

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2009 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Becky Baehr, Anyabwile Banko'le, Rona Buchalter, Eric Cramer, Nicole Perkins Kilcullen, Rosina Miller, Kristin Nocco, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez

Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Michael Farrell, Amy Leigh & Kelly Nelms, teachers; Jerry Santilli, Santilli & Thomson; Susan Burrows, PTA Liaison; Tina Kluetmeier, parent; Robin Kohles, Owner's Rep.

I. Call to Order

Co-President Nicole called the meeting to order at 7:06pm.

II. Approval of Minutes

The January minutes were approved unanimously.

III. CEO Report

Jurate reported that we have lost a couple of snow days. If we were to have another one, we would most likely have school without transportation. We've received a Patricia Kind Foundation grant for \$10,000 for each of two years to support our summer school program. There are a lot of teachers going to various training. PSSAs have started for 5th and 8th graders. Laureda Byers invited ICS to join a student debate team that would start next year. Jurate continues to meet as part of a charter school consortium. Ben Rayer, the Assistant School District Superintendent for Charter Schools, has been holding meetings and visiting charter schools, including ICS. There is a proposal to try to make charter schools have a two-tier funding model for special education funds. Charter schools are working on mobilizing around this and other issues, since there seems to be disparities between how School District and charter schools are being treated. Nicole asked that Leonora and Jurate meet to strategize on how to include these types of budget issues to be able to share that information with potential funders. Jurate and Leonora agreed to follow up on that request.

IV. PTA Report

Susan reported on behalf of the PTA. She stated that the PTA is now sending out weekly updates and is also working on planning more neighborhood meetings, since the northeast Philadelphia meeting was a success. The ice skating event was also a huge success; there will be a roller skating outing in April. There will be a Corbi sale in the spring; proceeds will go towards the 8th grade trip.

V. Teachers' Report

Amy reported that the Scripps Spelling Bee (5th-8th) plans are well underway; it will take place next Tuesday (2/17). The younger grades will have classroom or village-wide Bees during the school day. Rona gave kudos to the Spelling Bee planners, stating that the continuity shows great school-wide planning. Fifty-four (54) alumni came to the Martin Luther King Day Alumni Event; it was a huge success. We got lots of feedback regarding the alums' high school experiences, which can inform ICS going forward. Becky asked if we are formally tracking our alumni. Amy said we are trying to keep up with those who moved (addresses and schools). Rona suggested that possibly one of the student council reps might serve as an alumni rep.

One question from the teachers is how often the teacher pay scale gets reviewed. Jurate stated that she is usually the person who brings that to the Board. She stated that we look at what is happening in the local area. She added that issue is something about which she is always conscious.

VI. Development Report

Leonora noted that there will be another revision to the budget, because she feels she can shave off about \$50,000 in expenses. There will be a wine tasting event in June; the focus will be to draw new people to ICS. Board members will be asked to recommend potential guests. Rosina asked what ICS does to cultivate grandparents. Leonora agreed to follow up on that idea. Kristin asked whether the state pays for summer school. Jurate stated that summer school is not required by charter schools and we do not get state or local funding for it. She stated that our summer school reaches most of our at-risk students.

VII. Construction Update

Robin reported that demolition of the fence starts this weekend; it should take about a week to complete. Nicole asked what type of security we're setting up. Robin and Ramzy said there will be an orange fence and that we may be hiring a security guard for that time. The rest of the lockers will be installed over spring break and the attic will be insulated at that time also. The mesh which will replace the grates is back-ordered. Robin has nominated ICS for an historic preservation award.

Jurate reported that we cannot afford the insurance to cover the larger community to use the playground. Our legal counsel stated that the only way that would be possible is if a specific group gets insurance to use the space for a specific time. Rona asked if a group like the CCRA might want to underwrite something like that, since ICS would not be able to do that. Kristin said it sounds like Jurate has said Marcia Wolkof is working on that. Nicole stated that they'd also have to liability insurance for wear and tear on the equipment. Jerry explained that the School District is self-insured. Nicole stated that the Board has ok'd the Facilities Committee under Jurate's direction.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Finance

Nicole reported that there is no report due to no one taking minutes in Rosina's absence. Jerry stated the meeting focused mainly on the budget and included a presentation by our benefits broker. He reported that we won't have final numbers for medical costs until May, so we'll need to do some projecting in order to offer teacher contracts as early as possible. The benefits broker is also looking into some alternatives to the current disability plan. All the building debt information has now been moved to the Worlds of Opportunity Board books. Jerry stated that he confirmed that the city did indeed receive our tax exempt paperwork (to get tax exempt status for the building) before the 12/31/08 deadline.

