

ISLA – Board of Directors Meeting

Minutes

November 10, 2009, 6:30 p.m.

ISLA School Building - 12007 Excelsior Blvd, Minnetonka, MN

Room# 121 (Upstairs)

Board Members Present: Sonia Miller-Van Oort, Mark Mathison, Karen Terhaar, Melody Brombacher, Michael Valley, Kate Shablott, Eric Peterson, Vanessa Bera, Kerry Krawczyk-LeMieux, Steve Semler, Briana Boeser

Others present: Teresa Aleckson (PTO Chair), Jill Prohofsky (PTO Secretary), and Karen Trudell

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m. Briana read the Mission Statement.

The Chair asked that the agenda be changed by removing the *Open Meeting – MN Advisory Opinion* section under the Governance Committee report because the document had not been included as an attachment prior to the meeting, and Board members did not have a chance to review the document prior to the meeting. The agenda was approved with this revision.

The meeting minutes (as emailed to the Board by Sonia) were adopted as provided.

Karen Trudell, a 1st grade parent, spoke first under Public Input. She had three points to make.

- One, she understands the Board is discussing the Disciplinary Policy. There have been incidents in the K and 1st grade classes over the past two years. Karen is concerned that it took the fourth occurrence of a rule violation for her to see the school react. She needs to feel there is a level of protection at school that will keep our children safe. She wonders how the Disciplinary Policy will help this, especially how it will work for children with an IEP.
- Two, when Karen has been in the school (at lunch, outside, or in the classroom) she sees varying levels of control over the children's behaviors. She has been saddened and shocked by some of the behavior, including rough play, language and disrespect. She would like to see more emphasis placed on character at ISLA. Karen feels having a component of the school focused on character development would be a good idea and would help build a stronger sense of community.
- Three, she hopes parents can have input into the Disciplinary Policy that will be reviewed by the Board this Spring. She also hopes there will be clear explanations of how the Disciplinary Policy will apply to students in Special Ed (or with an IEP).

Jill Prohofsky, a Kindergarten and 1st grade parent, spoke next. Her child has also been involved in some of the incidents Karen spoke about. Jill wondered where ISLA's Code of Conduct can be found. There is a Code of Conduct on the Hopkins website, and Jill feels ISLA should have something similar so that both children and parents know what is expected. Jill came to this meeting to offer to help write this policy and help get it distributed. A Code of Conduct explains what kind of behavior is expected and which behaviors are prohibited. It is different from a Discipline Policy, which sets forth consequences for dealing with violations of the Code of Conduct. Jill stated that the HSD policy is very "squishy" and allows schools a lot of discretion, and agreed with the Board's previous discussions that ISLA's Discipline Policy should be more specific than HSD's.

The Chair asked both Karen and Jill to follow up with Steve to participate in the process of creating a Discipline Policy and potentially a Code of Conduct. She also stated that the Board will follow up on these issues and address them, and that the Board will keep both parents informed throughout our process. The Board thanked both parents for coming to the meeting and sharing their thoughts in this forum.

Theresa gave the PTO report.

- The Barnes & Noble bookfair is coming up. She asked the Board to please come shopping on November 15.
- She also reminded the Board that Blue Sky Guides are on sale for \$20 each, and the PTO gets to keep \$10 for each book they sell.
- At the last PTO meeting, the PTO re-allocated \$3000 in their budget. Previously budgeted to fund band, this money will instead be combined with additional funds to create \$3,600 of grant money for teachers to tap into. Deadline for proposals is 12/15/09. All teachers are encouraged to apply.
- The PTO is considering joining a website, givemn.org. It is a non-profit gathering place. The PTO has been looking at PayPal but there is a 4% fee to use it. With givemn.org there is not fee, and there will be a matching funds day on November 17 when all contributions have the potential to be matched a percentage, up to 100%.
- The PTO has received additional grants, including a \$1,000 stipend from PTO Today.
- The projected surplus for this year is \$7,000, increasing total reserves to \$30,000 by the end of the year. The PTO is hoping to spend some of that money on the playground at ISLA's new facility.
- Dia de los Muertos was last week. It was very well attended and everyone had fun.

Due to schedule conflicts, there were no Board members at the last PTO meeting.

The Committee Reports began as Kate gave a Facility update. The Facility committee met prior to the Board meeting. The committee is still hoping to have ISLA in new, permanent space by Fall 2010. The realtors presented two new spaces. The committee is currently considering four locations. None is perfect, but all have good potential. Kate and Karen will meet with Faith tomorrow regarding the possibility of remaining at Faith for next year and/or longer. ISLA will only be at Faith next year if it is not possible to find long-term, viable space before then.

