

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
August 19, 2009 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Becky Baehr, Rona Buchalter, Eli Lesser, Rosina Miller, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez, Elsie Stern

Board Members Absent: John Eagen, Kristin Nocco

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Krista Pfeiffer (taking minutes); Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Amy Leigh and Michael Farrell, teachers; Jerry Santilli, Santilli & Thomson;

I. Call to Order

President Rona called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm. She welcomed new board members: John Eagan with background in insurance and finance, now serving on the Finance Committee and parent of a 2nd grader; Eli Lesser, neighbor of ICS, formerly at the National Constitution Center and currently at the Univ. of Pennsylvania, with a background in teaching, now heading the Policy Committee; Elsie Stern, filling a parent seat, a Biblical History scholar at Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and parent of a to-be first grader. Elsie has agree to help work to engage a broader spectrum of families with school organizations, including but not limited to the Board. John and Elsie both bring prior board experience. Rona reminded that committee reports needs to be written and circulated in advance of the meeting, in time to be read by board members in advance. Committees may need to adjust meeting dates if necessary. Board meetings work on the assumption that everyone has read these reports, but all members should feel free to ask questions as needed.

II. Approval of Minutes

Rosina moved and Becky seconded the approval of the June meeting and Special meeting. Both were approved unanimously with no corrections.

III. CEO Report

Jurate discussed the Annual Report handout and noted that it should be seen as in “review” mode. It was submitted to the School District of Philadelphia on Aug 3. Some discussion followed about the fact that 750 students are enrolled for new school year while 732 is in our charter. We over-enroll since an average of 15 students leave (including students who started with us but now live in suburbs.). 732 is based on a model of attrition and not accepting kids in upper grades; but in our history, our retention rate is about 97%. This is great for ICS (though not for people on waiting lists). We have as many kids on waiting list as we have in school. Pam clarified that the wait list rarely moves since we are in fact overenrolled and expecting attrition.

Jurate mentioned that PCCS is asking schools to contribute \$500 to help improve PR for charter schools. We have also been invited to The Committee to Promote Charter Schools, headed by Laurada Byers, which includes 15 high-performing schools. This would cost \$15,000 in first year. There are currently no recommendations on the table from the Finance Committee but further consideration will be forthcoming.

Stimulus Dollars: First part of stimulus money used for summer school, to be used for after school clubs, Responsive Classroom and Developmental Design (RC &

DD) and extra books suggested by Children's Literacy Initiative (CLI). IDEA Part B funds were on hold until one week ago. The state released \$147,000, which we will use for mobile computers for special ed teachers, after school, life skills, and Spanish Plus for Special Education students. The last part of budget (over \$400,000) is still held up by the state budget approval process. There would be \$90,000 for CLI training, and funds for more renovation for the building, so that we could potentially consider an expanded physical plant (gym, major meeting space). Pam asked if it's possible we'll have CLI books but not training? Jurate said she feels sure the funds will come through though we can't know how much. Pam asked if the funds would be expected to cover other cuts by the state. Jurate replied that there are those who don't want Charters to get that much money to be used for facilities. There will be quarterly accounting for that money on general website that anyone can look up. Eli asked if there is a timeline for when money will be released? Jurate explained that the ICS budget was designed with certain expenses up front thinking other funds might be held up. We now have enough to hold us through, even though the per pupil allotment likely won't come through--including that from Delaware County which has already stopped theirs.

Although there was an error in reporting PSSA scores for ICS we have now received notice that we made AYP. By Aug 31 we'll know about specific sub-groups.

Elsie had a question about the Annual Report and asked if we establish these "goals"? Stephanie replied that yes, we had. We set the goals slightly higher than the state for each of our sub-groups in particular (African-American, Special Ed). We bumped up state goals by 5% taking into account every subgroup. Jurate noted that we insert comments in report where there is a comment section.

IV. PTA Report

No report was given although Jurate shared the handbook which Ramzy is getting printed, and noted that the PTA has planned something for every month.

V. Teachers' Report

Amy Leigh brought questions from staff: Will we be asked to complete CEO evaluation as we did a Principal evaluation?

Becky responded for HR Committee, yes.

Where do we stand on tax credit for bicyclists? Becky said that was question for the Finance Committee as Jerry will have to tell us if it works. Rosina agreed to add to the agenda for next month, but will need background.

Amy asked about Act 48 discrepancies. Who is submitting our hours?

Salaries & Benefits on HR agenda, can teachers be involved in that process?

Thank you for submitting teacher calendar so soon.

Why do teachers have extra day in June after students leave? These will be handled by administration. Jurate noted that idea is to reserve a date in case we have a longer school year than scheduled for emergencies. Because of our budget, we may have to reduce costs in every area, including money for curriculum writing in summer. If possible we could use the reserve a day for teachers to contribute to and refine curriculum.

