

**Independence Charter School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
April 14, 2010 7:00 pm**

**Board Members Present:** Becky Baehr, Rona Buchalter, John Eagen, Rosina Miller, Kristin Nocco, Elsie Stern

**Board Member(s) Absent:** Eli Lesser, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez

**Others Present:** Jurate Krokys, CEO; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Michael Farrell, William Loskoch, Kelly Nelms, teachers; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Robin Kohles, parent & Owner's Rep; David Engel, Mary Fitzpatrick, Nicole Perkins Kilcullen & Monika Kreidie, parents; Dana Twyman, prospective Board member.

**I. Call to Order**

**Rona** called the meeting to order at 7:10p.m. Kristin introduced ICS parents Mary Fitzpatrick and David Engel, who have expressed interest in running for the Parent Board seat and thanked them for their interest. Kristin and Rona emphasized that there are lots of opportunities for parent involvement with Board activities.

**II. Public Comment**

The Board agreed to move the public comment period to this point in the meeting for tonight. ICS Parent Monika Kreidie voiced concern about the plan to increase the student enrollment. Her concern is that she feels administration is overwhelmed with current responsibilities and that ICS should be sure that it is first serving all the current students. She noted that an example of her concern is that it took several attempts to get a question answered last week when she called ICS and that she had to come in person in order to have her question answered.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the March meeting were approved unanimously.

**IV. Finance Report**

**Jurate** asked to speak before the report. She noted that some charter schools have currently been in the news. She stated that she feels many facts have been skewed and/or left out of recent newspaper articles and that she wants to speak on behalf of Jerry Santilli, who was a paid consultant to ICS before it received its charter, and whom she highly respects. She noted that the ICS Board has always made sure to separate functions and that she feels a lot of ICS's success can be attributed to Jerry's good work in regard to its finances. Rosina seconded Jurate's comments and there was applause. Jerry stated that there are usually specific standards to which audits adhere and noted that the City Controller doesn't have auditing powers for charter schools. Jerry added that the City Controller's report was leaked to the newspapers and charter schools were not contacted directly. The Controller got information from Right to Know information and other public records. Jerry noted that when he was on the New Foundations board he worked gratis. Neither he nor his partner received any compensation. He explained that he and some partners do own a therapy company also; however, the Controller's report described the situation as if Jerry works there. Jerry stated that he is deciding what he can do legally about these misconceptions that have resulted from the City Controller's report. He explained that First Philadelphia, the school at which he was a founder, partnered with New Foundations for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant. First Philadelphia was the lead and sub-granted, as required by the federal grant, to New Foundations as its partner in the grant. He thanked everyone for their support. Rona asked if anyone had any questions. No one had questions; Jerry said people can always send questions to him later. Rona

stated that the Board has always felt Jerry was open to answering any questions the Board has.

