

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
April 13, 2011 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Rona Buchalter, John Eagen, Mary Fitzpatrick, Derrick Johnson, Eli Lesser, Fran Melmed, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez, Dana Twyman Naomi Wyatt

Board Member(s) Absent: Elsie Stern

Others Present: Parent; Jerry Santilli, Business Manager; Jurate Krokys, CEO; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Shavon Norris, Teacher Representative; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Todd Lentz, Ellen Pannell, Susan Segal, Maureen Eagen, Liz Reed, Shannon Smith, Debora DeV Vaughn, Jeanne Adamson, Nicole Kilcullen, Alison Sprague, Leland Lott, Jennifer Friedman, Kristin Nocco, Leon Phillpotts, Monika Kreidie, Denis Murphy, Robin Kohles, Lauren Ayala, David Engel, parents; Martha Curren-Preis, Andrea Yanez, Ericka Morris, Kristen Long, Tienne Martin, Adrienne Lindstrom, teachers; Patricia Yanez, community member.

I. Call to Order

Rona called the meeting to order at 7:01p.m. and announced that the Board would be going immediately into an executive session to discuss a personnel matter. The Board returned at 7:33p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the March meeting were approved unanimously without change.

III. Public Comment Period

Rona noted that the Board appreciates ICS parent involvement. She added that she is aware of why so many parents are attending tonight's meeting and wants to assure them that a process has been followed and that personnel matters will remain confidential. She reminded the audience about the Board rule of a maximum of three (3) minutes of speaking time for any one person. She stated that John will be the timekeeper and that people are welcome to send additional comments to the Board via e-mail. Rona assured the audience that the Board members read all comments that are received. Naomi introduced herself as the chairperson of the Board's Human Resources committee and stated that the Board will not discuss the substance or reasons pertaining to human resources matters. She noted that the Board's role in situations like this is pretty much non-existence and that this is a CEO level decision. She stated that the Human Resources committee's role is to ensure that the process has been followed and believes that has been done in this case.

Ellen Pannell (parent): Ms. Pannell noted she has had four children at ICS, which means having at least 38 teachers. She voiced her support of teacher Andrea Yanez, noting she has not seen any difference in the enthusiasm she brings to teaching. She asks the Board to look at the issues at hand to ensure the process is clear about the process that is followed.

Susan Segal (parent): Ms. Segal noted that she has a second grader in Maestra Andrea Yanez's class and that she was stunned at this news that Ms. Yanez's contract isn't being

renewed. Ms. Segal submitted written comments, along with some e-mails from other parents who are supportive of Ms. Yanez.

Andrea Yanez (ICS teacher): Ms. Yanez thanked the parents for being at the meeting. She stated that it was suggested to her to write a letter to the Human Resources committee and to speak at this meeting. She stated that she was told her contract was not being renewed based on her performance over the past three months. She stated she feels her prior commitment and performance was not taken into account and that when she asked to be given until the end of this year to grow and make some improvements, she was told she would not be given additional time. She added that she feels the teacher evaluation system is new and has a lot of flaws and that she knows for a fact that other teachers didn't seem to be held to the same standards as her. She stated she will accept the decision, but believes these are false, unreasonable grounds. She added that she is deeply moved by the support of the parents.

Maureen Eagen (parent): Ms. Eagen stated that her son had Andrea Yanez last year and he felt she's the best teacher he ever had. Ms. Eagen stated she feels Maestra Andrea fostered his joy of learning and that she feels this will be a loss to the school.

Nicole Kilcullen (parent): Ms. Kilcullen stated that she is the parent of three children who have attended at ICS and that two had Maestra Andrea. She noted that she understands and appreciates that the administration has the ability to make termination decisions to make sure ICS has the best teachers here. She added that as a former Board member, she knows that the review process is slim to none and recommends that the Board be sure the existing policy is being followed and is adequate. She suggested that the policy might need to be changed to take into account veteran teachers, because mistakes happen and we need to make sure we do the best thing for our children.

Shannon Smith (parent): Ms. Smith stated that we've all had teachers who have negatively or positively affected us and who shape who we are. She stated that she knows that Andrea Yanez will always remember me and she is saddened that her younger child won't have a chance to have Andrea. She stated that she hopes the Board will reconsider the decision.

Jennifer Friedman (parent): Ms. Friedman stated that she works in a program giving funds for excellence in education and that she promotes ICS and is also volunteer in Andrea Yanez's classroom. She stated that she believes a good teacher makes a good foundation for our children and that she is lucky her son is there.

Kristin Nocco (parent): Ms. Nocco stated that her son had Maestra Andrea and that when he moved from second to first grade mid-year, Andrea handled it very well and that she's still his favorite teacher. She stated that she has been involved in ICS for many years and has seen Andrea involved in ICS volunteering, which is impressive to her. Ms. Nocco state she feels Maestra Andrea goes above and beyond to help students and other staff members and ICS as a whole. She added that even if it's true that a mistake happened this year, she still think it's important to look at the whole career---the same way you would for a student.

