

**Independence Charter School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
January 14, 2009 7:00 pm**

**Board Members Present:** Becky Baehr, Anyabwile Banko'le, Rona Buchalter, Rosina Miller, Kristin Nocco, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez

**Board Members Absent:** Eric Cramer, Nicole Perkins Kilcullen

**Others Present:** Jurate Krokys, CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Michael Farrell, Amy Leigh & Kelly Nelms, teachers; Jerry Santilli, Santilli & Thomson; Cristina Veal, PTA Liaison; Tina Kluetmeirer, parent.

**I. Call to Order**

**Co-President Pam Prell** called the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes were approved unanimously with two changes: the November minutes (not the October minutes) were approved at the December meeting and no oath of office took place at that meeting.

**III. CEO Report**

**Jurate** reported that the National Geographic Bee was held last night and was lots of fun. The Spelling Bee is coming up at the end of February. Grades 3-8 will be watching the inauguration at the Kimmel Center; Board members are welcome to attend. The cost is \$5 per person. K-2 students will watch it at the school. PDE sent a letter regarding our getting an extra \$1,000 in Title I money for making AYP again. Today Jurate gave a presentation about the EPIC program to the teachers. Whether or not we get the funding, we are designated as an EPIC school. On Tuesday Jurate participated in a focus group run by the School District to give input regarding possible School District initiatives, such as the possibility of their contracting out their ten worst performing schools. Jurate also circulated information about the Middle States certification process; the process has a lot of similarities to our strategic planning process, so she suggested that we may want to use the Middle States process for that. ICS will pay Middle States about \$1,000 to work with us on this process. Jurate expects to have an update for the Board within the next month or so and then the Board can decide whether or not this would suffice as the strategic planning process. Jurate also circulated the results of the 2007-2008 parent survey. There was overall satisfaction with the curriculum; most dissatisfaction was with transportation and meals (note: that was with the old meal program). We'll be conducting another survey at the next report card conference time. Kristin clarified that we hope to have the computer lab room available that day (with an NTA available to staff the room) and to offer free dress down tickets for parents completing the survey at the school on report card day only. Pam recommended that since the survey deals mainly with curriculum, she would like the Curriculum Committee to review the questions. Kristin stated that she would like the Curriculum Committee to have its own specific survey; she fears it may become too long otherwise. Pam suggested that we might want to focus on one extra area each year. Last year 118 surveys were returned.

#### **IV. PTA Report**

**Cristina** reported that there was no meeting in January. The PTA assisted several ICS families who were in financial need before the holidays; those families were identified by the counselors. All staff received an ICS mug. The PTA will be sponsoring an ice skating event on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### **V. Teachers' Report**

**Kelly** reported that the staff was very appreciative of the end of the year gift and party. Amy reported that at least 30 ICS alumni will be attending Monday's first alumni event.

#### **VI. Construction Update**

**Robin** was unable to attend; her written report was circulated earlier this week. Becky asked if it's too expensive to get bars instead of grates. Jurate said it is too expensive; a very light colored mesh will be used.

