

**Independence Charter School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
December 9, 2009 7:00 pm**

**Board Members Present:** Rona Buchalter, John Eagen, Rosina Miller  
Kristin Nocco, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez, Elsie Stern

**Board Members Absent:** Becky Baehr, Eli Lesser

**Others Present:** Jurate Krokys, CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Jerry Santilli, Business Manager, Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Michael Farrell, Amy Leigh, William Loskoch and Kelly Nelms, teachers; Robin Kohles, parent and building rep; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Cristina Vea, parent & PTA Liaison; Chris Bobrowski and Michael Bull, Citron Cooperman (auditors).

**I. Call to Order**

**President Rona** called the meeting to order at 7:12pm. Rona circulated some charter school conference brochures that Elsie had brought to her attention.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the November and the December Special Board meeting minutes were approved unanimously without any changes.

Rona asked if there were any objections to the audit update being given at this point in the meeting; there were no objections

- III. Rona** asked John to give an update of this afternoon's Audit Committee meeting. John stated that the Audit Committee met today via phone with the auditors to review the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 ICS audits. He reported that no deficiencies were found in either report and that most of the meeting was spent having the auditors walk the committee members through the reports. He explained that the final audit letter will not be completed until next week. John recommended that the Board approve the overall audit report, since the letter will just be verifying the findings that the auditors reviewed with the committee. Jerry explained that the 2007-2008 audit had been delayed due to complexities in purchasing the school building. In the future the prior years audit will be reviewed at this time of year. He introduced Chris Bobrowski and Michael Bull from Citron Cooperman auditors. Mr. Bull reported that although the final audit letter won't be completed for about a week, ICS's 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 were both clean audits with no deficiencies. He also reviewed the draft 990 form; the final form is not due until 2/15/10 so is still being updated. Mr. Bull recommended that we be sure to add donated items (not volunteer hours). He explained that 990s are used to ensure that non-profits finances are transparent and that many organizations use the form as a fundraising tool. He also explained that the Worlds of Opportunity Foundation has a separate 990. Jerry clarified that completed 990 forms are public record and can be found at Guidestar.com Pam moved the audit motion; John seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**IV. CEO Report**

**Jurate** reported that our 5<sup>th</sup> grade ballroom dancing semi-final group won a gold medal today. Jurate thanked the Dancing Classrooms teachers, as well as that our students have dance and music. Tr. Shavon will set up a time once a week to practice; the finals will be in June in McGonigal Hall. Jurate explained that this was our first year working with this group. Mr. Harvey Kimmel has been a great supporter of this. Jurate hopes that we'll be able to offer an after school club and

possibly a parent class too. Tonight's Middle School Science Fair is another great example of our great school. Rona reported that she attended the lottery last Friday and was happy about how transparent it was. Kristin asked how we'd work on the ballroom dancing and whether it would go through the Curriculum Committee. Jurate said she feels it could just be agreed on, since it doesn't interfere with scheduling since its part of Dance and Music class. She stated that we may need to add a line item for some of the limited costs. Jerry stated that the Board may need to make a priority list----maybe ballroom dancing or another classroom assistant. Pam stated that we've always tried to find special opportunities for our students and have managed to do that at little or no cost. She added that we might just need to continue in that vein for now----not worrying about budgeting for it, but ensuring that we only take on ones that are low cost or funded. Cristina Vea noted that the PTA has brought in a lot less money this year, so that might need to be taken into account in regard to funding. Rona reminded everyone that the Board will look at all the items that have a budget impact. Pam noted that she thinks the agenda looks great for tomorrow's International Human Rights Day.

#### **V. PTA Report**

**Cristina** reported that the turnout for the December meeting was great. She reported that the issue of teachers wanting preference for their children to attend ICS came up at the meeting. Rona responded that the Human Resources Committee is reviewing that issue; we want to make sure that whatever we decide is in compliance with charter school law. There were no questions for the PTA.