Amy also relayed a question about seeming inequity in terms of supply requests. Administration will look into the specifics.

In August or September we'll be explaining to staff how reps fit into process and electing new reps, probably going back to two.

VI. Development Report

Leonora reported recent activities: Oct 16 will be the dedication ceremony for the new playground at 11:00 am. We'll be able to thank donors and promote other events.

The calendar event is now "ICS 365," and will feature a guest speaker, (signing contract), one of the original Freedom Writer students, he will come to school earlier in the day to meet with middle school students. Michael Farrell has chapter in new Freedom Writers book. He too has agreed to be part of the presentation. We had a promotional piece during Michael's reading at Barnes & Noble. In addition to artwork, there will be photography, and expository and creative writing. Sponsorship for the event has been reworked all levels, and we have created a package of benefits that include more than just advertisement. Can have place on wall, website placement. Pam clarified that the tagline being used is just for event? Leonora confirmed that it just the event that is rebranded, not the school. Rona asked for clarification about selling ad space on website? Leonor replied that the event sponsors would simply be listed on the website. Similar to what other non-profits do, with list of sponsors with links to their website.

In the area of grant writing, we have received \$4,700 from Children Can Shape the Future Swift grant, which will go towards Young Playwrights and ballroom dancing instruction. Feedback on recent grants: Claneil Foundation to speak on Monday. For the McLean Contributionship, we received a letter that we're on the 9/30 meeting agenda. Numbers: last year generated \$177,000, which was 103% of the goal.

This year's goal is \$185,000; we are currently at 36% of that. Rosina asked about the net income of wine tasting. Leonora responded that the net income was low. It was an expensive event. We were trying to make new friends. We made money from people who bought tickets and didn't show or who made donations. We initially thought of it more as a fundraiser, but eventually realized it wasn't going to make much money, only new contacts including possible corporate partnership. It was well attended.

VII. Construction Update

Jurate gave the report in Robin's absence. The cost of the playground is coming from remaining bond monies, as previously discussed and approved by the Board. Everything is costing more than the original budget of \$130,000; with change orders, it will be around \$152,000 including \$20,000 of steel for the trellis above the gate. The design was not flawed. When they started digging, they found discrepancies from the original drawings of the placement of underground pipes. Ramzy elaborated that the drawings were not accurate for the location of pipes, which required additional money to reroute the drain, do more excavation, and use more infill. These were all unforeseen issues. Difference in change order so far is \$19,000.

Jurate noted that in previous discussions we didn't talk about PHA design which costs \$30,000. This makes allowances for storm water run-off with porous asphalt. We chose Think Green after putting out RFPs. We now need a resolution to pay Think Green. It's possible the renovation won't be completed before school opening. The contract said they will be fined if not finished on time and Jurate anticipates that they'll finish earlier than the 25th. Rosina moved the resolution (#2) and Becky seconded. Becky clarified that funds still exist in bond proceeds. Rosina confirmed that \$251,500 is still available in the bond; the spending that is called for in resolution equals \$227,000. A friendly amendment was offered to change the wording to Pennsylvania Horticulture Association--not Philadelphia.

All approved, resolution passed unanimously.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Finance

Rosina reported that we will review disbursements for financials. Jerry presented disbursements for May & June since didn't have them in July. Auditors are coming in 10 days. We will need financials up to June 30. Jerry was very reassuring about ICS's healthy cash balance in light of the budget crisis in PA. We have good cash flow, which the board reserves just in case. We have 3-4 months of cash. It will be uncomfortable if we don't receive Sept. subsidies but manageable. If we are still waiting in October, Jerry will reconsider accounts payable and pay only staff paychecks, healthcare, and debt, possibly delaying payments to vendors if needed. Currently there is no budget solution on the horizon. Today, all legislation to override veto failed. Rosina asked about the stop-gap budget. Jerry clarified that it was passed for state workers only. Since Philadelphia levies taxes in January, the city is on a different cycle than rest of state; the cash flow from the state may not be as critical for other School Districts as for Philadelphia. Eli asked if we dip into reserves, can we recoup? Jerry said yes, when we get payments. Banks are willing to loan money to schools because they're secure loans.

