

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
September 9, 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; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; William Loskoch, Kelly Nelms and Michael Farrell, teachers; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Cristina Vea, parent & PTA Liaison

I. Call to Order

President Rona called the meeting to order at 7:16pm.

II. Approval of Minutes

Pedro moved and Pam seconded the approval of the August meeting minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously with one correction: Leonora clarified that the \$4,700 Swift Children Can Shape the Future grant is one grant and will be used to fund Young Playwrights and ballroom dancing at ICS.

III. CEO Report

Jurate reported that the school year has started out well. A pipe broke the Saturday before school started, but we had many volunteers helping clean up and save books. Some books were used, others were new. We had to throw out about a third of the books. Since the bookshelves are now in, the library is now being organized. Attendance has been close to 99%. Demographics have changed a bit; Our poverty rate has been dropping. Rona asked if we have a plan for remedying this. Jurate said we can ask other schools about their recruiting efforts. She noted that FACTS charter targets immigrant populations. We also have plans to place an ad in the Metro and to do outreach at religious congregations and community groups. She reported that there is a huge amount of team-building as part of Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs. She reported that some of our technology problems have been due to the move and the need for a better infrastructure. We tend to individualize too much, asking each teacher what they want on their laptops, etc. The report breaks down the various technology available at the school. Tomorrow there is a meeting sponsored by the School District at a charter school to discuss the issue of when charter schools can request changes in enrollment, replicating, etc. It appears the School District is interested in having charters take over some schools, where there are struggling students; the question is whether the next step will be to insist the charter keep the staff from those schools also. It seems the School District is adding conditions to some charter renewals. Pam stated she feels we need to focus in on the topics that specifically matter to ICS, not necessarily the more general issues. Becky stated we also need to see how the School District is interpreting the charter school law. Eli stated we should also send a letter to Babette Josephs, since this may become a state issue. Rona stated it seems there are two issues: our renewal and whether or not we want to consider replicating. Jurate stated she's discussed this with Jerry Santilli; his concern is cost. She also discussed this with parent Donna Sharer, who brought up the issue of specialty. The School District is currently interested in replication of high schools, not elementary.

Rona welcomed Teacher William (Loskoch) and Teacher Kelly (Nelms) who are this year's teacher representatives. They introduced themselves.

IV. PTA Report

No written report was circulated. Cristina reported the executive committee had its first meeting yesterday. This year the PTA wants to be of more help to teachers (i.e., helping collect envelopes during classroom fundraisers, etc). Tomorrow the PTA is hosting the Boo Hoo Breakfast for parents of kindergartners. The PTA is currently looking at other models of organizations.

V. Teachers' Report

William reported that the school year is off to a good start. Teachers want to thank the school for the flash drives that were given out this year.

VI. Development Report

Leonora reported Independence Charter 365 will take place on November 13th. The annual fundraising report will be posted on the website soon. We received a city Student Activities grant for \$1,500. October 16th is the brick walkway dedication. Tomorrow we are joining with the International Visitor Council for a panel discussion on early childhood education, including a representative from the Mayor's Office; there will be visitors from 26 (A-Z) countries. Jurate stated the group will be starting at Rutgers and coming to ICS later in the afternoon. Former ICS employee Matt Drexler now works at IVC, so we have a good connection in that office. Elsie asked if there has been a public event regarding the library fundraising; Leonora stated we decided to wait for that until the spring. We raised almost \$7,000; Jurate noted that since we did not receive the library grant we weren't able to complete the library as we would have liked. Leonora stated we are discussing other specific things for which we might want to fundraise. Rona asked if we might want to consider this as a literacy campaign---closing the achievement gap. Leonora agreed that is a great idea and noted that Stephanie and Kristen Long have an \$18,000 list of software for literacy. Jurate noted that several funders have told us how much they like the school, but that they can't fund us because overall our students are doing so much better than students in many other schools. Kristin stated that as a parent the fundraising letter about the library was a disconnect, since it didn't seem clear whether students would be able to borrow books from the library. She suggested that we do a better job of reporting back to the parents regarding fundraising.

VII. Construction Update

Robin thanked Ramzy for his work overseeing the summer playground project. We need to do a punch list of things that need to be checked, but things are mainly done. Parent Julie Snell is going to work on the rain garden. One item that is going to take more time is the canopy; that was due to the cost of installation. We are re-bidding that process, since the range of bids was so wide. Robin clarified that installation would take 1-2 days. Pedro asked if Robin can talk about the water pipe problem. She explained the pipe wasn't able to handle the water pressure. The pipe has now been braced up. Becky asked what we had done after the first break. Robin stated the brace had been planned, but not done prior to the second break. Robin stated we may want to think about doing small pieces of "green roof" to absorb some of the water. Rona thanked Ramzy and Robin for getting the playground done in time for the start of school.

