

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2009 7:00 pm**

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

Board Members Absent: Eric Cramer

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Amy Leigh (Tr. Rep for meeting) & Kelly Nelms, teachers; Jerry Santilli, Santilli & Thomson; Maureen DiStefano, Tina Kluetmeier, & Elsie Stern, parents; Susan Burrows, PTA Liaison; Robin Kohles, Owner's Rep (& Parent)

I. Call to Order

Co-President Pam called the meeting to order at 7:25pm. She apologized for the late start; it was due to Board budget training. She welcomed the two of the three Parent Seat nominees, who were able to attend. Maureen and Elsie introduced themselves. The Board thanked them for attending and noted that it is great that there are several nominees this year; Pam reminded the nominees that there are lots of leadership opportunities. The Board members introduced themselves.

II. Approval of Minutes

The April minutes were approved unanimously with three changes "for potential ICS friends and supporters" Caroline Buck Foundation"

III. CEO Report

Jurate noted that Pr. Stephanie is currently at the SOSNA meeting giving a presentation about ICS. She reminded the Board that the Principal now writes the staff portion of the Staff Development and Program Development portions of the CEO report. Jurate invited all Board, Staff and Committee members to her annual picnic. Jurate asked the Board whether or not they feel ICS staff and students should be asked to complete the surveys recently circulated by the School District of Philadelphia and it brings into question the independence of charter schools. She noted that Ben Rayer from the School District did contact her to apologize for the lack of charter school input. Charter schools were not included in the process of preparing these surveys. Pam pointed out that there are a lot of areas that do not apply to charter schools. Rona noted that charter schools are supposed to have oversight of their schools and have no idea how the results will be used. Becky asked what other schools are doing. Jurate said some are distributing them and some are not. The parent surveys were sent via mail by the School District. Nicole asked whether we have the right to decide whether or not to make the decision about the teacher portion of the survey. Pam said she thinks we do have the right. Jurate said we could have a discussion with the teachers about it. Rona suggested distributing them to the teachers with an explanatory note; Jurate said she feels it would be important to meet with the teachers to be sure they understand the concept of independence for charter schools. Pam asked Amy what her first instinct is; Amy said data is usually a good thing. However, she pointed out that teachers who want to complain may be more apt to complete it. Pedro suggested that we have the students complete it and keep the information. Pam added that would need to include sending the surveys in after making copies. Nicole stated that in the case of charter schools, if a parent gives negative feedback, they can move their child from the school. She further said

she doesn't want to add to the us/them between charter schools and the School District. After discussion the Board recommended that the surveys be distributed, but that ICS send a letter to the Superintendent to state our concerns about the process. Pam suggested that one of our teacher reps contact the School District. Amy agreed to call and Jurate will write a letter.

Jurate reviewed the most current high school acceptance information. She thanked Counselor Anne Hall for her work in this process. Jurate noted that ICS will be receiving a citation from City Council regarding our Goldman Sachs award. Kristin Nocco and Jurate met with a neighborhood business person who is very interested in a partnership with ICS regarding entrepreneurship. Jurate stated that she feels he would be a potential Board member. Jurate stated that she has re-worked the stimulus fund plans and is pleased with the results. Jurate will be attending the Schools that Can conference in Chicago this week. ICS was nominated for candidacy; there is not a cost at this point yet. Rona asked if their validation studies are done on a fee for service basis. Jurate said she thinks that is just in development at this point. Jurate stated that we are now having extended days for 7th & 8th graders and noted that the proposed 2009-2010 calendar is in tonight's Board packet for final review and adoption.

IV. PTA Report

Susan reported that the Silent Auction was a success, raising over \$10,000. The newly elected officers for 2009-2010 are: Conswelia McCourt, President; Luciana Boone, Vice President; Stephanie Kindt, Membership; Liz Reed, Treasurer; Nanette Johnson, Secretary; Cristina Veal, Board Liaison.

V. Teachers' Report

Amy reported that the Middle School dances were very successful. There will be a Barnes & Noble summer book fair to try to help parents locate the required summer reading books. Kristin asked whether or not we can get a bulk amount to sell here at the school; Amy said it's unlikely the store would do that due to their wanting to get foot traffic. Amy said we might be able to order some on-line. Kristin said it can be expensive for some families to get to center city to get to the store. Pam suggested that ICS figure out a way for parents to get the required books before the last day of school and then suggest that Barnes & Noble have copies of the recommended books on hand. Anyabwile asked about the mandatory book reports; he recommended that ICS be very clear with teachers, parents and students as to how that will be integrated into grades. Kristin noted that the Middle School Night was well organized and beneficial. Rona noted that it should be an annual event. Discussion ensued that we could make this two separate events: one to highlight our great middle school program and one for the details of the transition.

VI. Development Report

Leonora reported that the wine tasting event is on June 19th; she thanked the Jackson family for donating the wine and thanked the Board for inviting guests. She reminded Board members that this is a good "Give Get" opportunity. Kristin asked about the library funds; Jurate said the goal is to open the library in the Fall 2009. Jurate stated that we're waiting to hear on a grant, since the funding that was expected did not come through this past Fall. Rona asked if we're developing planning lists (i.e., books, technology, etc). Leonora stated that is partially completed because it was required as part of the grant application

VII. Construction Update

No report was circulated. **Robin** reported that we just signed a contract with the PA Horticultural Society. The Facilities Committee sent out a survey to the staff regarding the building; results are being compiled. Rosina asked about our spending the money that is left in the bond. Jerry clarified that we have two years from settlement to spend it. Robin estimates that we'll have about \$75,000 left over after phase II of the playground is completed. Rosina asked for a detailed update by the June meeting, so we can be sure to plan for this use by the September 2009 deadline or ask for an extension on using the funds.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Finance

Rosina turned the report over to Jerry. He noted that our cash position is strong. He stated that a new bank account has been opened for the Worlds of Opportunity Foundation and that information will start appearing soon and will start getting quarterly updates in July. Pam asked how the Worlds audit is done; Jerry explained that it's separate, but that we will also see a column for it on the ICS audit. Jerry said that is because ICS appoints their Board; current members are Eric Cramer, Terry Henry and David Webber. Worlds also owns 1600 Lombard Associates; 1600 Lombard Associates owns the building. Rosina asked whether or not we can resolve that. Jerry agreed to follow up on that. Nicole clarified that 1600 Lombard Associates was bought by Worlds in order for ICS to be able to step in on buying the building. Pam noted that we want to be sure that the wider community understanding this information. Unearned revenue is the funds from the Caroline Buck Foundation. There are no major variances in the budget. Jerry anticipates that ICS will end the fiscal year with a \$300,000 surplus. Jerry noted that an error was made in our monthly payment to Citizens Alliance; a refund has been requested, but we will soon need to pay the next monthly payment anyway. Jerry asked for extended time at the June meeting, since the Board will need to pass the four (4) separate stimulus funding streams and the 2009-2010 budget. He noted that the only definite money at this point is Title I. Pennsylvania is still reviewing the other allocations; the governor and legislature are in discussions. Jerry stated that documentation will be crucial. For example, we will need sign in and sign out sheets for any extra payments to teachers for working for extracurricular activities, such as extended day programs for students. Jerry explained that by law we are not allowed to amend our budget for at least 90 days after it is passed. Pam asked whether the Board should discuss the stimulus suggestions. Jurate explained that this has been developed with input from the Principal and Curriculum Specialist, who have received input from a variety of staff. They gathered "wish lists" and worked through what the most beneficial items would be. Some suggestions were more Responsive Classroom/Developmental Design training, increased after school options, etc. She stated that she and the team took under advisement recommendations from the Curriculum Committee to be sure that we were only funding things that we could easily end after two years or be able to fund at that point. Nicole asked how these type of items will be reviewed by the federal reviewers. Jerry said he doesn't anticipate a problem with that; the most important thing will be to document everything. Rona recommended that staff hired with these funds during these two years be responsible for putting systems in place; Jurate agreed that is the plan. Pedro asked if Jerry can distribute the information before the June meeting; he agreed.

