

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2010 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Becky Baehr, Rona Buchalter, John Eagen, Eli Lesser Rosina Miller, Kristin Nocco, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez, Elsie Stern

Board Member(s) Absent: None

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Michael Farrell, Natalie Henderson, William Loskoch, Ericka Morris, Kelly Nelms, Shavon Norris, & Andrea Yanez, teachers; Kristen Denahan, Counselor; Kareem Thomas, Upper School Dean; Kristen Long, Curriculum Specialist; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Robin Kohles, parent & Owner's Rep.

I. Call to Order

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

II. Executive Session

The Board went into an executive session at 7p.m. to discuss confidential personnel matters relating to next year's budget. The Board returned from executive session at 7:40p.m.

III. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the February meeting were approved unanimously.

IV. Public Comment

The Board agreed to move the public comment period to this point in the meeting for tonight.

Tr. Shavon Norris (ICS Dance/Movement teacher): I acknowledge that I do not know the details of the situation regarding ICS letting a student return after bringing a weapon to school. That decision makes me question my relationship with ICS. We need to mean what we say and say what we mean and remain faithful to our standards. The act of keeping the student in school makes the student miss learning a valuable lesson. ICS is a microcosm of the world. By not meaning what we say, we are robbing this student from learning and growing. We are teaching that the next time s/he doesn't abide by the rules, s/he'll be excused. I don't want that to be part of my teaching legacy. We are speaking volumes to the rest of the students. They are making decisions about fairness and what we say and do. Several years ago, students in similar situations, though a lot younger, were dismissed from our school for similar violations. Is separate equal to you? An elephant's faithful 100% (quoting from a favorite book). What they look like, sound like, act like. Do some students not get consequences? I am offended.

Rona stated that the situation to which Shavon refers is not yet settled.

V. Finance Report

Rosina asked Jerry to review the financial reports. Jerry stated the cash position is strong with very few receivables. The student subsidy is running a little higher than expected due to additional students receiving special education services. One major variance (page 3, line 41) is due to substitute teachers used during a lot of long-term leave situations. William asked about the IDEA computer budget; Jurate explained that these will be purchased to be used in the classroom primarily by students who receive special education services. Rosina moved the disbursement resolution; Eli seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Jerry reviewed the Food Services financials and reported that January was the first month that we've had a surplus. Kristin asked whether we get any money for the after school snacks. Jerry explained that we do get funding for those. He also noted that free breakfasts and paid lunches continue to run behind budget projections. Kristin reported that the new food services RFP is ready and has been reviewed by our legal counsel. Prospective vendors will be having a walk-through on April 8th. She added that we confirmed that we do definitely have to go out to bid. Kristin said that we still want to purchase a walk-in freezer. Jerry said that if the financial situation continues as it is, we should be able to purchase the freezer. Jurate stated the state did just send out an announcement that there will probably be an opportunity to apply for a grant that could pay for things like freezers and that she will share more information when it becomes available. Rosina moved the Citizens Alliance resolution; Becky seconded. Jerry explained that when the school opened in 2001, ICS received a loan from Citizens Alliance to have improvements done. The interest has been costing us a lot of money. Since the cash is available to pay off the loan, he recommends that we pay it off in order to save about \$30,000. Rosina clarified that the reason we didn't pay it off earlier, is that we weren't sure whether or not we'd need to have that cash on hand when we moved to the new building. Pedro said we should find out whether or not it could be returned to us if Citizens Alliance dissolves. Rona stated that we have the debt and owe this amount. John asked what the status is of Citizens Alliance. Jerry stated that Paul Levy (from the Center City District) has been appointed to oversee Citizen's Alliance. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. CEO Report

Jurate passed out several items. One was the doctoral thesis written by Andrew Sparks, who interviewed several ICS board and staff members last year; another was ICS's request for increased enrollment. She explained that when we projected a maximum of 732 students we were still in our old space; it is clear now that we can accommodate some additional students. To request this increase, the School District requires us to complete the same application that schools who want to start a new school need to complete. She added that the charter school renewal finalization seems to be backed up due to all the snow days. The renewal decision is now expected about 12 weeks later than we had anticipated. Jurate also circulated the revised calendar.

