

The Boston Renaissance Charter Public School

Board of Trustees Meeting
June 2008 Minutes

Present:

T. Saxon, N. Jacobs, R. Harris, J. Sinclair, K. Jeong, A. Pless, L. Bligen, C. Corbe, E. Washington, K. McLauren

C. Engerman, R. Villoria, B. Pina, A. Buckmire, J. Nesgos, E. Lee-Jones

Meeting Called to Order.

MOTION to approve minutes from April Meeting made by Dr. Harris, seconded by C. Corbe, approved by full board.

First on the agenda, a public comment from parent Ms. Lola Fernandez

Ms. Fernandez had concerns about two homework packets assigned to her daughter. In the fall, her daughter brought home a worksheet asking her to choose between two statements, one of which was "the noose hangs from the tree." She was upset and contacted the school, at which point the teacher said that she was unaware of the content of the packet and the primary school principal said that the publisher would be contacted. The same exercise then appeared in a packet sent home in June, and Ms. Fernandez contacted the NAACP and her State representative and city councilman. Ms. Fernandez has since received a formal letter of apology from the BRCPS Board of Trustees and read her own letter of support for the school and their ultimate handling of the issue.

Chairman Sinclair told Ms. Fernandez that she would follow up with her by the end of the week to ensure the full resolution of the issue.

Second item on the agenda was the recommendation for a new board member to assume the role of clerk, and there were no nominations. The issue will be revisited in the fall.

Third item on the agenda was a nominee to the board. Karl McLaurin was introduced to the board and his resume reviewed. After his presentation, Mr. McLaurin was asked to leave the room while he was discussed.

A MOTION to approve the board membership of Mr. McLaurin was made by K. Jeong, seconded by L. Bligen, approved by full board.

Fourth item on the agenda were the committee reports.

There were no updates on activities by the Chair, and the Nomination Committee was responsible for the nomination of K. McLaurin. The Human Resources Committee is in the process of reviewing the schools HR policies. L. Houston is compiling the results of

the Superintendent's evaluation. The Finance Committee reported a May budget deficit of \$29,904 but an end of year projected surplus of \$473,654 and presented the Board with projected budgets for FY 09-FY 15. The Board also reviewed the QZAB options for the construction of the new building. C.O.O. reminded the Board that the one million dollars that the school would need to raise as a QZAB requirement did not have to be in hard money but could be 'in kind'- thus BRCPS Partnerships could be considered. The consultants working with the school think it will not be a "huge task".

Dr. Harris asked for clarification that what the school would need is a million dollars worth of outside commitments, services, and partnerships that could be converted for their monetary worth but did not need to be monetary promises or donations in and of themselves. J. Dugan and K. Cherry are collaborating on that task.

K. McLaurin asked if the QZAB was guaranteed. Dr. Harris answered that the state has committed 10 million dollars if the school can raise the 10% requested. J. Sinclair asked if the eye and dental clinic were going to follow the school to the new building. Dr. Harris said yes, adding that he has already had a preliminary meeting with the clinic directors about enlarging the partnership and providing an increased number of services.

In reference to the projected budgets, E. Washington stressed the need for the Board to examine the maintenance costs of the new building, energy in particular, to make sure that the school is budgeting appropriately. K. Saxon requested that the school look into using energy efficient products in the new building.

L. Bligen recommended that the board approve the Finance Committee recommendation that the school choose QZAB option one to help fund the construction of the new building.

MOTION to use QZAB option one made by Dr. Harris, seconded by J. Sinclair, approved by full board.

C. Engerman's operational update discussed the exploration of other building sites as a contingency plan and the continued testing of the soil at the Hyde Park Ave site. Soil tests by the alternate lab reported environmentally safe levels with typical urban contamination.

The buyers of the current school building requested a 48 hour grace period on their 2 million dollar deposit, which the school granted after a conversation with their lawyers. C. Engerman is also checking on the square footage of several closing Catholic schools to see if their buildings would be large enough for BRCPS. On 6/5, Engerman and C. Brennan attended a town meeting regarding the new school and were welcome with "open arms" by the community, though some residents were concerned with the number of buses. Traffic consultants are working with the school to ensure a bus schedule and routing that will be as efficient and non-disruptive as possible.

J. Sinclair questioned the cost of C. Brennan's services, and C. Engerman and Dr. Harris

were in full support of the cost of her retainer due in large part to her connections to elected officials.

The Academic Instruction and Curriculum committee planned to meet to discuss the programmatic implications of the reduction in size of the student body and resulting budget cutbacks. A meeting between K. Cherry and the subcommittee will be scheduled.

Dr. Harris stressed the need for the Board and school to step up development efforts and capital campaigns. He has met with consultants to create a PR campaign that will be ready for distribution in the fall. The Foundation Board account has \$160,000 and needs to be increased. The Solomon Group is researching grant possibilities, and the school wants to move toward targeting individuals- large donors with “naming” opportunities, as well as numerous small donors, ala the Obama campaign. K. McLaurin will do research into other possible supporters, such as Third Sector New England, that he has worked successfully with in the past.

J. Sinclair pointed out that the Board has taken a 'backseat' in the fundraising department and reminded the Board that all members are required to make a donation to the school.

In his Superintendent's Report, Dr. Harris expressed his appreciation for the work done by the academic team in preparation for the MCAS. C. Corbe expressed her concern about the possibility of losing good teachers in the move, and Harris echoed her concern due to teacher's love of the current downtown location. The Board will schedule an additional meeting in preparation for the expected closing on the sale of 250 Stuart Street.

The Board is planning their next retreat as suggested at the April half-day retreat. D. Harris recommended a full day retreat, and the Board agreed. J. Sinclair will work with S. Mordan to schedule a date in the fall or early winter.

MOTION to adjourn meeting by N. Jacobs, seconded by K. Saxon, approved by full board.

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