

Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, August 25, 2015
Our World Neighborhood Charter School
Elementary School
36-12 35th Avenue, Astoria, NY 11106
7:00 pm

The Trustees present were:

Jeanette Betancourt, President
Melissa Chin, Vice President
Charles Gaudagnolo, Treasurer
Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary
Rich Bogle
Sarah Espanol

Also present were:

Brian Ferguson, Executive Director
Lisa Edmiston, Principal
LaToiya Revell, Vice Principal
Karrine Montaque, Business Manager
Yvette Strachan, Executive Assistant
Jamey Greco, Special Education Director
Mark Crusante, Director of Development
Tabitha Daye, Elementary School Secretary
Anna Evenhouse, PTO Co-Chair
Olubunmi Emigli, Parent, Board nominee
Sara Badavas, Parent

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

Board Business

Jeanette Betancourt

Ms. Betancourt called the Board's attention to the minutes of the December, 2014 and February, March and June, 2015 meetings which had been circulated ahead of the meeting. Several members of the Board and Executive Director Brian Ferguson had read the minutes and had no suggested edits. Others had not had a chance to review them yet.

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

RESOLVED to approve the minutes for the December, 2014 and February, March and June, 2015 Board meetings pending any edits submitted to the Secretary by Friday, September 28, 2015.

Ms. Betancourt reminded the Board that there will be a follow-on strategic planning meeting on Saturday, October 3 at 9:00 am. She also informed the Board that Ms. Olubunmi Emigli, former PTO Co-Chair and OWN parent had been interviewed by a panel of Board members and had confirmed her interest in joining the Board.

Executive Session

The Trustees met in Executive Session to conduct Board business. A report on their business follows:

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

RESOLVED to elect Olubunmi Emigli for a term ending in 2017.

Committee assignments will be made at a later date.

Director's Report

Brian Ferguson

Opening of the School Year

Mr. Ferguson reported that the logistics of opening this year were very challenging because the Elementary School building was in use all summer. In prior years, the summer program could rotate to different parts of the building to allow for renovations and cleaning, but it wasn't possible this summer because a larger number of students were enrolled. In addition, the school was reorganizing to accommodate an additional Kindergarten this year. So while the school is happy to be hosting the summer program, the changeover was difficult. The program closed on August 17, and professional development began the following day.

Staffing

Mr. Ferguson reminded the Board that he had previously circulated updates about staff turnover, including a couple of last minute resignations that left OWN with positions to fill just as school was opening. Mr. Guadagnolo asked whether this was typical in school environments, and Mr. Ferguson responded that, unfortunately, it is. In addition, he is planning for anticipated leave replacements. Mr. Ferguson noted that turnover was somewhat larger than in prior years, and that he had received the email request for a statistical overview, which he will provide in the coming month once all the staffing is complete.

Annual Report to NYSED and SUNY Charter School Institute

In preparation for the Annual Report, Mr. Ferguson reminded the Board that each member has to fill out both a paper and an electronic version of the annual Conflict of Interest statement. He asked everyone to please look out for a link to the electronic version in our email accounts.

Mr. Ferguson stated that he had sent a preliminary analysis of the State Exam test scores, which are an integral part of our Annual Report, to the Board via email. He pointed out that overall, our students continue to surpass the results of our local school district 30. In ELA, OWN out-performed district 30 at each grade level by at least 3 percentage points. In Math, we also out-performed the district, except for the 5th grade which ran behind. (The 8th grade math scores were also lower than the district, but this is offset in the data submitted in the Annual Report by the Math Regents scores of our strongest students. In order to avoid double-testing, we do not ask them to take both exams. Unfortunately, this important nuance is not reflected in the public NYSED reports.) Mr. Ferguson said that he plans to do a deeper analysis of the results and will work with the educational team to put an action plan for any required improvements in place.

To meet our accountability requirements, OWN currently administers the Terra Nova tests to grades K-2. Mr. Ferguson reported that the administration is considering changing to the MAP (Measuring Academic Progress) test developed by NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association), which is also on the state's approved list. The school has found that the Terra Nova is not easy to administer, and that it's not as tightly tied to the Common Core curriculum as they would like.

