

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

Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 6:30 p.m.
via Zoom

MINUTES

Present: Pooja Agarwal, Jeff Koung, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Nancy Nguyen, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

Board Members Absent: Thierry Saintine

Board Member on Leave of Absence: Leana Cabral

Staff Present: David Brown, Pheng Lim, Ellen Somekawa

I. Call to Order: Selina Morales

Leana Cabral is taking a three month leave of absence and will return in May.

II. Public Comment

III. Principal's Report Pheng Lim

- Principal Pheng sent a letter to the school community responding to an increase in racist and other oppressive language. Think there is a lot of exposure related to online access, students being isolated. Appreciate that people are coming forward, sharing experiences and we are hearing different perspectives.
 - February 21 Professional Development has been revised to include three hours of PD on anti-bias work and courageous conversations on race and identity. Will be using Learning for Justice Resources and Guidelines.
 - In March, we will have a week of schoolwide courageous conversations.
- Pheng joined the Citywide Talent Coalition to support the retention, recruitment and training of high quality teachers. FACTS is not alone in struggling with the teacher shortage
- 6th Grade Community Organizing Unit: Former students visited and spoke to our current 6th graders about the anti-arena campaign.
- Family Folk Arts Night: sharing a short video. A celebration of community knowledge.

Executive Director's Report Ellen Somekawa

- **COVID/Health Issues:** COVID-19 is still very present in our school. Between the last board meeting and this board meeting, 11 staff members and 15 students have tested positive for COVID. There have not been identifiable clusters of cases, however, and there was not an obvious spike in cases after the return to school following the winter break.
- **Unionization:**
 - Election of Union Leadership: The staff elected their union leadership. The members of the bargaining committee are: T. Lucy, T. Jill L., T. Katie, T. Lucinda, T. Catherine, T. Alondra.

- AFT (ACSE) Negotiators: The lead negotiators for our collective bargaining process are Krisann Selbst and James Rihel. We have had informal get to know you discussions with them. They want to be present during any of our conversations with the staff leadership of the union and have been facilitating dialogue with the staff leadership.
- Collective Bargaining Advisor: We are engaging an advisor to help us with collective bargaining. This is a local Philadelphia person whom Ellen met doing anti-arena work. Sunyoung Strait has many years of experience representing union workers, mostly with SEIU and negotiating contracts on behalf of the union, but they were also in a management position and negotiated contracts from the management side and ran a non-profit so understands the perspective of needing to steward the resources of a small business.
- **School Start Time:**
 - Parent Survey: Hearing that many parents are concerned about the early 7:30 am start time of our school day, we sent parents some information about our start time and a survey about their preferences.
 - Information shared with parents included:
 - FACTS does not have the power to make the decision over our start time. The School District of Philadelphia is responsible for transportation for charter schools, and the School District has the ultimate say over our start time.
 - FACTS may express our preference to the School District, but the School District does not have to honor our preference.
 - FACTS is only being offered the start times of 7:30 am or 9:30 am.
 - A schoolbus driver shortage led the School District to schedule all of their buses to do three runs in the morning and three runs in the afternoon.
 - There are some positives about our early start time:
 - Our buses have been running on schedule more consistently since this move to the earliest start time.
 - Students who now ride SEPTA do not face the large crowds of students from nearby middle schools and high schools at their transit stops. Large numbers of students from different schools has sometimes led to chaotic and unsafe conditions at SEPTA stops.
 - More parking available in the mornings for drop off. Callowhill is full by 8:30am.
 - There are also concerns about our early start time:
 - Some parents have expressed concerns with their child having a hard time waking up in the morning and they are concerned with their child not having adequate sleep.
 - During some seasons, it is dark in the morning as we make our way to school.
 - Survey Responses:

- 174 parents responded
 - 65.7% expressed a preference for a 7:30 start time; 34.3% expressed a preference for a 9:30 start time
 - Concerns and opinions in the open ended question ran the gamut of opinions.
- **Targeted Support Designation:** FACTS will be designated as a Targeted Support and Improvement School by PDE
 - It has been years since we've had a designation like this
 - It looks like the data is based on the 2020-21 school year which is our year of remote instruction and 2021-22 which is last year, our first year back in the building following the pandemic closure.
 - There are three levels of designation. FACTS is on the lowest (least serious) level
 - The areas where we did not meet the minimum threshold of performance are:
 - Achievement in Math and ELA combined (2021-22): Students with disabilities, black, hispanic
 - ELA proficiency (2021-22): students with disabilities
 - Attendance (during remote learning 2020-21): black, hispanic
 - We will need to develop building wide improvement plans
 - This will become public knowledge on March 10
 - March 7: PDE will hold a webinar for us to learn more about it

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 December 21, 2022.

Moved: Neeta Patel

Seconded: Xu Lin

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Jeff Koung, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Nancy Nguyen, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

2. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves the Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes of January 18, 2023.

Moved: Pooja Agarwal

Seconded: Alan Phan

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Jeff Koung, Selina Morales, Nancy Nguyen, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

Abstained: Xu Lin

V. **Finance Report**

Finance Committee Report

Neeta Patel

The Finance Committee reviewed the financial statements and narrative. There are no new surprises. Per pupil revenue has declined despite higher enrollment.

Expenses are up due to higher prices and some unplanned expenses such as PSERS payments. We are learning what the new union context means, but we anticipated some higher expenses related to that; an expense line has been added to the budget to capture these additional expenses such as legal and consulting expenses. In the first year, this will be higher and we expect it to level out in future years. In our budgeting for future years, we are planning for higher levels of inflation, with increased escalations for the next several years.

Discussion:

- How will the Fair Funding court ruling impact FACTS? [We expect it could have significant positive impact for us, but we anticipate that it will take years for it to work its way through appeals and to be implemented.]

3. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves the financial statements of January 30, 2023.

Moved: Alan Phan

Seconded: Jeff Koung

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Jeff Koung, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Nancy Nguyen, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

VI. Resolution on Cash Reserves

Presentation:

Neeta Patel

FACTS has an operational deficit, but a sizable surplus. The surplus mainly comes from ESSER COVID relief funding which we are using in part to help create a safety net for expected hard times and planned operational deficits. The Board needs to set some guardrails in place to ensure the long term sustainability of the organization.

Discuss:

- What was the minimum before? [We didn't have anything codified. But it is a healthy practice for Boards.]
- What is the approximate amount of a three month reserve? [About \$2 million in the reserve. This does not count the approximately \$800,000 we need to keep in our operating accounts.]

4. BE IT RESOLVED that the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School FACTS will maintain a minimum emergency reserve of at least three months of operating expenses (based on a 90 day average of the previous year); this emergency reserve will be in addition to the funds held in the operating accounts necessary for the day to day functioning of the school. A Board resolution is required in order to release funds from the reserve account.

Moved: Nancy Nguyen

Seconded: Xu Lin

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Jeff Koung, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Nancy Nguyen, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

VII. Approval of the 2023-24 School Year Calendar

Presentation

Ellen Somekawa

Discussion:

- Are there snow days built into the calendar? [We are counting mandatory hours. Until we have a finalized schedule, we don't know exactly how many built in extra days we have. The calendar might also be subject to collective bargaining.]

5. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves the 2023-24 School Year Calendar.

Moved: Neeta Patel

Seconded: Nancy Nguyen

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Jeff Koung, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Nancy Nguyen, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

VIII. Committee Reports

- Policy Committee

Pooja

Our initial draft of a policy on the Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth was to mimic the School District's Policy, but we realized that the SDP policy did not meet our needs regarding changing written records. Some students don't want to inform their families of their name or pronouns used at school and the SDP requiring changes to written records did not seem to provide for that. We saw a need for a more flexible policy to tailor our actions on the students' desires. We can revisit and revise as we learn more.

