

**Boston Renaissance Charter Public School**

**Minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting  
January 09, 2008**

Board Members Present: Lennit Bligen, Nia Jacobs, Albert Pless, Keeana Saxon, Tina Saxon, Carolyn Corbe, Edna Carrasco, Karen Ieong

Board Member Absent: Jackie Sinclair, Dan Mulhearn

Board Foundation Members Present: None

Staff present: Jillian Nesgos, Kevin Cherry, Lateefah Robinson, Beverly Pina, Amy Carignan, Steeve Mordan, R. Harris, Robin Vilorio

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Nia Jacobs, Chair in J. Sinclair's absence

Meeting was called to order at 5:40 pm

**I. Chairperson's Report (N. Jacobs for Ms. J. Sinclair)**

❖ **Approval of November 14, 2007 Minutes**

**VOTED:** With a motion by: C. Corbe, seconded by K. Saxon, the board unanimously voted to accept the minutes of the November 14, 2007 Trustee Meeting.

❖ **Committee Updates (All)**

❑ **Nomination Committee – Ms. J. Sinclair**

No meetings held. Search is ongoing. Please contact Sinclair about nominations. C. Corbe will forward information regarding candidate Monique Burns to J. Sinclair.

❑ **Human Resource Committee – Ms. K. Saxon**

Committee was very productive. Minutes are in the packet. Minutes reflect meeting committee had with R. Harris discussing performance evaluation, bonus, and future retirement plan.

❑ **Academic/Curriculum and Instruction Committee – Ms. N. Jacobs**

Very impressed with everything the school is doing. Robin gave us a great presentation re: meeting school targets. Administration is helping teachers flag students who need help. "Help Me Write Now"—this program sound like it will help tremendously. Proposal regarding laptops for this BRCPs students from high school student of N. Jacobs, will present at next subcommittee meeting.

▣ Assessment and Instructional Technology—Ms. R. Vioria—15 mins \*(See below after Headmaster's Report)

▣ Finance Committee – Mr. K. Cherry

Update is in the packet. FY08 financial data-- Board approved budget, current budget, and comparison. We have our projected budget to ensure that we meet budget. No changes thus far, but increase in service fee, where we have hired experts re: building construction, not anticipated cost.

▣ Development Committee - TBD

There was no meeting of the committee. There's been little activity. Committee should reach out to Foundation. Attempt to get meeting by the end of the month.

❖ Foundation Board – Nothing new to report

Foundation is hurting and it is critical to move on. Chair should talk to Nick, so at least we know whether we go ahead with them or to find some new folks.

**II.** Relocation Update – (Dr. R. Harris) Good news: We have signed both purchase and sale agreements. Buyers have 90 days to kick the tires and do due diligence.

Structural engineer, title work, and environmental, hired consultant. Kick-off meeting this Friday. Spearheaded by Engerman. We're happy to see project take the next step.

**III.** Finance Update – (Mr. K. Cherry)

FY 07 audit in draft form: slight deficit of \$24K. Last spring we were looked at a more significant deficit, but due to decisions we made and also new revenue, we were able to reduce, the deficit. We were going to use reserve, but through good management of energy costs and reduce staff, we did not have to dip into cash reserve.

I have to respond to findings of audit and meet with finance committee or meet with board for approval. We are late. It was due on January 1st. I will be requesting a meeting by the end of the month just to review the audit—a conference call. The standards have changed this year with all auditing. T. Saxon asked whether the audit has been reviewed by the committee. K. Cherry: should be. For expediency, through committee, then to board. Nia: before February 1st we need to have another meeting.

**IV.** Superintendent's Report (Dr. R. Harris)

Executive summary of report: I concur with Nia's comments. Our Leadership Team (LT) is doing a phenomenal job. Number of new teachers and the LT is preparing them very well. Our kids are way ahead of where they have been in the past. Jillian, Robin, and Letifah, Amy. Thank you all!

Operationally: preliminary budget discussions have begun. End of April, early May we will be able to present budget to Board, and we will be ahead of the game. We already have a timeline and we will be meeting with individual department heads.

Dental and Vision Center: up and operational. Students will be serviced during the day. Today's tour was cancelled, but some of the professionals could not be here. There will be a tour and opportunity for BOT to meet with those professionals in the near future.

Calls to the Mayor and City Council in process. BPS: has responded positively regarding changes. Engerman: buses will arrive at 8am instead of 7am. Received e-mail from BPS that is positive. Harris: Parents are complaining of early time. Tardy rate will probably not change.

Our Charter was renewed with conditions: BOT has conditions. We have met three of the four conditions: Fourth: reduce enrollment without terminating enrollment of any student from 1,240 to 880 by 2009-10. We need an amendment because we won't get into the new school on time. As long as we are here, we need 1240 students. We need that condition delayed to the year 2010. I will call Acting Commissioner. We need to ask for that or risk violation. I will contact him tomorrow and let BOT know of response.

