

DISCOVERY CHARTER SCHOOL

Board Meeting Minutes

February 26, 2015

A Board of Trustees Meeting was held on February 26, 2015, at the Discovery Charter School, 133 Hoover Drive, Rochester, NY 14615.

Trustees Present: Daniel Aureli; Sarah Armignacco; Yoshida Blackman; Thomas DaRin; Joseph Martino; Sara Varhus; David Vigren; Olivia West

Trustees Excused: Scott Adair; Donna Dedee Doyle; Lisa Lewis

Also Present: Anne Culver, School Business Manager; Steve Gleason, Administrative Consultant; Steven Polowitz, Attorney; Valerie Nolan, Independent Consultant

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 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. Conflict of Interest Reminder

The Chair read the following statement: "The Chair reminds everyone that if a potential conflict of interest exists concerning a subject under discussion by the Board that you have an obligation to disclose the potential conflict and, if deemed a conflict, recuse yourself and leave the room during any discussion and vote on the subject."

4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2015 meeting, after correction of a typographical error, was made by Mr. Martino, seconded by Mr. DaRin and unanimously approved.

5. Expansion Committee

- a. Placement of Grade 6 Graduates.** The subcommittee dealing with this issue reported the following:
- Mrs. Cordova contacted McQuaid Jesuit High School and is in the process of scheduling a meeting at the school. It is likely that Mercy High School will also attend.
 - A subcommittee phone conference will take place on 3/2 to identify more schools to contact.
 - An open house for all schools interested in Discovery graduates will be held in the fall. There are currently 4 private schools that have expressed interest in accepting the school's graduates.
 - Tours for Discovery staff and parents at other schools will be scheduled.
 - Contact information regarding the Urban/Suburban program has been shared with the subcommittee.
 - Questions to guide the subcommittee's and parent's examination of schools for 7th grade and beyond have been drafted.
- b. Ongoing Support.** Ms. Armignacco agreed to lead this effort and bring a plan to the board at a future meeting. A number of thoughts regarding ongoing support for Discovery graduates were shared:
- Ongoing support must be informal. No school funds may be used to support graduates.
 - Schools where graduates will attend will not share data, just as Discovery will not share such data.
 - Schools could be encouraged to have former Discovery students return to the school to do public service work, perhaps in a "big brother/big sister" manner.
 - Graduates could be invited to the school to celebrate their success after leaving Discovery.
 - An alumni Facebook page and/or newsletter could be organized by the Family Association.
 - Schools could be encouraged to provide existing Discovery students an opportunity to shadow graduates.
 - Exit interviews could be conducted to glean insight into the extent Discovery's program prepared graduates to succeed.

6. Summer Learning Program

Mr. Gleason presented a report on the implementation progress of the school's summer learning program. The effort is proceeding on time and no major hurdles have been encountered.

- a. **MOU.** A signed Memorandum of Understanding for the summer program's full-time option was placed before the Board. A motion to approve the MOU and approve and ratify the signing of same by David Vigren as Board Chair on February 20, 2015 was made by Mr. Aureli, seconded by Ms. Armignacco and unanimously approved. Prior to the discussion and motion, a potential conflict of interest concerning Ms. Varhus and Mr. Martino was discussed and deemed to be not relevant to the discussion and vote as both Nazareth College and Education Enterprise are (1) partnering with the school to provide the program, (2) that without these partnerships the school would have no summer school program for 2015 and (3) that both organizations are providing significant resources and/or monetary contributions necessary in order to make the 2015 summer school program a reality for Discovery's students. Inasmuch as this is the case and that neither organization will gain monetarily from participation, it was the consensus of the Board that no real conflict of interest exists in this case.

7. Charter Renewal

- a. **SchoolWorks Contract.** Mr. Vigren presented an opportunity to have a nationally known education consulting group perform a school quality review and assist in preparing for the charter renewal process. The Board agreed that both services would provide great value to the school in connection with its charter renewal application effort, and given SchoolWorks' lengthy experience in this area that it is highly qualified to perform the work. A generous offer from EnCompass: Resources for Learning to donate the school quality review as a gift-in-kind was embraced. Ms. Nolan, who assists the school in a wide variety of matters including the charter renewal application process, agreed to reduce her proposed contract by \$5,000 in order to enable the school to pay for the charter renewal process assistance offered by SchoolWorks. A motion to approve a SchoolWorks contract to perform assistance with the charter renewal process for a fee of \$5,100 and to approve and ratify the signing of same by David Vigren as Board Chair on February 9, 2015 was made by Mr. Aureli, seconded by Mrs. Blackman and unanimously approved.
- b. **ELL Students.** The Board discussed additional outreach techniques to attract ELL students. Efforts to attract ELL students since before the school opened were reviewed, including those implemented since the last lottery. It was the consensus of the Board that additional effort is needed in view of limited results.

8. HR Committee

Mr. Martino presented a report from the Human Resources Committee. The committee had reviewed teacher job descriptions and salary scales.

- a. **Job Descriptions.** Revised job descriptions, reflecting current duties and structure within the school, were reviewed for lead teacher, apprentice teacher, building substitute, and teaching assistant. A motion to approve the job descriptions was made by Ms. Varhus, seconded by Mrs. West and unanimously approved.
- b. **Salary Structure.** Revised starting salary ranges for lead teacher, apprentice teacher, building substitute and teaching assistant were reviewed. Mr. Martino noted that the recommended salary ranges resulted from local benchmarking and were designed to reflect updated job descriptions, actual operations and changing needs of the organization. A motion to approve the starting salary matrix recommended by the Human Resources Committee was made by Mr. Martino, seconded by Ms. Armignacco and unanimously approved.