Jurate reported that ICS students continue to participate in many exciting things. Our goal is to have a Middle States draft by the end of June and then will finalize it in September with the inspection being in November or in the spring (November would be our first choice). Elsie asked when the board will participate; Pam stated that part comes at the end. Jurate thanked the board members who visited classrooms recently and thanked the teachers who hosted. Pam stated she will send out Google Apps notes so everyone can share their comments and concerns from the visits. Jurate stated that she's now heard back from all the other host charter schools and she will have those schedules ready soon. Rosina moved the calendar resolution; Becky seconded. Eli asked if the teachers can comment on the revision. William stated the teachers realize that some time needs to be added to the calendar. He stated that some teachers feel that the time could have been made up by doing away with the rest of Early Dismissal Wednesday meetings and adding a minute or two each day. He added that the School Works report noted, many teachers feel that Wednesday early dismissal meetings are not used for professional development about best practices, etc. Rosina stated that canceling the Wednesday meetings is not the same as canceling the Professional Development time. (Because Wednesday early dismissal is not necessarily for professional development.) Pam stated that should be a separate discussion. Becky and Rosina stated that the initial reasoning for early dismissal was to have a time when teachers could meet---not necessarily professional development. Jurate stated we can look at the remaining professional

development/teacher planning time. Jurate stated the calendar is a different issue. She noted that we had discussed that we could do is add 15 minutes to the middle school classes; however, that would just add 15 minutes to whatever the last class of the day was. Jurate stated we will also be sure to have additional days to next year's calendar as a cushion. She noted that we avoided adding more days at the end of the school year and we needed to add instructional time for PSSA testing---not for specific test prep, but to ensure teachers have had a chance to introduce concepts. Pam stated that we have a marking period and need to add days to that. William noted that at least 1/3 of the teachers won't be able to be here on those two days. Next year ICS might want to add instructional time for Middle School to try to avoid this happening again. Eli stated he wants to be sure we address the teachers professional development concerns. Elsie stated that in the future we need to make sure the Board votes on these types of things before spreading the information to the community. Jurate pointed out that she did get approval from the Executive Committee before circulating the calendar information to parents. Rona stated that we knew the School District was doing this and that we could not please everyone. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Non-Board Committee Reports

PTA report: A written update was circulated.

Teachers Report: A written update was circulated. Eli asked that the hate speech issue be brought to the Policy Committee to review. Pam stated that the bullying policy may be something that could be revised to reflect our community values. Elsie asked whether the curriculum addresses gender identity. It was noted that the Curriculum Committee has discussed this issue from time to time. Jurate stated that there are some indicators that we need additional professional development in this area. William pointed out that it is important to address it, whether students are thinking they are funny or using a term in a threatening way.

Development Report: A written report was circulated. Leonora pointed out that we did not get renewed for the Carolyn Buck grant. She also pointed out that she will be contacting some Founding Board members to participate in the Language Day on May 7th. Mary Ramirez has agreed to be our keynote speaker. Jurate pointed out that this is a great launch for our school. Elsie asked what the plan is to meet our general goal. Leonora stated we are targeting donations, rather than general goals. Leonora stated we are behind.

Construction Report: A written report was circulated. Robin stated that Ken Roscioli's work schedule may not allow for him to complete the canopy project within the timeframe, so Robin is talking with another person. William asked where the money is coming from for the garden plans. Robin stated that is partly in the bond funding. Rona stated it is also a long-term plan. Kristin stated it seems like a good idea to have a master plan.

VIII. Committee Reports

HR Committee: Becky circulated a draft pay scale that the HR Committee has been working on. She made it clear that this is only a draft and that we are still working on it. We want to move to a grid approach to even the playing field in order to treat all teachers fairly. Pam asked whether this will be competitive if we're only giving people half credit for years of teaching prior to ICS. Jurate noted that the teachers' survey emphasized the need to value teachers after they are working here, rather than right when they walk into the door when we don't yet know their value to ICS. She added that teacher pay raises are our top priority in next year's budget. Elsie asked why the amounts in the steps are uneven and whether this does away with the annual percentage increase. Becky stated the steps are uneven because of the path of a teacher's development. She clarified that

the teachers have never been on a percentage increase; the percentage has only been for administrative staff. Jurate noted that a COLA increase may be available at some point if the economy changes. Eli asked whether we looked at an evaluation system, instead of a flat scale. Becky stated that we briefly discussed performance-based merit pay in the past and that we've applied to EPIC and are waiting for a response. She added that we want to be sure that our staff has a straight-forward, predictable scale. Jurate stated there has been staff concern about what gets valued with merit pay. Something like EPIC rewards all teachers. William raised concerns about the most updated draft in that it seems to just be bringing up the salaries to the status quo. He questioned why we would allow a teacher to be uncertified for eleven years. Becky stated there could be a person who we'd want to hire a person who fell there on the scale. Becky noted that we need to calculate salaries based on this new scale to see if this is feasible. Pedro asked where most people fall on this salary scale. Rona pointed out that we want to have a fair scale. Jurate noted that some people think that salaries were sometimes negotiated, which was not the case. However, there were no extras for an Enhanced K-5th grade teacher to get. Becky is planning a meeting on March 16th at 3:45p.m. and will circulate a draft ahead of time.