#### **VII. Committee Reports**

##### **A. Finance**

**Rosina** asked Jerry to review the financial report. Jerry circulated an updated financial report. He reported that the building financing soon will be moved to the Worlds of Opportunity Board's financial statement. Jerry will be sure the ICS Board gets updates at least quarterly. There will be limited expenses (legal, audit and insurance) involved. Eric Cramer, David Webber and Terry Henry currently comprise the current Worlds Board. Rosina clarified that this means the \$18 million bond financing will be taken out of the ICS financial. Jerry noted that the variance on line 5 on page 2 is due to ICS having fewer students who receive special education services than was originally anticipated. And that the variance on line 6 is due to across the board cuts in the IDEA program. He reported that ICS's federal allocation will be increasing. That increase will be in Title I (for underachieving and/or underprivileged students), Title IIA (class size reduction and/or professional development) and Title III (ESOL). We are currently on target with expenses; and the federal increase will help offset the other variances. Pam asked if we are currently a school-wide school for federal funds; Jerry stated that we are. However, if clarified that if ICS goes below 50% of students eligible for free or reduced meals, funding would be decreased significantly. In order to go under the School District's umbrella for federal programs, a school needs at least 50%. He suggested making sure to advertise our application process in areas of the city that have large numbers of families with lower incomes. Jurate added that sibling preference also works against the rate and that we might want to look at that issue when we go for charter renewal. Pam asked why afterschool is still in the budget; Jerry said that change will be made during the budget adjustment period. Jerry reported that utility bills still seem to be within budget, but that we'll know for sure after another month or so. The utility estimate was based on square footage. Jerry noted that we may need to look at whether or not we want to limit access to the building on non-student and teacher days (i.e., during winter break and weekends) to make sure we're not paying too much to allow just a few people to work. Rosina noted that due to the timeline for preparing the 2009-2010 budget, the February Finance Committee meeting has been changed to January 30<sup>th</sup> at 8:30a.m. Our benefits specialist Bob McIntyre will be invited to that meeting to discuss

anticipated benefit costs for the upcoming school year. Jerry stated he will not have an accurate food services report for the Board until the February meeting due to some parents still working on paying off high account balances. He noted that ICS staff is working diligently to ensure parents are paying these balances. Kristin asked how we're doing outside of some high balances. Jerry said he just received Linton's November invoice, so it's too early to tell. At the February meeting, Jerry will give a September-December report.

Rosina moved the disbursement resolution; Becky seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Rosina reviewed the budget timeline and clarified; this will require staff and committees to adhere to the schedule. The Finance Committee will then be able to bring the proposed budget to the Board at the March meeting and then the final budget proposal to the April meeting. Rosina stated that the Board was already aware of the America-Italy Society grant, but has not yet passed a resolution and asked Jurate to discuss the Lenfest grant. Jurate explained that this is ICS's third Lenfest grant. We received \$50,000 this year and are very happy to have received this, especially given the current national economy. She stated that the Finance Committee recommends that we use these funds towards next year's technology budget. Rosina moved the Lenfest and America-Italy Society grant resolutions; Becky seconded. The motions passed unanimously. Rosina noted that the Finance Committee asked Development to adjust its budget so that it is realistic.

## **B. Development**

**Leonora** reviewed a budget adjustment, which includes an \$88,000 reduction in expected income. She explained that this is due to lower income from the calendar event, less than the hoped for amount from Lenfest, and anticipating donations from a fundraising board which has not yet been developed. We continue to request grants from various places and she continues to work on building relationships. Pam asked about the bookkeeping regarding the Board Give-Get and how we estimate those donations, since it seems that we may be inadvertently double-counting the expected income (since Board members can either donate money themselves or find others to donate, such as by attending the calendar event). Leonora said she has tried to make sure not to double-count those types of donations. However, the Give-Get estimate is based on ten Board members and we only have nine at this time. Pam stated that we may want to have that projection somewhere else, since fulfillment could be made through recruiting attendees for the calendar event, etc. Leonora is working on identifying two to three corporate donors for EITC. Becky asked what happened with RCAP; Jurate explained that we have not received any RCAP funds and all of last year's RCAP funds were allocated to other groups. That means we'd need to start the process all over again. If we apply again, it would most likely need to be community-based project, such as building a gym that would be accessible to the community; we would start with Senator Farnese. Pedro stated that we may still be able to get smaller grants from the state. Leonora gave an update on plans for a fundraising board. Leonora and Jurate have been meeting with a small group of advisors and are working on cultivating relationships. Leonora's goal is to have several people in place by August; she welcomes potential fundraising board recommendations from the Board. Kristin asked whether there was much response to the appeal

to in-coming kindergarten parents. Jurate clarified that we may need an alumni parent to help spearhead that to get more parents interested. Leonora said there have been very good responses to concrete requests, such as donations for a library. Jurate clarifies that the EITC projection will have to be put in next year's budget. Kristin asked about the question about PNC's fees for working with money management. Rosina explained that ICS has been paying a fee to PNC in order for PNC to move around our funds to get better interest rates. Usually the fees for this service had been covered by the interest that was made by moving the money around; however, due to the current economy, the fee charged by PNC seems significant, so we may want Jerry to take back that responsibility. Rona asked whether the Development budget adjustments recommended by Development will be adding another \$88,000 burden to the budget. Jurate and Rosina explained that our finances are sound and that we'll make cuts if necessary. They reminded everyone that Jerry is very conscientious and wants to make sure people are aware of concerns.