VIII. Accreditation

Becky stated they are working getting the steering committee assembled. **Eli** stated that a friend of his who had done site visits has offered to meet with ICS reps regarding this process.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Finance

Jurate stated that Jerry and Rosina could not be here tonight. Jerry circulated a written report prior to the meeting. Jurate reported we may have up to \$16,000 remaining from construction funds, depending on the final price of getting the canopy installed. We are waiting on the rest of the federal stimulus money before starting projects with that money (i.e., additional staff bathrooms, etc). Reporting is supposed to start soon, but is stating that the first report is soon due; however, no forms have been received yet. The budget impasse is of concern; however, we have adequate reserves for salaries and benefits. There would be no impact for a few months; by then the budget will, hopefully, be passed. **Becky** moved the July disbursement motion; **Pam** seconded.

Rona and **Jurate** noted that there are no unusual items in the financial report. **Jurate** noted one expense is due to the wine tasting fundraiser. **Rona** asked how the **Cozen** account is being handled. **Becky** stated she brought **Cozen's** fee structure tonight, but **Jerry** isn't here. **Rona** asked how the billing is happening. **Rona** noted that we've been getting billed per service, not according to the retainer. **Kristin** noted that the budget columns have last year's headings. The motion passed unanimously.

Elsie moved the activities grant motion; **Eli** seconded. **Jurate** noted that the check has not yet been received. **Becky** offered a friendly amendment to the resolution to state that ICS "acknowledges the grant from the City of Philadelphia's activity fund for \$1,500." The amended motion passed unanimously. **Becky** moved the Children Can Shape the Future resolution, **Pam** seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Kristin asked that we discuss the food services report. **Jurate** stated she and **Jerry** reviewed this on the phone today. There was a \$23,000 deficit during the first year; a big part of that was due to our plan of having a part-time person handling the program, but we ended up having to have a full-time person. In addition, we had predicted there would be a higher rate of participation than we actually had. We're looking at many things, such as cutting back on the paper waste. We raised the full price lunch by 5 cents. We also raised the a la carte price from 50 cents to 75 cents. We will also have one day per month of "Chef's Surprise" to help eliminate waste. We wanted to cut back on one **Linton** staff person; however, if we use one of our staff people to cover that we'd need to charge that to the lunch program. **Jerry** is projecting another \$23,000 deficit this year; however, **Jurate** stated she doesn't feel it will be that much, since we'll be more vigilant this year regarding billing. **Jurate** stated we will be putting the program out to bid this year. **Kristin** asked when that group will be meeting; **Jurate** will be planning that soon. **Rona** stated we're going to have to decide how much we're willing to lose on a food service program. **Kristin** stated that what she wants to see each month is the same type of report that **Jerry** gives us for ICS, so we can ask the right questions. If we get more detailed information, we will be in a better place to decide if we're willing to run a deficit. **Jurate** explained that we actually need two separate meetings; one that is our regular Food Service committee, with parent and student representatives. The other would be specific people to discuss the finances. **Rona** asked **Kristin** to report back at the October meeting.

B. Human Resources

Becky reported that the September meeting will take place on Friday (9/11). **Becky** moved the hiring motion; **Pam** seconded. **Stephanie** explained this person replaces the teacher who backed out of the position originally. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Curriculum

Pam noted that this year the committee is at the evaluation stage, since it has met all its strategic plan goals. She stated they will be looking at parent communication on the website, folders, etc. **Stephanie** noted that the report states the writing program/rubric is named the "ICS Homebrew," but that is not the official name. **Pam** stated **Kristen Long** will be compiling that information. **Elsie** recommended that it would help new parents if we have a quick introduction to our curricula. **Pam** said that is good to keep in mind, since we tend to write minutes in code, since we've been talking about this for years. **Eli** noted that this information could also be useful with potential funders. **Rona** stated we do have a lot of this in the handbook, which is on the website. **Elsie** stated we also need something more conceptual (i.e., bullet points).

D. Board Development

Pedro reported that there are two interviews with potential Board members scheduled week. **Pedro** will be sending out the Board survey to new Board members to add their information to the existing data. **Rona** stated that the Board booklet is almost complete. She asked whether members wanted a hard copy or electronically. It was agreed we'll make 3-4 hard copies and then will put cds. **Kristin** asked if the Board Yahoo group is still working. **Rona** said it's been dormant. **Pedro** asked about changing the time of Board meetings. If we do that, we'd need to do our pre-meetings at another time. He suggested having them at lunch. Several members stated they'd rather come early. **Elsie** stated we might want to do post-meeting, instead of pre.

E. Policy

Eli reported that he held his initial meeting last week and is working on setting up a regular meeting schedule. The committee tabled two items until it has greater participation and decided to wait on the student smoke free environment until students are available to come and present it. Also, it became clear that we need a policy on student social networking and computer use. We are in full compliance with the Right to Know. We will have a resolution for the October meeting.

Eli asked everyone to review the social networking resolution. **Stephanie** asked about the third bullet point. She stated that at times teachers have gotten parent permission to post student works. **Becky** and **Eli** clarified that something like that would be posted by the school, not as an individual. **Eli** moved the social networking resolution. **Pedro** stated that if a class is out on a trip, those photos are public domain. **Eli** clarified that if a teacher takes the picture it is not public, as opposed to a stranger taking a photo. **William** stated that point #5 sounds like as long as you don't identify ICS, it's fine. **Becky** clarified that the point is you can't identify yourself as being from ICS. **Rona** asked **Eli** to take this back to the committee and bring it back next time. **Becky** also asked if the committee can look at the lottery policy. **Pam** stated she thought we'd decided we wanted it to be a common practice, not a policy. **Rona** asked the committee to take that under consideration.