The Personnel Committee has no Chair. Mark reported for the Committee. He reminded the Board that it has been renamed the Human Resources Committee. He also reported that contracts for the Director and Assistant Director are in progress and should be complete this week.

Eric gave a report for the Marketing and Communication Committee. If you Google Hopkins Spanish immersion, ISLA will now appear! Applications are now available online. The new landing page will have the all-school picture on it that Lee Prohofsky took. The committee will make sure all parents have given permission before the picture is posted on the website. The committee will meet with a search engine optimization company next week. SEO is important because as we go into open enrollment season, it will be key for ISLA to appear when parents look for Spanish Immersion elementary schools, IB programs, charter schools, and other options. Paid search options may be needed. Want to be careful and make sure our dollars are well spent.

Mark reported that the Governance Committee has a lot to do. The last attempt to convene a meeting failed to produce a quorum. Nevertheless, progress was made. Steve made progress on the Nominating Committee piece and Statement of Purpose/Governance Committee description. The Board discussed the Statement of Purpose. The Board agreed this would be a working charter for the group and will be adopted by the Board as other committee descriptions have been adopted. Several ideas were discussed.

- One change may be to move items 3&4 from the bottom portion to the top, where they would become items 4&5 – this is Mark’s version as presented tonight, and will be referred to below.
- Another question is whether the Board wants to have only five members for this committee or at least five members? This is confusing. Currently we are missing non-director members of this committee.
- Will replace first 1) “Establishment of policies ...” to “Develop and recommend to Board policies ...”
- Will change first 2) to include General Board.
- May change first 4). While it would be helpful to have this assigned somewhere, perhaps it should be assigned to the Executive Committee. In the past, conversations with the authorizer have taken place at the Executive Committee level. Is this point about contracts? Legal responsibilities? This is something for Governance to think about.

- With 5), it's already in the Strategic Plan that the Executive Committee will meet with the PTO Board. Perhaps this should be more about developing policies and procedures by which these groups interact, how various members of the different constituencies of the school work together, grievance procedures, when and how we meet, etc. Perhaps this can be tweaked to be more specific.
- With 7), the annual report to the school, there was discussion whether this is something old or something new. Yes, the bylaws call for an annual report to the sponsor, MDE, and the community. Is that a Governance (legal compliance) issue or more of a Communications issue? In the past this has fallen at the same time as the election meeting and so Governance has taken this on as part of the election process. Governance should not be the source of this information but may be the engine responsible for making sure that the report is produced and presented.

Action Item: *Mark will take this back to the Governance Committee and bring a revised Statement of Purpose to the next Board meeting.* **Action Item:** *Governance will also bring contracts to the next meeting.*

A recess was called at 8:44, and the meeting reconvened at 8:52.

Following the recess, New Business was discussed. First on the agenda was the Nominating Committee. This group needs to be appointed by the Board. This committee then finds people to become candidates for the Board of Directors. Nominated slate includes Melody Brombacher (appointed by Board Chair), Eric Peterson (appointed by Chair-Elect), Kerry Krawczyk-LeMieux (appointed by the Founders), Karen Speich (appointed by the Executive Director), Mark Mathison (by virtue of being the Governance Chair), and Jill Prohofskey (appointed as a PTO officer by the PTO Chair). **Action Item:** *Two additional parents need to be appointed to this committee – one by the Governance Chair and one by the PTO Chair.* No action required by the Board.

Next subject of discussion was the Faith waiver. It was sent home in the Thursday folder, for PTO extracurricular activities. It has been used by the PTO before. The Board had not discussed this document prior to this meeting, and significant discussion ensued.

- ISLA's insurance company has told us they do cover extracurricular activities, even if sponsored by the PTO. That means these events are covered by our existing policies and procedures and do not need a special waiver. Faith is an additional insured on ISLA's insurance policies.
- The Board feels the waiver is too broad, and requires parents to give up too much in order to be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities. It may even be so broad as to be invalid.
- Clear communication needs to be sent home with any form, in this case to inform parents that it was only for the extracurricular activities and not for ISLA in general (this was not clear from the original email).