Shavon Norris (ICS teacher, who noted that she was speaking as a community member): Ms. Norris noted that she is speaking personally, not as the ICS teacher representative. She stated that she feels there needs to be some transparency from the Board regarding the process of how someone is let go. She added that there has to be some type of

standard and expectation and that she feels it's taken ICS a while to get to this point, but that she feels that it's positive that we now in the place we are in regard to standards. She stated that she feels that many of our little brown faces are not represented and that she's curious about what community members who are not here tonight would be saying and whether there are people who have had different experiences than the parents here tonight. She noted that she'd never seen so many people here at these meetings and that she would like to see us rallying for lots of things for our students.

Martha Curren-Preis (ICS teacher): Ms. Curren-Preis noted that she has been at ICS for 5 years and that she was informed about the basics of this situation, because a parent blind-copied her on an e-mail. She noted that she will not be returning to ICS next year due to attending a PhD program, where will be focusing on teacher education. She stated that she thinks ICS is reflective, careful and cautious and that she feels safe as a teacher. She stated that the evaluation system seems to be holistic and reflects many areas. She added that in the past several years the teacher evaluation system had been flagged as an area we need to work on and that it has been. She stated that she doesn't mind that there's a one-year contract and that she doesn't think ICS needs a union.

Rona thanked everyone for sharing their comments and added that it's the promise of charter schools at their best that we are always holding ourselves to a higher standard. She thanked the speakers for their passion to the school.

IV. CEO Report

Jurate reported that tonight's budget proposal has already been reviewed with the staff, Finance Committee, the full Board and a synopsis with the PTA.

She announced that both ICS Odyssey of the Mind teams went to the state finals and that one of the teams will go on to the world finals in Maryland in May. She also noted that Leonora will be leaving ICS for a new position and thanked her for all the work she's done.

Jurate noted that the only change to the proposed 2011-2012 calendar presented tonight is that we changed the December report card conferences to the three noon dismissal days before the start of winter break. She stated that the calendar includes a charter school professional development day and we moved the usual January professional development day to November, which seems to make more sense.

John moved the calendar resolution, Eli seconded. Jurate clarified that the contract year for teachers will start on August 30th (instead of September 1st). The motion passed unanimously.

V. Finance/Business

Rona noted that John circulated the Finance report earlier; there were no questions. John asked Jerry to review the financials. Jerry noted that our cash flow is strong and there are small receivables. He stated we are completing a certificate of completion for use of the bond money. He noted that on page 3, the School District \$32,000 more than we anticipated due to having more students eligible for special education services than originally anticipated. And on Page 4 the negative variance in salaries is due to so many long-term subs being paid to cover for staff on leave, who have significant sick time and are using that at the same time. He stated that next year's budget anticipates that situation. He stated that other variances are relatively small and that Page 7 shows a

balance that is \$124,000 higher than anticipated due to both timing issues and savings. He noted there are no major issues with budget to actual and that Jurate has been very careful about how she uses funds. The only unusual disbursement is for PSERS, the staff retirement fund due to it being a quarterly retirement contribution. He added that the Food Services fund is slightly above break even and that in the next budget, there will be no money designated for Food Services in the regular budget because it is running so well.

John moved the expenditures resolution; Naomi seconded. Eli asked if we had a savings on insurance. Jerry stated he doesn't think that will continue. The motion passed unanimously.

Rona asked Jerry to review the proposed 2011-2012 budget. He explained that we hadn't expected the 13% budget cuts the city is now proposing and that those were not expected to hit us until the following school year. However, the School District is asking the state to consider making the cuts for 2011-2012. He also noted that we have not received an application or funding for reimbursement for rent from the state and that we have about \$100,000 budgeted for that. He added that we could lose revenue for this year and next year regarding that.

Rona asked John to review the budget process. John explained that Jurate started the initial discussions with staff, then the Finance Committee in January. He said the Finance Committee has reviewed the budget three times and the whole Board reviewed the draft last month. Jerry explained this budget projects a subsidy increase of 3% in the per pupil allotment, and that although there's a possibility that we won't get that, he feels confident that we will get it. He noted that ICS planned well for spending its Federal Stimulus funds, so that funding ending will not have a major impact on the budget. He also noted that we have been notified that the FLAP grant funding for next year is tenuous at best; therefore, we did not include it in the proposed budget. The budget has included costs related to the ICS administrative restructuring, PSERS is being raised from 5.46% to 8.22% and a projected 8% medical benefits cost increase. The School District has asked their union to reopen their contract for the purpose of discussing benefits. If there are changes, ICS would have the option to make similar changes. Jurate noted that we have cut some classroom assistant positions, which may result in sharing some assistants; she added that we will also plan to be more strategic about using specialists. She stated that 2/3s of our budget is salaries and benefits, so when we need to make cuts, there is often no place to go other than cutting some positions. Eli asked whether we have a worst case scenario in regard to discussions that need to be done. Jurate suggested putting that on next month's agenda. A 13% cut could mean salary freezes, etc. Eli suggested that we start soon to have these discussions with the whole school community. Rona asked if that should start with the Finance Committee; John said it could, but it is somewhat an HR situation since it's about jobs. Pam said that the staff may come up with suggestions. Fran said we may want to put together an advisory committee that represents various stakeholders and we could make the newspaper stories tangible for our school. Naomi suggested coming up with some comparables (i.e., this cut would mean X, a bigger cut would mean Y, etc). Eli said it's a long-term conversation, because it's probably going in this direction for a few years. Shavon stated that we need to be more aware of these situations to make sure people are prepared for their personal lives that are impacted. Pam said the time to rally may be now. Rona said that by May we'll make a plan for how we'll be discussing this and planning for worst case scenarios. It was agreed that the City may try to do many things and we won't have a lot of time to do with it. Pam noted that the district's position is that they are losing students and having to

close schools and losing money due to charter schools. Rona noted the proposed budget is based on a 3% increase. Fran asked whether the health benefits increase will have a cost to staff. Rona noted that charters are required to have the same health benefits as the school district. John asked whether we have to make cuts if the school district does; Rona said we don't have to, but that we would have the option.

John noted that the proposed budget includes information for capital improvements; Rona said the Facilities Committee will most likely be prepared to come to the May meeting with some proposals. Naomi asked whether there is any chance to request any enrollment increases this year. Jurate stated there is a possibility of ten (10) more seats; Jerry stated the School Reform Commission is supposed to vote on those increases for charters whose SPI index was 1 or 2 by the end of April. It was agreed that ICS will need to add language to the teacher contracts regarding salaries being contingent on the availability of funds. Jurate and Megan were directed to contact ICS legal counsel for the working. Pam asked Shavon, as the teacher rep, to spread the word about this, so that staff know that we're not trying to be sneaky. Jurate added that the information will also be on the cover memo of the contract packet. A roll call vote was taken:

John moved the budget resolution; Derrick seconded. Roll call vote: Pedro-Yea, Naomi-Yea, Mary-Yea, Fran-Yea, John-Yea, Rona-Yea, Dana-Yea, Pam-Yea, Eli-Yea, Derrick - Yea The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Non-BOT Committee Reports

Development: Leonora reported that a fair amount of work has been done on the annual report. She noted we have been so lucky to have many parents volunteers. She noted that ICS parent Todd Lentz has designed a new logo; Jurate noted that Todd also designed the Odyssey of the Mind logo and that he's also helping with our new brochure. Rona asked who will be updating the Facebook page; Leonora said that Jenny (Family & Community Liaison) will be doing that. Leonora thanked everyone for the opportunity to work at ICS and especially thanked Pam and Fran who participated in hiring her and for Jurate and the rest of the staff. Rona thanked Leonora, noting it was so nice to have someone who "owned" the development responsibilities.

Pedro suggested that, since we'll never have complete agreement on a new logo, he recommends that the Board accept this new logo and move on. Derrick added that a number of things are waiting on the acceptance of a new logo. Fran said she didn't think the Board had a say on this. It was agreed there had been complaints; Rona said the External Relations Committee should move forward with the logo of their choice.

VII. BOT Committee Reports

Human Resources: Naomi reported that ICS had a very successful response to the ICS table at the recent regional job fair and that there have been a lot of effort to make sure we follow up, especially in regard to diversity. She especially thanked Shavon and Odamis for representing ICS at the teacher job fair.

Naomi explained that under the new leadership model, there are three Teacher Leader positions. That interview process has occurred and applicants have been notified of the hiring decisions. There are also two new director positions: Lower School Director and Middle School Director. Jurate noted that an interview review panel has been formed and has a variety of representatives. Rona asked whether there will be an opportunity for Board members to be part of the final interviews. Pam asked Board members to contact Odamis if they feel left out of the process. Pam stated that this committee is screening

and interviewing and the Board will have will kept informed. John asked whether we'll have the people in place by June 1st. Pam stated that is probably not a realistic deadline.

John moved the contract termination motion; Derrick seconded. Fran stated she is clueless as to what she is supposed to know about this. Jurate stated the Board votes on the termination and start of any contract; for any additional information, Board members need to participate in the executive HR committee meetings. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy: Eli stated he circulated a brief update before the meeting and that the committee will be reconvening to discuss a building use policy, as well as a consolidated student lottery policy.

VIII. Old Business

Rona noted that she feels the retreat led by Cassie Solomon and Harris Sokoloff (consultants) seemed to be effective and that she and Jurate will be meeting to work on next steps that need to be taken. Rona noted that Middle States Accreditation goals are part of that conversation and that there will be a formal resolution about those goals at the May meeting. The Board will then move forward on strategic planning over the summer. Shavon asked if the position of the Teacher Rep position is being developed. Rona stated that is one of the items that Elsie is discussing with Cassie and Harris. It was noted that Rona and Jurate are now sitting next to each other during the Board meetings, which was one suggestion from the retreat. Rona noted that if there are people who want to lead the summer strategic planning process, they should contact Rona. Pam noted this means that any new Board members will also be participating in that process.

Eli noted that we must recognize the Middle States Accreditation that ICS went through and that he wants to formally say what a remarkable job Jurate did in the Middle States process. He added that it was a remarkable week and the MSA team came in and gave us positive and constructive feedback. Eli asked that the last day Power Point be circulated to the Board. He stated we will get a draft report over the next few weeks and that the vote on our accreditation will occur in November 2011, since the MSA board meets only in April and November of each year. Rona said she was impressed by the number of teachers who stuck around until 5 on a Friday afternoon for the MSA verbal report. Pam thanked the Board for their participation in the process, including the help fine-tuning the goals. Eli said there will be a thank you planned for later in the year.

Rona reminded everyone they need to submit the Financial Interest forms before May.

IX. New Business

Rona noted that Elsie is organizing a Board basket for the Silent Auction and will be in touch with everyone about their contribution. Rona noted that we're in the process of recruiting a few new Board members for next year and anticipate two positions. We are looking for people with financial and development experience, as well as possible legal expertise, and would like to increase diversity on the Board. She added that commitment to the ICS mission is the main priority. Contacts should be sent to Elsie.

Rona said that she Pedro and Pam went to a breakfast meeting, hosted by EPLC (Education Policy and Leadership Center) recently regarding projected state funding cuts possibilities. Pedro noted we need to have clear unity to the governor's budget proposal. He noted that Pennsylvania depends a lot on property taxes to fund education and that Philadelphia has been working on changing the property tax assessment system, which

may change funding availability. He stated that we need to mobilize our community. Rona noted they talked about the top three things to do. Naomi noted that the time is now, since the budget will probably complete the budget within a month. It was noted that one of the most effective things is sending letters with a personal note (including very particular impact). Rona noted that ICS parent Susan Gobreski, who is the Director of Education Voters PA, has said that calls and letters do make an impact, including asking friends in the suburbs to also get involved. Pam stated that it may only take a few extra letters. Naomi said to be sure to include everyone on the education committees, etc. ICS can put it on the website. Pedro suggested having one day when everyone updates their Facebook status at the same time. Fran suggests doing the letters first, then move for the Facebook. Rona suggested drafting a ten point action plan for saving funding. Eli suggested getting the Middle School students involved (i.e., make it a math problem and invite the media). Stephanie noted that the Service Learning group is working on creating a website that could be linked to that campaign. Todd noted that ICS should hit the topic of how our school handles finances so that politicians who don't know us can understand what we do. Shavon suggested that we first need to make our community really educated about that first and then move to rally. It was agreed that 15 or 20 minutes of a Monday's professional development will be used to talk about this. Rona asked for volunteers for a working group. Derrick, Jurate, Pedro, Naomi, Shavon, Stephanie, Fran and Eli volunteered.

X. Adjournment

Pedro moved for adjournment; Eli seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40p.m.

Handouts circulated prior to this meeting:

Agenda
CEO report
Finance report
February 2011 financials
Proposed 2011-2012 budget
HR Update
Policy Update
Draft March 2011 meeting minutes
Proposed 2011-2012 Academic calendar

Independence Charter School

April 13, 2011

Resolutions

ADOPTED

Proposed Resolution(s):

1. Contract Termination

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees acknowledges the termination of the following 2010-2011 employee agreement: Emily Goodman.

2. February Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of February 2011 in the amount of \$148,057.85 as presented to the Board.

3. 2011-2012 Budget

BE IT RESOLVED that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby adopt the consolidated budget for fiscal year 2011-2012 as presented.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees establish the following designations of Fund Balance effective June 30, 2011:

Designation for Unforeseen Contingencies	\$1,400,000
Designation for Capital Improvements	\$1,150,000

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees establish the following designations of Fund Balance effective June 30, 2012:

Designation for Unforeseen Contingencies	\$1,400,000
Designation for Capital Improvements	\$1,700,000

4. 2011-2012 Academic Calendar

Be it resolved that that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees adopts the 2011-2012 academic calendar as presented.

**Resolutions
DEFEATED
None**

**Resolutions
TABLED**