Rosina noted that the finance committee reviews financial report prior to board meeting, but board member can call Jerry if they have further questions. Becky asked about the item in May that is "Due from Worlds..." Jerry said that Worlds now has its own bank account after June (July), we won't see those listings any more. Rosina moved to approve May/June disbursements. Pam seconded. Becky asked about line 5249 in June to Fox Rothschild, Jurate said it was a legal matter approved by HR. Rosina noted that line 5158 to Kevin McKenna was for work done years ago. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Human Resources

Becky reported that regular meetings are the Friday before board meeting at 1:00 pm. She will send list of dates. On the issue of payscale/benefits, the committee would like to include teachers in the discussion. Becky noted that she and Rona discussed the fact that the last two times the payscale was evaluated, it was a board driven process. This time, we would like it to be a more internally driven process with staff and administration working to propose to the board different ways to compensate staff.

Becky moved the resolution (#4) on Personal Choice eligibility. Eli seconded. Rona noted that we're moving from 3 to 4 years, matching the school district. Currently, teachers who are completing 3 years can opt in. This will move to 4 years. Note a change in the wording of the resolution. It should read: "Be it hereby resolved by the ICS BoT that..." Pedro asked for number of people that would be affected. Jurate said that no one would be impacted this year, with possibly up to 10 next year. Jurate noted that very few people actually choose it. The resolution passed unanimously.

On new hires (Resolution #3), Jurate discussed the team effort to hire a new dean for Middle School. Most other hiring was done by Stephanie. Stephanie noted that three others were hired in June. Becky moved and Rosina seconded. The resolution passed unanimously.

C. Curriculum

Pam noted that the committee has not met since our last meeting. Pam moved the Global Studies resolution, Becky seconded. Eli asked how we expect to measure success. Stephanie asked if he meant the entire initiative or specific tasks. Eli clarified that he was asking about the initiative. Stephanie said we would begin with a survey provided by the Asia Society called “How Global is Your School?” We can use their rubric to assess our current position and measure growth. Pam added that as with the Villages initiative and the Middle School Task Force, ongoing review would be the role of the curriculum committee. Having completed the mandates of the Strategic Plan, the committee would now focus on evaluation of existing initiatives. Eli asked if we are on track for our meeting our goals as laid out in the document. Stephanie replied that some of it is complete while others are on hold as we need time to bring in outside facilitators. We have identified the Asia Society as our primary resource to begin this process. We’ve started informal conversations, but have nothing official. Pedro noted that the resolution is missing the word “of” “...resolution adoption of the Oxfam...” Pam reminded the board that the proposal will affect more than curriculum. This would include policy, procedures, and even fundraising. Jurate may designate someone to specifically look into aspects of implementation throughout the school. Rosina asked about the May – Sept goal “identifying outcomes” and wondered if we completed this. Stephanie replied that we have just appointed Global Leadership task force consisting of 5 teachers and this is their first major task. Ideally, Curriculum Committee will meet with them in the beginning and then they will create their own schedule. May be May – October. We are not worried about falling behind noting that this gives us a road map for all future growth. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Board Development

Pedro reported that two potential candidates are currently being vetted. We will begin with informal conversation about their intentions for future involvement. Rosina asked how many slots are currently open. Pedro answered 2. The goal is to build a reservoir of names looking specifically to bring perspectives and expertise not currently represented on the board. Rosina asked if any board members had met with the potential candidates. Pedro answered that the meetings were still pending. Rosina noted that Jurate should be at those meetings. Pam suggested it was important to take time to make sure they know what they’re getting into and that we have a sense of the time commitment they can give. Pedro also noted that Megan and Rona have been working on a board handbook. These should be ready for the Sept meeting.

Rona said she expected we would receive ongoing presentations at pre-board trainings. Perhaps at every other meeting. At the next board meeting, Stephanie will come at 6 to talk about achievement data and test scores. In October, Leonora and Emily Wartchow of Fairmont Ventures will discuss fundraising and development. We will also invite Jerry back to talk about finance. Another topic up for deeper discussion includes Jurate talking about the political landscape for charter schools. Kristen is putting together board and school recurring events for a calendar for board reference.

E. Policy

Eli was asked to chair the committee in July. He will be re-forming the committee. With vacation conflicts it wasn’t possible to meet so there is no formal report. Eli and Jurate met with Terry to discuss upcoming policy needs and he is soliciting people to join new policy committee. Before the next board meeting the

Tr. Rep will solicit teacher representatives for the committee. Upcoming activity will include the newly strengthened Right to Know Law. Eli: we'll have a Right to Know officer. The law sets out timeliness and requires response within 5 to 10 days and includes allowance to charge for copying costs. Another upcoming policy on social networking is needed for the employee handbook as well as Acceptable Use for students for technology. Rosina asked who else is on the committee. Eli said it was just him so far. Pam mentioned that when it comes to teacher involvement, we might want to solicit involvement based on the policy under discussion as some teachers would find some policies more relevant to their area than others. Providing plenty of advance notice of meeting times and agendas would help. Amy asked about getting board meeting agenda prior to meetings. Rosina: did you get all reports? Amy: not 100%, but better this year. Eli said he'd like to run some policies past students as well—ideally through a student council. Perhaps students would like to see policies discussed. Rona said that we should be aware of the limits of that role.