Action Item: *Karen Terhaar will find out about current coverage and get something in writing confirming coverage from ISLA's insurance company if she does not already have this in writing.*

Discussion followed about what to do with the forms that parents have already signed. Michael moved that from today forward the Faith Presbyterian Church Release Waiver Indemnity Document is not distributed to any parent for signature, and that the current signed agreements are collected by a Board member for safe keeping until further decisions are made. Kerry seconded. Discussion followed regarding talking to Faith about the form, returning forms to parents, and/or retaining forms. The PTO Board members present suggested the PTO take over and return forms to parents. A vote was taken. The motion was defeated unanimously.

Eric moved that from today forward the Faith Presbyterian Church Release Waiver Indemnity Document is not distributed to any parent for signature. Seconded by Vanessa. Motion passed unanimously.

Sonia moved that after Karen is able to confirm the insurance information and coverage, that she in conjunction with the Exec committee have conversations with Faith raising the issues that the Board has expressed regarding the Faith Presbyterian Church Release Waiver Indemnity Document ... and reach some agreement with Faith that this not be distributed to parents moving forward. Steve seconded. Passed unanimously.

Kerry moved the board request the PTO to no longer distribute the Faith Presbyterian Church Release Waiver Indemnity Document from this day forward, and in addition to retain the ones that have been signed until further decision has been made by the ISLA board. Seconded by Mark. Passed unanimously.

Michael moved that Exec Director and/or Executive Committee asks, if Faith agrees to not use said form in the future, that Faith return the forms they currently have. Kate seconded. There is serious concern that this form is too broad and too much to ask parents. Initial use of this form was done without Board involvement. And, if the Board had approved using this document the Board would have used it for ISLA, too. It's possible these aren't even enforceable based on future acts/future events. Members of the Board think it's unfortunate and unnecessary. The motion was defeated (Michael and Kerry voted for it, all other voted against it).

Sonia moved that Karen, in conjunction with the Executive Committee, ask Faith to return any Faith Presbyterian Church Release Waiver Indemnity Documents in their possession and to acknowledge that they have been revoked and to agree to the destruction of any signed waivers and releases in existence. Seconded by Mark. Passed unanimously.

Michael reported on the Financials. The documents are not ready for approval. They will be presented at the next meeting. Rhonda is leaving at some point, but will stay on until we replace her. Financially we are sound. Josh has started to put together a cash flow model that will be presented to the Board when it's accurate. Once the cash flow projections are nailed down they will meet with the bank about a loan.

Under Old Business, there was discussion about joining MACS. Kate reviewed the member benefits. Kate moved we choose not to join MACS at this time. Melody seconded. Discussion followed about this being "our" organization as a charter school, and about having MACS "speak" for us when they don't necessarily represent ISLA's best interests. The only way to be happy with what they are doing is to become members and get involved. For now, we should keep our Executive Director as a member always at a minimum. The motion passed unanimously. Karen, and maybe Melody and Sonia, are currently individual members.

Next the Board discussed a clarification to the dress code, as requested at the last meeting by the PTO. The discussion was whether or not turtle necks qualify as collared shirts. Kate moved that turtle necks do qualify as a collared shirt. Briana seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The Director gave her report.

- At this time, ISLA is planning for two Kindergarten classes just like this year. Our current 5/6 class has 10 5th graders and 5 6th graders. Next year there will be 18 5th graders and 10 6th graders (if no children leave and no new students join the classes). These will be small classes but can not be combined. Currently there is a parent with twins in 5th grade at Emerson who is looking to move them to ISLA after Christmas. There is some concern about space in the classroom for two additional students.
- Karen asked the Board about two classes vs. three classes for Kindergarten next year, as the Board discussed last Spring. Michael moved that, if state education charter school laws allow, we offer only two full day K classes next year. Mark seconded. Discussion followed about having half day kids leave early and not pay for full day as an option for parents who prefer half day. This would be disruptive to the classes and potentially impact learning. There is a question whether our charter would allow less than 25 kids per class. Requiring full day, if allowed, could make us an elitist school which could violate our charter. Michael voted in favor of this motion, all others voted against it. The motion was defeated.
Action Item: The Board agreed to address this again in the Spring for the 2011-2012 school year.
- Karen hired a Special Ed aide to start work immediately. This wasn't in the budget, but was run by and approved by the Treasurer and the Executive Committee. We anticipate realizing new revenue to cover this,

but even without reimbursement it is essential for the school to have this person on staff.

The Chair gave her report. First, there was a meeting between the Executive Committee and HSD (attended by Sonia, Karen, and Michael). Last year, HSD wanted to meet with us about potential collaboration with our school. They approached us again this year regarding collaboration. The Executive Committee asked to meet with them. The Assistant Superintendent and Diane, our liaison, met with us last week. They wanted to tell us about their issues and told us it's great working with us. Then they brought up two big items.