9. Director's Report

Mr. Vigren presented Mr. Saia's report. Mr. Saia was unable to attend the meeting due to unexpected air travel delays upon returning from a leadership conference. Mr. Vigren highlighted attendance, noting improvement from December; discipline referrals noting significant reduction year-to-date; attendance at Family Association meetings, noting significant improvement in January.

- a. **Academic Performance – 2Q.** It was decided to have Mr. Saia present the second quarter academic performance report at the March Board meeting.

10. Business Manager's Report

- a. **Enrollment Report.** Ms. Culver presented the February 1 Enrollment Report noting a year-to-date average number of students in the school of 259.
- b. **Insurance Renewal.** Ms. Culver presented a recommendation for insurance renewal. After receiving three bids for insurance, a recommendation to accept a renewal bid from Austin & Company, a preferred vendor of Northeast Charter School Network and insurance broker for over 100 charter schools, was reviewed. All insurance companies included in the Charter-Renewal proposal from Austin carry a rating that meets NYSED requirements. The Austin bid was the lowest of the proposals received and it offers the school better insurance coverage at a cost that is lower than the current premium. A motion to approve the Austin proposal was made by Mr. Aureli, seconded by Mrs. Blackman and unanimously approved.

- c. **Food Service RFP.** Ms. Culver presented the results of the Request for Proposal process conducted for food service. Three responses were received, including one from the school's current provider. Ms. Culver recommended acceptance of the proposal from Julia K Caters. Julia K provides service to other charter schools in the area and employees a chef who managed the food service department for the Rochester City School District. After sampling food prepared by Julia K and checking with references, Ms. Culver and the staff highly recommended Julia K, noting the high likelihood of students being strongly encouraged to eat more and waste less. Ms. Culver noted that the slightly higher cost would not compromise the school's ability to have revenue continue to exceed cost. In view of the superior quality of the service/product offered by Julia K, Ms. Culver's conclusion is that Julia K's proposal is the lowest bid received from a responsible vendor. A motion to approve the Julia K Caters proposal was made by Mrs. West, seconded by Mr. DaRin and unanimously approved.
- d. **Audit Service RFP.** Ms. Culver presented the results of the Request for Proposal process conducted for audit service. Four responses were received. Three respondents were interviewed by the Audit/Finance Committee. The Committee recommended retaining the firm of Mengel Metzger Barr & Company as the school's audit firm, noting the firm's very significant experience with charter schools across the state (over 40 served), their deep familiarity with NYSED audit requirements, and their solid work with the school during its initial charter period. The Committee felt that these qualities far outweighed the annual cost proposed by the lowest bidder. A motion to approve the Mengel Metzger Barr & Company proposal was made by Mr. Aureli, seconded by Mrs. Blackman and unanimously approved. Ms. Culver was asked to contact the firm to see if their cost could be reduced. After the meeting, contact was made and costs for Form 990 preparation were reduced by the Mengel Metzger Barr firm.
- e. **Legal Engagement Letter.** Upon the Board's approval of Mr. Polowitz's request for increased fees, presented at its January 15, 2015 regular meeting, an updated Letter of Engagement with Mr. Polowitz and his firm was prepared. A **Resolution (#198)** to ratify the approval of the updated Letter of Engagement with Mr. Polowitz dated January 26, 2015 and to approve and ratify the signing of same by David Vigren as Board Chair on January 27, 2015 was moved by Mr. Martino, seconded by Ms. Varhus and unanimously approved.
- f. **Consultant Contract.** Mrs. Nolan left the room. A proposed contract from Mrs. Nolan was reviewed. It was noted that Mrs. Nolan has extensive experience with the school, having worked with its founders from the very beginning of their deliberations. It was also noted that she was chosen for that work from several other candidates interviewed. Her assistance continues to provide value to the school, particularly at this time when a

charter renewal application must be prepared and in view of the fact that she has already been extensively involved in the charter renewal application planning and development process. A motion to approve the proposed contract with Mrs. Nolan for the calendar year 2015 in an amount not to exceed \$14,200 was made by Mr. Aureli, seconded by Ms. Varhus and unanimously approved. Mrs. Nolan reentered the room.

11. Finance Committee Report

- a. January Financial Statements.** Ms. Culver reviewed the January Financial Statements and Cash Flow Forecast with the Board, noting results are tracking according to plan.
- b. Key Financial Indicators.** Ms. Culver reviewed the Key Financial Indicators report.
- c. Grant Status.** Ms. Culver presented the February 23 Grants Report.
- d. Check Detail Report.** Ms. Culver asked if there were any questions concerning the 7-page Check Detail Report, totaling \$108,681.42, for the month of January. There were none.
- e. Checks Over \$5,000.** Ms. Culver presented a *Resolution (#199)*, detailing non-routine payments of \$5,000 or more. The Resolution was moved by Mrs. Blackman, seconded by Mr. DaRin and unanimously approved with Mr. Martino abstaining.

12. Old Business

The Chair asked if there was any old business. There was none.

13. New Business

The Chair asked if there was any new business. There was none.

14. Motion to Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Martino, seconded by Mr. DaRin and unanimously approved at 8:05 pm.