

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2007 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Becky Baehr, Anyabwile Banko'le, Joana Davis-Diaz, Sean Hennessy, Rosina Miller, Lisa Nelson-Haynes, Pam Prell

Board Members Absent: Ryan Boyer, Eric Cramer, Nicole Perkins Kilcullen

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, Principal/CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations, Jerry Santilli, Santilli and Thomson; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Matthew Drexler, Development Associate; Mike Farrell, Amy Leigh, Noga Newberg & Andrea Yanez, teachers; Cristina Vea, PTA representative; Stephanie Kindt, parent

I. Call to Order

President Becky Baehr called the meeting to order at 7:12pm.

II. Approval of Minutes

Becky asked if there were any changes to be made to the October Board minutes, noting that they weren't approved in November since the meeting was not held. There were no changes; the minutes were approved.

III. CEO Report

Jurate highlighted sections of the November and December reports. She noted that the Professional Development Day Language Acquisition conference which ICS hosted was a great success. In addition, she stated that 15 students have applied for Masterman's Middle School; we won't hear until early spring as to whether or not any are accepted. She also stated that we are considering feedback regarding changes we might make to our lottery process, since the process we're using (Random.org) might happen too quickly, making those whose children do not get a space or a low waiting number feel that something was missing from the process. There was feedback regarding how twins were handled this year in that twins were given one number, but guaranteed that both would get in if the number was picked. Some parents of twins felt both twins should get a separate number, but still be guaranteed that both would get in if one was chosen. It was noted that we changed the process this year, because last year parents of non-twins gave feedback that it wasn't fair that twins (and last year triplets) got two or three chances in the lottery with a guarantee of all the children getting in if one of those numbers was chosen. Becky stated that the Policy Committee has been asked to make a recommendation regarding next year's lottery.

Jurate stated that we're continuing to work on student lateness issues, noting that students are not marked late when it is due to a school bus issue. ICS is looking forward to a partnership with a school in Nigeria where former ICS teacher Kristel Solomon is currently working; Kristel will be visiting ICS in the near future. Jurate thanked the Board for her being able to attend the Spanish Academy's 3-day conference in Las Angeles recently. Jurate is hoping to be able to send an ICS representative

to one of their upcoming conferences on curriculum writing and is trying to have the Academy sponsor the representative. The Goldman-Sachs grant application has been submitted. Late last week ICS was awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Brook Lenfest Foundation and explained that the Ramzy, Dave Peterson and she have met to discuss how to best use those funds with a focus on our move to the new site. Tomorrow she will also be meeting with Jerry to discuss this further. Pam asked whether or not we should consider consulting with an educational technology expert to assist. Jurate stated that will be considered and that we may be able to get that type of advice from PATTAN, etc. without having to pay for it. She added that we continue to desperately need a high quality administrative software package in order to not having to repeatedly manually enter data for various reporting needs. Lisa suggested that ICS keep an open mind when considering its future technology needs, including the possibility of using some Apple computers; she will pass on some information about this to Matt via e-mail. Jurate reported that she was recommended for and now sits on the School District's charter school application review panel.

Becky noted that the Board has asked Jurate to add the "Challenges" section to the CEO report and would like to also have a discipline update included each month.

IV. PTA Report

Cristina reported that the PTA's December family social meeting event drew a bigger crowd than in previous years and thanked Maestra Ronith for having 4th and 5th graders sing at the meeting. Parent Conswelia McCourt and her committee are moving ahead with attempting to obtain a new meal provider by the time we move to the new building. Jurate noted that while we will not be able to have the required facilities at our new building to provide food services ourselves, we are designing it to be able to store fresh food and to be able to re-heat items. Conswelia has also applied for a grant to get a mobile salad bar; the PTA will find out about that grant in March. Cristina stated that theater trips for all the grades have been scheduled. Some classes have already gone and the rest will be attending throughout December and January. The PTA raised \$12,300 from Cherrydale sales. The holiday Barnes & Noble book fair only raised about \$100; however, it serves as a good event for publicizing the school. The PTA met with Jerry to work out a system for their paying half the salary of the Middle School art teacher, as agreed last year. The PTA met with the Development Committee to talk about the various fundraising events. At this point, the PTA plans to continue with its regular fundraisers, since it seems that grants from the PTA can be gotten in a more timely manner than having to go through a more formal structure. Lisa clarified that she thinks Fairmount Ventures concern is that ICS families who raise money through PTA fundraisers may not get acknowledged for their contribution to the school. In regard to holiday gift giving to ICS staff, Cristina stated that for now the PTA feels parents should be able to decide on what they want to do or not do. Pam stated that some schools have policies limiting or banning gifts to staff due to potential ethical issues-----for instance, if a parent gives an expensive gift to the teacher, will that possibly affect how a teacher grades a student.

