

**URBAN CHOICE CHARTER SCHOOL  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES – MINUTES  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2010**

**Present:** Hanif Abdul-Wahid, Mike Abraham, John Bliss, Ron Boillat, Ed Cavalier, Thomas Felton, Jr., Susan Fox, Tamala Lynch-Bradford, Sidney Moore, Gail Sklair, Spiro Ziogas

**Media Notification:** Erica Bryant of the Democrat and Chronicle was notified of the January 7, 2010 Board of Trustees meeting on December 22, 2009. Public notice was also posted in the school and published in the school newsletter.

The Board of Trustees meeting was called to order at 6:11 p.m. by Susan Fox.

- Susan commented on the unusually heavy attendance and requested a show of hands of staff members, parents, volunteers, and members of the community.
- Questions and comments regarding the principal search will be addressed during the Personnel Report. In addition, time has been added to the agenda during Staff Development on Friday, January 15 for the opportunity to ask questions.

**Motion 100107.1** Upon a motion by Hanif Abdul-Wahid and duly seconded by Ron Boillat, the following was submitted for adoption: RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees approve the December 3, 2009 minutes.

Voting in the affirmative: Hanif Abdul-Wahid, Mike Abraham, Ron Boillat, Ed Cavalier, Thomas Felton, Jr., Susan Fox, Tamala Lynch-Bradford, Sidney Moore, Gail Sklair, Spiro Ziogas

Voting in the negative: None

Motion 100107.1 passed 10 to 0

**Mission Minute – John Bliss**

John shared an experience he witnessed in a classroom around the holidays. Becky Hendel's classroom had a gift presentation that involved elaborately wrapped gifts. The gifts were selected specifically for each student and it was obvious that the students experienced much joy and a meaningful connection – similar to a family experience.

## CEO Report – John Bliss (*Refer to Attachment A*)

- Charter Renewal
  - K-8 Program renewed. High school extension to be revisited in the future.
    - ✓ Susan added that she had the honor of coming in on Tuesday to sign the Charter – our contract to operate this school starting the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, 2010 until June 30, 2014. When BOR meets next week, the Chancellor will sign and will allow us to continue to operate – which is cause for celebration.
    - ✓ A discussion followed about preparing correspondence related to denial of our high school. It was decided that Susan will work with Lisa Read to write to the attention of John King and copying the BOR requesting reconsideration. BOT will request clarification since the decision was not determined based on appropriate information – specifically addressing curriculum and financials.
- Stanford Testing
  - Primary internal exam for grades K-6 and fall results are being mailed to parents.
  - Summary of results were provided.
- Students
  - High risk and high need students – designation based on academics, behavior, social/emotional or a combination. Require resources far above the norm.
- Personnel
  - Some changes were made for maternity leaves and other circumstances.
- Enrollment
  - Current enrollment at 390 students – waiting lists at every grade except fifth.
  - Collecting Intent to Return forms at this time – will be a good indicator of where we will have enrollment shortages which are rare.
    - ✓ Discussion took place regarding enrollment consideration based on not getting a high school. RCSD going back to having applications at eighth grade – will allow for a high school of choice for eighth graders.
    - ✓ John met with Superintendent Brizard and will be meeting with the new Director of Placement for RCSD soon.
- Programs and Events
  - Saturday programs: middle school girls group, family health information day, spring ELA/Math camp.
  - Relationships with the Harley School, Nazareth and St. John Fisher Colleges, Highland Hospital, and the Jewish Federation are on-going.
  - Garth Fagan Dance and a program with the Rochester Broadway Theater League (Wicked).
- School Safety Plan (*Refer to Attachment B*)
  - Required plan approved by NYSED last year. Sent earlier to BOT members for review with minor changes related to staff changes.

**Motion 100107.2** Upon a motion by Ed Cavalier and duly seconded by Sidney Moore, the following was submitted for adoption: RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees approve the Safety Plan.

Voting in the affirmative: Hanif Abdul-Wahid, Mike Abraham, Ron Boillat, Ed Cavalier, Thomas Felton, Jr., Susan Fox, Tamala Lynch-Bradford, Sidney Moore, Gail Sklair, Spiro Ziogas

Voting in the negative: None

Motion 100107.2 passed 10 to 0

- Finances
  - State budget will affect funding.
- Addition
  - Snow blower accident on property.
  - Legal interpretation/assistance required for student discipline and a parent/staff issue.
  - Federal Race to the Top funding pursued.
  - Donation received from Robin Quivers. She is Howard Stern’s sidekick and had a connection with a student at the school.
  - Prominent attorney wants to support the music program (wants to remain anonymous).
  - Arts Night planned on Wednesday, March 24.
  - Eighth grade class trip to Washington, DC being planned

**Treasurer’s Report – Spiro Ziogas (Refer to Attachment C)**

Income and Balance Sheet as of November 30, 2009:

	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>	<u>YTD Surplus</u>
Net Income	\$793,467.82	\$505,362.11	\$288,105.71
Total Capital	11/30/09	10/31/09	9/30/09
	\$2,226,760	\$1,770,370	\$2,103,161

- Due to concern over budget issues in Albany, drew \$200,000 from our line of credit with HSBC on December 22, 2009 to be prepared.
  - We received our funding in full as scheduled from RCSD and the line has been paid back in full.
- New budget prepared for charter application and submitted
  - Per pupil – no change for next year, 1.5% increase the following year, and 3% for the next two years.

- Fundraising was added in the income line in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 to help balance the budget in those years. Fundraising will be a very important variable going forward.
- In light of the situation in Albany, Carol shared that a freeze on spending has been communicated to all staff.
- December Holiday Bonuses were paid to staff totaling \$17,775.
- UCCS continues to be financially sound, but there are challenges ahead and we will need to prepare for them.

### **Fundraising Report – Gail Sklair**

- Gail shared that this committee was formed with little activity to date due to the charter renewal process.
- A meeting is being scheduled for this month.
- In December, the Committee approved funds for the sixth graders to attend a performance of Wicked, a robotics program, and the eighth grade trip planned for Washington, DC.
- Fundraising will be used to balance the budget operationally.
- Five year budget provided, but it will be looked at annually.
- BOT members will be added to the website in the near future.

### **Governance Report – Thomas Felton, Jr.**

- Thomas reported that the Committee is looking at recruiting and succession planning for BOT members. Some terms will be expiring so they are looking to fill those positions.
- A list of strong perspective BOT member candidates has been received and will be reviewed.
- If BOT members know of individuals, please send recommendations for consideration.

### **Personnel Report – Mike Abraham**

- The BOT jump started the process for a principal search after meeting with SED in early November. BOT members were disappointed with the outcome of this meeting and several points were highlighted.
  - ✓ School was classified as being out of compliance with its charter.
- A process to fill the position of principal needed to be put into place. It was communicated at this meeting that charter schools have been closed due to Board failure to be in compliance.
- The November BOT meeting was held one week later than usual where a directive was given to restart the process since the position was open and needed to be filled.

- A Personnel Committee meeting was set up to begin the process. Instead of acting on the process, the Committee was handed a letter of resignation from the CEO.
  - Additional communication was received from the State asking for an update on restarting the process.
  - BOT decided that it was necessary to move forward and that is what is happening.
  - It is believed that one individual can only shoulder so much – dual focus has led to diluted results in professional development as well as curriculum.
  - It is not possible to just nominate someone in an open position - must point to a process that shows that your decisions or actions are in the best interests of the school due to HR law and fairness.
- The actual committee will include: two BOT members that have decades of experience of running interview processes in different industries – including education and private industry, the CEO or a Senior Administrative Officer, a parent, and two teachers.
  - Communication will be sent out to parents asking for the nomination of a parent to serve on the committee and a similar nomination process will take place for teachers.
  - Interview process will resemble how administrative officials have been selected for various schools across the State.
  - Candidates will be chosen based on indications of interest, meeting qualifications, interview with committee, formal meeting of the search committee to determine top ranked candidates followed by presenting recommendation to the BOT.
  - After interviews, the only correspondence sent to candidates will be a letter thanking them and informing them that they will be hearing from the Personnel Committee – to be notified one way or the other.
  - After finalists are identified and if the finalist accepts, letters will be released.
  - Timeline: It is likely that candidates could be employed at an existing school and difficult to secure mid-school year. It is possible that the position will be filled at the end of the academic year.
  - All interviews and indications of interest will be confidential.

### **Open Forum – Questions from the Public**

- Volunteers, parents and staff communicated support for John Bliss.
- BOT acknowledged the hard work that John has put forth for this school. They have confidence in John's ability.
- John is still the CEO – had a vision – BOT supports his leadership. He has recruited BOT members, he has hired teachers, and he has embraced parents.
- BOT is committed to clarifying the role of CEO. CEO is the visionary – cannot imagine John not being the CEO. If he was the Principal, BOT would have to find a CEO.
- John as CEO will still have access and flexibility to move in and out of the classroom – mold the principal and spread the culture. CEO will manage fundraising, assist with getting a high school, and obtain funding partners. CEO sets strategy, tone, and culture.
- BOT must take direction from the State in the best interest of the school.
- Questions were addressed to clarify the Principal search process that the Personnel Committee is working on.

- Ed shared his passion for educating children. He was convinced by John to sign on as a board member. He shared that this is the passion that will be brought to the principal search. They will be looking for passion – making this the best school for the students of this community.
- It was confirmed that reapplying for the high school approval can take place next year.
- BOT members were informed that they have been added to the agenda for Staff Development on Friday, January 15 from 11:00-12:00.

**Executive Session**

**Motion 100107.3**                    Upon a motion by Hanif Abdul-Wahid and duly seconded by Mike Abraham, the following was submitted for adoption: RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel issue.

Voting in the affirmative:    Hanif Abdul-Wahid, Mike Abraham, Ron Boillat, Ed Cavalier, Thomas Felton, Jr., Susan Fox, Tamala Lynch-Bradford, Sidney Moore, Gail Sklair, Spiro Ziogas

Voting in the negative:        None

Motion 100107.3 passed 10 to 0

**Motion 100107.4**                    Upon a motion by Tom Felton and duly seconded by Sidney Moore, the following was submitted for adoption: RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees end Executive Session.

Voting in the affirmative:    Hanif Abdul-Wahid, Mike Abraham, Ron Boillat, Ed Cavalier, Thomas Felton, Jr., Susan Fox, Tamala Lynch-Bradford, Sidney Moore, Gail Sklair, Spiro Ziogas

Voting in the negative:        None

Motion 100107.4 passed 10 to 0

**Next Board Meeting:**

Thursday, February 4, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.**