

**FOLK ARTS-CULTURAL TREASURES CHARTER SCHOOL  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

1023 Callowhill Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

Via Zoom Meeting (Zoom Invitation posted on website)

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Pooja Agarwal, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Thierry Saintine, Kenzo Sung, Allaire Wohlgemuth

**Board Members Absent:** Heather Davis-Jones

**Staff Present:** David Brown, Heather Green, Pheng Lim, Lucinda Megill, Ellen Somekawa

<b>I. Call to Order:</b>	Selina Morales
<b>II. Sharing from Founders Day</b>	Selina Morales
<b>III. Executive Director's Report</b>	Ellen Somekawa
<b>Principal's Report</b>	Pheng Lim

- Sharing from the Investigative Journalism Unit in 8th Grade Social Studies: usually students do an observation of recess. This year focused on observations of themselves and each other during pandemic. Kristin Graham from the Philadelphia Inquirer and Avi Wolfman-Arent of WHYY came to the publishing party. The student writings are important artifacts to be saved.
- Sharing from Founders Day: The last in-person assembly was Founders Day a year ago. Pheng will share the clip through email.
- Sharing the Intentionality Statement from Black Heritage Day which is shared with staff and students so we all gain an understanding of the purpose of the ritual event. There is a K-8 spiraling curriculum for BHD. It is not just a one day celebration. We need to integrate this content throughout the curriculum; we continue to review and revise this.
- Sharing a poem from the Fourth Grade Civil Rights Unit
- Kelly Starling Lyons wrote *Sing a Song: Lift Every Voice and Sing*. She will be a guest author on 3/25 and will also be donating a copy of the book to all of our second and third graders.
- T. Griffin shares her gratitude for the support. We are especially touched by the donations of our former FACTS students.

**IV. Approval of the Minutes**

**1. BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves the Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes of February 17, 2021.

Moved: Thierry Saintine

Seconded: Alan Phan

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Thierry Saintine, Kenzo Sung, Allaire Wohlgemuth

## V. Finance Report

Finance Committee Report

Neeta Patel

Thanks to the Finance Director for the thorough reports. We are in decent shape. We have a good amount of cash on hand, but we have a lot of expenses coming up. There are unexpected expenses related to technology especially, but there are also unexpected revenues and also reduced expenditures due to COVID; so that puts us in a position to end about where we had budgeted.

Report on the Financial Statements

David Brown

We are about to submit our ESSER II grants (a COVID relief grant). That funding can be used for this year, so many of the special expenses for this year will be offset by that funding. We will incorporate that funding into future reports.

Discussion:

- Are there restrictions on how ESSER II is used?
  - Yes there are restrictions but the allowable expenses are very broad.

**2. BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves the Financial Statements for the period ending February 28, 2021.

Moved: Alan Phan

Seconded: Kenzo Sung

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Thierry Saintine, Kenzo Sung, Allaire Wohlgemuth

[Lucinda Megill entered the meeting]

## VI. Statements of Financial Disclosure

All Board Members must complete these. These are due to the state by May 1, but the School District is asking for these by March 26 so they can review these and help us get into compliance prior to the May 1 deadline. Please remember that we are filling these out for the year 2020.

## VIII. Discussion of the Stars Program

Please see the ED report for information on new information impacting our Stars Program.

Discussion

- We shared our decision about putting the Stars program on pause. Our partner at HIAS shared that the refugee resettlement agencies are gearing up for a significant increase in refugees coming to Philadelphia. There is a pipeline of people whose cases were stalled which is now moving. Other

refugee resettlement agencies are restructuring and gearing up their programs.

- This seems like the time to introduce ourselves as partners, as resettlement agencies are getting their new systems set up. We have struggled to partner with some of the agencies before, but now they are convening as a group, so we have a chance to build relationships with these other organizations who may be able to refer students to us. We want to be known as reliable partners to these organizations and to be ready to receive students who may be coming.
- Would we consider keeping the program going so that we can be positioned to partner with these groups now?
- For long term planning, this may be a strategic choice as we look towards expansion. In terms of mission as well as growth.
- We were saddened to put the program on hiatus. At this point in time, we decided not to enroll students in 6-8 grades. If we are able to build back the Stars program, we have slots in the middle school now.
- We still have a problem with where Stars go when they exit the program (more quickly than we originally planned). This needs to be figured out. If the majority of students we are getting are refugees, many come with limited schooling, limited literacy in their first language and gaps in school skills. The chances of them exiting in one year are relatively low.
- If there is a big number or percentage of refugees, how will this impact our counselor's work?
  - Those who are coming as refugees often have caseworkers and other supports.
  - We have been thinking about universal designing for Trauma Informed Practices, to implement practices that support students with all that they are bringing.
- By next month, we might have more of an estimate of numbers of refugees expected to be arriving in the summer and fall.

#### Next Steps

- We will present the draft budget to the board next month and think that will be a time for the Board to deliberate over whether to take the program off of pause.

## VII. Discussion of the PSSAs

Please see the ED report for information on standardized testing requirements by the US Department of Education and the PA Department of Education.

#### Discussion

- Are there advocacy efforts to join onto?
  - Individuals can reach out to people in public positions to make noise about this. The board can start an email chain with draft messages for board members to share and a google group.
    - Allaire can initiate the email chain. All Board members want to be included.
  - We should think about responding to the advocacy groups that pushed for the testing not to be waived.
  - Are we writing as a school board, as public officials? Where are the lines?

