

**DISCOVERY CHARTER SCHOOL**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**November 21, 2013**

A Board of Trustees Meeting was held on November 21, 2013, at the Discovery Charter School; 133 Hoover Drive, Rochester, NY 14615.

**Trustees Present:** Daniel Aureli; Thomas DaRin (trustee-elect); Donna Dedee Doyle; Barthelemy Koumassou; Joseph Martino; Delmonize Smith; Grace Tillinghast; Sara Varhus; David Vigren

**Trustees Excused:** Scott Adair (trustee-elect)

**Also Present:** Joe Saia, School Director; Steven Polowitz, Attorney; Valerie Nolan, Independent Consultant

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. and it was determined that a lawful quorum was present.

**2. Proof of Public Notice of Meeting**

Public Notice was provided in the Messenger Post.

**3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2013 meeting was made by Mr. Martino, seconded by Mrs. Tillinghast and unanimously approved with those absent at the last meeting abstaining.

**4. Extended Learning Program**

Ms. Lisa Hiley, Director of Education, EnCompass: Resources for Learning, presented background information on her organization. The EnCompass program has three primary parts: Extended Learning after normal school hours; Academic Support and Tutoring; Academic Outreach Services. Most of the presentation focused on the EnCompass-Discovery Extended Learning program. The program this fall serves 80 students, selected on the basis of need, in grades 2, 3, and 4. Students are divided into groups of 12, each group having 2 academic coaches. The program is held 4 days each week. Ms. Hiley also reviewed various measures of progress from the previous year. Mr. Saia noted that work is being done to compare results for students in the program and not in the program and indicated it was likely that the analysis will be available in January.

## **5. Summer Program**

Ms. Deana Darling, Executive Director of Horizons at Nazareth College, presented background information on Horizons and discussed the program that has been held at the college for Discovery students during the last three summers. 45 students (15 from each grade level beginning with 1<sup>st</sup> graders moving into 2<sup>nd</sup>) participated in the summer 2013 program. Students receive literacy, math and science instruction from certified teachers, take multiple field trips, and learn how to swim. Classes are small with a teacher to student ratio of 1:5. Ms. Darling outlined economics associated with the program and indicated how difficult it is going to be to continue the program without RCSD financial support like they give to all other Horizon programs in the community (\$500 per student). It was noted that all of the students attending the Horizons at Nazareth program live in the city, yet because they attend a charter school rather than a RCSD school, RCSD funding is not available. Mr. Polowitz agreed to examine the legality of the current RCSD position. Mrs. Tillinghast indicated she would try to meet with the RCSD Superintendent on the matter.

## **6. Expansion Committee Report**

Mr. Martino briefly outlined committee actions since the October board meeting and led a discussion relative to mission/vision for an expanded school. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that an expanded school should focus on college prep. A selection of some of the very thoughtful comments made during the discussion follow:

- We should provide basics and do so exceptionally well.
- A solid foundation in education keeps doors open.
- Need a counselor who focuses on colleges.
- Marketing will be important until a reputation is established.

- In today's environment in this country, a college education is viewed like a high school education of previous generations.
- We need to understand, in depth, what colleges expect from high school graduates.

## 7. Director's Report

Mr. Saia reviewed the more significant elements of his Operations Report.

**a. Quarterly Academic Review.** Mr. Saia reviewed the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter academic assessment results. In general the results are favorable. In some cases, however, the results are much higher than AIMSweb results (which are more indicative of likely State Test results). The staff is looking for more reliable assessments. Overall, progress continues to be made.

There was discussion about thinking out-of-the-box to accelerate progress and to deal more effectively with environmental issues outside the school. Mr. Smith volunteered to lead a "skonk works" to develop innovative ideas for inside and outside the school.

**b. Demographics.** Mr. Saia reviewed student and staff demographics noting an increase in free/reduced price lunch eligibility from last year, student ethnicity that has tipped more toward Hispanic since opening, a more balanced student gender mix this year, and an increase of students with IEP's coupled with a reduction of ESOL students. He noted the predictable increase in staff experience and the need to continue to increase male presence and ethnicity that more closely mirrors the school's student population.

**c. Staff Handbook.** Mr. Saia reviewed a revised Student Handbook. Revisions resulted from a review of the prior Handbook by professional HR staff at Education Enterprise of NY. A motion to approve the revised Handbook was made by Mr. Aureli, seconded by Ms. Varhus and unanimously approved.

**d. Recognition Calendar.** Mr. Saia and Mr. Smith commented on the staff recognition calendar. It was agreed that each trustee would determine the best way to obtain examples for recognition.

## 8. Business Matters

**a. Legal and Regulatory Monitoring.** The board reviewed the process for monitoring changes in the legal and regulatory environment within which the school operates. No

less than quarterly the Business Manager will report to the board any important legal or regulatory changes.

**b. Health, Wellness, Safety Policy #4800 Revision.** Revisions to Policy #4800, resulting from the school's relocation, were reviewed. A motion to approve the changes was made by Mr. Martino, seconded by Mr. Aureli and unanimously approved.

**c. Enrollment Report.** The November 1 Enrollment Report was reviewed. A continuing student count of 214 was noted despite 4 students leaving the school during October.

## 9. Finance Committee Report

**a. Key Financial Indicators.** Mr. Vigren reviewed the new Key Financial Indicators report with the board, explaining the various indicators and calculations as well as how to interpret results. Consensus of the board indicated that it is a good summary to review monthly.

**b. Monthly Statements.** The October financial statements were reviewed. Mr. Vigren pointed out that the current surplus is likely to shrink as the year proceeds.

**c. Grant Status.** Ms. Nolan indicated that the SUNY Facilities Grant results have not been announced. In fact, indications are that the applications have not yet been scored.

**d. Friends of DCS Status.** Mr. Vigren indicated that "Friends" has now gone dormant, albeit with three new directors. Fundraising, as discussed at an earlier meeting, will now be spearheaded by the Education Enterprise of NY Foundation.

**e. Check Detail Report.** Mr. Vigren asked for any questions concerning the report. There were none.

**f. Checks Over \$5,000.** A *Resolution (#137)* approving a non-routine check over \$5000 was moved by Mr. Aureli, seconded by Mr. Koumassou and unanimously approved.

## 10. Motion to Move into Executive Session

A motion to move into Executive Session to discuss a confidential legal matter was made by Mr. Martino, seconded by Mrs. Dedee Doyle and unanimously approved.

## **11. Motion to Move out of Executive Session**

A motion to move out of Executive Session was made by Mr. Aureli, seconded by Mrs. Dedee Doyle and unanimously approved.

A *Resolution (#138)* authorizing the board chair to accept a Letter of Commitment dealing with the reimbursement of legal fees was moved by Ms. Varhus, seconded by Mr. Smith and unanimously approved with Mr. Martino recusing himself.

A *Resolution (#139)* authorizing full payment of rent directly to 133 Hoover Drive LLC without the need for an escrow account was moved by Ms. Varhus, seconded by Mr. Aureli and unanimously approved with Mr. Martino recusing himself.

## **12. Old Business**

The chair asked for any old business. There was none.

## **13. New Business**

The chair asked for any new business. There was none.

## **14. Motion to Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Martino, seconded by Mrs. Dedee Doyle and unanimously approved at 9:40 pm.