

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
February 13, 2008 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Anyabwile Banko'le, Becky Baehr, Sean Hennessy, Nicole Perkins Kilcullen, Rosina Miller, Lisa Nelson-Haynes, Pam Prell

Board Members Absent: Ryan Boyer, Eric Cramer, Joana Davis-Diaz

Others Present: Jerry Santilli, Santilli and Thomson; Jurate Krokys, Principal/CEO, Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations, Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Matthew Drexler, Development Associate; Robin Kohles, Owner's Rep; Amy Leigh, Kelly Nelms & Andrea Yanez, teachers; Stephanie Kindt, Consuelia McCourt, Fran Melmed, Donna Sharer & Cristina Veal, parents.

I. Call to Order

President Becky Baehr called the meeting to order at 7:19pm.

II. Approval of Minutes

Becky asked if there were any changes to be made to the January Board minutes. There were no changes; the minutes were approved.

III. CEO Report

Jurate reported that during Tuesday's science assembly, Comcast presented ICS with a \$5,000 check; ICS was one of 15 schools nationwide to which this science assembly is being presented. The 6th & 7th grade classes in the audience were exceptionally well behaved and thoroughly enjoyed the assembly. Comcast representatives communicated that they may assist with some specific building project at the new building, but will not be wiring the building.

The Study Island test prep program appears to be working well. Advertising for the Principal position has begun in earnest; Jurate noted that she saw an ad for an immersion school principal in Indianapolis and the ad stated that a bilingual candidate was preferred, as opposed to required. We have started interviewing teacher candidates for next year and had the first of three prospective teacher open house events last night. Last night's weather prevented a big turnout of candidates, but we had many ICS teacher volunteers and had good discussions with the candidates who attended. There has been a suggestion to have a Durham alumni reunion fundraiser at the new site. Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez, along with one of her staff and a representative from Youth United for Change, toured ICS today and met with Jurate and Matt. The councilwoman was interested in our thoughts about chartering some of the schools currently under corrective action. Jurate clarified that Youth United for Change is a group that is reportedly trying to urge the Philadelphia School District to move more rapidly toward making necessary changes.

IV. PTA Report

Cristina reported that plans for the May 3rd Silent Auction are well underway and that the PTA once again is requesting that the Board donate a basket or other item. The PTA looked at some other spaces for the

in this space. However, some of the other venues may be used for events like this year's end-of-the-year student talent show. Funds from the Corbi fundraiser will go toward the playground at the new site. The PTA has started looking into after-school options near the new building in order to give parents information in case ICS decides not to have an after school program next year. Cristina then introduced parent Conswelia McCourt, who gave a presentation about the work that has been accomplished so far in an effort for ICS to get a new food vendor as of September. The main points were that it seems very likely that ICS will be able to contract with a new vendor, who will provide fresher, more nutritious and appealing food at the same price currently charged for a school meal. The vendors have all said that in order to work, the school would need to ensure that at least 65% of the students get lunch at school---- no matter whether they qualify for free, reduced or full-priced meals. Any surpluses would go back into the meal program----buying more healthy food, getting new cafeteria equipment, etc. This committee will meet with Jerry before sending out an RFP. Becky thanked Conswelia and the rest of the committee for their diligent work on this project.

V. Teachers' Report

Amy and **Andrea** reported that Maestra Ronith Epelbon is now participating in the morning announcements. Some classes in the gifted support program are learning how to quilt and are deciding how they will use their final projects. The 5th & 8th grade PSSA writing tests are being administered this week. The staff appreciates being asked for feedback on the sick time policy, as well as the opportunity to have input on the search for a principal. It was also noted that it's always great to hear ICS teachers speaking at prospective teacher open houses about how supported they feel at ICS.

VI. Committee Reports

A. Development

Jurate introduced ICS parent Fran Melmed and thanked Fran for agreeing to coordinate Development Committee activities until a chairperson is identified. Fran reported that development at ICS is in a good place right now with a good structure. She listed the current members of the Development Committee: Jurate, Matt, Marin Gaughan, Stephanie Kindt, Tina Kluetmeirer, David Webber and herself and noted that there are several active subcommittees with additional members. She stated that Emily Warchow from Fairmount Ventures has been integral in keeping the committee grounded. She stated that the committee is now ready to start working on the process of developing a foundation board and noted that the current Board members will be asked to assist in that process with such things as attending specific functions to represent ICS.

Fran stated that the report circulated for tonight's meeting ties back to the Fairmount plan. She asked that Board members send questions via e-mail and that they included the full Board so that she can reply to all in case several people have the same questions. Fran also reported that Development is doing well toward this fiscal year's fundraising goal and that the committee is working on ensuring a good practice for tracking donations. Becky thanked Fran for stepping up to this role and stated that as the Board works on recruiting new members, it will want to work with

chair Development. Fran stated that the committee is looking both internally within the ICS community, as well as externally. Nicole stated that we may not need to worry about recruiting a specific Development chair for the current Board if the Foundation board gets up and running. Rosina suggested we might want to consider someone who would start out on the current Board and then transition to the Foundation board once it's established. Jurate stressed the importance of having someone at the board level available to meet with Foundation representatives and other potential funders. Pam suggested trying to find someone who would complete the last year of Sean's term, since he will be stepping down in June. Nicole asked that the financial information be included with each month's Development report and complimented the committee on their forms. Fran stated that most of the forms were introduced by Fairmount Ventures and that Matt will send copies of the rest of the forms to the board.

Fran stated that now that an ICS case statement has been developed, we can start recruiting Foundation Board members. Jurate clarified that a case statement is not the same as the mission and vision statement, but is written to draw attention from potential donors. Fran added that much of the case statement was developed through interviews with Board members, parents and staff.

B. Finance

Rosina asked Jerry to review the December financial statement and disbursements. Jerry stated that ICS continues to have a strong cash position and that most variances are due to timing issues; he pointed out that the variance in line 29 is due to the PTA paying for part of the Middle School Art Teacher salary. He added that there are some adjustments to be made to the Summer School section due to income from the Spanish camp. Jerry and Sean pointed out that the payment to a pretzel company from last month is being straightened out; a bill was paid accidentally by ICS, instead of by the PTA.

Rosina moved the resolution regarding December disbursements; Sean seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Curriculum

Pam reported that Rona Buchalter and Teacher Odamis Fernandez-Sheinbaum are working on an evaluation of the village model. The committee is also working on gifted support guidelines. The bulk of the committee's work has recently been on the Middle School Task Force, which has involved lots of research about middle schools. She circulated hard copies of the draft report. She clarified that the research involved middle schools in general, not specifically schools with immersion programs. A main theme that's been found is that the social/emotional aspect is extremely important, not just as an isolated class, but through integrated units. She added that also helps with Middle States Accreditation. Pam stated that although many different people participated on the Task Force, attendance has dwindled. Pam suggested that the final draft be used as one tool when interviewing Principal candidates. Pam asked Jurate to let the committee know about budget and hiring implications of this plan. Jurate stated that the teacher commitment

a summer school program this year due to the move, that may mean some more funds will be available for curriculum writing. Pam emphasized that the committee wants a huge amount of staff involvement with the implementation. Donna agreed that this plan won't work without teacher buy in. Pam will circulate the draft to the full board via e-mail and will raise some questions for the board to consider while reviewing it. Becky thanked Donna for the work that she's put into the efforts of the Task Force.

D. Policy

Nicole reported that at its next meeting the committee will be reviewing its own structure and mission in relation to the structural plan approved by the board and encouraged all committee who haven't done so to do so also. She explained that the Parent Involvement policy resolution that is being considered tonight is a requirement by the state; however, the state did not give guidelines regarding it. Jurate brought a draft to the committee and the committee revised the draft and agreed that ICS wants parents to buy in to this policy, which is why the committee recommends that all ICS parents sign the policy. Nicole moved the Parent Involvement policy resolution; Anyabwile seconded. Nicole stated that someone had suggested adding a suggested number of volunteer hours, but that she doesn't feel it makes sense to add that, since it's not something we could enforce under the law. Sean offered a friendly amendment to delete in the first sentence of the policy "a charter school instead of their local neighborhood school" since it sounds somewhat negative toward neighborhood schools. Anyabwile seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Nicole stated that another issue being discussed is the current sick leave policy. Jurate raised a concern that the current policy is burdensome, especially on new staff. One suggestion the committee discussed was allowing ten (10) days and not differentiating types of days, but to limit the amount of days that can be carried over to the next year to five (5). Nicole added that Jerry has some concerns about the financial implications of the 25% payback in the current policy. She thanked the staff for their input so far and encouraged the teacher reps to try to ensure that a variety of opinions are heard. Nicole stated that a cost analysis will be needed in regard to cost, such as considering the cost of substitute teachers.

