to give are mainly from lower grades, etc. Jurate said that this was a great accomplishment--getting such a high and representative response. Jurate will go through the survey to draft a summary to be shared with parents. Elsie reported that she is working on getting increased participation by a wider variety of parents and guardians in an effort to better support all students. We want to be sure that we are valuing all the perspectives of our families. She wants to inventory current parent opportunities and then to reach out to parents who aren't regularly involved to find out in what areas they are interested and what obstacles exist. Our Family Liaison, for instance, is now contacting all parents/guardians who did not attend Back to School Night. Rona clarified that the board and administration has talked about this in many different ways and now we're moving forward with this. It isn't something that needs board approval, but we wanted to make sure the board knows it's happening. Elsie asked for people to contact her with names of possible parents who should be contacted. Pam suggested that cultivating parents from the Spanish Enhanced program as potential board members is something that could be included in this initiative. Rona asked where we are with outreach for this year's lottery. Jurate stated that our Metro newspaper ad will be published for two days in the beginning of November. Rona asked whether Jurate feels that's enough. Jurate said she does think it's enough and that seems evident by the families who are submitting applications. Eli suggested that ICS may want to publish our current stats re: low income households, etc.

#### **IV. PTA Report**

No written report was circulated. Cristina reported that the October PTA meeting was well attended and the PTA approved using \$3,000 for the ballroom dancing program. The PTA also agreed to subsidize the sale of the Freedom Writers' book to which Tr. Mike Farrell contributed. The Cherrydale fundraiser has started. Picture day is on October 29<sup>th</sup>. The Middle School Parents Group is working well. They will be offering the babysitting class again on Report Card Day in December. The PTA has its own website (icspta.com). Some concerns were raised about dismissal; some parents felt last year's dismissal plan worked better. Jurate explained that the main reason we changed that was due to the large number of kids who were out in the yard at the same time. Since staff all have responsibilities at that time and parents tend to socialize, many kids were

unsupervised. Also, parents tended to be engaging in conversations about their kids' academics, making uncomfortable situations for teachers who do not want to discuss individual student situations publicly. We need to be able to dismiss the children safely and in a timely manner. Jurate stated that she is talking with the deans and teachers to see if we can work out something. Rona stated the concern seems to be more about the situation of having so many students out front at the same time. Cristina noted that another concern is that so many parents are double parking on Lombard Street. Cristina said it may take care of itself now that clubs have started, since there will be less children being dismissed at the same time. Elsie stated she also felt that the shortened time for dismissal makes it feel rushed. Kristin noted that a big problem rests with parents who are not following the parking rules.

#### **V. Teachers' Report**

**Will** reported that teachers in the lower school are happy to have a second recess period. The middle school math carnival is on 10/21. Middle schoolers are starting on their science fair projects. Tr. Will is interested in starting a lower school science fair. There was a suggestion to post board committee minutes on the public drive at ICS. There was a great response to the teacher salary survey. A teacher committee will be established to help draft some new salary scale suggestions. There is some concern about the time it's taken to get reimbursed for part of their prescription payments, etc. Some teachers are concerned about the issue of Teachers who are concerned about parents so often cornering teachers without appointments, asking for homework at the last minutes, etc. Becky stated that any salary scale decisions need to be made before the budget process; Jerry stated he feels very uncomfortable about making commitments on numbers before we know what type of per student increase the school will be receiving. Becky stated the HR committee will be making recommendations by March or April and then will wait for the financial aspect. Rona clarified that keeping communication open is the key to this process. Will asked how that will affect signing contracts. Becky stated that some cuts may be able to be made in other areas, but that salaries need to be based on what we know will be available. Pam pointed out that we need to look at concrete ways that salary increases could be made. Will pointed out that he and Kelly are working on dispelling myths.

#### **VI. Development Report**

**Leonora** thanked the board members who attended tonight's pre-meeting workshop. She encouraged people to attend Friday's brick walkway dedication and that the ICS 365 event invitations will be out soon.

#### **VII. Construction Update**

**Robin** reported that the playground is almost all done. Robin reported that we still need to determine how the steel canopy will be installed.

#### **VIII. Accreditation**

**Becky** stated that she doesn't have a written report, since the initial steering committee meeting occurred yesterday. The steering committee is: Becky, Eli, Jurate, Lisa Nelson-Haynes (parent and former board member), Neyza Cabrera, Kristen Denahan, Leslie Burton, Andrea Soelter, Lynn Eckerman, Luz Angela Bolivar Poveda, Mary Beth Kronick, and Ramzy. The first meeting included reviewing the process and starting sub-committees. The goal is to have a draft of the community survey completed by the beginning of December. Becky is working on figuring effective ways to keep the community updated and involved. The first phase is to study where we are now, then to make 5-year goals, then to

review in 5 years. There will be updates on the ICSinfo listserv and through the ICS Link.

## **VIII. Committee Reports**

### **A. Policy**

**Eli** reported that it was decided to table the idea of the social networking policy and to instead resurrect the ICS Technology Committee to work on an acceptable use policy. Jurate is working on that and we hope to have something for the November meeting. Eli is working with ICS counsel to complete an ICS “Right to Know” policy. Eli is working on an article for the ICS Link to explain the structure and mission of the Policy Committee.

### **B. Finance**

**Rona** reported that Rosina could not be here tonight. Jerry explained that although a PA budget has finally been passed, schools are not a top priority to receive money. ICS is owed money from last year and this year and won't receive it for quite a while. Jerry emphasized that the only reason ICS has been able to stay in such good financial status is due to its designating a contingency fund. He pointed out that's not the case with all schools. Rona thanked Jerry for his continually reminding us of the importance of this. Pam added that she hopes this will stand as a good example of why this is needed, even though some on the state level don't believe charter schools should be allowed to hold surpluses. Jerry reported that we are still waiting for food services funds that were held up due to the state budget. In November Jerry will have a detailed food services budget that ICS will be able to monitor throughout the year. The bidding process for the food services program will begin soon also. We've made some banking changes and have gotten out of the cash management account due to fees increasing. Instead the money is in a money market account that Jerry is monitoring. There is little option in what we're allowed to invest in due to state regulation. Pedro asked what type of interest we're earning. Jerry said about half a percent. We have received some stimulus money. Jerry explained that disbursements for August include textbook purchases. Rona asked whether the legal counsel is being charged. Jerry explained it's a flat rate for the year, which is paid on a monthly basis. Jerry is getting more detailed information about that. Becky moved the disbursement resolution; Pam seconded. Kristin pointed out that the spreadsheet should say 09-10 (not 08-09); Jerry will correct. The motion passed unanimously. Becky moved the lease reimbursement resolution; Pam seconded. Rona and Becky explained this is a state subsidy by which we get reimbursed for part of lease expenses. The board needs to pass this resolution annually. Eight board members were present; all eight voted in favor of this motion. Jurate noted that Worlds of Opportunity is a not-for-profit and this is a legal process.

### **C. Human Resources**

**Becky** reported the main issue right now is the teacher salary scale. Becky noted that one suggestion is to have a grid. Pam suggested we urge our teachers to get certified through the National Board Certification process. Rona asked what the main reason for that would be. Jurate explained that it is a self-reflective process. She stated that some states fund this process, which costs several thousand dollars.

### **D. Curriculum**

**Pam** reported that the report indicates that there would be other attachments regarding curriculum writing, but there was a computer glitch. Pam will send that out tomorrow. \$30,000 went to staff time for curriculum writing over the

summer. The committee will be reviewing the three areas from the strategic plan, starting with the villages' model and will be collecting data on those initiatives. Kristin noted that the summer reading issue came up at the PTA meeting also. Pam said that we expect that there will not be specific required books next year, so locating books will not be an issue. Rona stated the point will be to continue a love of reading. Pedro asked if the curriculum belongs to the school; Jurate stated that it does belong to the school. Becky recommended discussing copywriting with our legal counsel.

### **E. Board Development**

**Pedro** noted that two potential new board members, Rickie Sanders and Isaura Thibault came to tonight's meeting to get a feel for the work of the board. There will be at least two more interviews with potential board members which will be taking place soon. Pam will check on the glitches with the Yahoo group. Rona reviewed the draft calendar that Kristin made. Rona will post this on the Yahoo group; continue to give suggestions to Kristin. Rona asked when the food services RFP will be due; Jurate stated she plans to start the process in January after the charter renewal is completed. She handed out a draft timeline. The plan is for the resolution to be before the board by the April meeting. Jurate said she anticipates the process to be much more streamlined this time around. Jurate noted that Kristin's brother, who works in food services management graciously met with Jurate and Jerry recently and helped create templates, etc. Kristin asked who will be reviewing the monthly invoices from Linton. Jurate said Ramzy, Jerry and Jurate will do that. Ramzy will be meeting with Linton to review the invoice monthly. Ramzy confirmed that he will be reviewing it line by line every month. Rona stated that at 6:30p.m. before the next board meeting, parent Julie Snell will give an update on all the horticultural things that are happening in the school yard. Pam suggested making sure that enough people can come early; otherwise, plan for 10 minutes during the meeting.

### **IX. Public Comment Period**

No one signed up to speak during the public comment period.

### **X. Old Business**

### **XI. New Business**

### **XII. Executive Session**

The Board went into an executive session at 9p.m. to discuss the CEO evaluation and contract and to discuss a legal matter.

### **XIII. Adjournment**

Pedro moved to adjourn; Becky seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10p.m.

#### Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda  
Minutes from September 2009 meeting  
CEO report  
Food Services contract timeline  
Charter school renewal timeline  
Teachers' Report  
August financials  
Finance Committee Minutes  
Development Report  
Human Resources Committee Minutes (Sept & Oct)  
Curriculum Committee Minutes  
Policy Committee Minutes  
Draft Board Activity Calendar  
2008 Parent Survey Results

**Independence Charter School  
October 14, 2009  
Resolutions**

**ADOPTED**

**1. August Disbursements**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of August 2009 in the amount of \$312,964.88 as presented to the Board.

**2. Lease Reimbursement**

Be it resolved, that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School make application to the State for approval and reimbursement of a charter school lease.

**Resolutions  
DEFEATED  
None**

**Resolutions  
TABLED  
None**