Curriculum: A written report was circulated. Pam noted that assessment is an on-going issue. Kristin asked whether the issue of late assignment grading is being addressed. Pam stated that is being discussed. Elsie asked the Curriculum Committee to be sure to include a representative section of parents in the assessment discussion. Stephanie noted that will be disseminated after the staff has discussed it. Pam pointed out that the staff is working on that, not specifically the committee. Stephanie asked Elsie to forward concerns to her.

Policy: There was no written report; the last meeting was cancelled due to snow. Eli stated the committee will begin to review the Parent/Student handbook and hopes to have something new to put in place before next school year. The meeting is on the last Thursday of the month at 4p.m. Becky asked whether the committee should be involved in the uniform policy discussion. Jurate stated that the committee will probably not be involved until the draft policy is complete.

Board Development: Pedro moved the Parent Seat Give/Get resolution; Becky seconded. Elsie explained this was raised to ensure that all parents would consider being nominated to a Parent Seat on the Board. Elsie questioned whether the people in the Parent Seats actually have a different expected contribution to the Board. Leonora added that she put together several different scenarios of how this could be achieved. Pam stated that there is not to be a distinction among types of Board seats. There are different types of seats to ensure that we have a variety of people on the Board. Rona stated that we need to have a conversation about whether the Parent Seat member is to represent parents or to be a board member as well as anyone else. Becky clarified that when the Give/Get idea was raised it was somewhat controversial and that it was kind of a stopgap measure until we got a Foundation Board started. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Issues Discussion/Board Education

Accreditation and site visits were already discussed. Rona stated that the visits were worthwhile. William asked whether there was any feedback. Pam stated that the purpose was not to evaluate any teachers, but to ensure that all Board members are familiar with the school during the day. Eli stated it was great to see the work that is done at ICS. Kristin stated the level of engagement with teachers and students was amazing. Rona asked whether Board members can come back for more visits. Jurate said that members can list some thoughts on what else they'd like to see and she will plan more visits. Elsie recommended that Jurate circulate the observation sheet that was developed. Jurate noted that she used the questions Pam designed and broke them down. Rona stated she hopes

to do this every year. Pam stated that teachers should always feel comfortable asking Board members to come to the class to read to a group, volunteer, etc.

X. Old Business

All old business was conducted earlier in the meeting

XI. New Business

Rona stated that succession will be discussed more next month. She welcomes input. Eli noted that there are additional *Race to the Top* funds that will become available soon. There is an informational meeting next week in Baltimore. Rona stated there's no reason not to apply. We would need to raise the promise of one million dollar by September. Jurate stated this is somewhat connected to our discussions about possible replication in that we would work on replicating our global education and second language acquisition. Rona stated it is totally outside funding that would allow us to do some separate planning. Elsie stated it's a big concept and the whole Board needs to be involved. Eli stated he'll have lots more information

XII. Adjournment

Pedro moved for adjournment; Becky seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:44p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda
Minutes from February 2010 meeting
CEO report
PTA Update
Teachers' Report
Finance Committee Minutes
January 2010 financials
January 2010 Food Services financials
Development Report
Construction Update
Curriculum Committee Minutes
Thesis paper by Andrew Sparks
Charter enrollment increase request
Revised 2009-2010 calendar

Independence Charter School

March, 2010

Resolutions

ADOPTED

1. January Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of January 2010 in the amount of \$171,274.43 as presented to the Board.

2. Citizens Alliance Final Debt Payment

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve the repayment of outstanding debt with Citizens Alliance for Better Neighborhoods in the amount of \$321,500 less a 5% discount for a total of \$305,425. Be it further resolved that the CEO and Controller are authorized to make the final payment by Friday, March 12, 2010.

3. Revised 2009-2010 Calendar

Whereas there have been an inordinate number of weather-related school closings this winter and whereas ICS wants to ensure an adequate number of teaching hours to comply with Pennsylvania standards, be it resolved that the 2009-2010 calendar will be adjusted as follows:

Thursday, March 25th will be an Early Dismissal School Day (instead of Report Card Day), Friday, March 26th will be an Early Dismissal School Day (instead of a Professional Development Day), Monday, March 29th will be a full school day (instead of Spring Break) and Tuesday, March 30th will be a half school day with a noon dismissal (instead of Spring Break).

4. Parent Seat Give/Get Obligation

Whereas the ICS Board of Trustees is committed to making it feasible for a broad range of parents to serve on the ICS board as parent representatives and whereas the ICS BOT recognizes that the current Give/Get obligation may be a disincentive for some parents, be it resolved that members of the ICS Board of Trustees who occupy designated parent seats are required to make a financial contribution to ICS and are expected to participate in fundraising efforts in accordance with a plan drawn up by the individual board member and the development staff at board orientation.

**Resolutions
DEFEATED
None**

**Resolutions
TABLED
None**