Jerry stated that the cash flow is strong. Rosina asked what is currently due from Worlds; Jerry stated that there are capital expenditures. Jerry stated that it is unlikely in this economy that we will make up the nearly \$10,000 variance (line #4). School District funding will most likely not be made up either due to fewer students than estimated receiving special education services. Jerry will be drafting budget revisions for the next Finance Committee meeting. The variance on line #25 is due to several people on long-term leave this year. We are also

awaiting reimbursement for half of the Middle School art teacher position. Jerry cautioned that the surplus will go away soon. Becky asked if Worlds will soon be paying the debt; Jerry stated that would start to happen and rent will appear on the ICS books. The Citizens Alliance debt will remain on the ICS books. Nicole asked why the Italian grant appears as an expense; it was explained that ICS needs to pay the consultant to teach. Rosina moved the expenditure motion; Becky seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Jerry passed out a food services report which covers the period from September 2008 through the end of December 2008. He explained there are two sources of revenue for the program: federal subsidy and sales income. The expenses are mainly payment to Linton and 75% of an ICS employee salary. Part of the sales income includes several thousand dollars that are outstanding. Jurate explained that part of the collection process problem was that we had to do a lot of the work by hand until we got computerized. Jerry added that Linton had to bring on an extra staff person and ICS had to change a part-time position to a 75% position with benefits. Jerry stated we are depositing at least \$10,000 per month. Jurate explained that we picked our vendor based more on the type of food they could provide than their experience. Kristin asked whether teachers have noticed better student attention due to better nutrition. Amy and Michael said that anecdotally it certainly seemed to have made a positive impact, even with the added paperwork for teachers. Pedro asked whether we should have a policy about no junk food. Pam explained that we want to be sure that we're not making cultural decisions. Pedro asked whether mice were still a problem; Jurate said that problem is mostly under control at this point. Kristin asked whether the deficit is mainly manpower or is some due to commodities. Stephanie said the Linton staff has been adjusting the menu to be sure to use the commodities.

Rosina asked about line 4805; Jerry explained that is our annual trustee fee for the bond. Jerry also said he's had lengthy conversations with PNC Bank about their fees and told them ICS is considering moving its account. Eric agreed to give Jerry some other banking information.

Rosina moved the Kind Foundation grant; Becky seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Board Development

Pedro reviewed the Board survey results. He stated that overall the current Board members are visionaries. The membership is primarily women and most of the members are within the same age range. We need more people with fundraising backgrounds. Pam asked whether that is important for a governing board if we're going to have a specific fundraising board. Pedro said he feels it is. We also need someone with a finance background. He stated that he feels the Worker Free Choice Act will be passed and that will create challenges for charter school finances. Nicole stated she also feels it's very important for all board members to get finance training, since that's a major function of the board. Jerry will present a training at the March meeting; Rosina stated she will make sure that's an in-depth training. Amy pointed out that the board may also want to recruit more Enhanced parents for the Board; Pam stated the board is committed to do that. Pedro stated that now that we know what skills we need, board members, staff members, etc should contact Megan to suggest names; Megan will then send out the recommendation form to be completed and then will forward that to Pedro. Pam asked whether we might want to change the by-laws to require one parent seat to be an Immersion parent and one an Enhanced parent. Pedro said that's a possibility and that he feels we also need to increase the number of seats on the

board. Several members stated that the board has gone back and forth on that issue many times. Nicole explained that we lowered the number to have a working board and that was done with the plan for a separate fundraising board. Pam stated that the other part of that is that our staff is growing and that staff are handling more responsibilities that used to be under the board. This has streamlined the work of the board to be governing and not managing. Nicole stated that the current number of Board members seems to be working efficiently. Nicole stated that whether or not we change the by-laws, we need to effectively recruit more Enhanced parents. Rona stated that a by-laws change might make it more of a top priority. Kristin stated that we want good board members, no matter which program their children are in. Rona stated that the teachers are probably a good way to reach out to particular parents. Stephanie stated that connecting those parents with a board member may be key in that process. Rona suggested that a board member or Stephanie do a brief presentation for the teachers. Pam volunteered to send an e-mail to the teachers. Stephanie said she can include that in one of her weekly updates.

C. Curriculum

Pam reported that she had circulated the Oxfam report via e-mail, but some people didn't receive it; she will recirculate it via e-mail. A model world cultures task force has been meeting monthly. Pam stated the term "world cultures" is outdated and that the term "global education" seems to better define what we do at ICS. The committee will propose a resolution at the next board meeting regarding adopting a specific plan for this. Rona said she feels the Oxfam plan is very user friendly and clear and that the knowledge, skills and disposition in regard to what we expect our students to learn through our program. Nicole asked if this would involve training as the Responsive Training program did. Pam said this would not require training; it involves the assumptions that would go behind our training. The good thing is that this would give us specific guidelines. Eric pointed out that this is not apolitical; Pam agreed and said she feels that is a good thing. Jurate stated that it would probably be a good idea to state this more strongly in our charter renewal. Rona agreed that the school would be very clear about this being its position. We have learned through adding Japanese and Arabic instruction that what we really need to focus on is culture. If anyone is interested in working on the FLAP grant with Jurate, let her know as soon as possible.

E. Human Resources

Becky reported that Jerry attended the most recent HR meeting to give input on the budget impact of some proposals. Two policies that the committee will be introducing in spring are changes to the bereavement policy and an Individual Professional Development Plan. We're looking at whether or not we can get a shorter wait time of our disability plan and are putting the tuition loan reimbursement plan on the back burner until we can look at possibly re-vamping the whole tuition reimbursement policy. A staff survey was distributed today to determine the staff priorities in regard to benefits. We're looking at plans that would save the school money, but not change the benefits for staff. Pedro recommended that ICS not sign any long term contracts with benefit providers. Becky stated that we haven't found that we have many options of providers.

IX. Public Comment Period

No one signed up to speak during the public comment period.

X. Old Business

Nicole stated that a few Board members volunteered at the last meeting to review the strategic plan. Rosina stated that she, Pedro and Anyabwile haven't had a time to meet yet, but will meet sometime before the next meeting. Pam announced that there is money in the budget if a few Board members want to attend the national charter school conference at the end of June in Washington, D.C. Jurate stated that the state conference is in Philadelphia at the end of April. Those interested should contact Jurate right away if you want to register. Nicole highly recommended the national conference, since the one she attended several years ago provided information that our Board is still using. Rosina and Pam said they'll look into the possibility of our board presenting about our strategic planning process at the state conference.

XI. New Business

Pedro asked if we can post the minutes earlier; Nicole stated that they have to be approved before they're official. Pedro asked if we could post them as "unofficial" minutes. Becky suggested watermarking them as "draft." Nicole agreed that the board would look into this possibility. Pam suggested that Megan circulate the draft to the Board before posting on the website. Nicole stated that we can't vote via e-mail. Becky suggested asking our legal counsel.

XII. Adjournment

Pedro moved to adjourn; Anyabwile seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:01p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda
Minutes from the January 2009 meeting
CEO report
Teachers' Report
PTA Report
Construction Update
December financials
Food Services Financial Report
Development Report
Curriculum Committee Minutes
Global Education information sheet
Human Resources Committee Minutes
Board Development Committee Report

**Independence Charter School
February 11, 2009
Resolutions**

ADOPTED

December Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of December 2008 in the amount of \$ 862,878.48 as presented to the Board.

Patricia Kind Foundation Grant

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School acknowledge and approve the acceptance of the Patricia Kind Foundation grant in the amount of \$ 10,000 in each of two consecutive years for the purposes of supporting the ICS Summer School program.

**Resolutions
DEFEATED
None**

**Resolutions
TABLED
None**