#### \*Assessment and Instructional Technology—Ms. R. Vilorio

Elementary School Grade Level Assessment Update: part of school improvement plan. Major change: giving grade level assessment routinely during the year for math and language arts for 4, 5, 6 grades. GLA: Grade Level Assessment--developed by coaches and reviewed by LT in Sept. and Nov. and at the end of January. First day math only and second day English only. Wanted to give kids test similar to MCAS so that there was no shock once kids got to MCAS. First and second test: we look at whole test score, multiple choice and open response. English and language arts: we give a familiar passage and new passage. We did see improvement in scores for 4th grade. Open answer: students fall there, but concentrated on that in curriculum and scores are up. 6th grade: scores are up as well. Data meeting with teachers and it was more specific--we widdled it down to each student.

Math: Open answer and multiple choice. Percentages on graph are accuracy rate: There's a jump in open response. Teachers were modeling how to answer open response, so kids practiced how to set up problem. Between Sept. and Nov: had repeat standards (70% accuracy) and new standard (50%) -- found root causes.

Next steps: 4th grade: long comp intensive small group instruction groups for an hour.

Coaches use of data for flexible grouping and instructional strategies. Grades 4-6 Math or intensive small group Jan thru April.

## V. Parent Trustee Update (Ms. E. Carrasco)

We have a really great group this year. I will be forwarding BOT their resumes. Two more members need to be added. Absentee issue: there are two questions: what happens to parents who don't respond to school's notices—Is there a written process? Also, what do we do with neglectful parents? Parents should be held more responsible.

Fundraising: Some of you expressed shock that we haven't been raising funds. We now have an account. We sold cookies and donuts to replace un-returned library books. We had our parent meeting last night. The Voices of Renaissance (VOR) performed and were wonderful. We are really trying to encourage more parents to come. The VOR was an attraction. The parents sang and got a chance to talk. Huge success!

## VI. Old Business

### ❖ Amendment of charter

LT has been involved in discussions with architects. The new school should reflect the program. The charter will drive the design of the building. We can remain a K-6, change to a K-5, or change to a K-8. An amendment to the charter is necessary only if we go to a K-8. T. Saxon asked whether the school had to scale back from a K-8 due to problems. R. Harris explained that the original plan was for a K-12 (in the same building), but that he recommended that the school focus on K-8. The K-8 model did not work because the school was held to a bad real estate deal, which forced them to backfill with non-Renaissance and under-performing students. T. Saxon remarked that backfilling will not be a factor in the new building. R. Harris: though the middle school has been problematic, we have been experiencing success in the kinder and elementary schools. We can thank L. Robinson and others for that. Some members of the LT question whether we should return to the K-8. Either way, the architects need to know. T. Saxon: Maybe we shouldn't bite off more than we can chew. C. Corbe: We had some difficult years with the middle school. With the change in leadership, since R. Harris will be retiring, we should only manage what we've got now. A. Pless: we need time to look at the pros and cons. K. Saxon: Maybe BRCPS should devise a process by which we can make a decision. What's the timeline? K. Cherry: just short of 90 days. The science labs for the middle school will cost more. K. Saxon: can we keep the open space and change that space later if we decide to go include a middle school? C. Engerman: Yes. Space can be reserved for changes later. N. Jacobs: a K-5 would allow students to get a full middle school? Yes. C. Engerman: With a K-8, kids can get into good high schools and get athletic scholarships. K. Jeong: Aren't we now a little bottom heavy? Do we plan to keep the grades even? R. Harris: We can't drop any students. There'd be a bubble going through all the grades. If we

went to a K-8, attrition would reduce the numbers. Smaller is better. 880 students in a K-6 school is a good size school. J. Nesgos: there are some unknowns going to a new school. K-5 is a good model, also a K-8, but *not* a K-6. We should start with what we know. We would need to have a stable staff at the middle school. R. Harris: It's hard to attract and retain middle school teachers. We can get new folks, but not experienced ones. BPS pays more. Maybe we should play it safe since we are under a microscope. As far as process, we will leave that to the LT. C. Corbe: We could have a capital campaign to raise money for the middle school. R. Harris: That's why it is important to have the Foundation Board up and running. Endowment: This is how successful private schools do it. E. Carrasco: We should have energy-efficient contractors. There's a program whereby the savings go to the school. N. Jacobs: The BOT is asking for an official recommendation from the LT by next month. R. Vioria: A recommendation should come from the Advisory Committee as well.

❖ No Vote on Charter Amendment

**VII.** New Business: Nothing presented

**VIII.** Open Forum: No further comments

**IX.** Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Clerk for meeting: K. Saxon



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