Becky stated this may need to be discussed further by the Policy Committee.

V. **Teachers' Report**

Amy reported that many ICS staff either volunteered at or bought tickets for the Calendar Event. The Middle School Science Fair is next Wednesday. Teachers have reported that the students who have gone to see the *Sleeping Beauty* theater production have really enjoyed it. Teacher Mike Farrell's 7th and 8th grader Freedom Writers' group helped organize ICS's "Mix It Up Day" last month; that is a national campaign that urges students to try meeting new people. Students signed pledges and were seated at lunch tables according to birthday months. Joana asked that memos be sent home about these types of events so that parents can follow up with their children. Amy also reported that being able to visit another school for the November Professional Development Day was an interesting experience and that ICS staff who went to other schools received lots of good feedback about ICS. The Mazzoni Center presented an in-service training for all full-time staff in November; the purpose was to ensure that ICS is providing a welcoming atmosphere to students of all sexual orientation and preference. The Sunshine Committee has initiated a Secret Buddy system, as well as a staff holiday party. In response to the gifts from student family question, Noga stated that she feels uncomfortable for there to be any expectation of receiving a gift, especially since many ICS families have a hard time even paying for field trips. Becky asked Amy and Jurate to talk about this with other teachers to determine whether ICS needs a policy about this for the future. Anyabwile reminded them to keep in mind that some families do not celebrate holidays.

VI. **Committee Reports**

A. **Finance**

Rosina asked Jerry to review the September and October financial statements. Jerry stated that our financial condition continues to be good and that we have a strong cash balance. He noted that some variances are due to payments from out-of-district schools being slow. He stated that his recommendation is that Lenfest funds be used towards planning the technology infrastructure at the new building and stated that we'll be conducting a full technology inventory to make sure we don't pay to move old, unreliable equipment to the new building. He added that ICS will be receiving some money back from taxes; the exact amount is not yet known.

Sean moved resolutions #2 and #3 regarding September and October disbursements; Rosina seconded. The motions passed unanimously. Rosina then moved resolution #4 regarding the revised budget; Anyabwile seconded. Jerry reviewed the reasons for the budget revisions, as noted on the spreadsheet that was circulated. The motion passed unanimously. Jerry reviewed a construction expenditure spreadsheet which was circulated at the beginning of the meeting. Sean asked if the full new site financial picture could be included in future spreadsheets; Jerry agreed to do that. Rosina moved resolution #1 regarding the lease reimbursement; Sean seconded. Rosina explained that the Board needs to pass this

resolution again, because we had passed it too early in the year at a prior meeting. This is a resolution that needs to be passed annually to ensure that ICS can request partial lease reimbursement from the state. The motion passed unanimously with seven (7) yes votes; three Board members were absent.

B. Development

Lisa, the Board Liaison to this committee, thanked ICS parent Stephanie Kindt for her remarkable work in planning this year's Calendar Event; Stephanie received a loud round of applause. Lisa also thanked Matt Drexler for his continuing work on developing an ICS development infrastructure. Jurate stated that she has received calls from Senator Fumo's office regarding the RCAP application. According to that office, Mr. Fumo's RCAP funds are already allotted; however, they assured Jurate that they support ICS's effort and strongly encourage ICS to seek support from the governor's office to release more RCAP funds. Lisa also noted that Fairmount Ventures created a funding schedule for ICS, which was circulated. Pam noted that Ace INA is missing from the list and that we should check to make sure others are not missing. Lisa noted that this is a list that ICS should incorporate into a data base to be updated continually. Matt is responsible to research details about each funding opportunity. Becky asked whether the Development Committee is ready yet to make a recommendation as to whether or not ICS should proceed in starting a specific development board. Lisa said the committee is moving forward with discussion about that issue and may be ready to give a recommendation in January. Lisa noted that the annual appeal letter went out this week.