Rosina moved the March disbursement resolution; Pedro seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Rosina moved the Santilli & Thomson contract extension motion; Becky seconded. Rosina noted that our lawyer has reviewed and approved it. The motion carried unanimously. Kristin asked if Jerry has the food

service budget to share with the Board tonight. Jerry stated he doesn't feel comfortable with sharing it yet; however, he agreed to e-mail the preliminary report that was reviewed at the Finance Committee to the full Board. Jurate clarified that we need Linton to adopt the same type of accounting procedures as ICS. Jerry noted that Linton had not been cutting off the month on the last day, but have now corrected that. Jerry stated that we also need to be sure that our deposits are made in a timely manner and that we need to institute better accounting practices for the program. Jerry said he hopes to have a report for next month. Rosina asked if there are decisions that the Board needs to make now for next year. Kristin said it's hard to estimate surpluses without a good budget. Kristin asked Ramzy whether Linton is tracking things like depreciation; Ramzy said he is not sure. Kristin stated we are waiting for a meeting to be set up with Linton, Ramzy, Jerry's staff, etc.

B. Curriculum

Pam reported that there's a typo in the report; the FLAP grant is due May 2009. The report notes that we are phasing out the Voyager program and will be working with CLI (Children's Literacy Initiative); we are very excited about that. The committee will bring a recommendation to the Board regarding the purchase of curriculum. The Global Ed Task Force will be presenting a resolution at the June meeting; it breaks down the goals of the strategic plan. Pam will circulate a draft as soon as possible, so questions can be asked before the June meeting.

C. Human Resources

Becky reported that the committee reviewed the HR goals of the Strategic Plan; Becky circulated hard copies. Becky noted that there will be some changes in the structure of health benefits, but no change to the benefits. Jurate stated that she and Jerry have met with our benefits consultant Bob McIntyre and have a plan to recommend to the HR Committee. Becky noted that there was an overall 15% increase in the cost of benefits, which ICS cannot afford, which necessitates the need for staff to pay higher co-pays, but get reimbursed for the difference during the next school year. Becky noted that the committee will be ensuring that the Employee Handbook gets updated; the suggestion is that we might hire a temp. Pedro recommended adding a line item to the stimulus package to help give more support to teachers. Jurate stated she will look into it. Amy said the issue came up in the teacher survey and she will pass on the information to the Board. Rona said that that we need to appoint a "Right to Know" officer, as well as adopt a policy and procedure for timely handling of these requests. Pam asked Jurate to look into that to prepare a draft to go to the Policy Committee. Pam asked if that would be the same as an ombudsperson; Rona said they are two different things. Nicole said the recommendation can be sent to her, since the Policy Committee hasn't been meeting. Pam asked whether we can ask the Parent Board reps could take on the ombudsperson role; Rona said they might, but it might need to be a separate entity and might be better if it's not a Board member. Pedro said it's also a legal issue. Pam asked Susan whether the PTA can discuss the possibility of having a Board Liaison/Ombudsperson. Rona noted that all the information should be posted on the website once it's determined.

D. Board Development

No report was circulated. **Pedro** reported that we are getting some exciting nominations for Board seats. He noted that after the committee meets, he'll send information to the whole Board. Pam asked whether the names and information will be circulated to the whole Board; Pedro agreed to send one document that includes all the names of people who are currently under consideration. Nicole stated that she will not be running for re-election.

IX. Public Comment Period

No one signed up for the Public Comment Period. Kristin stated that several parents want to know what the ICS lice policy is. Jurate agreed to revisit the policy with the nurses and that we'll post it on the list serve. Kristin recommended that it also be put on the website. Jurate said we follow the state policy. Rona noted this is a good example of our need to have policies available in the front office and on the website. Pam noted that administration needs to revisit the policy and taken under consideration the comments made tonight. Jurate thanked all the parents and kids who attended yesterday's charter school rally in Harrisburg.

X. Old Business

Pam reported that there are two resolutions up for adoption. Anyabwile moved the Strategic Plan Extension motion; Becky seconded. Rona asked if we have a timeframe for moving to accreditation; Jurate agreed to bring that to the June meeting. Becky recommended a friendly amendment "the 3-year" plan. The motion passed unanimously with the friendly amendment.

Rosina moved the school calendar motion; Rona seconded. Nicole noted that as a parent with kids in the public school system and ICS, having different report card and professional development days are difficult to manage. Discussion ensued regarding whether the Spring Professional Development Day could be moved to the Monday after Spring Break. Megan noted that we couldn't do that due to standardizes testing requirements. Amy noted that the Middle School teachers have discussed the possibility of having evening report card conferences to accommodate parents. Rosina mentioned possibly changing the day to noon-9p.m. instead. Pam said that if we need to amend the calendar later for a minor change like that, we could. The motion carried unanimously.

XI. New Business

Pam reported the several Board members attended the PA Charter School conference; the general consensus was that the workshops were valuable. Pedro reported that there could be problems filing the 990 forms this year; Pedro agreed to follow up with Jerry about that. Rona noted that Jurate bought a book by Brian Carpenter; Board members can borrow it from Jurate. Pam recommended that new Board members have access to it first. The national conference is in June; several Board members are attending. Our attorney Terry Henry will be offering a pre-meeting Board presentation at 6p.m. before the June meeting. Rona asked whether the idea of a Board retreat is still on that table. Pam said it is, but that it will most likely have to be held in the Fall. Pam said we are currently addressing needs with these pre-meetings.

XII. Adjournment

Becky moved to adjourn; Nicole seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda

Minutes from the April 2009 meeting

CEO report

Proposed 2009-2010 School Calendar

Teachers' Report

PTA Report

March financials

Development Report

Curriculum Committee Minutes

Human Resources Committee Minutes

Invitation to Jurate's Annual ICS Picnic

Copies of School District Student and Staff Survey

Independence Charter School

May 13, 2009

Resolutions

ADOPTED

Proposed Resolutions

May 13, 2009

1. March Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of March 2009 in the amount of \$347,683.12 as presented to the Board.

2. Santilli & Thomson Contract

Be it resolved that inasmuch as the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School has maintained a professional education business services agreement with Santilli and Thomson and inasmuch as the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School wishes to continue this business agreement at the conclusion of the current agreement, therefore be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School sign a three year contract extending business services from July 1, 2009 to June 2012 for the sum not to exceed the following:

Year 1: \$ 65,000

Year 2: \$ 66,950

Year 3: \$ 68,958

3. Strategic Plan Extension

Whereas Independence Charter School is embarking on the Middle State Accreditation process which will drive reflection and clarification of institution goals and direction involving the board, administration, staff and parent community,

BE it resolved that the three-year Strategic Plan, adopted in April 2007, be extended through 2011 at which point a new plan should be in place as a result of the Middle States Accreditation process.

4. 2009-2010 School Year Calendar

Be it resolved that the ICS Board of Trustees approve the attached 2009-2010 calendar.

Independence Charter School

FINAL 2009-2010 Calendar

(subject to change)

The school day will begin at 8:30a.m. and will end at 3:30p.m. (except on Early Dismissal Days)

DATE	Early Dismissal at 2:30p.m. EVERY Wednesday, starting on 9/16/09
Mon-Fri, 8/31-9/4	Required In-Service Days for All ICS Teachers
Mon, 9/7	Labor Day holiday
Tues, 9/8	First Day of School for 1 st -8 th Graders
Thurs, 9/10	First Day of School for KINDERGARTNERS
Mon, 9/28	SCHOOL CLOSED (Yom Kippur holiday)
Mon, 10/12	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY- NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
Wed, 11/11	SCHOOL CLOSED (Veterans' Day holiday)
Thur & Fri 11/26-27	SCHOOL CLOSED (Thanksgiving holiday)
Wed, 12/23	REPORT CARD DAY- NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
Thur 12/24-Fri 1/1	WINTER BREAK- NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
Mon, 1/4	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY- NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
Tue, 1/5	Students Return to School
Mon, 1/18	SCHOOL CLOSED (Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday)
Mon, 2/15	SCHOOL CLOSED (Presidents' Day holiday)
Thur, 3/25	REPORT CARD DAY- NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
Fri, 3/26	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY- NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
Mon-Fri, 3/29-4/2	SPRING BREAK- NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
Mon, 5/31	SCHOOL CLOSED (Memorial Day holiday)
Fri, 6/18	Last Day for Students

**Resolutions
DEFEATED
None**

**Resolutions
TABLED**