1. They are working on a Strategic Plan that includes world languages.
 - We understood from last year's HSD Board meeting that they decided to add world languages at the Middle School level. This new Strategic Plan recommendation will go to the HSD Board eventually and will recommend they incorporate world languages into all elementary schools, and will also recommend they begin a new immersion program. The language is not specified in their recommendation, but they acknowledged that Spanish is the language with the biggest demand. This is still in the planning phases. Community input sessions will be held before they go to their Board to present this.
 - They wondered if we'd like to share our expertise, and asked if we'd be open to being a charter school within the HSD (now allowed under the new charter school law). We asked how that might work and they are unsure. Key parts are that the funding would stay the same but that the HSD would govern the school; there would be an advisory board but not a charter school board. Also, the HSD people said the teachers union would be part of the school, and the school would be bound by the collective bargaining agreement that would impact hiring, firing, salaries, etc. There was some discussion by the ISLA Board as to whether this is accurate or not – it may be possible for a charter school within a district to remain independent of the collective bargaining agreement that is in place in that district.
 - The HSD has no time frame for their plans, no specific details to their proposal, and nothing tangible to bring to the ISLA Board. If they were to start a program from scratch, they would start with Kindergarten and grow it from scratch.
2. This group is recommending that HSD no longer serve as a sponsor/authorizer for any charter schools. They will make this recommendation to the Hopkins School Board in December. Being an authorizer is too burdensome, and there is too much to do. They were not clear whether they would try to cancel agreements in effect, not renew existing agreements, or not take on any new charter schools.

Karen added that the idea of taking us in as a district school has been a concept that they have thrown out to us every year for four years. It has never gotten past the discussion phase. Since the first day we went to Hopkins as a charter

school idea there has been a question “would you have a conversation?” but they never follow up and act on it. District surveys keep coming back asking for Spanish immersion, so they keep raising the question.

Michael added that part of this is about funding issues. The way they made the Chinese immersion school work is by getting school funding but also getting kids from outside the district. Their concern is that we don't get enough funding as a charter unless they get enough students from outside of the district.

IB was mentioned, because ISLA talked about it being a distinguishing factor of our school. ISLA would be a steal for them because of the cost and training that we've already put into being an IB school. Students drawn to our school look at the IB part, and if Hopkins didn't offer that then that would separate/distinguish our school, too.

The Board is concerned about the potential impact on hiring and firing teachers, qualifying teachers, and setting salaries. Karen pointed out that there is a very competitive market right now for Spanish immersion teachers. It is hard to recruit teachers, and going this route would allow Hopkins to not have to start from scratch.

The Executive Committee raised the issue of facility. Hopkins has not given any thought to where a Spanish immersion school would go. Currently, ISLA is not housed in midst of an English environment ... and that helps us be a better school. The Executive Committee told them there is some urgency here, as we're about to enter into a long term commitment that will make this whole discussion moot. We could push the issue with them for next year, but we don't think they're ready to move that fast. It is possible that they will have a Spanish immersion school in place in 2011-2012.

It was suggested that the Board look at our contract with HSD as our authorizer to see what their ways out are. In light of that, and what they said about not wanting to be a sponsor, perhaps we should entertain the idea of looking at new sponsorship. This could open up busing issues but could also broaden our search for a new facility.

Action item: *Sonia will track down the HSD Board meeting date for December. Get packet ahead of time. Someone from our Board will attend that meeting to see what form that recommendation takes.* The current policy was written by and advocated for by John Schultz, who is currently superintendant. Not sure what impact that will have on the future of this recommendation.

Action Item: *Next meeting we will entertain discussion on sponsorship ... and report on the HSD Board meeting ... also discuss becoming part of the district as district school and/or charter school within a district.*

The Executive Director pointed out that ISLA has agreed to discuss this with the HSD, but at this point we are only entering discussions. The HSD has asked for

similar discussions every year since we started talking to them about creating ISLA. The ISLA Board is not committing to becoming part of HSD or any other district at this time. At this stage, the Board has no opinion on this matter. In any event, the Board would always solicit parent input and opinions prior to making any decision or recommendation on this matter.

Continuing with the Chair's Report, Sonia shared information about a training session available on November 17. Sonia will forward the information to the Board.

Kerry moved to adjourn at 10:02. Eric seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously