

ORACLE CHARTER SCHOOL
888 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, February 1, 2018

Board Co-Chairs Jacqueline Hollins and Ramone Alexander called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

The following individuals were present:

Trustees – Jacqueline Hollins, Ramone Alexander, John Whitty, Susan Hakala, Ron Stewart, Ramelli Choates, Pastor George Nicholas

Trustees Excused: Divitta Alexander, Bryan Donohue, Thomas Bailey, Maureen Ludwig, James McLeod

Administration -- Benjamin Willis, Ellen Connell, Dara Seeley, Kathy Herman

Legal – Steve Polowitz

Consultants – Ken Peterson, Melissa Brinson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon a Motion by John Whitty seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2018 Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION UPDATES

Curriculum & Instruction Presentation – Ms. Seeley noted that the academic dashboard was being updated after the lock on report cards on February 1 and the dashboard will be emailed to Trustees. Regents Exam pass rates for January 2018 were provided: Algebra I – 24.2%, Geometry – 8.3%, Global Studies – 21.9%, Living Environment – 37.8%, and English 61.1%.

Student Enrollment, Discipline and Attendance – Ms. Connell reported that enrollment stands at 299 students. The high unexcused absence and unexcused tardy rates were discussed at length, including School policies, actions, involvement of the attendance clerk and social worker. News of the possible closure of OCS was cited as one particular reason for the sharp increases. Restorative justice circles were discussed in particularly with regard to class removals for disruption of the learning environment. Mr. Willis noted that the student advisory period had just been moved to the early morning, which was a measure taken to reduce tardiness to academic classes.

Board Reactions/Discussion:

- A. Trustee Pastor Nicholas asked if the Board could learn more about the lives and circumstances of “repeat offenders” so there could be an assessment of whether enough was being done to help the students and their families.
- B. Trustee Stewart opined that that the students of OCS need to understand the connection between education and upward mobility.
- C. Mr. Peterson, KXD Consultant, noted that OCS is drawing from the same pool of disadvantaged students as the Charter School for Applied Technology, for example, or Bronx charter schools, so OCS is not unique because of the high poverty percentage of its student body.
- D. Visiting successful charter schools and forming key partnerships would perhaps help to make clear the “it” factor that OCS must develop.

Faculty and Staff – Ms. Herman noted that Mr. Schosek, ENL teacher, had returned to OCS. There were 4 new hires, 4 resignations, and 2 vacancies. Ms. Herman has been gathering exit data from teachers who have resigned.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Academic Excellence Committee — Committee Chair Ramelli Choates noted that the last meeting was productive because the academic coaches attended.

Finance Committee – John Whitty, Committee Chair, reviewed the balance sheet as of December 31, 2017 and the income statement for the six months then ended. Variances from budget were explained. It is expected that unfavorable revenue variances will continue due to declining enrollment.

Governance Committee—Thomas Bailey, Committee Chair, was excused due to illness. It was noted that a new parent Trustee was needed, and Mr. Willis was asked to help identify candidates.

CHARTER RENEWAL

The Charter Schools Committee meets on February 13 at 10:00am and Jacqui Hollins noted that it is anticipated that the Committee will vote on OCS renewal during the meeting. Prior to the meeting, Jacqui Hollins and Ramone Alexander will provide the Charter Schools Committee with an update on the leadership team plan and brief details about strategy moving forward.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:20 PM upon Motion by Pastor Nicholas seconded by John Whitty, the Board unanimously voted to enter Executive Session to discuss confidential personnel matters. At 8:25 PM upon

Motion by Jacqui Hollins seconded by Ron Stewart, the board unanimously agreed to exit Executive Session.

BOARD BUSINESS

Upon Motion by George Nicholas seconded by Ramone Alexander, the Board unanimously voted that pending charter renewal:

1. OCS shall hire Dr. LaVonne Sheffield, a turnaround expert currently working with the School as a consultant in the area of academics, to serve in the capacity of Superintendent In Residence based upon her qualifications, her past work with OCS, and to provide continuity/stability at OCS.
2. Dr. Sheffield will serve as Superintendent In Residence until a new HoS is hired and is fully on-boarded.
3. Ms. Barnes will continue in her capacity as HoS thru June 2018, and Mr. Willis will continue to serve in his capacity as Assistant HoS. Ms. Barnes will report to Dr. Sheffield.
4. Dr. Sheffield will have authority to reorganize staff reporting as she deems appropriate.
5. The Board will launch a national search for a new HoS for the 2018/2019 academic year.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:30 PM upon Motion by Ron Stewart, seconded by George Nicholas, the Board unanimously approved adjournment of the meeting.

The next Regular Board Meeting will take place on March 1, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Hakala
Secretary to the Board