**Rosina** asked Jerry to review the financial reports. Jerry stated the cash position is strong with very few receivables. He stated this is the high point in the cash flow, because we pay teachers over 12 months. The Citizens Alliance debt has been paid off. He stated we're ahead on the School District funding, due to the number of students receiving special education services. He stated that ICS's special education population is lower than the national average, which is about 13%. ICS's rate is about 10%. Jurate pointed out that this is an area that some opponents of charter schools, where they either say some charter schools have too many students identified for special education services or that the school "creams" students. Elsie asked how much of the School District funds go specifically toward the students with special needs. Jurate explained that there is a wide variety of the types of services students receive. Jerry explained that the least expensive area is speech. He stated that at this point, it's a blended rate. He added that usually the amount that comes from School District does not cover all the costs involved. Jerry stated that there has been an internal audit of the stimulus process to ensure the system is working as it should. Salaries are higher than expected due to many substitutes due to many staff being on medical leave (primarily for births/adoptions). Our surplus is currently about \$900,000. Rosina moved the disbursement resolution; John seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Rosina explained that Jerry had our insurance carrier to meet with the Finance Committee to determine whether we have adequate coverage. Jerry walked through the handout, which includes the type of coverage (building, liability, etc). The recommendation is to increase the umbrella coverage for general liability. This would be an increase of \$3,750. To increase coverage in case of building loss, would cost up to \$6,000 (depending on whether we'd want coverage for \$2 or \$3 million). Jerry stated this comes under the administration section of our budget. He noted that Worlds' insurance is separate and is paid through the rent we pay. Jerry recommends coverage that is adequate for rebuilding if the building were to be destroyed. An appraisal will be needed to make that determination; the appraisal will cost about \$5,000. Rosina stated that the Worlds decision would impact ICS, since we'd have to end up covering the cost. Jerry reminded everyone that charter schools were forced to start separate non-profits in order to get rent paid. Rosina echoed that it is the state that set up the system that we need to go through for rent. Rona asked John for his input. He recommended that Jerry should first ask Hartford if they can assist with the appraisal. Rosina asked if there's anything that needs to be voted on tonight. Jerry stated that he feels you don't want to wait too long on increasing coverage. Rosina suggested that we pass the ICS piece tonight and wait on the Worlds section. Rosina moved the increase in building loss/business interruption loss to \$3 million at an additional cost of \$5,710. Becky seconded. Rona clarified that we're actually buying \$2.1 million increase. The motion passed unanimously.

A Food Services report was not circulated before the meeting. Jerry reported that we're now at a surplus of \$1,600. There was a loss in February, most likely due to snow days and a short month. Rosina and Jerry noted that there is \$25,000 in the budget in case of a loss. Kristin reported that only two vendors have showed interest. The bids are due next week. She complimented Linton on trying new ideas to increase participation. Kristin also stated that if possible, and food service does not use the \$25,000 that was budgeted as a projected overrun in costs, that the board considers purchasing a walk in freezer. This would help defray storage costs for commodities and give additional freezer space. The walk-in freezer would be stored in the basement.

Rosina stated that the Finance Committee is recommending that we change the budget approval to later in June. She is proposing changing the June meeting to the 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup>

to be sure we'd have the information from the School District regarding the student subsidy amount for the coming school year.

Rosina stated that since we're not moving on the budget yet, we do need to pass a personnel resolution so that we can offer contracts. Rosina moved the personnel motion; Becky seconded. Rosina explained that this budget is based on a 1% increase to the student subsidy amount. Jurate explained that this is connected to the new pay scale, which is dependent on the total student enrollment. Jurate went through the sheet that explains the plan for an increase in student enrollment. She clarified that in order to ensure that we can maintain a new pay scale from year to year, we need to not be dependent on the amount of the student subsidy increase, which is why we're hoping that our enrollment will be increased a bit. Jurate stated that Ben Rayer has said the charter school renewal should come through in May and the decision on enrollment increases should come through in June. The motion passed unanimously.

## **V. CEO Report**

**Jurate** reported that we had been hoping to get some Race to the Top funds for possible replication. Jurate has talked to the Asia Society about possibly including us in their plans. If they include us it would focus on middle school and plans for high school. We had decided not to apply for a FLAP grant this year. However, she recently received a phone message that ICS has received a FLAP grant based on the application we submitted last year. If we receive it, it will be for Arabic and includes lots of outside opportunities for students. We have not yet received anything in writing. We may want to ask whether there is a chance that we could change it to Chinese and/or possibly having two tracks (Arabic and Chinese). Elsie stated that it may be good to follow through on Arabic, since there are some other schools that offer Chinese language programs.

Jurate stated she worked with our legal counsel to get a waiver so that we can occasionally open our playground to neighborhood kids. This weekend will be the first opportunity for this. Rona asked why there aren't parents on the steering committee. The steering committee is the organizing body of the Middle States Accreditation process that ICS is undergoing. Jurate explained that the steering committee members are supposed to organize the work, which will include a wide range of participants. Jurate stated that she still thinks November is still realistic in terms of the visit.

Rosina asked what type of federal audit we had earlier this year. Jurate explained that it was a Federal Funds audit. Jerry clarified that we should expect this every three years. Rona asked what the areas of improvement were: sending out letters regarding teachers who are not highly qualified and giving parents the opportunity to ask about their qualifications. We need to have teachers sign a form to say they know they are funded by Title I. Jerry explained that Title I is for students at risk. It has to be supplementing. We also need to require assistants without at least two years of college to pass a competency test. We are trying to find out whether we are allowed to give the test in Spanish to staff for whom Spanish is their first language.

Elsie suggested that Jurate ask for suggestions on parents who may be interested in participating in the accreditation process. Elsie also asked why the students are not allowed to play on the equipment. Jurate explained that due to a lot of injuries, we feel the need to re-teach the students about how to properly use the equipment.

Jurate reported we had a great visit from staff from two D.C. public schools. She also noted that ICS will be receiving a prize from the International Visitors Council; the ceremony will be at City Hall on April 29<sup>th</sup> at 5:30p.m. at City Hall. She welcomed

Board members to attend. Stephanie stated that the Report Card in the *Inquirer* had ICS's poverty rate incorrect. It was noted that there was a group lobbying with incorrect poverty rate numbers (i.e., they had ICS as 29% instead of over 50%). Stephanie has contacted the *Inquirer* to find out how/when they will print a correction. Jurate stated the students and staff are doing great on focusing on the PSSA testing this week.

Elsie stated the parent involvement focus groups were very successful. She explained that most of the parents involved were parents who are very involved with their children's education, but not necessarily in the bigger life of the school. She feels it's now time to start looking at the wider question about involving families. She said there was so much good feedback on the work of the teachers. One issue that came up was that there were very variable response rates when they contact different staff members. A suggestion was made to make public what the response time expectation is for staff. This would be drafted by parents and staff. The next step will be to meet with groups of teachers regarding curriculum and on recommendations about the ideas that have come out of the focus groups. The final recommendations would be circulated to everyone. Elsie stated that from her research she has learned there are a lot of schools with similar issues. Becky asked what the main topics of concern were. Elsie stated communication and increasing parent participation in decision-making were the main concerns. Becky and Rona stated that this is exactly the type of parents we want involved in the Parent Seat for the board. Kristin added that the survey responses will also contribute to this information.

## **VI. Non-Board Committee Reports**

**PTA report:** No report.

**Teachers Report:** No report.

**Development Report:** A written report was circulated. Rona asked if there were any questions. Rosina stated the information about the Global Studies workshop looks terrific. Leonora stated that we've gotten even more great speakers confirmed. Leonora asked Board members to help circulate the information. She also stated that we are partnering with different groups to write grants.

**Construction Report:** No report.

## **VII. Committee Reports**

**HR Committee:** Becky circulated the April meeting committee meeting minutes. The Employee Handbook is being updated. Becky noted that a final decision has not yet been made regarding a change to Paid Time Off (as opposed to separate sick and personal time). William asked if there could be a more specific policy regarding staff vacancies and as to whether or not you're being asked back for the next year. Becky stated those items will be discussed by the HR Committee. William clarified that he hopes there would be more guidelines as to how the process works, so that people know what to expect. Becky moved the pay scale motion; John seconded. Becky explained that this is an effort to ensure that we make a significant change in the pay scale; however, we want to be sure that we can continue funding the scale in future years. Rosina asked whether we considered whether we can manage the increase based on the student subsidy. Becky explained that we didn't want to do that, since that amount can vary from year to year. Plan A is our optimum goal for the new year; Plan B is a basic plan if for any reason the enrollment increase request is not granted. She explained that there would be a 10% increase for staff who are completing their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> year this year due to the fact that they would have received a "bump" in the current pay scale. Rosina asked if the numbers have been cleared with Jerry and Becky stated that he has. Jurate stated that if we get a higher than expected student subsidy increase and the enrollment increase, that will mean

that we won't need to make as many cuts as we have planned. Kristin asked how the enrollment increase would be made. Jurate explained that we currently have about ten student for whom we do not get paid, since we have over 732 students which is our currently enrollment cap by the School District. Rona clarified that the enrollment increase would allow us flexibility. William asked whether we've considered putting in Cost of Living Increases (COLAs); Jurate stated that Jerry has worked that into the budget so that it won't be stagnant. William suggested that we include that the scale will be reviewed annually to consider a COLA. The motion passed unanimously. Becky thanked the teachers for their input on this. The next HR Committee meeting may be rescheduled due to it being on the same day as the Language Institute.

**Curriculum:** No report. Stephanie noted the Assessment Committee is meeting again this Saturday. The work is taking longer than anticipated, but the committee hopes to have something for the Curriculum Committee for the next meeting.

**Policy:** A summary was circulated before the meeting. Rona stated that she's talked to Eli in regarding setting goals for the coming years.

**Board Development:** No report. Potential Board member Rhonda McKitten will be meeting with board members later this month.

### **VIII. Issues Discussion/Board Education**

Rona stated that she'd like to have the Board be clearer and transparent about setting goals as a Board as a whole. She would like to start developing those at the next meeting so that they can help inform the committee goals for the coming year to ensure the whole Board is working in concert. She asked if there are goals members would like to suggest for the 2010-2011 school year. She'd like to narrow them down to two to four goals. Elsie recommended a system for assessment. She recommends looking at how well we're aligned to our mission and vision in order to set future goals. John said he feels we need to look at the mission statement first and then to move forward. Becky noted that will all be part of the Middle States process. Kristin stated she'd like to see more parent participation at the Board table, since they are such important stakeholders and since it seems like there has been less involvement by the PTA at the Board meeting. Possibly the PTA liaison could sit at the table, the same as the Teacher Rep. Rosina noted that would require a by-law change. William stated that he feels that's a good idea. Becky stated she feels we want to look closely to see how we're adhering to the Ox-Fam principles and increase diversity on the Board. Rosina echoed the need to better integrate the Ox-Fam principles and to continue working on Board development to have consistency of people who want to make a commitment for a few years at a time. Becky stated that our Board needs to decide what it wants to be and what the role of the Worlds of Opportunity Foundation should be. Rona stated she hopes to agree on a method to determine the success of the school in regard to the things we value.

### **IX. Old Business**

All old business was conducted earlier in the meeting.

### **X. New Business**

Rona asked Jurate to discuss the issue of alcoholic beverage policy in regard to the PTA's annual Silent Auction. Jurate stated that we've always had the Silent Auction and some staff celebrations here at the school. However, under the scrutiny that is currently happening, she wants the Board to decide whether or not the PTA should be allowed to serve alcoholic beverages at the auction. Jerry's recommendation is that we should no longer allow it. Rosina stated that in some regard, we don't want to feed into the skewed media coverage of some charter schools. Jurate mentioned that she has mentioned the possibility to the PTA that we might need to move the location and/or not have alcoholic

beverages. Kristin stated that she doesn't want to do away with it since it's two weeks away. It would mean students losing out on some great opportunities that this funds. She stated she feels we could consider changing the venue for next year. Becky asked whether there was a distinction between serving alcohol or having it on the premises. Rosina stated it seems this is more about appearances than about legal reasons. Elsie asked whether we've heard about any discomfort about this issue. Jurate said we have not. Kristin noted that we need to ensure that absolutely no one under 21 is allowed to attend (i.e., in the band, etc). Becky recommended running this by our legal counsel. Leonora added that we do have information regarding legal riders for these events. Becky agreed to contact our legal counsel. Rona asked if there are any objections for our going forward with this event for this year. Kristin stated that we need to ensure that no one under 21 is here and we need to know what our responsibility is in regard to carding people. It was agreed to move forward.

Rona stated that a number of inquiries have come forward regarding our discipline policies. Rona has asked former Board member (and ICS parent) Nicole Kilcullen to start that review. Jurate asked who else will be involved with the process. Nicole said it depends on the scope. She said there will probably be an ad hoc committee to decide. William asked whether this is more about things like expulsion or more general. Rona stated that we want to ensure there's consistency and continuity to our approach to issues. Nicole stated that if we're going to look at all the categories of behaviors from when you need to sit on the rug to getting expelled, then we would need an ad hoc committee. If the scope is more narrow, then a committee may not be needed. Jurate stated she feels if we're doing this, it makes more sense to look at the whole range. Input would be needed from various staff and from parents. She noted that the parent survey will inform the process to some extent, but that sometimes some of that input is based on perceptions. Nicole said that it will probably be helpful to start with a meeting with Jurate, Stephanie and the deans. Elsie added the importance of communicating information to parents, as well as to having parents involved in the ad hoc committee. Nicole stated that the emphasis will be on reviewing the existing policies to ensure they are within the law; there will always be areas where there is discretion. Rona noted that it will be important to make it clear that things are not always black and white.

Rona stated that she feels that the term of Board President should not be a one-year term; she recommends that the by-laws be changed to make it a two-year term, whether she would stay on as president or someone else takes over. Rosina noted that in many organizations the vice president's role can move on to be president. Rona stated she does not recommend institutionalizing that, since you could have someone in that role who is not effective. Rosina stated that we need to figure out a way to communicate with people who make public comments. Her suggestion is that the Board Secretary be responsible for that. Rona suggested that possibly the ICS Feedback mailbox can be forwarded to the Board Secretary.

## **XI. Adjournment**

Elsie moved for adjournment; John seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:48p.m.

### **Handouts circulated at this meeting:**

Agenda

Minutes from March 2010 meeting

CEO report

Finance Committee Minutes

February 2010 financials

Insurance Coverage Information Sheet

Development Report

Policy Committee Summary

**Independence Charter School  
April 14, 2010  
Resolutions**

**ADOPTED**

**1. February Disbursements**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of February 2010 in the amount of \$51,547.53 as presented to the Board.

**2. 2010-2011 Personnel Budget**

Whereas Independence Charter School plans to delay adoption of its consolidated school budget until the June Board meeting so that the School District of Philadelphia new rates are included in that adoption,

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees authorizes the CEO to offer contracts to instructional and support staff under the parameters of the preliminary budget approved by the Finance Committee and detailed below:

- 48 full-time teachers and 6 part-time teachers not to exceed a cost of \$2,534,500
- 24 part-time classroom assistants not to exceed a cost of \$125,064
- 5 special education teachers and one classroom assistant not to exceed a cost of \$280,780
- 4 instructional support staff not to exceed a cost of \$228,700
- 22 (full & part-time) administrative and non instructional support staff not to exceed a cost of \$888,327

**3. Increased Insurance Coverage**

Be it resolved that the ICS Board of Trustees authorizes a \$2.1 million increase in building loss/business interruption loss to \$3 million at an additional cost of \$5,710.

**4. Revised Teacher, Counselor, Curriculum Specialist, Dean & World Languages Coach Pay Scale**

Whereas Independence Charter School strives to hire outstanding, creative and committed professional staff, and  
Whereas Independence Charter School's current professional staff pay scale is currently significantly lower than that of many neighboring school districts, and  
Whereas ICS desires to implement a pay policy that values its staff members for the skills they bring and the work they perform, and

Whereas ICS values staff who bring experience prior to employment at ICS, as well as staff whose experience has been primarily or exclusively gained while working at ICS, and

Whereas Independence Charter School is committed to retaining high performing staff, Be it therefore resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees approves the attached pay scale to become effective as of July 1, 2010.

## **Teacher, Counselor, World Languages Coach and Curriculum Specialist Pay Scale Structure**

Staff members whose salaries would be greater under the previous pay scale than under either Plan A or Plan B of the following pay structure will receive annual increases in salary of \$750 per year. These increases will continue annually until the staff person's actual salary matches the appropriate salary in the new pay scale.

### **PLAN A**

Will become effective July 1, 2010, if and only if the School District of Philadelphia confirms that ICS is approved to receive student funding for a total of at least 760 students.

#### **Definitions**

**Step:** One year of teaching experience at ICS.

**Non-Certified:** Does not possess a Pennsylvania teaching certification to teach the subject matter assigned to teach at ICS.

**Certified or Highly Qualified:** Holds a valid Pennsylvania teaching certificate (Instructional I, Instructional II or Intern certificate but not an emergency permit) or meets the requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Education definition of a Highly Qualified staff person, but is unable to be certified because no certification exists in Pennsylvania for the subject matter being taught/practiced or because the Pennsylvania Department of Education will not review the certification materials.

**Masters:** Highly Qualified or Certified, and holds a Masters Degree in Education or a content area relevant to the subject matter assigned to teach/practice at ICS. The CEO has the sole discretion to determine whether the Degree is relevant to the subject matter assigned to teach at ICS.

**Master Teacher/Counselor:** Holds a Doctorate in Education/Counseling.

Step	Non-certified	Certified or Highly Qualified	Masters	Master Teacher
1	37,000	39,000	41,000	-----
2	38,000	40,500	43,000	-----
3	39,000	42,000	45,000	-----
4	40,000	45,000	48,000	51,000
5	41,000	46,500	49,500	53,500
6	42,000	48,000	51,000	56,000
7	43,000	51,000	54,000	59,000
8	44,000	52,500	56,500	61,500
9	45,000	55,000	59,000	63,000
10	46,000	56,500	60,500	65,000
11*	47,000	58,000	62,000	67,000

- Annual increases of \$1000 per year after 11 years of teaching at ICS for all teachers who are certified or highly qualified. Non-certified teachers receive \$500 per year after 11 years. (These annual increases will take effect beginning in the 2011-2012 school year).
- The salary of Curriculum Specialist shall be 1.25 times the amount otherwise calculated because it is a 12-month position.
- Staff members who possess a certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification shall receive an additional \$3,000 added to their salary, regardless of their step or column placement on the scale.

#### Application

A first-year staff person enters the scale at Step 1. A staff member shall move up one step each year a satisfactory evaluation is received.

Staff members with less than two years of experience prior to working at ICS will start at step one.

Staff members with teaching more than two years of teaching experience prior to working at ICS will enter the scale at the step equivalent to one half of their years of K – 12 teaching experience. Credit for relevant college-level teaching will be given only when accompanied by a valid Pennsylvania teaching certificate (not an emergency certificate) in the subject area assigned to teach at ICS.

Wherever there is ambiguity about step placement, the length of experience shall be rounded up in favor of the staff member, except that the CEO shall have discretion in how to value teaching experience that was college-level, part-time or not a complete 10 months of teaching.

Staff members shall not move from one column to the next until all requirements of the previous column have been met. For example, a staff member may not move to the “Masters” column until s/he holds a valid Pennsylvania teaching certificate or meets the definition of “Highly Qualified”, even if s/he holds a masters degree in education.

Salary changes reflecting moves from one column to the next will only be made on July 1 and February 1 of each year.

The Human Resources Committee shall review the pay scale annually to consider the cost of living impact.

#### **PLAN B**

Will become effective July 1, 2010, unless the criterion for Plan A has been achieved. Plan B applies only to returning staff members.

Returning staff members who are not certified in Pennsylvania to teach/practice the subject(s)/area s/he teaches/practices at ICS and/or does not meet ICS’s definition of “highly qualified” will receive a salary increase of 4%, or their salary on the Step Scale in Plan A, whichever is less.

Returning staff members who are certified in Pennsylvania for the subject(s)/area s/he teaches/practices at ICS and/or meets ICS’s definition of “highly qualified” receive a salary increases of 8%, or their salary on the Step Scale in Plan A, whichever is less. Those just

completing their third or sixth year at ICS will get a 10% increase, or their salary on the Step Scale in Plan A, whichever is less.

**Resolutions  
DEFEATED  
None**

**Resolutions  
TABLED  
None**