

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustee Meeting
April 13, 2005, 7:00 PM**

Board Members Present: Becky Baehr, Sean Hennessy, Susan Gobreski, Rosina Miller, David Webber, Jon Baram, Gary Shepherd, Ingrid Shafroth, Pam Prell, Sandra Aidar, Christine Chisholm

Board Members Absent: Michelle Campbell, Eric Cramer

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, ICS CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, ICS Operations Manager; Cassandra, PTA Liaison; Mark Spector and Randy Ostrow, Foundations; Anna Evans, Veronica Kim, Claudia Lee, ICS Teachers

I. Call to Order

President Becky Baehr called the meeting to order at 7:06pm.

II. Reading and Review of Minutes

The minutes from the last board meeting were circulated. No objections or modifications were made and the minutes were approved.

III. Public Comment Period

None

Presentation on Facilities Financing, Mark Spector, Foundations

We are applying to have the Durham school leased to us for \$1/year

Mark Spector – Objective is to lease the Durham school for \$1/year

Find a way to continue to pay rent in order to continue get a reimbursement

By getting an additional 501 c 3 just to get the reimbursement for rent from the school district we are asking for leasehold improvement, we are not going to own the building.

The lease needs to be a long-term lease and we have to be able to make capital changes in the lease.

Any lender wants to see a history unqualified audit opinion. That the state finds no expectations in our general accepted budget. The budget must contain a large surplus; a rule of thumb is 2-5%.

When the school district passes it budget we will get an increase and that can be the surplus, because the current budget has no increase built into it.

Lenders would want to see concrete fundraising plans, and not one that is theoretical. They want to see stability, in the event we loose kids we have a waiting list they also want to see that we have a strong political background.

Bank: Disadvantage: Short term, 20% equity, which will be \$1,000,000 also collateral. Bond issue will be tax free. 501c3 in charter school does not have the authority to issue tax exempt debt.

(LOOK AT FOUNDATIONS PACKET BOND FINANCING) (Must put up equity, collateral)

Bond: As long as you pass a resolution that all the fees come out of the bond. The credit rating is going to be on the charter school, and not the individual members. Requirement: Debt service reserve fund. This can come out of the reserve fund. The rate here may be higher because there is no equity involved. Take the \$5 million load it will end up to be \$6 million.

Piggy back on the school district budget. (Council does not think that this is a good year.) In a sense this sounds like a bad idea.

We have to obtain a clear lease in order to get the financing we need.

What else are we going to need each additional year for renovations? Mark says to ask the school district to do the major capital improvement.

IV. CEO Report

Testing kids, interviewing people for personnel, began the Uruguay project, 6th Grade dance in Harrisburg, The state presents a paper of how we do compare to other special ed kids, and we look very good in that we include the kids more often we are looking forward to make the new special ed curriculum from the government. Human Rights, and Jurate teaching the children (goal is to send 1000 letter to the senators for this family who is going to be deported.)

1. Personnel: All full time staff have returned their “intent” letters indicating interest in staying or leaving ICS. With the exception of three letters, all others indicated that their intent was to stay were

they given a contract. A month earlier, I had polled teachers to gauge what their grade and subject preferences were. This past week, all teaching staff received letters from the administration indicating our intent in regard to renewing contracts and the intended grade/subject assignment for each teacher. In all cases, we were able to satisfy the grade assignments/subject assignments as requested by the teacher. Teachers were reminded, however, were there unexpected circumstances, they might be assigned to another grade. This however, is not expected.

Two teachers indicated an interest in looping and so we will have one teacher move up with their second grade class, and a third grade teacher move up to fourth. In the case of looping, typically at least 75% of the class remains in tact as a cohort. Decisions are made to change cohort composition based on various factors: behavior difficulties with original cohort members, parent difficulties with teacher, and more effective grouping (e.g. ESOL kids in one class). Although looping requires that the teacher prepare for entirely different curriculum, she/he starts the year off knowing the parents and children and their learning styles.

We have been fully engaged in the search for the following employee positions:

2 FLES teachers, 1 VPrincipal, 2 7th grade teachers, 1 Special Education teacher.

We received and continue to receive many responses to our advertisement in the Public Notebook and the Philadelphia Inquirer Online. Those inquiries come from as far as Arizona and Florida. The quality of applications varies from highly qualified and certified to “nowhere in the ballpark”.

AMITY: Claudia Lee and the Principal met with a representative of AMITY on April 4th. This is a non-profit organization that works to help in the international exchange of teachers and teaching assistants. We were pleasantly surprised to hear that using the services of AMITY does not incur ICS any costs. Locally, AMITY works with the French International School. They are based on the West Coast. There are two levels of teacher “acquisition”: one is to use our own pre-selected teachers who are overseas. (The organization states that it has significant experience with Spanish teachers). These teachers are assisted in obtaining J-1 visas and in all of the paperwork necessary. Of course, the agency will work with the teachers only if they are qualified. In the other level, teachers are screened by the agency and eligible teachers are presented as suitable candidates for a school. The teachers in both levels must pay the fees required by AMITY. Since these are J-1 visas, the teachers must return to their home countries after three years. It is expected that the hosting school helps a teacher and perhaps their family settle in. We are expected to pay a typical teacher salary. However, there seems to be a savings to the school in FICA, PSERS costs, at least for the first two years. And finally, there is no commitment of keeping a teacher if the match proves unsuitable. Overall, the process is much faster than if a teacher were to try to obtain appropriate documents themselves. The only question left was to ascertain requirements for certification in light of NCLB and Pennsylvania requirements. The AMITY representative will be doing this.

2. Curriculum: The curriculum meeting met and resulted in the various members of the committee taking on searches for math and reading curriculums for the middle years program. The Principal also discussed the importance of providing skill based training for those upper grade students who are one to two years behind grade level.

This spring has heralded new training for our teachers. The April staff meeting featured presenters from the Mazzone Institute for Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, Bisexual Health and Education. Thanks to connections made by Anne Hall, they gave a presentation on how to deal with name-calling and harassment. This hour long presentation was free of charge but made a powerful impact. Although this is not at present a significant concern, it is nonetheless a matter that has arisen though not targeted at any one in particular.

A Girl’s Club has been formed for the upper grade girls under the direction of Nurse Leslie Burton and Teacher Anne Hall. This club undertakes helping girls think about who they are, what influences them, about decision making, about empowerment, and about health issues. The club meets after school and is for those whose parents have given permission.

WOAR (Women Organized against Rape) is an organization that will be coming to talk to all of the children about “good touch and bad touch”, about being safe, etc.

Teachers at all grade levels will be working on a small project with our sister schools in Uruguay. Be looking for their published books on display during the International Festival on May 25th.

The Principal will be working with all Grades 1-6 on a discussion of human rights and the US as haven for the oppressed in light of an ICS family that may be deported.

3. Standardized Testing: ICS kids are in the midst of testing for the PSSA’s. The third and fifth graders are being tested formally. The fourth and sixth graders were given a field test in mathematics. This means that within a year or two, these levels will also be taking the “real” PSSA’s. We are also

preparing to take Terranova tests in early May in grades 1 to 6. Grade One is tested in reading only. And finally, we have agreed to participate in a research pilot for the Commonwealth in late May. In this pilot, our two fifth grade sections will take the PSSA's again (field test) this time; one group will take it on line whereas the other group will take a paper and pencil test. The target of the research is to ascertain if online testing is advantageous to special education students.

We are following the latest news to find out the new Education Secretary's Margaret Spelling's decision to allow some Special Needs students to take a different kind of standardized test instead of the typical standardized tests. The reason is to allow better feedback on what those children have learned. No doubt, it will take at least a year to put something like that in place.

4. Charter Schools Conference: Our sixth graders will be performing at the Charter Schools Conference in Harrisburg this May 1-3 (perf. May 2nd). As a school, we will be planning to celebrate National Charter Schools Week May 1-7. Perhaps we can combine the Year of Languages to gain media attention for the excellence of our school.

V. Treasurer's report / Finance Committee Report

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees approve the spending of \$171,350.04.

Sean Hennessey moves to accept the budget

Rosina Miller seconds the motion

Roll Call Vote

Becky Baehr – aye

Sean Hennessey –aye

Susan Gobreski –aye

Rosina Miller –aye

David Webber –aye

Jon Baram – abstain

Gary Shepherd –aye

Ingrid Shafroth –aye

Pam Prell –aye

Sandra Aidar -aye

Christine Chisolm -aye

Motion Carries.

Finance committee minutes 3 items

1. The Budget
2. Finance Options of Renovations to Durham
3. Financial Statement
 - 1a. Take time to review minutes
 - 4 new classroom teachers
 - Curriculum specialist
 - Vice Principal
 - Director of Development
 - Exec Secretary

Additional Students (80 New)

State Subsidy Increasing

Decrease in budget because we need to apply for EETT grant again

ICS is absorbing the cost of higher health insurance to the employees

2005-2006 Budget Approval

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School approves the 2005-2006 Budget.

Sean Hennessey moves to accept the budget.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion

Roll Call Vote

Becky Baehr – aye

Sean Hennessey –aye

Susan Gobreski –aye
Rosina Miller –aye
David Webber –aye
Jon Baram –aye
Gary Shepherd –aye
Ingrid Shafroth –aye
Pam Prell –aye
Sandra Aidar - aye
Christine Chisholm -aye

We have adopted the budget.

VI. Updates

A. Brief presentation: Kristen Long, Reading Specialist

1. Reading Groups
2. ESL Groups
3. Reading Intervention
4. ESL Administration
5. Fast Forward
6. Testing Coordinator
7. Dibbles/Grade Testing
8. Philadelphia Reads
9. Presentation
10. Teacher Resources
11. Writing Program
12. Book Challenge

B. Teacher representative report: Anna Evans, Veronica Kim

None

C. PTA Report

Silent Auction on May 14, 2005.

D. Committee Reports

1. Renewal/Executive

License for next year we will get it before this one expires.

June Meeting will be the annual meeting. (Important for nominations)

2. Development

Meeting with Eric from La Salle nonprofit.

There is talk about supporting children in Ghana. We want to be able to put ideas together for fundraising so that there is not donor fatigue. Ingrid thinks that we should just leave what the teachers are doing alone, and we should just keep doing it separately.

3. Human Resources

Benefits are not going to be cut. Teacher assignments are where they need to be. We still need a curriculum coordinator, immersion coordinator, 2 NTA's Full time Technology, Vice Principal, development director. There seems to be a good pool of applicants.

4. Curriculum

Curriculum- Claudia Lee was present to discuss her concerns for children in the Immersion program who are struggling with reading. At this point they are not offered the same level of support services as children in the general program. Claudia urged that the board consider making a Spanish speaking reading specialist a hiring priority in the future. Kristin Long is working with some of these children and giving them reading support in English. The classroom teachers report improvement with even this level of individualized help. It was decided that at least until a Spanish-speaking Reading Specialist was on staff, the children who were identified as below grade-level in reading would receive support services in English as needed.

A trip is scheduled for May 5 to visit the Lehigh Valley Charter School. The team visiting will see how the International Baccalaureate program functions in

this K-Middle School setting. This is part of our ongoing investigation into the appropriateness of IB for ICS.

5. Technology

None

6. Community Relations

Strength of teachers, art program, lacking of email and web, create more of community.

7. Discipline

None

8. Facilities

Visited the Durham School building on March 18th; we are in the process of submitting a proposal to the center city residents association by May 16th. The Durham School Committee will disregard proposals that do not consider a set-aside. We need to put in a good proposal. There will be a community meeting where the proposals will be presented and discussed by the community. Who is going to the meeting? Who makes the final decision? We need to start engaging ICS parents who reside in the vicinity of Durham.
ICS starts paper recycling on May 1st.

VII. Resolutions

A. Old Business

1. 2005-2006 Budget Approval

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School approves the 2005-2006 Budget. **(Resolved above.)**

B. New Business

1. Immersion/General ratio resolution

Be it hereby resolved that ICS reduce the number of incoming classes in the 2006-2007 school year to three incoming Kindergarten classes.

Susan Gobreski would like to amend the resolution:

Be it hereby resolved that ICS reduce the number of incoming classes in the 2006-2007 school year to three incoming Kindergarten classes -- To reduce the number to two Spanish immersion classrooms and one general classroom.

Sean Hennessey seconds the motion.

