

Board of Trustees Meeting  
Tuesday May 26, 2015  
Our World Neighborhood Charter School  
Elementary School  
36-12 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Astoria, NY 11106  
7:00 – 9:00

**The Trustees present were:**

Jeanette Betancourt, President  
Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary  
Charles Guadagnolo  
Sarah Espanol

**Also present were:**

Brian Ferguson, Executive Director  
Karinne Montaque, Business Manager

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

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***Board Business***

***Jeanette Betancourt***

Ms. Betancourt reported that she has circulated the minutes from the Strategic Planning meeting held Saturday, May 30, and gave a top level summary. She said there were rich discussions regarding facilities and budget planning and the possibility of forming a Charter Management Organization to replicate our school model. At the time, the discussions focused on identifying a location in upstate New York, in part because of the needs of the student populations, and in part because there were no more charters available in NYC. However, it was announced today that the charter cap was revised to allow for the continued growth of NYC's charter sector, so we may also want to consider a second NYC location.

Facilities discussions centered on building on our investment in architectural planning by taking steps to expand available classrooms in the Elementary School building that came out of that work, conducting a feasibility study regarding our infrastructure needs and options, and continuing the dialogue with our Middle School landlord about expansion options at that site.

The Board also discussed the need for each Committee to develop an annual calendar of agenda topics to share with the rest of the Board to support stronger interchanges between Committees.

Since the Board was not able to cover the full agenda on May 30, there will be a follow-up meeting in the early fall to discuss development.

*Director's Report*  
*Brian Ferguson*

Closing of 2014-2015 School Year/Staffing. Today was the last day of school. Three teachers have tendered their resignations. Two were recruited by The Avenues, an independent school that reportedly pays high salaries. Recruitment of teachers and an Assistant Vice Principal are already well under way. Mr. Ferguson reported that Ms. Edmiston will be out for a good portion of the summer for Family Medical Leave. Therefore, Mr. Ferguson will only take one week of vacation in late July. He has already begun work on the Annual Report.

Mr. Ferguson and Ms. Montague presented the draft budget for FY16. It incorporated modest changes per the discussions of the Board at the Strategic Planning meeting (where it was recommended to increase the Kindergarten class size from 25 to 26 students) and the Finance Committee last week, but still included a large deficit. The Board and Administration engaged in a vigorous and positive discussion of the assumptions incorporated into this draft and made the following recommendations:

- Since at our last meeting we identified ways to be more aggressive in our enrollment practices, we are comfortable reflecting a higher number of students in our revenue projections.
- Since we have determined to do a review of our health insurance and expect to restructure our offerings, we recommend eliminating the increase to the cost of health insurance.
- The budget should incorporate the new Department of Education teacher salary scale as this is crucial to recruitment and retention. Mr. Ferguson pointed out that this will also give a salary increase to those teachers who have maxed out at the top grade of our scale.
- Mr. Ferguson pointed out that our Guidance Counselors and Social Workers are considered part of the Administrative staff who would only receive a 1% raise. He noted that their starting salaries were competitive, but may no longer be so. The Board agreed that Mr. Ferguson should use his discretion and judgment to make salary adjustments for these highly valued staff.
- Salaries for projected new hires should be set according to our historical experience for new hires instead of at the salary level of the outgoing teacher.
- Salaries for administrative staff who are not expected to be on board as of the start of the fiscal year should be discounted accordingly.

As noted in the Finance Committee minutes, members of the Committee raised the question of whether we should add an additional class of students already this year. Since the Finance Committee meeting last week, Mr. Ferguson has discussed this possibility with his senior staff and is 95% sure that this is feasible and desirable. This plan would require the addition of a teacher and assistant teacher for the new classroom, plus a new “specials” teacher. He has begun to conceive of a new “STEAM” teacher to bridge STEM and the arts, who could push into current classrooms to introduce robotics and digital arts projects.

Mr. Ferguson will continue to review all the logistical, enrollment, recruitment and pedagogical considerations and expects to finalize his recommendation to add either an extra class of Kindergartners or First Graders in the next two weeks.

The Board appreciated Mr. Ferguson's thinking and planning on this subject and is hopeful that the group of changes outlined above would bring us much closer to a balanced budget for FY16. The Board agreed that it would approve the budget presented on a provisional basis, and would look forward to reviewing a revised budget at the August meeting.

### ***Finance & Administration Committee***

#### ***Charles Guadagnolo, Treasurer***

Mr. Guadagnolo said he would like to reach out to underwriters that the school has worked with in the past, as well as to other possible sources, to learn more about the criteria they used in assessing our creditworthiness, and the Board agreed that was a good idea. He also noted that he and Ms. Montaque would use the budget recommendations made this evening to tweak the business model and financial projections that they have been working on.

Mr. Guadagnolo asked about a budget for the fill-in of the Atrium in the Elementary School to create new classrooms. Mr. Ferguson replied that he would pull the files and share them with Mr. Guadagnolo so that they could determine what is needed to activate a plan to proceed with this project in time for the start of the FY17 school year.

The Committee shared the new annual calendar it has developed in consultation with Ms. Montaque. There are a number of new items to reflect the broader mandate of the Committee agreed to at the Annual Meeting last November. Ms. Fitzgerald noted that it is a work-in-progress, and may need to be adjusted over time to ensure that the additional reporting requirements dovetail well with the work cycles of the Business Office.

### ***Resolutions***

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

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes for the May, 2015 Board meeting as presented.

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

**RESOLVED** to approve the draft budget for the 2015-2016 fiscal year, as presented, with the expectation that revisions will be presented at the next meeting of the Board.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary, OWNCS Board of Trustees