

Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday October 21, 2014
Our World Neighborhood Charter School
Middle School
31-20 37th Street, Astoria, NY 11106
7:00 – 9:00

The Trustees present were:

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

Also present were:

Brian Ferguson, Executive Director
Lisa Edmiston, Principal
Karinne Montaque, Business Manager
Yvette Strachan, Executive Assistant
Olubunmi Emigli, PTO Co-Chair

Steven Solinsky, Vice President of OWNCS Board of Trustees, chaired the meeting.

Joint Finance & Audit Committee Report
Steven Solinsky

Mr. Solinsky confirmed that the decision made by the Board last month regarding the 401(k) distribution has been executed. He also reported that our first 401(k) plan audit has been completed as a routine matter of course.

Mr. Solinsky noted that the annual audit has been completed. The Draft Report has been circulated to the full Board for review, and the committee will meet with the auditors next week to review the report.

He called the Board's attention to page 2 of the report which is a standard letter that confirms that the school's financial reports are sufficient and appropriate, and that the numbers, which are presented fairly, are backed up with documentation. He reminded the Board that the Balance Sheet is a snap shot of the school's financial position on the last day of the fiscal year, and that the information presented was in alignment with draft year-end financial statements prepared by the Business office and previously reviewed by the Board, noting that the school continues to be in a strong cash position.

Mr. Solinsky also reviewed the status of OWN's fixed assets (detailed in Note 3) with the Board, calling attention to leasehold improvements of \$3.6 million for item such as wiring, roof repairs, HVAC, etc. that are cash expenses that are allocated over a number of years. He also pointed out the asset category for "construction in progress" and reminded the Board that if we do not proceed with a building project, we will eventually have to reclassify this as an expense instead of an asset. This action would reduce the school's assets, but not its cash position. Mr. Solinsky indicated that the Committee would discuss this with the auditors.

Mr. Solinsky went on to review the Statement of Activities which has been consistent year over year. One small variation this past year was that we had an increase in government grants. The statement also illustrates that our expenses were higher than our revenue, as previously reported, resulting in an operating deficit. The amount on the draft that was circulated was \$160,000, and it is expected to go up to \$188,000 after the auditors make one final correction to the report. The schedule of functional expenses presented is also incomplete, but will be reviewed by the Committee before the report is submitted by the November 1st deadline. A final version of the Auditor's Report will be shared with the full Board next month.

Mr. Solinsky also informed the board that next year we should expect the auditors to ask for a pre-audit meeting to comply with New York states new Not-For-Profit Revitalization Act, in addition to the post-audit meeting.

Education Committee Report
Melissa Chin and Sarah Espanol

At their most recent meeting the Committee met with members of the Support Team at OWNCS and discussed their role at the school. Among others, the team includes the Middle School Dean of Students, Anita Angrum, and the new Elementary School Dean of School Culture, Kerry Henning, who is a former guidance counselor. The Committee is very pleased at the creation of this new position at the ES which exemplifies the team's focus on preventing behavioral issues instead of being reactive. They also noted how well the team is working together. In addition to working to support positive choices by students – tied to the Pillars of a Positive Community – the team works to support teachers, students and parents on an individual basis to create behavior plans. They have also met with the PTO to let parents know how much support is available to them and how much work they do.

Based on teacher reports and their own direct observations, the Support Team has noticed particular trends with different age groups such as difficulty negotiating friendships; low self-esteem among a certain group of girls; and managing classroom expectations. The Committee discussed whether it might be possible to gather data to measure the effectiveness of interventions designed to address things like self-esteem. For instance, do we notice a change in grades after an intervention?

The Board asked how the administration's thinking about group punishment had evolved, and whether the school had a clear policy on the subject. Mr. Ferguson replied that the school has no specific stated position on the subject, but generally avoids it. He also cautioned that students

may sometimes interpret an action as group punishment when the staff regards it as a safety issue. For instance, if a group of students is loud and chaotic as they exit for recess, they may be asked to sit for a while to calm down. In one situation, field trips via subway were cancelled for a period of time because the student behavior on one trip was too chaotic, and it was not safe. This was not meant as a punishment, but was a safety measure. Upon discussion the Board agreed that the tales students bring home may not tell the whole story and that if parents have concerns they should always be encouraged to discuss them directly with the teacher.

The Committee concluded by noting that an INOK (It's Not OK) Assembly is going to be held, and that they were pleased to see the way that all the programs such as INOK and the Pillars, and the members of the Support Team are working so well together.

PTO

Olubunmi Emigli

- A school-wide pot luck picnic was held and was a tremendous success.
- The K-1 pot luck to welcome new families was packed and it seemed everyone came. The PTO will definitely continue to sponsor this event each year.
- Spirit Week is launching at the Elementary School this week. This fundraiser is a huge deal for the kids with a fun theme each day building from Pennies for Pajamas through the week.
- Plans for the Auction are well under way, and tickets can be purchased via PayPal. The Board is encouraged to attend, and to consider buying an extra ticket on behalf of an OWN teacher or staff member. There will be a full buffet plus a cash bar. This year the PTO has chosen to honor Mr. Ferguson and Ms. Ranchor at the event.

Director's Report

Brian Ferguson

General Business

- Mr. Ferguson also reported on the many events that are happening at the school including a school dance.
- The school has been developing its Health Awareness program since last Spring, and is doing more to communicate about existing efforts on the school website. Activities include Fresh Fruit Fridays at the Middle School, Move to Improve, Fitnessgrams in the Physical Education program, and our school Wellness Policy. The administration would also like to make further improvements to the school lunch program by serving more fruits and vegetables and has started a full bidding process that may result in a shift to a new vendor.
- In fact, Mr. Ferguson reported the school is in the process of reviewing all its major vendors. The school has been working with a number of vendors for quite some time and wants to make sure it continues to get the best prices.
- On the technology side, PowerSchool, which has been in use for many years at the Middle School is being rolled out to the Elementary School for parent access to grades.

- The PICCS process has launched for the year, which requires a great deal of day-to-day management.
- The city's vaccination forms have changed which will require the school to audit and validate existing forms
- The Department of Health has also informed the school that it will be required to re-verify hearing and vision for the older students. This policy used to apply only to grades K-1, and there is no clarity on who will pay for the new screenings. The administration has sent a query to the DOH. In the meantime, the school is arranging to do a hearing program with some trainees from Hunter College. Ms. Fitzgerald encouraged the administration to look into services by Helen Keller International's ChildSight program for free vision screenings and glasses for Middle School students.
- Mr. Guadagnolo asked whether the school is tracking fitness in light of the obesity issues our country is facing. Mr. Ferguson responded that the school nurse communicates with and trains parents on a variety of health issues, such as asthma and obesity, but that the latter is a very sensitive topic for some parents. A discussion ensued about how the statistics for our students measure up compared to the general population. The school is conducting Fitnessgrams in Physical Education, promoting programs such as walking or biking to school, and is measuring students' physical activity in connection with a recent PE grant. Mr. Ferguson noted that he will ask for an analysis of available data from the staff to see if there are any significant trends. In the meantime, it was agreed that it would be a good idea to reinforce messages delivered in the past. A good place to start is to work with the PTO to review the healthy snack policy as this has proven to be a good entry point into a discussion of healthy eating.

Resolutions

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

RESOLVED to approve the minutes for the September, 2014 Board meeting as presented.

Executive Session

The Trustees met in Executive Session to conduct Board business.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary, OWNCS Board of Trustees