Discussion

Pamela Prell – Is this budgeted for down the road? This will reduce the rate of growth and our current budget will be met. The staff would like to see the school size decreases, but we need to keep both the immersion and general program. There is discussion of whether this will be ongoing, or is this something that is going to change from year to year. We need to get smaller, but how can we go from 4 to 3? The demand is for the Spanish Program and it is our niche. We need to look at where things stand and where we need to go. This will cause us to loose some teachers because of class reduction. We need to dispel the idea that immersion is only for highly educated children in the immersion program. We cannot overlook our long-term goals.

Susan Gobreski withdraws the amendment.

Sean Hennessey moves to amend the resolution:

Be it hereby resolved that ICS reduce the number of incoming classes in the 2006-2007 school year to three incoming Kindergarten classes -- To reduce the number to two Spanish immersion classrooms and one general classroom.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Becky Baehr – aye

Sandra Aidar – abstain

Sean Hennessey –aye

Susan Gobreski –aye

Rosina Miller –aye
David Webber –aye
Jon Baram –aye
Ingrid Shafroth –aye
Pam Prell –aye
Christine Chisholm -aye
Motion carries.

2. EOE resolution in advertising

Be it resolved the Independence Charter School establish a policy to note its status as an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE) in every public notice and advertisement that reaches the general public.

Sean Hennessey moves to adopt the resolution.

Susan Gobreski seconds the motion.

Unanimous to adopt the resolution.

3. Real Estate representation

Whereas ICS has a representation agreement with Peter Soens for representation on real estate services;

Whereas, ICS is currently exploring the possibility of leasing a facility owned by the Philadelphia School District;

Whereas the standard compensation for real estate representation is generally a fee paid to a broker by a lessor or seller based on the total cost of the lease; and Whereas the total cost of such a lease may not be sufficient to provide for a reasonable fee for services rendered; now

Be it hereby resolved that ICS enter into an agreement with Peter Soens for real estate representation that provides for compensation for representation services if Mr. Soens represents ICS in leasing a building from or through the Philadelphia School District (PSD). The fee for such services will be \$12,000.00, payable over a 1- or 2-year period upon occupation of the premises. Payment arrangement that provide for full payment within two years of occupancy will be made and approved by the Executive Committee at the time an approved agreement to occupy PSD premises is executed. This agreement is an arrangement with Mr. Soens and does not constitute an agreement with his current firm.

Be it further resolved that this fee will be null and void if any real estate commission of an amount equal to or greater than this agreement is payable or if Mr. Soens is not currently representing ICS at the time a lease is secured.

Sean Hennessey moves to adopt the resolution.

Susan Gobreski seconds the motion.

Discussion

David Webber does not know what we are paying for Pete Soens.

Unanimous to adopt the resolution.

4. Durham executive resolution

Whereas the ICS BOT will be meeting at a later date on May 18th for its monthly meeting, and

Whereas the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Durham School Building is due May 16th, now

Be it resolved that the ICS BOT enable the Executive Committee of the ICS BOT to approve the Request for Proposal to be prepared for May 16th.

Sean Hennessey moves to adopt the resolution.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Becky Baehr – aye
Sandra Aidar – aye
Sean Hennessy –aye
Susan Gobreski –aye
Rosina Miller –aye
David Webber –aye
Ingrid Shafroth –aye

Pam Prell –aye
John Baram – abstain
Christine Chisolm -aye
Motion carries.

5. Donor Policy

Whereas ICS accepts gifts of any amount in the form of cash, stocks, real estate, personal property, partnership interests or other assets, including gifts through trusts, estates or insurance policies, and

Whereas, the BOT designates the ICS Chief Executive Officer as the public contact person who provides information to potential donors about particular types of gifts; now

Be it resolved that the ICS BOT reserves the right to refuse any gift that it believes is not in the best interest of the school.

David Webber moves to adopt the resolution.

Sean Hennessey seconds the motion.

Susan Gobreski moves to table the resolution.

Sean Hennessey seconds the motion to table.

Motion Tabled.

6. Personnel – hiring

a. Emily Goodman

b. Robert Kelly

Be it resolved that ICS offer full-time positions to the following individuals under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS teacher’s contract:

Emily Goodman – teacher

Robert Kelly – teacher

Pamela Prell moves to adopt the resolution.

Sean Hennessey seconds the motion.

Unanimous to adopt the resolution.

X. Executive Committee

None

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 pm.