

Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday June 24, 2014
Our World Neighborhood Charter School
Middle School
31-20 37th Avenue, Astoria, NY 11106

The meeting of the Board of Trustees was called to order at 7:06pm.

The Trustees present were:

Jeanette Betancourt, President
Steven Solinsky, Vice President and Treasurer
Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary
Josh Adland
Richard Bogle
Melissa Chin
Sarah Espanol
Charles Guadagnolo,

Also present were:

Brian Ferguson, Executive Director
Lisa Edmiston, Principal
Yvette Strachan, Executive Assistant
Olubunmi Emigli, PTO Co-Chair
Mary Kane, PTO Co-Chair

Jeanette Betancourt, President of OWNCS Board of Trustees, chaired the meeting.

Board Business

Jeanette Betancourt

Ms. Betancourt officially called the meeting to order. She reminded the Board that there will be a strategic planning meeting on July 12, 2014 from 9:30 – 2:30, and announced that she has planned a small celebration to thank Josh Adland for his contributions to the board at that meeting.

Ms. Betancourt informed the attendees that she and Brian Ferguson are currently working on his overall goals with the intent of tying them to the recent and upcoming strategic planning sessions. When they are ready, she will pass them on to the rest of the Executive Committee for review before circulating them to the full board to finalize the process.

Director's Report
Brian Ferguson

End of Year / Report Submissions

Mr. Ferguson noted that things are very busy at this time of year as school wraps up and he starts work on reports and paperwork with August deadlines including the Annual Report and Title I application. With this in mind, he had asked that each trustee sign the online version of the financial disclosure for CSI by the end of the meeting.

Mr. Ferguson is also working on a notification to families whose children did not meet the city's criteria for promotion based on their state test scores, informing them that the students are mandated by the City of New York to attend summer school. The total number of students from grades 3 through 8 required to attend summer school is smaller this year than last year. There were 15 students who did not meet the math criteria and an additional 20 who did not meet the ELA criteria. Mr. Ferguson explained that summer school is usually held at the child's zoned school or the closest school offering a summer school program.

Upon discussion, Mr. Ferguson indicated that OWNCS does not make it a practice to retain children and it does not use just the state test results to make that determination. Well before the state tests, usually by February, it is known which students are struggling and not making sufficient progress. The next course of action is usually to evaluate students for learning disabilities to see who might require special services. Each situation is evaluated carefully to assess what plans put in place are working, or not working, and to determine what will be best developmentally and academically for the child.

Mr. Ferguson also noted that the school has not received the State test results yet. We have only received word from the City about the students who did not meet the promotional criteria as set by the NYC Department of Education; this is not a state mandate. On the other hand, the Terra Nova test scores are back and he's hoping to put those scores in this year's annual report.

Title I Application

In regards to the Title I, there are no major changes to the application this year, and it will be finalized and submitted shortly. Mr. Ferguson brought to the Board's attention, however, that the amount of this award is going down again. Generally speaking the grant has been trending down. Three years ago we received over \$200,000, and this year it was \$175,000.

After-school

Mr. Ferguson reported that OWNCS received approval for the city's OST grant with SAYA (South Asian Youth Action) and he's setting up a meeting with SAYA in the coming weeks. It is very likely we will arrange to partner with SAYA for the 21st Century program as well. Ms. Betancourt asked whether Mr. Ferguson felt comfortable that SAYA would provide enough staffing for the program, and he confirmed that he did. Ms. Betancourt also asked whether we selected SAYA or they selected us. Mr. Ferguson explained that the school worked with both SAYA and HANAC to craft their proposals. The Mayor's office approved the SAYA application, so they received a grant to do the program whereas the HANAC application was not

approved. Mr. Ferguson went on to say that both the 21st Century and the city's OST programs were supportive of the idea of merging the two programs – both thought it can be done and stated they would help us make sure it happens, providing individualized technical assistance, as needed. Mr. Ferguson stated that the 21st Century report is also due in July, so the administration is collecting data and preparing the report for submission.

Education Committee
Melissa Chin

Ms. Chin informed the Board that the committee had a really good presentation from the Middle School Guidance Counselor, Ms. Whitney, about the school's comprehensive school counseling program which follows the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) model for school counseling programs. Ms. Chin summarized the model, including recommendations for how a guidance counselor should allocate her time between direct service and guidance systems; the focus of the guidance curriculum on teaching students skills related to consequential thinking, self-advocacy and ownership of choices; and how OWNCS has adapted those recommendations. Highlights of the program at OWNCS include the INOK program ("It's Not Okay", discussed at the last Board meeting), anti-bullying, managing social media, RIT (responsiveness to instruction), time and stress management, high school application process and college preparedness, individual counseling, community service and employment and accountability. She offered to circulate the handout provided to the Committee to any members of the Board who are interested.

Ms. Chin noted that Ms. Whitney wanted the committee to get a sense of where the program has taken OWNCS students this school year and shared the results from surveys given to both teachers and students before and after the INOK program, which indicated that it was the perception of both groups that more students were being "upstanders." While the results are not a statistical sample, they are encouraging.

Another goal of the program is to help 8th graders through the high school application process. Ms. Chin reported that this year 83% of students were accepted to one of their top three high school choices compared to 56% last year, 73% the previous year, and 48% the year before.

The school offers preparation for Specialized High School exams in the fall. The committee will be looking at data to see the effectiveness of the exam prep, which is offered to students at a steeply discounted rate, with financial aid made available. The approach of allowing 7th graders to concentrate in Art or Film to prepare a portfolio for high school applications is also paying off. The Trustees discussed what OWNCS can do to offer support for students preparing for interviews and/or auditions for performing arts and other selective programs.

In summary, Ms. Chin stated that the Committee sees the overall approach to the counseling program as being really positive and that OWN will continue on with the same model for next school year. She is pleased to report that the counseling education program is taking a look at where our student needs are, and tying the program to those needs.

Facilities Committee
Richard Bogle

Mr. Bogle suggested that the Trustees need to talk more about facilities at the strategic planning meeting to clarify our goals and next steps and to determine the feasibility of our goals and options.

Ms. Betancourt suggested documenting specific next steps and creating a timeline to stay on track. Ms. Betancourt also stated she will re-send the previous strategic meeting minutes which were very detailed on this topic.

Development Committee
Joshua Adland

Mr. Adland noted that we had already received an update from the Executive Director about the status of the OST grant. He went on to update the group on the Data Manager position and briefly described the strengths and weaknesses of the final two candidates and the hiring committee's recommendation. Mr. Ferguson agreed with the recommendation and stated that he had already reached out to the final candidate and made an offer with hopes of an August start date. Mr. Adland also stated that just in case it did not work out with the final candidate he thinks the second candidate would also be a good fit for the position.

Finance Committee
Steven Solinsky

Ms. Betancourt stated that the new fiscal year 2015 budget was completed and that she hoped everyone had an opportunity to review this important document. Mr. Solinsky stated that a Finance Committee meeting was held on June 17, 2014 to review the budget and that an updated version had been circulated based on their recommendations. Mr. Solinsky reminded the Board that 90% of the school's income derives from per pupil revenue, and that the state had finally approved a 1.8% increase after 4 years. Since our routine costs continue to go up, and we expect to fill some vacant positions, add a key position, and the UFT salary scale is increasing, while revenues are only increasing modestly, the FY15 budget as presented includes a deficit of about \$425,000. He explained that this figure includes depreciation of about \$248,000, so in terms of the actual operating budget the deficit is about \$177,000.

Mr. Solinsky pointed out that the increase in salaries alone is over ½ a million dollars and is accompanied by an increase in employee benefits. He stated that the increase in benefits is more than the increase in revenue. The committee did review the projected salaries and suggested modifications to reflect the fact that historically, not all positions are filled immediately, and that the salaries and contracted services (substitute teacher) budgets often offset each other. These adjustments made some difference in reducing the deficit. The Committee also requested some

additional analysis regarding the cost to raise a dollar noting that the development budget is still running into a deficit compared to the money it raises.

Mr. Solinsky noted that while we have not had an operating deficit like this in the past, the Board is making appropriate investments. Furthermore, he said this is a conservative budget on the expense side, so our expenses may in fact be lower once we review mid-year, which would lower the deficit. He also expressed the hopes we would pick up some additional revenue from foundation grants. Mr. Solinsky asked the board to approve the budget.

Ms. Betancourt inquired about the cost for substitute teaching indicating that the cost was higher this year than usually. Mr. Ferguson explained the reasons for the increases, with various leaves and hard-to-fill positions. The Trustees inquired about the staff turnover for this year but the information was not known at the time of the meeting.

PTO

Olubunmi Emigli

Ms. Emigli reported that the PTO gave the school an end-of-year donation of \$1,000 to be spent at the Executive Director's discretion. She informed the group that the PTO co-chair Mary Kane is stepping down as the PTO co-chair but will continue her involvement with the PTO as the 4th grade representative. The new co-chair will begin in August.

Ms. Emigli reported that the PTO already has a few items on the calendar for next school year, which have been approved by Mr. Ferguson. There is a kindergarten play date scheduled to meet and welcome new families at Rainey Park on Saturday 8/23/14 from 1pm to 4pm. In September, there will be a grade K-8 potluck picnic and in November there will be the extravaganza auction. The trustees acknowledged that it has been a record breaking fundraising year for the PTO and that the PTO had engaging events. The board was pleased with the work done by the PTO.

It was also reported by Ms. Emigli that the school community is getting discounted tickets to theatre productions, plays and musicals. The PTO has a box office open on Fridays from 3:30pm to 5:30pm, and will be open during the summer. Ms. Betancourt congratulated Ms. Emigli on an excellent year and for her guidance and participation at the school. Mr. Ferguson thanked Mary Kane for her work and expressed his pleasure working with her and the PTO.

Ms. Edmiston reported that the Soccer team won the championship and was undefeated, and that the Middle School held a 4th Quarter awards ceremony for the community that went very well.

Ms. Betancourt stated that the next official board meeting will be on August 26, 2014 at the Middle School and the committee meetings will start up again in September.

Resolutions

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to approve the meeting minutes for October 2013, November 2013 and May 2014, as presented.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to approve the modified budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year, as presented.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to approve the 2014-2015 school calendar, as presented.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary, OWNCS Board of Trustees