

ORACLE CHARTER SCHOOL

888 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Thursday, January 5, 2017

Board Chairman Joe Costantini called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

The following individuals were present:

Trustees - Joseph Costantini, Jacqueline Hollins, Ramone Alexander, Ron Stewart, James McLeod, Susan Hakala;

Administration - Janet Barnes and Cara Monaco.

Legal - Steve Polowitz.

Non-voting new Trustees - Evin Conyer and Bryan Donohue

The Following individuals were not present –

Trustees - Vivian Logan, Tom Bailey, Maureen Ludwig, Divitta Alexander

Non-voting new Trustees - Susanna Schenk and John Whitty were not present.

MINUTES: Upon motion by James McLeod, seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, the draft minutes from the December 1, 2016 meeting were unanimously approved.

PRESENTATIONS:

Ms. Janet Barnes, interim Head of School (HoS), briefed the Board on her background and career with the Buffalo School District and on her assessment of Oracle Charter School (OCS) after a few weeks in the building. Ms. Barnes noted that a lot of loose ends at OCS that she is addressing, and indicated that she is focused on behavior issues.

She assessed that some negative behaviors on the part of certain students is influencing others in a negative way and some behaviors are filtering throughout the school such as disrespect of teachers and adults, and students fighting and disrespecting each other. However, she also noted that the students are already catching on about improving their behavior .She noted that there have been many parent conferences since her arrival (face-to-face and by teleconference) for student reinstatements and for preventative measures.

In addressing student behavior, Ms. Barnes has begun to see improvement in compliance on wearing school uniforms, behavior in classrooms, and in students having passes for being in the hallways. Ms. Barnes has visited each classroom and laid out expectations such as students are expected to bring the necessary materials to class and to leave combs, food, drink, etc. outside the classrooms. She commented that she has seen a need for more supervision in certain areas and is addressing those needs. There will be professional development (PD) focused on teachers learning how to more effectively manage their own classrooms and how to capture and retain students' interest.

Ms. Barnes is working to coordinate a dedicated substitute teacher pool of certified teachers. In addition, Ms. Courtney Hawkins' status at OCS is being evaluated to possibly hire her full time as an OCS employee.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

The three Directors and the school's Operations Manager were not present, due to illness and inclement weather. An extensive written report was provided, and the Trustees will bring questions and concerns to the next Board meeting. Cara Monaco, the President of the teachers' union, was present and noted that the teachers will appreciate Board support for PD around behavior management.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Academic Excellence (Academic Policies)—Jacqueline Hollins, Chair:
Ms. Hollins noted that the committee meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month. Ms. Dara Seeley regularly presents to the committee the Academic Dashboard. Ms. Hollins indicated that there is a need for individualized educational plans for the seniors who are in academic jeopardy, to ensure they have every opportunity to graduate. Chronic lack of attendance is a problem among students with academic issues. The committee has talked about the algebra program and indicated that there are now extra labs available to students who are struggling, to help boost their learning.

Development/Marketing—Needs a new chair; no report.

Finance—OCS is operating close to its budget; there are enough reserves and the balance sheet continues to be positive. John Whitty will be both the Chair of this committee and the Treasurer when his membership on the Board has been formally approved by CSI.

Governance—Tom Bailey, Chair: Tom was absent, but Mr. Costantini noted that the committee has been very active, with revision of the Bylaws and with recruitment of four new Board members.

NEW BUSINESS:

At 6:40 P.M. the Board took up discussion of a number of resolutions:

1. Upon motion by James McLeod, seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, it was moved that the Board adopt revised Bylaws, which needed updating and were reviewed over a period of months. The resolution was unanimously approved, and the Board adopted the Bylaws, subject to final Authorizer approval. The Bylaws will be on the school website, will be provided to CSI, and will be provided to Ms. Barnes, HoS.
2. Upon motion by James McLeod, seconded by Ramone Alexander, a resolution was unanimously approved to directing the interim HoS and school administration to take immediate steps to identify, contract for, and to schedule PD around management of behavior and discipline issues with the objective of implementing a more effective program for classroom and school-wide management of behavior and discipline as possible. The resolution further authorized the allocation of up to \$10,000 for such purposes. There was some discussion with Ms. Barnes about how to seek experts to

provide this PD. Mr. Polowitz will write appropriate contracts once the providers have been identified.

3. The Board then took up the matter of the Board structure and nomination of a replacement for Mr. Joe Costantini due to his resignation as Chair after six years in the position. Upon motion by Ron Stewart, seconded by James McLeod, the Board unanimously approved a resolution to approve the following:
 - acceptance of Joe Costantini's resignation.
 - creation of Co-Chairs, on an interim basis, in lieu of a single Chair and in lieu of three Vice Chair positions.
 - nomination of Ramone Alexander and Jacqueline Hollins to serve as Co-Chairs until summer 2018, when the charter school renewal application process should be completed.
 - continuation of Divitta Alexander and Tom Bailey as Vice Chairs.
 - step back by Jacqueline Hollins from the Academic Committee. Susanna Schenk will assume leadership once her Board position has been approved by CSI. Upon motion by Mr. Costantini, seconded by Susan Hakala, the Board unanimously voted to elect Jacqueline Hollins and Ramone Alexander as the Co-Chairs.

4. The Board then considered a resolution to change banking signatories that stemmed from the changes in Board Officers in #3 above. Upon motion by Susan Hakala, seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, the Board unanimously approved. Tom Bailey's continuation as a signatory, and that Ramone Alexander, Amanda Kenefick, and John Whitty (upon his approval by CSI) be added as replacement signatories in place of all other current signatories; and that Amanda Kenefick be authorized to process checks, subject to the requirement that the HoS review and approve any and all processed checks that will be signed by Kenefick.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:55 P.M. Ron Stewart moved that the Board enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Jacqueline Hollins seconded the motion. At 7:25 P.M. James McLeod moved to come out of Executive Session. Jacqueline Hollins seconded the motion. All were in favor.

5. Upon motion by Ramone Alexander, seconded by Susan Hakala, the following Resolutions were unanimously adopted by the Board:
 - (a) to authorize the new Co-Chairs and the Board's legal counsel to negotiate a final separation agreement and general release with John Ashwood sue to the fact that Mr. Ashwood notified the Executive Committee in early December of his intent to leave his position as HoS; and
 - (b) one to ratify all actions taken by the Executive Committee in the hiring of Janet Barnes as interim HoS under a short term Independent Contractor Agreement (effective from 12/12/2016 to 12/31/2016), and under an Employment Agreement, effective as of 1/1/2017

6. Upon motion by James McLeod, seconded by Ramone Alexander, the Board voted on and approved unanimously a resolution to authorize and direct the Executive Committee to:
 - Submit an RFP to those consultants it identifies to recruit a new HoS, review/evaluate, the school's program in preparation for renewal, and to assist in the preparation of the school's charter renewal application;
 - review proposals and make a decision about which consultant to retain;
 - consult with the Finance Committee to prepare an appropriate budget amendment to cover the consultant contract for approval by the Board;
 - enter into agreement with the consultant as soon as possible, including doing so prior to the next regular Board meeting.

7. Finally, though this was not the subject of a Board resolution, the Board noted that communication protocol henceforth will require that the Co-Chairs are the appropriate persons to communicate with the Head of School. Other Board members will communicate, as appropriate, with school administrators in line with their committee assignments. For example, members of the Academic Committee would likely communicate with Ms. Seeley, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, or members of the Marketing/Development committee would communicate with Ms. Thompson, Director of Community Relations and Outreach, or members of the effort to revise the Student Code of Conduct would communicate with Ms. Connell, Director of Student Life. Informal communication between individual Board members and teachers is not within the agreed upon protocol.

At 7:45 P.M. the meeting was adjourned. The next Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 1, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan R. Hakala
Secretary to the Board of Trustees