- Crossing the line would be advocating for our parents to opt out. We should focus our message on disapproval of the administration of the tests during the pandemic.
- One idea we have is to optimize the morning times for students' experience. We will start off students' days with community building and instruction and schedule the tests for the afternoons.

## IX. School Reopening

Please see the ED report for information on new information impacting our Hybrid Reopening.

### Discussion

- Parent Meeting
- Results of the Parent Commitment Form and Staff Reopening Survey
- Currently the plan is to look at metrics for community spread as of next week. The metrics have been up and down. At of now, the metrics would point to not reopening
- All teachers will have had the chance to be vaccinated by CHOP.
- It is important that revisiting this discussion not disrupt our relationships of trust with the staff. Families would have a chance to opt out.

Does the Board agree to reopening this discussion again?

### Discussion:

- With the number of families opting for remote, do we have a staffing model that can handle that remote learning? [yes]
- After we talk about the spring, we should do another survey to plan for the fall to find out what the families feel comfortable about.
- I would see reopening in the Spring as a good stepping stone. Families get the choice, and staff have had a chance to be vaccinated. It sounds like we would have a manageable number of students returning.
- Looking at just nine days max of any child opting in, today there was an elementary school that only brought back second graders and closed already. What consideration could be made for disruptions to families' plan caused by unexpected closures?
- What new information has emerged to lead to our revisiting this discussion?
  - All teachers have had a chance to be vaccinated.
  - Survey results of teachers:
    - Many teachers agree with the idea of going back but at the same time have mixed feelings about returning.
    - Part of mixed feelings is that it is only one day a week and no additional academic material being presented.
    - Part of mixed feelings also is not opposition to coming back but natural anxieties and a mix of excitement and worry.
  - 50% of our families want their students to come back. There were also students who reported not doing okay in all remote.
- Reminder of what in-person school will be like: Morning Meeting, two outdoor times, one journaling/reflection period, one read out loud, one math fluency practice, one period of qigong, one IDR. There will be learning happening all day.

- At the last meeting, we talked about how community spread impacts our decision. We had expected that community spread would go down. But this month it hasn't dropped below 110. The spread is still there.
- How to prepare for the fall is a legitimate concern. Is there any other way to prepare for the fall besides reopening?
  - If we had to do a full reopening of all 485 students, it would be hard to prepare.
  - We want teachers to have the chance to ease into teaching a smaller group of students instead of going from all remote to full capacity. We may increase teacher comfort levels with a soft reopening this spring.
  - Politicians may be painting a rosy picture, It could be a very different world we're living in September 1.
- Last meeting was draining. Can we just vote?
- Why is the SDP only opening K-2?
  - Only a third of the classrooms passed the ventilation studies, so they had to start small to rectify the issues before expanding to more classrooms.
  - Teachers Union must approve the use of specific spaces.
- Every fall, educators go through the feeling of having to enter with new classes. It's always an adjustment.

**3. BE IT RESOLVED** that the Folk Arts Cultural Treasures Charter School will open in the 2020-21 hybrid model on April 14, 2021 conditional on: Community Spread: If 99 new cases or fewer per 100,000 (7 day total). OR teachers who want the vaccine have had the opportunity to be vaccinated in time for inoculation to be effective by 4/14/2021.

- Moved: Pooja Agarwal
- Seconded: Neeta Patel
- Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan
- Voted No: Thierry Saintine, Kenzo Sung, Allaire Wohlgemuth

**4. BE IT RESOLVED** that the Folk Arts Cultural Treasures Charter School will open in the 2020-21 school year in the hybrid model if the Philadelphia Department of Public Health continues to recommend for schools to remain open.

- Moved: Pooja Agarwal
- Seconded: Neeta Patel
- Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Kenzo Sung, Allaire Wohlgemuth
- Abstained: Thierry Saintine

## X. Committee Reports

- Development Committee

Alan/Allaire

Have invited more people to join the Development Committee. Trying to engage people who have networks. Have discussed having a virtual Friends of FACTS event in conjunction with the 5K. This is the moment when microdonations can make a huge impact.

- Selina did a Facebook fundraiser and raised almost \$1000. If others want to know how she did it, reach out to her.

## **XI. Other Action Items**

**3. BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves contracting with DG Network Solutions for the provision of a Barracuda Firewall in an amount not to exceed \$11,200.

**4. BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves contracting with DG Network Solutions for the provision of network infrastructure equipment (wifi access points, switches, racks, etc.) in an amount not to exceed \$19,000.

**5. BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves contracting with DG Network Solutions for the provision of 70 laptop docking stations in an amount not to exceed \$12,000.

**6. BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves contracting with Innovageous for the integrating new wifi access points, switches and cabling into existing FACTS technical infrastructure in an amount not to exceed \$14,000.

Moved Resolutions 3-6: Thierry Saintine

Seconded: Xu Lin

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Thierry Saintine, Kenzo Sung, Allaire Wohlgemuth

## **XII. Adjournment**

Moved to Adjourn: Allaire Wohlgemuth

Seconded: Neeta Patel

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Thierry Saintine, Kenzo Sung, Allaire Wohlgemuth