

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting
October 12, 2005, 7:00 PM**

Board Members Present: Sandra Aidar, Becky Baehr, Michelle Campbell, Christine Chisholm, Joana Davis-Diaz, Susan Gobreski, Sean Hennessy, Nicole Perkins Kilcullen, Rosina Miller, Lisa Nelson-Haynes, Pam Prell, Ingrid Schafroth, David Webber

Board Members Absent: Eric Cramer

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Jerry Santilli, Santilli and Thomson; Ramzy Andrawos, Operations Manager; Sean Gallagher, Vice Principal; Sheba Verma, Development Director; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Catherine Passante, Alison Sprague, Rob Kopf, Fran Melmed, J. Anyabwile Bankole, Robin Kohles, Kristin Nocco, Cassandra Carponter, April Cartwright, Ryan Boyer, Gerry McDermott, Isha Belnavis, and Michelle Carter, parents.

I. Call to Order and Election of New Board Members

President Susan Gobreski called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm. David Webber nominated Joana Davis-Diaz, Nicole Perkins Kilcullen, and Laval Miller-Wilson to fill the three vacant seats on the ICS Board of Trustees. Rosina Miller seconded the motion. The three were unanimously elected to the Board.

Mr. Wilson will complete Gary Sheperd's Founder's term, which expires in 2006. Ms. Davis-Diaz's term expires in 2006. Ms. Perkins Kilcullen's term expires in 2007. Davis-Diaz and Perkins Kilcullen were present and were sworn in. Mr. Miller-Wilson was not present and will be sworn in at next month's meeting.

II. Reading and Review of Minutes

The minutes from the last Board meeting were circulated. Rosina Miller pointed out that Sean Hennessy had noted two minor corrections to what had been circulated via e-mail; these corrections were made prior to the distribution of the minutes for this meeting. No objections or modifications were made and the minutes were approved.

III. Discussion: School Size and Location

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President Susan Gobreski asked **Facilities Chairwoman Sandra Aidar** to give a summary of the committee's work to date. Sandra gave a brief Power Point presentation. The committee has looked at 10 sites (each a minimum of 50,000 square feet), both rental and sale properties, between the general boundaries of Spring Garden to Washington and river to river. There was a brief discussion regarding how the boundaries were decided and it was agreed that the committee has some flexibility regarding areas

in which to look. The committee's findings to date include that: 1) pick-up congestion is likely to remain the same in any Center City location, 2) it is likely that ICS would need to share space under a lease agreement, 3) base prices for leases range from \$7.50-\$14 per square foot; purchase prices range from \$5-\$6 million, 4) the gross budget for renovations would be \$4.5-\$5.8 million; the total cost to buy/renovate would be \$12-\$14 million, 5) few buildings offer playground space; some would allow a gym. The committee's recommendations include: 1) pursue multiple venues, 2) have Board define size of school and budget for purchasing/renovating, 3) while issues are being discussed and decided, continue to negotiate with CHAD for next year, start negotiations to purchase Durham, start lease negotiations to lease 401 Race Street and consider hiring a Project Manager to oversee the project. Discussion ensued. Becky noted that ICS is still pursuing the possibility of expanding at the present site. She stated that the two issues are space and size. School size discussions (from the September 2005 Board meeting) have revolved around the relative merits of a smaller school v. a larger school being able to generate the revenue necessary to maintain the extra programs we want to be able to offer. The board has considered smaller class size v. fewer overall classes per grade v. maintaining the current numbers. Rosina noted that, in an effort to contain school size, the board had voted this past Spring to limit next year's incoming Kindergarten classes to three, rather than four. However, upon further reflection, the Board is reconsidering this decision in part because of the challenges of our particular program – with both Immersion and General classes – to avoid a scenario where one program would only have one class per grade, moving up the grades. The Board has discussed maintaining four incoming Kindergarten classes, yet developing ways to maintain a small-school feel with learning communities, for example. No final decisions have yet been made regarding school size.

Susan then asked Jerry Santilli to summarize the financial implications. Jerry is ICS's business manager; he has a background in finance, worked in the Philadelphia School District's finance office for many years, and is a founder of a Philadelphia charter school. He circulated a comparative budget scenario sheet, which shows revenues and expenses for varying enrollment sizes. Jerry noted that charter schools get 80 cents on the dollar, since the School District doesn't give charter schools facility cost funds. Before opening discussion, Susan pointed out that our attorney is currently discussing specific charter school location issues with the School Reform Commission. Public comments included:

- Feeling that the Board will make the right decision (Mr. Bankole)
- Feeling that having two immersion classes and one general class per grade would create an imbalance. What option would a struggling student have? (Mr. Boyer). Rosina and Becky noted that one goal of

ICS is to support struggling students within any classroom, including Immersion, rather than moving them to the General program.

- Several parents who live in the immediate vicinity of ICS's current location expressed desire to stay in current location, and suggested that if ICS moves more than a few blocks away they might not stay with ICS. Other parents who do not live in the immediate area expressed a desire for a better facility regardless of location. There was a tension between the interests of the two groups.
- What criteria are being used to make the decision? (Fran Melmed)
Susan Gobreski stated that the Board is planning to use a flow charter-like process. Lisa noted that this may be a golden opportunity that shouldn't be lost.

Susan pointed out that it seems the SRC ground is shifting in that stipulations, such as staying at the original site, are now being included in charter renewals (including ours). Becky pointed out that when the school's census declines for any reason, ICS does not want to add too many new students in the older grades, since we want to keep a sense of community. Ms. Sprague stated that she would like ICS to stay where it is. Christine asked if ICS might consider lease-purchase agreements. Susan stated all options are being explored. Susan noted that ICS's lease with CHAD ends at the end of this school year. CHAD appears open to negotiations. Becky added that the BOT hopes to sit down with CHAD and the Designing Futures Foundation (the owner of the building) before the end of the month. However, in any event, ICS needs to have other options available. Jurate noted that the children's safety needs to be the top priority and that accessible stairs are needed, rather than waiting for elevators. She also noted that multiple tenants in any building have different priorities and affect the general atmosphere. She stated that when contemplating school size and space issues, we need to consider what having more children can mean in terms of funds to attract and retain quality teachers. Mr. Bankole suggested that once the Board gets down to a few viable options, then the parents should be polled. Susan pointed out the difficulty with negotiations considering that charters need to be renewed every 5 years. Jerry McDermott suggested that the Board try to work out a 2-3 year lease with CHAD with plans to use that time to plan for long-term buying.

Susan announced that parent nominees for a November 2005-June 2007 term are being sought. Sandra Aidar noted that she plans to leave at then end of this term, unless a replacement cannot be found. Susan then noted that two parent seats will be available; one would be for 18 months and the other for 30 months in order to start electing one parent seat each year for a 2-year term.

Sean noted that the Board has decided to keep one kindergarten waiting list in order to avoid confusion if the Board decides after the lottery to open a fourth kindergarten class.

III. Updates

A. ICS Teacher Representatives

No teachers were able to attend tonight's meeting. However, two new reps were elected at today's staff meeting.

B. PTA

Cassandra Carponter reported that the PTA has approved this year's budget, as well as funding for part of the 7th grade artist-in-residence program and the Girls' Club, run by Nurse Leslie and Tr. Anne for 6th and 7th grade girls. She also noted that VP Sean announced that he may be starting a Boys' Club this year for 6th and 7th grade boys. She also reported that a parent suggested increasing technology for the upper school children in order to better prepare them for high school expectations. One possibility suggested was to re-band the Technology Committee. Pam recommended that the Curriculum Committee be asked to look at the academic aspect of technology, since the Technology Committee had worked more on the hardware issues of getting computers into the school.

Finally, Cassandra announced that approximately \$24,000 worth of merchandise was sold through the Cherrydale fundraiser; ICS PTA will get 50% of the sales amount.

Reports:

1. CEO Report

Jurate Krokys highlighted several items on her monthly report (attached):

-Proposal for Teaching Intern Ben Horner to be the new full time Math and Science teacher for 6th grade.

-Terranova testing will take place next week. The School District has changed the testing schedule, which means 3rd-7th graders will be taking tests in the Fall that are grade-appropriate (but not the exact same tests) for their prior grade. In the Spring, 1st and 2nd graders will take grade-appropriate tests, which means next Fall they will take tests grade-appropriate for 1st and 2nd grade. After that phase, everyone will be on a Fall cycle, assuming no further changes are made. Sean noted that benchmark goals included in our charter renewal were based on the tests occurring in the Spring.

-The Penny Drive for victims of Hurricane Katrina is finishing this week; Tr. Bobby is coordinating purchasing supplies as families move to permanent living situations.

2. BOT Committees

a. Treasurer/Finance Committee Report

Jerry circulated the Financial Operations Report for September 30, 2005 and noted that the School District has started to distribute funds. He also stated that a percentage column has been added, as requested at the last

Board meeting. Jerry pointed out that the report shows overspending in Summer School and on benefits. He also said that the reason Professional Services is overspent is that the physician submitted her invoice after the books were closed for the last fiscal year. Becky noted that one issue that has been discussed in the HR committee is that of tuition reimbursement for the School Nurse position. Becky noted that the policy appears to only cover teachers; however, Nurse Leslie was recently reimbursed for classes taken towards her state School Nurse certification. Jurate stated that she made that decision based on the fact that, like teachers, school nurses are required to be certified, so she understood the nurse to be part of the staff included in the reimbursement. Sean suggested that the September expenditures, except for the nurse's tuition reimbursement, be approved and that the HR committee revisit the issue and make a recommendation. Jurate went on the record as saying that she cannot understand why the Board would even consider taking back the tuition reimbursement money from the nurse, since the State lumps the nurse position in the same category as teaching staff. Susan clarified that we are talking about the benefit to a class of employees, which has legal implications if any benefit is applied in an arbitrary manner. Lisa noted that if the issue was confusing for the principal, perhaps the staff is unclear about the benefit also.

Sean Hennessy moved that the September expenditures be approved with the exception of the nurse's expense, which will be discussed by the HR committee. **Becky Baehr** seconded the motion. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

b. Executive

Susan reported that the charter renewal and the 4th floor lease are both currently with our attorney. She also reminded everyone that Saturday, November 12th is the Board retreat; the location is to be announced. She welcomed David, Sandra and Jerry to participate. Jerry said he is definitely available. Everyone was encouraged to contact Susan with ideas. Susan announced that the 2006-2007 lottery will take place on October 21st. Susan also requested that the November Board meeting be held on either November 14th or 17th, instead of the 16th. It was agreed that the meeting will be held on the 14th.

c. Diversity

Lisa stated that neighborhood socials will be arranged soon and that the committee hopes to plan a Spring concert event. Lisa noted that this committee has great parent participation.

d. Facilities

Reported earlier in the meeting

e. Development

Sheba gave some brief background information about herself and emphasized the importance of making a lot of personal connections. She

has met with the Managing Director of the Reinvestment Fund. She is working on information for the website, is working on an informal “coffee club” discussion group with parents and is planning a November 28th event at the restaurant owned by the Rosselli family. She is also working on cleaning up the database. Pam noted that some of the software the curriculum committee is reviewing may be helpful for development efforts also.

f. Community Relations

David reported that the committee has been successful in recruiting new Board members and is working on updating website information. There will be more information about committees and staff. The first featured staff will be Nurse Leslie and Tr. Anne. Classroom wish lists may also be added to the website. David recommended printing out the website information so it can be shared with those without internet access. Kristin Nocco recommended adding pictures of students participating in a variety of classes and activities to the website.

g. Discipline

Michelle reported that the committee met last week and that the two codes of conduct seem to be working well. A current issue is some parents wanting bus seating charts changed so that kids can sit with their friends, instead of with siblings. More parent input is needed on this issue. The committee will meet every-other month and will be presenting a mock expulsion hearing for teachers next month. Pam suggested that the dress code be revisited at the Board retreat; Michelle agreed. Michelle also noted that Sean, Andrea and Pr. Jurate are meeting every week to ensure that discipline is consistent throughout the school. Susan also mentioned that 9 staff attended the first casual discussion meeting. The next one will be scheduled for the first week in November.

h. Curriculum

Christine reported that the Enrichment program got off to a somewhat rough but promising start. Jurate noted that there were mostly positive responses from teachers and that one big challenge was that several specialists canceled at the last minute. She also noted that it was difficult to find adequate space for the staff to meet. Ramzy will try to find space on the 3rd floor. Pam mentioned that her children were given a special assignment in “study hall,” rather than being allowed to work on homework. Jurate said she is working out that issue. Christine stated that the committee is working on changing report cards for the older grades, since the content areas do not match up with the current report cards. The older grades will also start using A, B, C grades. Christine also noted that the committee did not approve a specific text requested by the 7th grade language arts teacher for use on the Lewis and Clark unit. A list of major topics to be covered during all country studies is being developed.

i. Human Resources

Becky reported that the next meeting is Friday morning at 9a.m. She reported that Tr. Veronica decided not to return. The committee continues

to work on teacher support and evaluation. She mentioned that VP Sean will be available to assist Pr. Jurate with evaluations for the upper grades. Susan applauded the new checklists that Pr. Jurate located for observations. The committee will be discussing several issues: tuition reimbursement, long-term substitute policy, how to investigate corporeal punishment allegations, developing a benefits summary (for marketing purposes), projecting next year's benefits' budget, long-term staffing issues. Susan stated that she has asked Michele to be the point person regarding the teacher diversity effort. Lisa asked how ICS lets people know about vacant positions. Jurate stated that ICS holds a Teacher's Night, usually in January at which we target black colleges. We also send e-mails to colleges. We don't usually pay to advertise.

V. Resolutions

A. Old Business

1. Recurring Expense Resolution

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School approve the following recurring payments and contracts for the school year 2005-2006:

Vendor	Services	Rate	Not to Exceed
LA Liberty Squares	Electric	N/A	\$66,510
Larry Taylor, Ed. D.	Psych Serv.	\$100 per hour	\$20,000
Pediatric Therapeutic Svs.	OT;PT;Speech	\$65 per hour	\$35,000
Robb Quattro	Computer Svs.	\$75 per hour	\$5,000

Sean Hennessy moved that the motion. Becky Baehr seconded the motion and suggested that the word "annually" be added in the last column and that vendor Verizon be added with an annual amount not to exceed \$25,572. The motion carried unanimously with Becky's suggested additions.

2. Audit Committee Resolution

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby establishes an Audit Committee to review the findings of ICS's annual independent audit, and that the Audit Committee shall be chaired by a Board of Trustees member who is not a member of the Finance Committee.

Sean Hennessy moved the motion. David Webber seconded the motion. Sean pointed out that this committee would probably meet only once or twice per year and that in order to ensure no appearance of misconduct the Finance Committee should not be directly involved in this committee. He suggested that Lisa Nelson-Haynes may be a good candidate to chair this committee. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Personnel

Be it resolved that the ICS BOT offer full-time employment as 6th grade teacher of mathematics to Ben Horner (formerly Teaching Intern) under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the employee contract. Becky Baehr moved the motion. David Webber seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

B. New Business

Susan recommended that the Board start a “Healthy Kids” committee to promote good health and healthy eating. The response was positive. Susan asked Sean to be prepared to talk about the budget process at the retreat and asked that the committees be prepared to discuss their 5-year plans. She welcomed David and Sandra to the retreat and invited them and all members to be ready to talk about what works and what doesn’t seem to work with the current Board functioning. She thanked Sandra and David for their hard work on the Board.

VI. Adjournment

Susan moved for adjournment; Sean seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 10:19p.m.