### **C. Curriculum**

**Pam** reported that none of the current issues under discussion are ready for resolutions. The committee is working on a more formal process for reviewing our curriculum.

### **D. Human Resources**

**Becky** reported that she will attend the re-scheduled Finance Committee and will re-schedule the next meeting Human Resources meeting to January 30<sup>th</sup> (immediately following the Finance meeting). Pam asked why a bereavement change wouldn't require a resolution. Becky explained it would require a resolution, but the committee is just looking at that possibility at this point.

### **E. Board Development**

No written report was submitted. Pedro reported that he has still not received the last Board member survey. As soon as he receives that person's survey, he will be able to provide a summary.

## **VIII. Public Comment Period**

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

## **IX. Old Business**

Pam asked Becky to update the Board on her legal services recommendation and whether we need a resolution. Becky recommends that ICS continue to use Cozen O'Connor. She stated that since we won't have as much pro bono work from now on, we need to limit the number of times we contact Cozen O'Connor to be sure to keep within our budget. Becky noted that Jerry does not yet have a recommended budgeted amount for legal services. Rosina clarified that we'll need to be very mindful of how often we're calling so that we stay within the budget. Becky moved a resolution:

*Be it hereby resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees names the law firm of Cozen O'Connor LLP as general counsel.* Rosina seconded. Anyabwile stated he feels this is the right choice, but that it is good the Board went through the process of reviewing several potential firms. The motion passed unanimously.

**X. New Business**

**Pam** stated she circulated information to the Board regarding board development events. She stated that we may also want to have a Board retreat. Kristin said she thinks a retreat is a good idea and that she is going to try to attend one of the events. Pam asked to get feedback from whoever attends any of the events and for members to let Jurate and Megan know if you're interested so they can help with registration. She noted that Nicole brought back a lot of useful information from the national conference she attended several years ago. Pam also asked that a few members volunteer to review our current strategic plan and critique where we are in the process. Pedro, Anyabwile and Rosina volunteered; Megan will e-mail the strategic plan to the whole board. They will report back at future meetings. Pam recommended that we may want to vote to extend the current plan and/or be sure that certain items be included with the Middle States certification plan. This will be occurring at the same time as we prepare for charter renewal.

**XI. Adjournment**

**Anyabwile** moved to adjourn; Becky seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda

Minutes from the December 2008 meeting

CEO report

Letter from the PA Dept. of Ed. Re: AYP Title I funds

Middle States Certification information

2007-2008 Parent Survey Results

Teachers' Report

PTA Report

Construction Update

Finance Committee Minutes

November financials

Development Committee Report

Fundraising Board Status

Revised Development Budget

Human Resources Committee Minutes

**Independence Charter School  
January 14, 2009  
Resolutions**

**ADOPTED**

**November Disbursements**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of November 2008 in the amount of \$ 666,158.40 as presented to the Board.

**Lenfest Grant**

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School acknowledge and approve the acceptance of the Brook Lenfest Grant for \$ 50,000.00 for the purposes of supporting the technology program at Independence Charter School for the 2009-2010 School Year.

**America-Italy Society Grant**

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School acknowledge and approve the acceptance of the America-Italy Society grant for \$ 12,750 for the purposes of supporting an Italian Afterschool Club language and culture program for 2008.

**Legal Services**

Be it hereby resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees names the law firm of Cozen O'Connor LLP as general counsel.

**Resolutions  
DEFEATED  
None**

**Resolutions  
TABLED  
None**