

ORACLE CHARTER SCHOOL

888 Delaware Avenue

Buffalo, New York 14209

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Thursday, September 7, 2017

Board Co-Chairs Jacqueline Hollins and Ramone Alexander called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

The following individuals were present:

*Trustees* – Jacqueline Hollins, Ramone Alexander, Thomas Bailey, John Whitty, Susan Hakala, Evin Conyer, Vivian Logan, Ron Stewart, Bryan Donohue.

*Administration/Teaching Staff* - Janet Barnes, Ellen Connell, Dara Seeley, Jeff Meister, Kathy Herman (new Chief of Operations).

*Legal*-Steve Polowitz.

The following *Trustees* were excused – Maureen Ludwig, James McLeod, Divitta Alexander.

*Guests (prospective new Trustees)* – Pastor George Nicholas, Dr. Ramelli Choates.

*Consultants* –Ken Peterson.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon **Motion** by Vivian Logan, seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, the Board unanimously voted to approve the August 3, 2017 Regular Board meeting minutes.

## **EDUCATION CONSULTANT UPDATE**

Ken Peterson from KXD Consulting Group was present to provide a status report on the KXD's contract as follows:

- A. That the quality school review was 100% complete and that the next step is to monitor implementation.

- B. The national school leader search was 100% complete and that KXD would provide ongoing support through the transition. Teacher attrition is a significant stressor for the school.
- C. The charter renewal application was submitted on-time. But noted that the need for the School to develop better and consistent methods for preserving institutional knowledge and archiving documents. needs
- D. Noted that KXD had helped the school to better align the organizational structure in a way that strengthened instructional capacity and operational efficiency; that an instructional improvement plan was a key component of the renewal application.
- E. Establishing a talent pipeline for hiring new staff and developing teachers and administrators, 75% complete with new higher education partnerships being established.
- F. Search has been renewed for an Assistant Head of School.
- G. KXD's Dr. Sheffield will serve as a leadership coach for OCS leaders.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- A. Co-chair Jacqueline Hollins will send out the link to the Google Drive Trustee folder and ensure that all Trustees have access to the Drive and the documents stored there so that Trustees can more easily be acquainted with the key documents and check for updates.**
- B. Each month at the Regular Board meeting, the Board will spend time checking milestones of academic and other progress, according to the improvement plan laid out in the renewal application.**
- C. Storage of key school documents will be rigorous.** The Board now has a digital on-boarding book for new Trustees, which will be kept up-to-date and made available to all Trustees.

#### **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATES**

Janet Barnes, Head of School Report:

- A. Presented a chart with the **staffing** for the 2017-18 school year, which specified those who were new to OCS, along certifications of all. There were 21 new hires and 16 returning staff.
- B. Update on staff **vacancies**, including the Director of Community Relations and Outreach position (who left recently to take another job.) This position will

- be re-defined; the duties are split for now among other staff members. Also noted that an Assistant Head of School was hired, but stayed on the job only a few days before leaving for a position with the Buffalo Public Schools.
- ACTION ITEM: ad hoc committee on personnel issues be formed.**
- C. Updated **graduation data**: 37 students graduated in June 2017; others did not pass or complete summer school.
  - D. **College matriculation rates** – Information is currently not available from the National Student Clearinghouse; an update will be provided at a future Board meeting.
  - E. Statistics regarding **enrollment** of students per grade level and numbers of students with **credit deficiencies** led to considerable discussion and concern among the Trustees regarding how to fill the gaps in student credits and how to help students feel more urgency to pass Regents exams on time. Ms. Barnes pointed out that Gradpoint and virtual learning, as well as the RTI program, are expected to help.
  - F. Expressed that **parent engagement** is an area she wants to be a strong piece in the current school year. She will talk with Ms. Conyer, Parent Representative on the Board, to coordinate on key initiatives. **ACTION ITEM: Coordinate with Ms. Conyer.**
  - G. **College preparation** is moving ahead Ms. Barnes is sending 2 students on a college tour through Delta Psi Omega, and the college counselor is planning a tour of black colleges for students in grade 12.

Ms. Ellen Connell – Director of Student Life Report:

- A. Reported on student support services, noting that Courtney Hawkins, the school mediation specialist, is now working fulltime at OCS.
- B. Introduced the Chat and Chew program, which will engage students in conversation, provide information and tools to make positive life choices. It will address self-esteem issues important to many of the OCS female students in order for them to focus on healthy relationships.
- C. Noted that Restorative Justice training for new and returning staff is being sought. **ACTION ITEM: New Trustee George Nicholas offered to help with Restorative Justice Training options. Ms. Connell to follow up with him.**

Mr. Jeff Meister, Technology Coordinator

- A. Provided information to support a request for a copier purchase. The current copier service has been in operation for over 7 years, and the contract is up in

April. He reviewed 3 bid proposals and recommended a new vendor with better equipment at a savings of \$750/month.

- B. Upon **Motion** by Bryan Donohue seconded by Vivian Logan, the Board unanimously voted to approve the expenditure to engage a new company for copier services, pending review of the contract by counsel.

## BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

- A. Academic Excellence Committee – Ms. Vivian Logan is the new Chair. She applauded the work to revise the academic Dashboard, which will be presented to the entire Board in October. The Board Co-Chairs attended a meeting of “Say Yes” Buffalo and reported that charter school students are eligible for some of its services. Mentoring opportunities for OCS students will be explored by the Executive Committee.
  
- B. Audit/Finance Committee – There was no report this month.
  
- C. Governance Committee – Tom Bailey, Chair
  - 1. Mr. Bailey requested that the Board formally consider the nominations of George Nicholas and Ramelli Choates to become Board members. Upon **Motion** by Ramone Alexander seconded by Vivian Logan, the Board voted unanimously to approve these two as Trustees, subject to authorizer approval. The Board secretary will submit the paperwork to the authorizer.
  - 2. Noted that a date in October will be selected, after Trustee input, for the annual Retreat. Ms. Hakala noted that it is critical that the Retreat be productive and produce action items for the Board with milestones for progress, which should be evaluated at the Board meeting each month.

## BOARD BUSINESS

- A. Upon **Motion** by Bryan Donohue seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, the Board unanimously approved adoption of the Conflict of Interest Policy, which was distributed electronically and provided in hard copy at the meeting. The policy must be distributed to the entire staff of OCS, will be on the school website, and should be in the staff and student handbooks.
- B. Upon **Motion** by Bryan Donohue seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, the Board voted unanimously to designate the Executive Committee to handle complaints under the Whistleblower policy. The Whistleblower Policy was distributed electronically before the meeting and a copy of the policy was provided in hard copy at the meeting.

An update was provided on the union Step 3 Grievance hearing held at the August 2017 Board meeting. There has been no demand from the union for Step 4 Arbitration. Ms. Donna Nowak is currently the teachers' association President.

Upon **Motion** by Jacqueline Hollins seconded by Ron Stewart, the Board unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 PM.

Next Board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 5, 2017 at 6 PM.

Sincerely,

Susan R. Hakala

Secretary to the Board of Trustees