C. Human Resources

Sean asked Jurate to clarify the rationale for the highly qualified teacher test requirement. Jurate explained that although a teach may hold a PA teaching certificate, there are times that due to ICS's creative programming that we ask a teacher to teach a subject for which they are not yet technically state-certified. She gave an example of someone who may be certified to teach K-6, and who primarily teaches math to sixth graders, but who may be needed to teach an 8th grade math class. Under state rules, that person is not highly qualified in that area unless they meet certain standards, such as passing a Middle School math Praxis test. Sean moved resolution #5 regarding this issue; Anyabwile seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Sean moved resolution #6 regarding signing staff contracts; Anyabwile seconded. Sean explained that this is a matter of delegating this role to the CEO; the Board is still responsible to approve hiring decisions. The motion passed unanimously. Sean moved resolution #7 regarding the 2008-2009 organizational model; Rosina seconded. Sean explained the differences between the current model the proposed model for next year. The main difference is having separate CEO and Principal roles. Joana asked whether we'd still need two deans with this model. Jurate stated that she feels it would be very important to continue with two deans at least for the first year of using the new model and then it could be re-evaluated to see if the deans could take on other roles if time permits. Pam added that this model would let the Principal concentrate on teacher and curriculum issues. Becky noted that Jerry had asked whether we'd

still need two Curriculum Specialists under the new model. Sean stated that so far we always been understaffed administratively. Joana asked whether this is financially possible. Becky stated that Jerry is confident we can afford this model. Lisa stated that she advocates keeping the diversity of the two Deans, etc. Rosina stated that this model looks like a nice way to build on what we have. Jurate stated that the work of the Curriculum Specialists continues to be on an upswing and that she feels we will need two people in these positions for at least the next couple of years. Anyabwile commented that the new model is functional, which is great. The motion passed unanimously.

Sean moved resolution #8 regarding hiring; Rosina seconded. Jurate noted that these two new teachers are highly talented. Pam stated that she thinks the idea of having tea to introduce the new teachers to the parents is a very nice idea. Rosina clarified the last part of the resolution, explaining that although the Board won't be voting on the full use of the Lenfest grant money until the January meeting, the Finance Committee agrees that the school needs to move forward with hiring a part-time technology assistant in order to keep up with the high volume of technology work at the school. The motion passed unanimously.

Sean stated that Human Resources Committee needs additional members due to the many issues with which it is working. In addition, he wants the Board's feedback regarding whether the committee should delve into the area of merit-based pay. He acknowledged that this tends to be a "hot button" issue since you need to balance student needs with fairness to teachers. Sean stated that our current pay scale shows how a teacher looks on paper, but does not recognize how the person teaches. If the Board wants to move forward with this, the next recommendation would be to form a task force, representing all constituent groups. Pam asked what Jurate's opinion is. Jurate stated that it seems some schools use merit-based pay as a thank you to some teachers and that the key would be developing an equitable plan. Rosina asked whether our teacher reps have an opinion. Amy stated that during the development of the new teacher pay scale when a group of teachers were asked to meet, there were wide-ranging opinions as to what should be valued when compensating teachers. Rosina stated that it seems the Board could defer on this subject and come back to it at a later time, since the Board is working on so many other things at the moment. Lisa asked whether or not this might help with teacher retention; if so, it might need to become more of a priority. Pam suggested broadening the scope and looking at teacher issues with merit-based pay being one issue. Sean stated that the committee will move forward slowly.

D. Policy

Nicole was unable to attend tonight's meeting, so **Becky** agreed to speak on her behalf. She noted that resolution #9 regarding proposed bylaws changes will be tabled tonight, because one of the Board members had to leave early, so we would not have the necessary 2/3 members available to approve a bylaws change. Becky explained that resolution #10 is being brought forward in order to try to have a broad representation on the Executive Committee. Lisa moved the resolution; Rosina seconded. Sean

stated that he feels the Executive Committee should be small and nimble. Further, Board officers are elected, while committee chairs are chosen by a more informal process. Sean recommended amending the resolution by ending it at the word “officers.” Rosina stated that since the number of Board members is shrinking, the Executive Committee, under this proposal, could end up being almost the whole Board. Sean withdrew his motion to amend and Becky called the vote. The motion was defeated with five (5) opposed and one (1) abstention.

E. Community Relations

Anyabwile reported that there has been a lot of discussion as to whether or not this committee should be revived or whether it should be incorporated with the Development Committee. The current committee members feel the committee is needed, since the Development Committee’s focus is on developing financial resources and the Community Relations Committee can focus on developing relationships. He gave as an example conversations he had at the Calendar Event where some parents conveyed negative feelings about the appearance of separateness between the two different programs. Anyabwile stated this is an example where reaching out within the school is necessary. This committee can be a good resource when people contact the school (i.e., visitors, etc). Jurate stated that she feels assistance from this committee would be great, but she wants to make sure people aren’t doubling efforts. Rosina asked whether these types of activities need Board oversight. Anyabwile stated it may not need to be a standing committee, but it is a needed committee at this time. Sean recommended that this committee handle nominations. Anyabwile said that would be fine, as long as the committee was just the single point of entry, but that all Board members are continually working on Board member recruitment. Becky asked the committee to present a mission statement resolution at the January meeting.

