

**Independence Charter School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
February 9, 2011 7:00 pm**

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

**Board Member(s) Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Parent; Jerry Santilli, Business Manager; Jurate Krokys, CEO (via phone); Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Shavon Norris, Teacher Representative; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Yerodin Lucas, Teacher

**I. Call to Order**

Rona called the meeting to order at 7:05p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the January meeting were approved unanimously without changes.

**III. Public Comment Period**

There were no public comments.

**IV. CEO Report**

Rona asked if there were questions about the CEO report. Eli asked how much money would be needed for the Temple study; Jurate stated it would be \$40,000 which ICS would need to help raise. Eli noted that seems that it would not be objective. Pam and Jurate stated this is the same as hiring an outside entity to study us. Eli suggested that we try to bundle the study with something else in order to seek grants for action and study. Jurate disagreed, saying it seems that having the study first is needed before seeking funding based on the results of the study. Fran asked whether there might be a way to partner with another entity if it would be for the benefit of more than just ICS. Jurate agreed that may be possible. Elsie stated she didn't know that this would cost ICS any money, but that she really likes the part that would determine what the most effective aspects of ICS are. She asked what the action items mean. Jurate stated she also was not aware of the cost until the follow up meeting; she said the action items are how we serve a diverse group of kids. Jurate stated that the plan was developed after the researchers heard more about ICS, who are kids are and what we do. Several people asked what the term "theory of action" means; Pam and Rona clarified that it's a research term used to describe how something is done. Pam stated she feels this type of study is a big part of our long-term strategic plan. Pam said she has a copy of the research this team did for Youth Build and that was very helpful to see the final result. Derrick stated that \$40,000 seems like a high price, even though initially they thought it might be \$100,000. Eli said the \$40,000 seems reasonable from his perspective; he added that when researchers are coming from a university, a percentage of the cost (usually over 40%) goes to the university. Jurate stated it would take 12-18 months to complete. Eli suggested getting other quotes. Elsie asked whether the fact that we're involved with the fundraising would change the focus. Rona stated that it's different than if we were just agreeing to be a

subject of their research, because this way will give ICS more control of the design of the study.

John asked whether we've gotten a response from the School District regarding the PMI or renewal agreement. Jurate stated that we have not heard anything; Jerry stated he hasn't heard anything either.

Eli moved the contract termination motion; John seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Elsie moved the new hire motion; Derrick seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Fran moved the family leave motion; Naomi seconded. Rona asked whether there was any follow up regarding the PTA's questions at last month's meeting about plans for long-term substitute teachers. Jurate stated that we will review the hiring process with the PTA, but that teacher confidentiality will be ensured throughout the process. Stephanie will be addressing this issue with the PTA. Pam asked if there is a clear cut plan for covering Dean Andrea's responsibilities; Stephanie stated that there is a specific plan. The motion passed unanimously. Shavon stated that she feels that these long-term substitute opportunities could be good opportunities to find diversity outside the ICS community; in particular, possibly finding a male substitute for the dean's position. Jurate stated that since this is a mid-year situation, we needed to ensure that we have someone who is familiar with the school, policies, etc. Rona asked that the rest of this conversation happen in another venue.

## **V. Finance/Business**

**Jerry** noted that we currently have a \$612,000 surplus. He noted that on page 3, line 1 is the School District subsidy which is running ahead of budget. He expects that to continue throughout the year. He noted that some funds raised are earmarked and can only be used for certain items, which becomes a budget issue. He will have a recommendation about that for next year's budget. He stated that no rental subsidy have come out yet. The PSERS variance is a timing issue. He noted that Line 40 is still off due to employees on leave who are able to use leave time at the same time we need to pay substitutes. ICS is 45 days away from going "live" on the new automated financial system. Training will occur closer to the start time. We are running about \$270,000 ahead of budget at this time. Jerry noted that the December disbursements are relatively routine. He stated that due to the holidays, disbursements were accelerated in December. Eli asked whether there's any subsidy we could get for our internet services. Jerry stated the E-rate is still around, but our poverty rate is much lower than other schools, so we would not get that funding and the application costs \$5,000. Jerry stated that if a school's poverty rate isn't at least 80%, there isn't a chance of getting it. John moved the December disbursement resolution; Pam seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

John stated the audit committee will meet on February 17<sup>th</sup>; Pedro is finding a location. The members are Pedro and Derrick; John hopes to be there too. Jerry stated that Food Services program is currently running a surplus of \$11,000 which includes student account funds. Pam suggested giving free breakfast during PSSA; Jurate and Stephanie agreed that's a great idea and agreed to follow up.

Rona asked Jurate to talk in broad terms about the preliminary plans for next year's budget. Jurate reminded everyone about the institutional goals; Rona also stated we need to talk about goals for next year. Jurate stated that there will be no more stimulus funds and that from the beginning of that funding ICS tried not to use stimulus funds for items

we would not be able to continue to fund after stimulus ended. Some piloted positions, such as the Family/Community Liaison, are ones that have been successful and that we want to continue under the general operating budget. She stated that the administrative leadership working group has been very helpful to her in planning for next year. Clubs will be totally cut, summer school will most likely be very limited. The final budget depends on the percentage increase (if any) for per student funding. Jerry stated the Board will get the first draft of the budget a week before the March Board meeting and asked that members send questions in advance of the meeting, so he can be prepared to answer. He stated that we'll need to have a plan for the possibility of different funding increases on the state level to approve the final budget in April. Pedro asked if we can start looking at how health care reform may affect us as employers; Naomi stated that the initial changes are scheduled for 2014, but it's not clear how a school district will be considered. Pedro stated there's some discussion among some non-profits and that we may want to start getting involved with that. Rona asked Pedro to recommend any such meetings that seem appropriate for the Board to consider participation.

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

**Development:** There were no questions from the Board. Leonora stated she is spending a lot of time on FLAP grant reporting. She addressed Jerry's concern about restricted funds; she stated she is trying to be as strategic as possible. She stated that it is more effective to fundraise for specific things. She stated she hopes to plan next year for something that will work that won't negatively impact the budget. Pam noted that we need to start building more relationships to ensure we can continue the Arabic program after the FLAP grant ends. Rona suggested that we also consider approaching someone from Al-Bustan for Board membership. Leonora stated that we are continuing to build those relationships. Eli asked whether any teachers are applying for this summer's Arabic Fulbright fellowship; a few people stated there is one Fulbright that is only for non-native Arabic speakers. Eli stated the one he's talking about is studying Middle Eastern culture in Turkey. Jurate noted that the Board should be aware that most places only receive about one out of ten grants for which they apply. Elsie asked whether we sometimes get a letter that encourages us to apply again. Leonora said sometimes we get no feedback and other times we get a lot. Rona stated that she feels we should always be trying to get feedback. Derrick stated that the Board should also be looking at the names of the board members at these funding sources to see if we can reach out to them too. Rona stated that sometimes you can also call the funders before you send in the grant to get some specific information about what they're looking for.

**Teachers:** Rona stated there was no teachers' report circulated. Shavon stated that the teacher representatives don't want to just have a gripe list; instead, they want to help things work better.

## **VII. BOT Committee Reports**

**Human Resources:** Naomi circulated a short report prior to the meeting. She reported that the diversity project is on-going; there will probably be a short report on that next month. The retention/year-end process has changed a bit to inform teachers earlier regarding contract decisions for the following year. She noted that due to a number of leave issues that have risen, we are surveying some other institutions to find out how they handle leave requests.

**Policy:** Eli stated there isn't a policy report due to his work on Middle States. He stated he has circulated to trustees regarding a webinar about Board Affects and Board Docs.

He hopes to have a recommendation soon; moving to one of those programs would involve a small cost.

### **VIII. Old Business**

Rona reminded everyone to hand in their Statement of Financial Interest to Megan.

Rona asked Eli to give an update on the Middle States Accreditation strategic planning process. Eli thanked everyone who has been participating in the process and encouraged Board members to participate in the remaining conversations. Jurate stated that Middle States has a lot of double checks throughout the process. At this point, she is hoping to have staff work during school time to hone the final goals that can be presented to various stakeholder focus groups next week: students, staff, family/community. Jurate stated we may want to have a small group of Board members meet early in the week of February 21<sup>st</sup> to discuss the final product. A representative from Middle States will be here on February 25<sup>th</sup>; we need to have a final draft ready for that date. Jurate stated that the administrative leadership group work has helped this process also. Eli stated that we need the Board to keep their calendars free for various times during the site visit April 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>. Eli stated that the Board might want to approve a goal based on the leadership structure meetings. Eli stated that we had a meeting with all teachers and other staff; he thanked Shavon, Jurate and Stephanie for helping plan that meeting. He noted there were remarkable conversations among the staff and that staff talked in areas outside of their personal/professional interest areas. Jurate stated they were looking at the same goals that were presented to the Board. Eli and Jurate noted that we want to involve students of all ages in these conversations. Eli encouraged Board members to take part in these conversations as members of the community. Jurate stated that Middle States does not require a resolution; however, she would like the Board to give approval in March based on the revised draft. Elsie recommended that the Board have a separate group, even if it would need to be done over the phone. Jurate stated that even if that happens, she also recommends that Board members try to get to one of the other group meetings. Pam agreed that a Board group meeting will probably be more meaningful if you first attend one of these other group meetings. Eli noted that in addition to the Middle States goals, the Board needs to make other long-term goals. Eli stated that in some ways, the staff has been very hard on themselves in the process and he feels we also need to start talking more about all the successes. Shavon asked for more information about that; Eli stated he just feels we were being very critical. Jurate stated that during the process she actually had to remind people in some instances to be more critical, because some sections seemed too positive. Eli stated we will be sure to polish the final draft. Rona stated that although she feels it's good for Board members to try to attend the other focus groups meeting, she still feels the Board needs to also meet separately. Eli stated that Board members are all members of the school community. It was agreed that the Board members will meet with the Steering Committee during the week of February 21<sup>st</sup>. Eli asked Naomi to give an update from the administrative leadership group meetings. Naomi stated that it was a long process and very eye opening in terms of all the tasks that get accomplished at ICS. The group met once with consultants, who taught them the RACI process to make decisions about responsibilities, which will help clarify roles. The goal was to make recommendations regarding changes to the leadership structure. There was basic consensus around a structure change with more teacher leaders, etc. In addition, there is a list of attributes that will help when interviewing individuals for various roles. Eli asked what the timeline is; Naomi stated she hopes to get that completed next week. Rona stated that one thing that came out was that it may not be so much about the structure, but about clarifying roles and responsibilities. Shavon stated that we need to figure out how to teach this throughout the school community. Naomi

said the work group also learned about normal growing pains of any organization has. Pam noted that have tried several leadership models, but this is the first time we had so much teacher involvement in the process, which seems to have been really helpful.

Rona stated the discussion about student lottery preference for Board members' children will be discussed at next month's meeting.

#### **IX. New Business**

There was no new business.

#### **X. Adjournment**

Pedro moved for adjournment; Eli seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50p.m.

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

Agenda

CEO report

Finance report

December 2010 financials

December 2010 Food Services financial report

Human Resources report

Development report

### **Independence Charter School**

**February 9, 2011**

#### **Resolutions**

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **1. Contract Terminations**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees acknowledges the termination of the following 2010-2011 employee agreements: Andres Cisneros.

#### **2. New Teacher Hires**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees approves the hiring of the following new teacher: Joseph Tayoun for the remainder of the 2010-2011 school year under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS contract.

#### **3. Leave Approvals**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees approves Family Medical Leave time for employees Andrea Brock, Natalie Henderson and H. Elisse Santiago-Droz.

#### **4. December Disbursements**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of December 2010 in the amount of \$217,257.71 as presented to the Board.

#### **Resolutions**

**DEFEATED**

**None**

#### **Resolutions**

**TABLED**