Discussion:

- Does this policy provide what we need to address staff discipline issues?
 - We are attempting to differentiate between intentional and persistent use of wrong pronouns or names and mistakes and accidents in language usage.
 - We don't know what union contracts will look like in relation to discipline issues.
 - It will be up to the supervisor to come up with evidence of persistence of problematic behavior.
- Every family has their own way of navigating this process.
- How or whether this policy will be shared.
 - Concern is that depending on the families and the students, some will welcome this policy and others won't.
 - Part of creating spaces is letting students know.
 - How will we let students know that this is a path available to them.
 - Given that it's new, it would warrant its own communication. This isn't a policy that requires parent sign off since it is about how the school is treating students.
- How will this be rolled out to students?
 - Teachers were asked to do lessons on this topic and have been learning about choosing pronouns.
 - Slide shows shown to students with voice overs. Key points and what you can do.
- Happy and proud to see that a shift in the culture of the school was reflected in the policy.

6. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves the Policy on the Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students.

Moved: Allaire Wohlgemuth

Seconded: Xu Lin

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Jeff Koung, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Nancy Nguyen, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

- Nominations Committee Selina

Will be starting with interviews of potential candidates. People are encouraged to let the Nominations Committee know of potential candidates. The committee is aiming to forward two nominations for consideration in the spring.

Discussion:

- Are there any specific skills or qualifications that the committee is looking for? [Fundraising is an immediate concern as we see the critical role of the board in building a successful capital campaign. Who could join the board, care for the mission, be grounded in the community we serve and in our purpose, and at the same time have access to networks of people who could be approached for fundraising.]
- There are also other skills, passions, professions that could be supportive to the school leadership.

- Development Committee Alan/Allaire

Development Committee met and is working through an approach to putting together a capital campaign. Made some traction in reaching out to resources, schools. One of the biggest learnings is that we would need to work with a consultant that knows the space and can put us in touch with the right people and funding sources. Are gathering notes from the conversations. Looking to transition some of the responsibilities from Ricque such as the 5K. Will be looking at a spring appeal. Will have a special meeting to draft a rough draft of guardrails around funding sources.

Discussion:

- Would funding for a consultant need to be fundraised before hiring someone? The Committee wants to put forward a proposal by the March meeting. [Could be included as part of the 2023-24 budget. The goal is to approve the budget in May]
- What kind of staff capacity is needed if the committee wants to apply for additional grants? [Some grants come with a lot of reporting]
- Proposal coming from the Development Committee:
 - A hired consultant for a capital campaign
 - A grant admin to add to the Admin staff

- Opportunities around operations and expansion. In the realm of raising funds for a capital project. A grants admin person versus a development person.
 - Does the board recommend staff needs for the school?
 - It isn't the Board's practice to require that positions are created. Admin takes into consideration recommendations that the Board or committees make.
- This needs to be a partnership between the board, admin and staff. We need to incorporate this proposal into the larger picture
- We need a strategic plan. This proposal would be a step in an agreed upon plan. Absent a strategic plan, we need to do some strategic planning together. Seeking expansion grants, committing to them.
- Appreciation to the committee for its work.

IX. Other Action Items

7. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves contracting with Sun Young Strait in an amount not to exceed \$25,000 for consulting services related to staff unionization and collective bargaining.

8. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves contracting with Gen3 Construction Company in an amount not to exceed \$5,000 for the installation of an instahot hot water heater in the third floor kitchen.

9. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves contracting with Enspire Consulting Group in an amount not to exceed \$5,000 for the purposes of assessment of mental and behavioral health support needs in grades K-2.

Moved #7-9: Xu Lin

Seconded: Neeta Patel

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Jeff Koung, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Nancy Nguyen, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

XI. Adjournment

Moved to Adjourn: Allaire Wohlgemuth

Seconded: Alan Phan

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Jeff Koung, Xu Lin, Selina Morales, Nancy Nguyen, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth