

**Independence Charter School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
January 26, 2011 7:00 pm**

**Board Members Present:** Rona Buchalter (via phone), John Eagen, Mary Fitzpatrick (via phone), Eli Lesser, Pam Prell (via phone), Pedro Rodriguez (via phone), Elsie Stern (via phone)

**Board Member(s) Absent:** Derrick Johnson, Fran Melmed, Dana Twyman, Naomi Wyatt

**Others Present:** Kristin Nocco, PTA Representative; Marco Roth, Parent; Jurate Krokys, CEO (via phone); Stephanie Bungard, Principal (via phone) Leonora Cravotta, Development Director (via phone); Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant

**I. Call to Order**

Rona called the meeting to order at 7:08p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

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

**III. Public Comment Period**

There were no public comments.

**IV. CEO Report**

Jurate noted that her name is listed as a Vice President of Philadelphia Charters for Excellence (PCE) when writing a public letter for that group, as per ICS protocol.

Rona asked Jurate if she had anything to report about the 2011-2012 budget; Jurate stated that will be in February.

Rona summarized the Keystone Staff status recommendation process. Jurate stated she is recommending four employees for this status: John asked whether the Board will see any applications which are not approved; Jurate stated that would be in a closed session. She clarified that for this year, these were the only four applicants. John moved the resolution; Pedro seconded. Due to several trustees calling into the meeting, a roll call vote: Mary-aye, Pam-aye, Pedro-aye, Eli-aye, Rona-aye, Elsie-aye, John-aye

Eli moved the contract termination resolution; John seconded. Jurate noted that the word “terminated” is used generally to refer to the contract being terminated either by ICS or by the employee. Pedro asked whether there’s anything unusual about any of the terminations which the Board needs to know. Jurate said there is not. Due to several trustees calling into the meeting, a roll call vote: Mary-aye, Pam-aye, Pedro-aye, Eli-aye, Rona-aye, Elsie-aye, John-aye

John moved the new hire resolution; Eli seconded. These teachers replace those who left during this year, including one teacher, Ryan Dunn, whose contract ran from September through late December. Due to several trustees calling into the meeting, a roll call vote: Mary-aye, Pam-aye, Pedro-aye, Eli-aye, Rona-aye, Elsie-aye, John-aye

Eli moved the leave approval resolution; John seconded. Rona noted that the Human Resources Committee is reviewing some of the details of ICS's FMLA and unpaid leave policies. Rona asked if the planning for long-term substitutes is working smoothly; Stephanie said it is. Due to several trustees calling into the meeting, a roll call vote: Mary-aye, Pam-aye, Pedro-aye, Eli-aye, Rona-aye, Elsie-aye, John-aye

## **V. Finance/Business**

**Rona** noted that due to this month's Board meeting being rescheduled, ICS's business manager was unable to attend tonight's meeting. John noted that there are no unusual financial occurrences. Jurate stated that Jerry (ICS's business manager) has reported that the food services program is doing well.

Rona asked for an audit update. John stated that the report is not yet ready; however, no deficiencies were found. Jurate noted that one reason it is taking longer than expected is that there is additional reporting required for federal stimulus funds. John stated that Jerry is looking into whether the rest of the bond money can be used toward paying down some debt. Jurate will follow up with Jerry about this. John asked whether we are getting a freezer with bond money as was planned. Jurate stated that the paperwork and payment were processed by the 12/31/10 deadline, but the delivery was not able to be done by 12/31 so Jerry is looking into whether or not we can still get it.

John reported that Jurate asked the Finance Committee to recommend that ICS donate \$500 towards the PCE general legal fund. John stated he feels this makes sense based on Jurate's recommendation and that the Finance Committee is in agreement. Rona stated she feels it's a good gesture. Eli asked whether we're specifically supporting the Palmer school's lawsuit; Jurate stated it will go toward a general legal fund. Jurate stated that we would want others to support us if we needed assistance at some point in the future.

Rona asked if we lease our computers; Jurate stated we do lease most of the computers and then buy them for a dollar when the lease is completed. Rona asked how the contract nurse was working out; Jurate stated it is working well and that an added advantage is that the agency sends a substitute if the regular nurse is absent. Someone asked what AppleHeart CDC is; Jurate explained this is the agency for the physician that we are required to have a doctor on-call to consult with our nurse, review IEPs, etc. Rona asked about the disbursement for Zeynep Turan; Jurate explained she is the consultant for the FLAP grant. Elsie moved the disbursement resolution; Eli seconded. Due to several trustees calling into the meeting, a roll call vote: Mary-aye, Pam-aye, Pedro-aye, Eli-aye, Rona-aye, Elsie-aye, John-aye

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

**PTA:** Rona thanked the PTA for adding other aspects to their report. Kristin Nocco asked if the PTA has the Board's approval to talk with our state representative to get an okay to have alcohol at the annual silent auction. Jurate clarified that she had talked with the PTA representatives about this due to proposed charter school changes, which would prohibit alcohol on school premises; the concern is that the legislation could pass after the silent auction is already planned. Jurate recommended that the PTA talk with Representative Tony Williams. Pam added that it may be helpful for the ICS PTA to educate the representatives about this event (i.e., it is for adults only, held only once a year, is a fundraiser for arts, etc). Jurate stated that we could also contact former ICS Board member Ryan Boyer who worked for Mr. Williams. Jurate and Rona agreed that

this sounds like a good plan, but added that the PTA is an independent entity, so they do not need official approval from the CEO and/or Board to proceed.

Kristin asked for better communication regarding letting parents know what the process is for finding long-term substitutes for teachers who are going out on family medical leave. Jurate stated that she doesn't feel it's appropriate due to confidentiality concerns for ICS to publicly discuss this until the staff person is ready to disclose that she or he is going to be going out on leave. Stephanie noted that she sends a letter out to parents to introduce the substitute. She added that we could send a basic letter about our process, including a timeline for the process. Several Board members agreed that it is a good idea to send out information about the general process. Rona recommended getting parents involved in developing that process. Stephanie stated that it's the same process as for any other teacher hire: interviews, demonstration lessons, and hiring. Kristin asked for clarity regarding what to expect on this. Mary stated that this is a personal issue and it's up to the teacher to decide when she's going to announce a pregnancy, etc. Rona stated that this is something the Human Resources Committee will need to review. Elsie stated we need to be sure parents are privy to ICS's long-term substitute policy. Jurate added that parent Cristina Vea has approached her regarding the process when an immersion teacher is going out on leave and that Cristina feels that if a substitute with both subject content teaching experience and Spanish fluency cannot be identified, that the priority should be on hiring the substitute who can teach the subject content, rather than Spanish language fluency, especially in the higher grades. Some trustees noted that ICS might want to get more parent input when it comes to the Spanish Immersion program.

Rona asked Kristin to clarify the PTA's concern about teachers following the communication protocol. Rona asked who would be the person to address these concerns; Stephanie said she would be the person. Pam clarified that it's on the communications chart that Jenny developed. Stephanie agreed to review this with teachers.

Rona noted another PTA concern was for ICS to make sure to hire more native Spanish speakers for both cultural diversity and language fluency. Jurate clarified that is an ICS priority; however, there are some hurdles in regard to someone from outside of the U.S. getting certified in Pennsylvania. Rona asked whether we need a concerted outreach effort, similar to the effort underway for more minority hiring. Jurate stated we have contacted Teachers Council again to consider some international candidates for 2011-2012. Rona stated that she feels this is an important discussion for the Board to have. Pam stated this doesn't seem like a policy issue, but more of a communication issue. Jurate will report back to the PTA and Board by March with the current process and plans.

## **VII. BOT Committee Reports**

**Board Development/Governance:** Elsie said the committee will soon have a resolution regarding Board member lottery preference. She asked that all committees send her an update of their mid-year review. She also asked trustees to get back to Elsie or Rona if your term or type of seat is incorrect on the Board list.

**Policy:** Eli stated that once Middle States is completed, the committee will work on clarifying the building use and admissions policies. Rona asked for a Middle States progress update. Jurate reminded the Board that the documents are available on Google Docs and the Board members can comment on them. She stated the next step is the strategic planning, which Eli is leading. Eli explained that we're coming to the end of the

Middle States process and that the work that's been accomplished should be a source of pride for all involved. He reported that a process document will be circulated in a day or so. The strategic planning group met for the first time yesterday. The group will review all the work to define two to four measurable goals; these goals can have sub-goals. The group meets again next Tuesday; after that, there will be different constituency discussion group with faculty. After that there will be parent conversations and then meetings with students. The group will revise the goals based on the results of those group meetings, then will present to the Board. Eli noted that although the goal is to get this to the Board's February meeting, that doesn't seem realistic, so a separate Board meeting may be needed. Jurate noted that we do want the Board to resolve that they accept the goals. Eli stated he feels the Board discussion should be the last constituency group meeting in order for them to have a say in the process. He added that Board members are invited to attend any of the group or constituency meetings. The headers are: Students, Curriculum, Teachers, Language. There are also ten to eleven themes that run through the work. Elsie stated it's still not clear to her what the responsibilities are in terms of the goals: how responsible is the Board for meeting the goals? what's the Board's relationship to the goals? Is the Board another constituency group or is it something else? Eli clarified that Middle States accreditation is written for all different kinds of schools and, therefore, the Board will be a constituency. He added that the Board can set out goals for itself to help the school meet the goals it sets. Jurate stated that Middle States requires asking for feedback from various stakeholders. It asks the constituency groups to be asked whether what the staff has determined is valid. Eli noted we want to make sure that many voices are heard in this. He stated there seems to be good feelings on the part of the teachers; they feel their input is being heard. Eli stated that although the Board has talked about using this process as the school's strategic planning process, since Middle States only allows for three to four strategic goals, we may want to do a separate strategic planning process. This will certainly make that process smoother. Eli noted that these are public documents.

**Curriculum:** A report was circulated by Pam prior to the meeting. Rona asked for any pertinent updates from the committee. Pam stated there will be more concrete items to focus on once the Middle States process is completed.

### **VIII. Old Business**

Pam stated that the discipline report, which was circulated previously to the trustees, from Nicole Kilcullen did not specifically talk about expulsion situations. Jurate stated that Nicole did review all the discipline processes, but didn't specifically note that in the report. Rona stated this report should put the Board at ease regarding ICS discipline processes.

Rona asked Jurate to give an update regarding ICS's charter renewal response to the district. Jurate reported that ICS's legal counsel Terry Henry prepared a letter, after confirming that there is no danger of money being withheld, noting what items we are unwilling to sign. He also drafted a simple one page statement (ie., that we will follow charter school laws, etc) that we would be happy to sign. ICS has not received a response from the School District; Jurate stated the other schools that wrote similar letters have not gotten a response either.

### **IX. New Business**

Statement of Financial interest will be mailed out to all trustees who were not able to get to the school for tonight's meeting; Board members will need to bring completed forms to the February meeting. These are required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Parent Marco Roth asked whether the remaining bond money (that was discussed under the Finance report) could be used to buy additional library books. Jurate stated that a portion of the bond money was already used to purchase library books and explained that the reason for having some money left was that our plans for building additional bathrooms was at first turned down and then approved, but there was not enough time at that point to get the project completed by the 12/31/10 deadline.

**X. Adjournment**

Pam moved for adjournment; Eli seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:39p.m.

**Handouts circulated at this meeting:**

Agenda  
CEO report  
Finance report  
November 2010 financials  
Board Governance & Development report  
PTA report

**Independence Charter School  
January 26, 2011  
Resolutions**

**ADOPTED**

**1. Keystone Staff Designation**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby awards ICS Keystone Staff status to ICS employees Odamis Fernandez-Sheinbaum, Luz Marina Guevara-Conde, LaVeta Meaux and Nabila Simms.

**2. Contract Terminations**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees acknowledges the termination of the following 2010-2011 employee agreements: Rachel Butler, Ximena Leyrer and Janet McGrath.

**3. New Teacher Hires**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees approves the hiring of the following new teachers: Anais Brutus, Toni Ingram, Jeffrey Rahman and Darlene Porter for the remainder of the 2010-2011 school year under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS contract.

**4. Leave Approvals**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees approves Family Medical Leave time for employees Alison Andrawos and Neyza Cabrera.

**5. November Disbursements**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of November 2010 in the amount of \$124,435.39 as presented to the Board.

**Resolutions  
DEFEATED**

**None**

**Resolutions  
TABLED**