F. Executive

Becky reported that at this time there is no update regarding board member nominations.

G. Curriculum

Pam reported that because of the great effort to include lots of perspectives, the Middle School Task Force is behind schedule in recommending a plan for next year. Their next meeting is in January. She stated that topics being discussed include whether or not the 6th grade day should be structured more like the 5th grade day. She urged all who are interested to attend the next task force meeting.

VII. Public Comment Period

No one signed up to speak tonight.

VIII. Old Business

A. Construction Update

Robin was unable to attend tonight’s meeting, so a written update was circulated. Becky noted that Robin is working on managing contingencies at this time.

IX. New Business

1. Parent Survey Results

Becky stated that overall the results of last year's parent survey were positive. She stated that Fran Melmed is not available to undertake this year's survey; Becky asked the Community Relations Committee to take on this responsibility. Jurate stated that these annual surveys are very useful not only in terms of feedback, but also for grant-writing purposes. Cristina suggested asking Consuelia McCourt to assist the committee. Matt mentioned that the Development Committee may also be developing a survey. Anyabwile stated that it's important not to duplicate efforts. Becky stated that the Board can decide at the January meeting what survey information to post on the website.

X. Executive Session

The Board went into Executive Session at 9:45p.m. to discuss confidential personnel issues; they returned at 10:10p.m.

XI. Adjournment

Sean moved for adjournment; Anyabwile seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda

Minutes from the October 2007 meeting

CEO reports for November & December

Finance Committee minutes for November & December

September & October Financials

Revised Budget

Construction Financial Summary

HR Committee minutes for October & December 3rd

2007-2008 Organizational Model

Proposed 2008-2009 Organizational Model

Policy Committee minutes

Curriculum Committee minutes

Development Committee Report

Proposed bylaws changes

**Independence Charter School
December 12, 2007**

**Resolutions
ADOPTED**

1. September Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves disbursements from September 2007 in the amount of \$335,300.81 as presented to the Board.

2. October Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves disbursements from October 2007 in the amount of \$232,959.34 as presented to the Board.

3. Revised Budget

Be it hereby resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Independence Charter School adopt the revised budget for the 2007-08 fiscal year attached here.

4. Lease Reimbursement

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees authorize the CEO and the Controller to make application to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the Lease Reimbursement subsidy in accordance with Pennsylvania Department of Education Regulations.

5. Highly Qualified Test Requirement

Be it hereby resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Independence Charter School adopts the attached policy regarding "Meeting Highly Qualified Teacher Standards" in order to take all steps possible to ensure that ICS teachers are "highly qualified" in all areas in which they are teaching, as defined by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act. This policy becomes effective as of 11/15/07.

Meeting Highly Qualified Teacher Standards

If ICS requests that an ICS teacher teach a class for which the teacher does not yet meet the Commonwealth's definition of "highly qualified," ICS will request that teacher take, at the next available opportunity, the required subject area Praxis examination in order to become recognized as "highly qualified". In such a circumstance, ICS will reimburse the teacher for the cost of the examination.

6. Staff Contract Signing

Be it hereby resolved that the CEO of Independence Charter School may sign employment agreements on behalf of ICS where the salary of the employee or potential employee is calculated by the current, duly adopted pay scale. The CEO may also sign employment agreements on behalf of ICS with other employees or potential employees so long as the position being filled is consistent with a current staff model and that the position is funded in an approved budget for the corresponding fiscal year.

7. Organization Chart for the 2008-09 Academic Year

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves the attached organizational chart for ICS for the 2008-09 academic year.
(Independence Charter School DRAFT Organizational Chart 2008-09 attached)

8. Hiring

Be it resolved that the following individuals be offered full time positions as listed for remainder of the 2007-2008 school year under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS contract:

Ana Donofrio- 5th Grade Math/Science

Marla Colondres- 3rd Grade Immersion

and that the CEO move forward to hire a part-time technology staff person.

**Resolutions
DEFEATED**

Executive Committee Composition

Be it hereby resolved that the Executive Committee of the ICS BOT be comprised of the Board officers and the chairpersons of all standing Board committees.

**Resolutions
TABLED**

Bylaws Changes

Be it hereby resolved that the ICS BOT adopt the attached by-laws as amended to 1) reflect the policy committee structure adopted on 9/12/07, 2) delete sections 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.2.1 due to their being unnecessary, and 3) to clarify nominations procedure.

Independence Charter School
Organizational Chart 2008-09