IX. Public Comment Period

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

X. Old Business

Kristin is putting together a calendar for recurring events that are pertinent to Board members, such as the annual calendar event, when the annual report is due, etc. Rona asked everyone to send this information to Kristin.

XI. New Business

Rona asked what the thoughts of members are regarding the possibility of exploring expansion/replication. Pam asked whether people are willing to look into the possibility. Pedro stated he feels it's a very crucial decision. He recommended setting aside a chunk of time at a Board meeting or at a separate time. John stated it may be good to lay the groundwork now so we're ready when funding is available. Elsie stated she feels the self reflection part of Middle States Accreditation will probably inform this. Eli stated he feels we should look into a high school, since a charter center city high school is needed. Pam clarified that our paperwork could simply state we want to look into the possibility. Otherwise, we might have to wait 5 years for our next charter renewal. Jurate stated there are some Gates funding for looking into starting high schools. Cristina asked if this should be taken to the PTA; Rona said it's probably too early at this time. Jurate stated it would most likely have strings attached---such as being required to accept certain students. If we had a high school, we'd probably have to open the enrollment to the general population. Eli and Pedro volunteered to meet to discuss this possibility; Cristina volunteered to join them.

XII. Executive Session

The Board went into an executive session at 9:35p.m. to discuss the CEO's contract.

XIII. Adjournment

The board returned from Executive Session at about 10p.m. and the meeting was adjourned.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda

Minutes from August 2009 meeting

CEO report

July financials

Development Report

Curriculum Committee Minutes

Policy Committee Minutes

Construction update

**Independence Charter School
September 9, 2009
Resolutions**

ADOPTED

1. July Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of July 2009 in the amount of \$140,557.14 as presented to the Board.

2. Activities Fund Grant

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School acknowledges the grant from the City of Philadelphia's activity fund for \$1,500.

3. Children Can Shape the Future Grant

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School acknowledge and approve the acceptance of the Children Can Shape the Future award in the amount of \$ 4,700.

4. New Hire for 2009-2010

Be it resolved that the following individuals be offered full time positions as listed for the 2009-2010 school year under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS contract:
Beatrice Bolger: Kiswahili teacher (3-4 classes per week)

**Resolutions
DEFEATED
None**

**Resolutions
TABLED**

Policy Regarding Blogging and Social Networking

Independence Charter School (ICS) is a community of learners that includes students, faculty, and staff. The community values free speech and expression, as defined by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19). ICS recognizes that the Internet can be a valuable resource and tool for both professional and personal use. This policy is intended to set forth ICS's expectations regarding employees' on-duty and off-duty posting of web content on Internet sites, including but not limited to Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, on-line chat groups, and other personal blogs and social networking sites (collectively "Internet sites").

Employees are reminded that they must not engage in any conduct that is unbecoming of a professional associated with an elementary/middle school, including but not limited to the following:

* Employees may not post web content for non-work related purposes during working time, using ICS owned information technology hardware or software.

* Employees may not post content on any Internet site that is covered by and violates ICS's policy as listed in the Employee Handbook.

* Employees may not post content (text, images, video, audio) that mentions, discusses, references, or involves ICS students, whether

mentioned by name or not, on any Internet site.

(continued on next page)

* ICS employees must not engage in any inappropriate communication or conduct with students by way of Internet sites, including communication about personal matters. ICS recognizes that the identity of users of Internet sites can sometimes be difficult to determine. However, should an ICS employee communicate with an individual on an Internet site in a manner that would be considered inappropriate for communications with a student, the ICS employee must inform the CEO immediately upon discovering that the inappropriate communication was with a student so that appropriate measures can be taken.

* Employees who post content on social networking sites or other Internet sites and choose to specifically identify themselves as an employee of ICS or otherwise associate themselves with ICS must state explicitly, clearly and in a prominent place that any views expressed are the employee's own and not those of ICS or of any other person affiliated with ICS. If an employee is featured or creates a web presence and chooses not specifically identify themselves as an employee of ICS, and the page is created and maintained in accordance with the policy the information on the page shall be considered personal and not connected to the school community any concerns or feedback should be reported to the CEO.

* ICS recognizes that the world wide web is a powerful tool and is instrumental in the 21st century world, we celebrate our faculty and staff and the lives they lead beyond the ICS community. Employees are urged to think before they post any web content, even if in compliance with this policy, with the understanding that such postings are often public and may remain accessible indefinitely, and may be viewed by students and/or parents.

ICS reserves the right to discipline any employee who is in violation of this policy, up to and including termination of employment.

Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the CEO. If an ICS employee is in doubt whether a particular web posting will violate this policy, the employee is encouraged to seek guidance from the CEO.