#### **VI. Teachers' Report**

William and Kelly had submitted a written teachers' report. Rona stated that she spoke with Becky, the chair of the HR Committee, and that she feels the teacher salary discussion is moving along well and that other staff are welcome to attend the HR meetings to be part of the on-going discussion. William reported that Jurate spoke to the teachers today and gave a great update. He also stated that teachers feel Jurate's done a great job covering Pr. Stephanie's responsibilities while she's been out on leave. Pedro asked what the issue was regarding the teachers not feeling they were part of the tobacco policy. Jurate explained that we've always had a tobacco policy, but the new one added some details. Pam recommended that the Policy Committee reports be sent to all staff. William stated that due to all the other issues that HR needs to discuss and the fact that most teachers are not free to attend the meetings that is a cause for concern. Rona stated that lots of work happens outside of the committee meetings, so teachers can send messages to Becky and become involved that way. Pam stated some time at early dismissal might need to be used to help gather some issues. Jurate stated that we might want to have a few before school and after school meetings. Rona stated that people could also work ad hoc on this. Jurate stated that once we have a good working draft in January, then we'll be able to make several versions (depending on what funding is available). Rona stated she feels the work that teachers have put in to this has been extremely valuable and that a new pay scale will be in place for the new school year.

#### **VII. Development Report**

**Leonora** reported that she is busy writing grants. She is also working a report to try to evaluate the effectiveness of our summer school in order to help get more funding. Rona noted that the fundraising picture doesn't look promising as presented, showing 46% below projection; Leonora clarified that that number is

for the whole year, not to-date, and so in fact we're over 50% of our 12-month goal in less than 6 months.

## **VIII. Construction Update**

**Robin** stated she didn't have anything to add to her written report. Pam asked for an update on the canopy. Robin said we have still not gotten an installation price we can afford. We will either have to re-bid it or possibly pay Ken Roscioli to install it. Robin is checking with ICS legal counsel about this possibility. Rona clarified that almost all of the bond money has been spent and any new expenditures are from our budget. Pam asked about the mural; Mike Farrell said it should be completed by the end of the school year.

## **IX. Accreditation**

Rona reported that she checked with Becky, who said the process is moving slowly since Jurate has had to deal with the charter renewal. Rona suggested that Becky and Jurate discuss the timeline----one year or several years? If it will take several years, then we'll need a strategic plan to guide us. Jurate stated that she feels we'll be able to move forward more quickly in January.

## **X. Committee Reports**

### **A. Finance**

**Rosina** reported that no Finance meeting was held in the past month. She asked Jerry to review the October financials. Jerry stated that the rest of the School District's subsidy didn't come through until November, so October's cash flow was low. Jerry will be meeting with PNC next week to discuss their exorbitant service fees. Rona asked whether there's any requirement with our bond to keep our funds at PNC; Jerry said there is not. Jerry stated there are no variances of concern. Jerry explained that we need to provide quarterly reports for the use of stimulus money and ICS is doing well with that record keeping. Jerry noted that the last payment to the CPA firm to get tax-exempt building status was made during October. Rosina moved the disbursement resolution; Pam seconded. Rona asked if the legal counsel payment has been straightened out; Jerry agreed to do that this month. Rona asked about some of the textbook purchases; Jerry explained that a lot of those were from September. William stated that there was also a lot of one-time science materials. Jerry stated he had slowed down a lot of payments due to the state budget delay. The motion passed unanimously.

Rona recapped the process of drafting the Financial Procedures Manual and explained that ICS legal counsel has reviewed it. Jerry reported that he made the changes recommended at last week's Special Meeting. .” Rosina moved the manual motion; John seconded.

Pam moved the McLean Contributionship motion; Rosina seconded. Jurate explained that this grant will allow us to open up the computer lab on Saturdays and after school to offer Rosetta Stone. Pam asked what staff will be doing that; Jurate stated we'll hire someone to do that. Jurate explained that we have over 900 Rosetta Stone accounts; however, Rosetta Stone is not very flexible in the use of the accounts (i.e., you can't have a family account). The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion returned to the Financial Procedures Manual. The motion was passed unanimously with one change in the Food Services deposit section “as soon **as possible.**” Jerry will be giving a presentation to the staff at the January Professional Development Day.

Jerry will forward the Food Services budget; he had brought it to last week's meeting. He will circulate it via e-mail. Jurate reported that the monthly meetings with Linton are going well. The November deficit was lower than the prior month's. Linton's reduced their staff by one and have found they are still able to function well. We're working on increasing staff participation. Jerry agreed to add the Food Services financials with the regularly monthly reports. We'll review any questions about the October report at the January meeting.

Jurate asked if the charter school renewal resolution can be considered at this point in the meeting, so that Jerry can be available to answer questions. Rona agreed. Rona clarified that the charter renewal motion is not actually approving the final packet, but the basic components of the renewal. Jurate stated that's true; we're not changing any of our main components. She is, however, recommending that we request to project to accept up to 765 students. Our current charter allows 732; although caps are not supposed to be in place. Another reason for projecting this number would be one way to be able to increase teacher salaries. If we added one extra child per class in grades 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, this would give us about \$250,000 toward our budget. Pam asked how this would work---would we purposely accept more students in the upper grades? Jurate stated that one thing that has been very meaningful is having students from other countries enroll. Rosina asked for clarification regarding how we'll budget for this---will we still budget for 732? Or do we need to enroll over 765 to budget for 765? If so, we'd need to revisit our classroom size policy. Jerry stated that since you don't know what's coming up, you might want to ask for up to 800. Rona clarified that if this was approved, it would not be approval to enroll that many students but to have that cushion. Jurate noted that there is a typo on the year in the resolution. Rosina stated she doesn't feel we need to have a detailed discussion at this point, but would need to have those conversations if we do actually decide to add more. Jurate noted that the two references to 2009-2010 should actually read 2010-2011 and 2014-2015 needs to be added at the end of the resolution (relating to the enrollment projections for each year of the charter renewal). Elsie asked whether this would in any way force us to fill those spots. Jurate stated that the School District did put some pressure on us several years ago, but understood that our Board had an enrollment plan. Rosina moved the renewal motion; Pedro seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **B. Curriculum**

**Pam** stated she had nothing further to report. Pedro asked if there is a Board policy for ICS not to teach cursive writing. Pam stated there is not a Board policy; Rona stated that is a question for Pr. Stephanie and Pam agreed to bring it up to the Curriculum Committee.

### **C. Human Resources**

**Becky** circulated the committee report prior to tonight's meeting. There were no questions for the HR Committee. Rona pointed out the minutes talk about the proposal for an admissions policy for children of staff, which was an item in the teachers' report.

### **D. Policy**

No report was circulated; the committee did not meet in November.

### **E. Board Development**

No report was circulated. **Pedro** reported the committee will meet on Friday (12/11); the time may be changed from noon to another time. Pam stated that January 9<sup>th</sup> is the proposed date for the Board organizational caucus. Pam

estimates it will be about 4-5 hours; it will be held at Rosina's office on Broad near Sansom.

**XI. Public Comment Period**

No one signed up for the public comment period.

**XII. Old Business**

Old business (charter school renewal) was discussed earlier in the meeting.

**XIII. Adjournment**

Rosina moved for adjournment; Pam seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:12p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda

Minutes from November 2009 meeting

Minutes from the December 1, 2009 Special Meeting

CEO report

PTA Report

Teachers' Report

October financials

Development Report

Curriculum Reports

Human Resources Committee Minutes

**Independence Charter School  
December 9, 2009  
Resolutions**

**ADOPTED**

**1. 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 Audits**

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School accept the audit reports for fiscal years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 and direct the CEO and Controller to file said reports with the appropriate government agencies and the Bond Trustee.

**2 October Disbursements**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of October 2009 in the amount of \$129,120.85 as presented to the Board.

**3. Financial Procedures Manual**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve the ICS financial procedures manual as presented to the Board.

**4. McLean Contributionship**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees accepts the \$10,000 grant from the McLean Contributionship to be used to establish a language learning resource center.

**5. Charter Renewal**

**Whereas**, Independence Charter School was granted a charter by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on September 1, 2000, which was renewed by the School Reform Commission and the School District of Philadelphia on March 16, 2005, and which expires on June 30, 2010, and

**Whereas** the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School and the school community are seeking renewal of said charter, now therefore

**Be it resolved** that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School request the School District of Philadelphia and the School Reform Commission to renew the school's charter, and

**Be it further resolved** that it is the intention of the Board of Trustees to request authority to increase the total number of students in the existing K-8 program from a projected number of **732 to 800**, with said increase beginning in 2010-2011 school year as follows:

- School Year 2010-2011      800
- School Year 2011-2012      800
- School Year 2012-2013      800
- School Year 2013-2014      800
- School Year 2014-2015      800

**And be it further resolved** that the Chief Executive Officer is authorized to prepare and submit a renewal application to the School District of Philadelphia,

**And be it further resolved** that the Board President and Secretary are authorized to sign the appropriate documents.

**Resolutions  
DEFEATED  
None**

**Resolutions  
TABLED  
None**