Sean stated he's glad the Policy Committee is handling this issue, but asked how the Board decides to which committee a policy concern goes. He suggested that maybe the Human Resources Committee should only deal with human resources policies and the Policy Committee should handle the rest. Nicole stated that we're not drafting HR policy; instead, the staff drafted a policy and the committee is reviewing and suggesting changes. Becky added that it's hard to anticipate which policies will need to be seen by various committees. Nicole stated that Policy Committee is only dealing with issues brought to them by the Board or the CEO. Pam stated that the Board needs to keep in mind that not having a policy can sometimes put the Board at risk; Nicole stated that we also have to have a level of trust.

E. Human Resources

Sean asked if there were any questions about the report that was circulated; there were no questions.

F. Community Relations

Anyabwile stated there is no report this month. **Becky** stated that we need to get started on Board nominations and asked how the committee wants to be contacted with suggested candidates. **Anyabwile** stated that before recommending a candidate, a Board member should speak with the person to be sure that they would consider being nominated, understanding the commitment, including a financial commitment. **Becky** will include the issue of nominations in her next newsletter article, noting that there will be a parent seat open, as well as several others.

G. Executive

Becky reminded everyone to complete their financial interest forms, which are required by the state.

VII. Public Comment Period

Matt Drexler asked the Board to consider specifically included donations as part of the Parent Involvement policy. **Nicole** agreed that the Policy Committee will consider that request.

VIII. Old Business

A. Construction Update

Robin reported that construction is going great and that the various committees are working hard. **Ken Roscioli** is looking into possible funding for a canopy connection; if we are going to have a canopy, this is the point in construction that we'd need to make that decision without having to go through additional steps. Tomorrow and Friday volunteers will be sorting through bricks that were part of walls that had to be torn down. They are old, well made bricks and can be integrated into the playground project. **Robin** stated that the Library Committee is just starting to meet. **Jurate** noted that there is a federal library grant that is due in March. **Robin** stated the Library Committee will be visiting the libraries at Greenfield and McCall schools. **Jurate** stated that neighbors of the new site are always commenting on how thrilled they are to work with **Robin**. **Nicole** asked what the schedule is for opening the doors; **Robin** stated she's not sure yet. Although the finish date is slated for September 1st, we need to figure out how long it will take to get it ready for students once we're able to be inside. **Robin** stated that **Jerry** has recommended a more upgraded security system, which will probably be over the budget and will need to be brought to the Board for financial approval and it's sent out to bid. **Rosina** applauded **Robin** for doing such an amazing job.

IX. New Business

There was no new business.

X. Adjournment

Nicole moved for adjournment; **Anyabwile** seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Minutes from the January 2008 meeting
CEO report
Finance Committee minutes
December Financials
Construction Report & Financial Summary
Curriculum Committee minutes (2 sets)
Development Committee Report & Activities Protocol
Meal Program Power Point handout
Policy Committee minutes
Human Resources Committee minutes

**Independence Charter School
February 13, 2008
Resolutions**

ADOPTED

December Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves disbursements from December 2007 in the amount of \$271,292.58 as presented to the Board.

Parent Involvement Policy

Be it hereby resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Independence Charter School adopts the attached Parent Involvement policy. This policy becomes effective as of 2/13/08; ICS parents will be required to sign the policy at registration and annually while their children attend ICS.

In choosing to send their children to Independence Charter School (ICS), parents are opting to work with the school in planning for and supporting the best possible educational experience for their children. ICS is a parent-founded charter school and, therefore, has a strong commitment to and expectation of parent involvement. Avenues of parent participation include, but are not limited to:

- Board of Trustees participation- ICS reserves specific Board seats for parents
- Partners in the educational process- In addition to ensuring that their children arrive punctually and attend school regularly, it is the expectation of ICS that parents will be responsive to communications from the school regarding concerns about students' academic work, behavior, physical health, and social-emotional health. Further, ICS expects that parents will provide a home environment that will allow children to study, do homework and interact with their family and neighbors in exploring the world.
- Volunteering- ICS encourages parents to become active volunteers. No matter the family schedule, ICS has a way for families to stay involved. Parents act as field trip chaperones, assist during recess, plan classroom fundraisers, conduct special presentations, help with mailing and so much more.
- Committee work- parents are encouraged to participate in committee work at the Board or school level in order to ensure that a wide variety of voices are heard.
- Participation in the ICS Parent-Teacher Association- parents is urged to become active members of the vibrant ICS parent-teacher association.

Additional information regarding parents' rights and responsibilities can be found in the Independence Charter School Parent Handbook,

I/We _____,
parent(s) of _____
have received a copy of the Independence Charter School Parent Involvement Policy.

Parent Signature(s)

Date

**Resolutions
DEFEATED**

None

**Resolutions
TABLED**