Members of the Board asked whether state test scores had been sent to families yet. Mr. Ferguson explained that families who attend district schools are able to access their children's scores earlier than charter school families because the DOE is able to publish individual results on their parent portal, whereas we have to wait for the state to mail them to us. He committed to mailing them to families as soon as they are received, just as in prior years. Ms. Betancourt asked that he consider sending a message to families to say that they are forthcoming.

This led to a discussion about that fact that more and more of the school's communications with families are now paperless. A Board member asked whether the families know to expect this. Mr. Ferguson responded that the returning families are aware, and that the new families need to be informed. He requested the PTO's support to reinforce these messages. He also noted that the school needs to update existing information and to collect more complete data from Elementary School families.

A board member went on to ask about enrollment figures to date. Mr. Ferguson responded that he had already met with the Admissions Coordinator to review the information. They are making lists of who has not showed up yet and that they're trying to learn why. Teachers are helping by making calls to families. He confirmed that the school will be working aggressively to keep the enrollment figures up, as previously discussed.

Finance & Administration Committee
Charles Guadagnolo and Karrine Montaque

Closing out FY15

Ms. Montaque informed the Board that a pre-audit planning meeting had been held, per new state requirements for all non-profits, and that both the annual fiscal audit and the 401(k) audit are under way.

Ms. Montaque and the Committee reviewed the highlights of the year-end Financial Analysis, and the recent Committee minutes which had been previously distributed to the Board. Revenue was \$10.9 million, and expenses were \$11.45 million, resulting in a final deficit of \$478K. This was larger than previously anticipated primarily because per pupil revenues were lower than projected. (See discussion in Committee minutes.) They reviewed the fact that the school did a good job controlling expenses last year, and that we have plans in place to increase and maintain enrollment figures, and hence revenues, this year.

Budget for FY16

Ms. Fitzgerald reminded the Board that it had approved a provisional budget at the start of the fiscal year, with a request for further revisions aimed at producing a balanced budget. The Business Office has integrated several suggested changes, and upon discussion, the Board and the Executive Director agreed that another round of realistic adjustments is required in order to achieve our goal.

Committee Business

The Committee noted that, per the request of the Business Office they have changed their meeting from the 2nd Wednesday to the 3rd Wednesday of each month (the week before the full Board meeting) and asked that it be changed on the school calendar.

Education Committee

Melissa Chin

This committee did not meet over the summer so has nothing to report. They will resume regular meetings in September.

Development Committee

Jeanette Betancourt and Marc Crusante

This committee did not meet over the summer either and will resume regular meetings in September. Ms. Betancourt requested that the regularly scheduled meeting be added to the school calendar. She reminded each Committee that if they have not already done so, they should prepare an annual calendar of topics to discuss throughout the year, and they should take notes.

Mr. Crusante reported on the preparation of proposal for a highly competitive RFA for Social Emotional Learning. He went on to say that he had met with the administration to discuss funding priorities relating to STEM and STEAM, and that he was setting up meetings for Mr. Ferguson to meet with elected officials. He was also meeting with potential local partners such as the Queens Council on the Arts, so that we can be prepared to respond quickly to future calls for proposals. Mr. Crusante also stated that we may get one additional year of funding under the 21st Century Learning Center grant, and that he has a call scheduled with the donor to learn more. Ms. Betancourt thanked him for the updates and requested that a holistic long-term plan be developed.

PTO

Anna Evenhouse

New PTO co-chair Anna Evenhouse reported that the PTO website has been updated and that the annual pledge drive has been initiated. This year the PTO increased the suggested donation to \$50 per family, and they have already started to receive pledges. The PTO has also already hosted a Kindergarten play date attended by 25-30 families who were keen to meet each other. A larger K-8 back-to-school picnic is in the works for September along with other fundraising and community building events traditionally sponsored by the PTO such as selling tickets to a Mets game.

Resolutions

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

RESOLVED to approve the unaudited financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 as presented.

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

RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations for April, May and June 2015, per the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary, OWNCS Board of Trustees