IX. Public Comment Period (none)

X. Old Business (none)

XI. New Business

Rona said that there have been requests from a few key participants to change time of board meetings to make meetings more accessible to staff and some of us. She asked if we might be able to move board meeting up to 6:00? Discussion followed about the effect on specific board members. Pedro would have to rearrange. Elsie would be late for a 6:30 meeting. Rosina asked if the move was primarily for staff. Rona: asked Amy to throw it out to teachers. The September meeting will take place at 7 pm with the pre-board meeting at 6 pm.

Worlds of Opportunity Board: Terry Henry formally resigned his position on the Worlds board in light of the fact that he is providing legal services through Cozen O'Connor on retainer, and no longer on a pro bono basis. Rosina volunteered to take the role on the board noting that it would be helpful to have someone from this board on that board to report back and forth. Jerry has separated the accounting and we get quarterly reports from Worlds since the board is effectively controlled by the ICS Board of Trustees. Some discussion followed about the need for a resolution.

Becky moved the following resolution and Pedro seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Be it resolved ICS Board hereby appoints Rosina Miller to Worlds of Opportunity Foundation Board.

Middle State Accreditation

Becky agreed to chair the Steering Committee. Jurate reminded the board that it is a 12-18 month process, and we're behind. There will be many committees needing representation from teachers, parents, and board and requiring self-reflection. Ultimately, Middle States representatives will come to observe for several days. This international accrediting organization provides questions and rubrics to guide the process Becky will hold a phone conference on Friday to determine rest of Steering Committee. Pam asked how the board will receive progress reports? Becky replied that she would report at meetings, then committees can report where it's relevant. Eli shared that he worked in a school

during the process and felt that it was a very healthy next step after strategic planning.

Rosina asked about renewal in the fall, Jurate shared that there was no news but we would plan to use last year's requirements as a starting point. She noted that our last renewal had big questions looming, specifically the addition of 7th & 8th grade. This time we might question the addition of a high school. School District considers us a school to be replicated. Rosina asked about the deadline and the requirements for writing such a proposal. Jurate replied that the deadline is December and added that when Stephanie was at Asia Society Conference, Tony Jackson said Asia Society interested in training/supporting a HS at ICS. Pam asked if the question of adding HS to be connected to renewal? Could we later apply for an addendum to our charter? Jurate said she would research the issue. Eli pointed out there many donors and funding sources are more interested in HS than elementary.

XII. Adjournment

Becky moved to adjourn; Pam seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda

Minutes from June 2009 Special meeting

CEO report

May financials

Development Report

Human Resources Committee Minutes

Construction update

PA Dept of Education Charter Annual Report

Independence Charter School

August 19, 2009

Resolutions

ADOPTED

1. May Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the months of May and June 2009 in the amounts of \$266,645.15 and \$186,035.20 respectively, as presented to the Board.

2. Playground Financing

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby affirm the contract established with Think Green for the purposes of renovating the ICS playground area for a cost not to exceed \$152,000.

Be it further resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby affirm the contract established with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society for the purposes of designing the renovation of the playground at a cost not to exceed \$30,000.

And be it further resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves the budget for completion of interior renovation including painting, tack boards, renovation coordination, and additional security cameras for a price not to exceed \$45,841.

3. New Hires for 2009-2010

Be it resolved that the following individuals be offered full time positions as listed for the 2009-2010 school year under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS contract:

Ryan Dunn: Middle School Physical Education & Health

Ericka Morris: 4th Grade Enhanced

Andrea Ringklib: 4th Grade Immersion

Kareem Thomas: Middle School Dean

Lela Betts: Reading & ESL Teacher (20 hours per week)

Faten Baraka: Arabic teacher (4 classes per week)

Khadija Shariff: Kiswahili teacher (3-4 classes per week)

4. Benefits Resolution

Be it hereby resolved by the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees that individuals entitled to health insurance coverage who have worked for Independence Charter School for more than four (4) calendar years, have the option of enrolling in the Personal Choice program, with Independence Charter will pay 97% of the premium and the employee must pay 3% of the premium.

5. Global Studies Resolution

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees will adopt the attached Global Education Task Force proposal as a model for growth over the next 15 months.

Be it further resolved that the implementation of this proposal will be supervised by ICS staff and the Curriculum Committee. This proposal articulates a plan for integrating global education into the ICS curriculum and provides a theoretical framework for such integration.

Resolutions

DEFEATED

None

Resolutions

TABLED