

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
One Corliss Park
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

MEETING MINUTES

Date: September 9, 2004

Time: 6:00 PM

Minutes recorded by: Jake Camara

Minutes Approved on: October 14, 2004

Interpreters: Jennifer Maloney, Rosa Norberg, Christine West

Minutes

I. Call to Order

The meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees was called to order by **Trustee Phil Wheeler** at 6:21PM in the RI School for the Deaf Cafeteria.

II. Roll Call of Board of Trustees

In Attendance: Bonnie Abols, Carol Dorros, Steve Florio, Tracy Karasinski, Phil Wheeler

Excused: Maureen McEntee, Bill Walker, Travis Zellner

III. Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes

a. July 8, 2004

- i.** Trustee Karasinski requested “positions to be advertised in house” on Page 2 be changed to “positions being explored at present time”.
- ii. Motion** was made by Trustee Karasinski to accept the minutes of July 8, 2004 as amended. Seconded by Trustee Dorros. Approved unanimously.

IV. Reports

a. Interim Director Report

- i.** John Plante gave a brief overview of the highlights from his Interim Director’s report.
- ii.** Trustee Wheeler suggested the Board write a letter to staff and students regarding the school no longer being a school in need of improvement.
- iii. Motion** was made by Carol Dorros to write a letter to staff and students of the school congratulating them on the work and the accomplishment of becoming a school that no longer needs improvement. Seconded by Tracy Karasinski. Approved unanimously.

- iv. Trustee Florio asked about the status of teacher evaluations.
 - 1. John Plante said that teacher evaluations will take place this year. The new teachers' contracts require that they be evaluated twice.
 - 2. John asked Sharon to contact the Learning Center and American School for the Deaf to find out how they contract for ASL proficiency evaluations. They are still waiting for a response. John Plante contacted Boston University's Deaf Studies program as well.
- b. Coordinators Reports
 - i. Preschool/Family Guidance
 - 1. Trustee Dorros asked about Family Guidance funding for this year.
 - a. Wayne Hannon responded that they are at a point where EI providers are now able to sign contracts. They have started to schedule meetings to go to each provider to go over information and hopefully walk away, if not with a signed contract then a contract that will come to us in a very short period of time.
 - b. Mary Jane Johnson clarified that the money that they receive from the EI centers does not come anywhere near the costs that are incurred in all areas of the Family Guidance Program.
 - 2. Trustee Dorros asked how the children with special needs mentioned in the Early Childhood report are being accommodated.
 - a. Lena Greene is teaching those children and she does have a Special Education Certification.
- c. Finance Director Report
 - i. Wayne Hannon passed out a summary of the "FY 05 and FY 06 Budget Request" (*attached*) and discussed the outcome of his meeting today with the Board of Regents.
 - ii. Wayne Hannon discussed the status of the new building.
 - iii. **Motion** was made by Steve Florio to set up a special meeting within two weeks to approve the budget and the Parent/Student Handbook. Seconded by Tracy Karasinski. Approved unanimously.
 - iv. Trustee Wheeler thanked Wayne Hannon for the extraordinary work he has done over the past year.
- d. Chairperson Report
 - i. Correspondence
 - 1. Phil informed the Board that Maureen suggested a follow-up letter to RIDE regarding the issue of a Chairperson.
 - 2. **Motion** was made by Steve Florio that the Chairperson goes to the Board of Regents to inform that they have not

received a response to the question regarding a Chairperson for the Board of Trustees. Seconded by Bonnie Abols. Motion not approved.

3. **Motion** was made by Steve Florio that the chairperson must find a way to get the last word from the commissioner. Seconded by Carol Dorros. Approved unanimously.

ii. Trustee Update

1. Phil Wheeler informed the Board that Bill Walker is reviewing his ability to attend meetings and remain on the Board of Trustees. He suggested that it would be good to canvas and gather a list of as many people as possible for Board Member candidates.
2. Phil informed the Board that Maureen suggests that the by laws are reviewed regarding attendance, absences etc. Additionally, the board needs to nominate members to serve as vice chair and secretary as stated in the by laws.
 - a. Steve Florio suggested this be brought up at the next monthly meeting. Tracy Karasinski suggested it also be added to Policy's agenda.
3. Phil informed the Board that Maureen has said that the Personnel Committee needs assistance in meeting their assigned responsibilities (e.g. Search, staff evaluation, other issues). She has heard from all 3 board members indicating their difficulty in devoting extensive time to this committee because of other commitments. Perhaps the board can assist with the search set up to reduce some of the committee's work.
4. Steve Florio and Carol Dorros informed the Board that they are interested in being involved.

e. Sub-Committees

i. Architectural and Engineering

1. Carol Dorros informed the Board that since the last meeting the A&E Committee has met twice. They have been working towards advocating for school renovation or building of a new school.
2. Since the last meeting, a letter went from the Board to the Governor's Office and the Senate and House Finance Committee.
 - a. The Governor's Office has not responded but the Senate Finance Committee has responded.
3. The Committee has been working on an advocacy plan. There is a broad list of groups that would be interested in issues related to the building including the following:
 - a. RI School for the Deaf Parents
 - b. RI School for the Deaf Students

- c. RI School for the Deaf Teachers' Union
 - d. RI School for the Deaf Teachers' Assistants
 - e. RI School for the Deaf Alumni Association
 - f. RI Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 - g. RI Association of the Deaf
 - h. Friends of RI School for the Deaf
 - i. RI Department of Education
 - j. The Corliss Center
 - k. NEARI
 - l. Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 - m. RIRID
4. The committee developed a letter writing campaign. All parties were contacted and requested to write letter to Governor's Office and Senate Finance Committee.
 - a. There have been a number of letters sent.
 - b. Senator Alves requested a meeting and during the meeting was very positive in committing himself to helping the School for the Deaf (*minutes attached*).
 5. John Plante mentioned new legislation regarding funding for hearing aids.
 - a. Steve Florio clarified that the new legislation was actually an amendment to current legislation. It was originally \$400 and 20%. The next hearing they changed it to \$1000 to children under 18. They now need to work on it to include adults as well.
 6. John Plante suggested looking at Steve and the CDHH as a resource and into the monthly or bimonthly report there be built in a legislative report. It would be great information to share with the Board and the staff at the school.
 7. Steve Florio informed the Board that the website has lists of current legislation and laws.
 8. A proposal was made by Steve Florio to add a legislative report starting in January as a standing agenda item.

V. Old Business

a. Strategic Planning

- i. Carol Dorros contacted Mary Joe Kaplan regarding Strategic Planning. She asked her whether she would consider facilitating Strategic Planning for the RI School for the Deaf. She is aware of the school and she would consider facilitating (*information attached*).
- ii. She is willing to meet with the Board and bring another educational strategic planner to discuss ideas.
- iii. Discussion took place as to whether the top priority would be a strategic planning or the national search for a director.

- iv. **Motion** was made by Steve Florio to set up a sub-committee for Strategic Planning. Seconded by Bonnie Abols. Motion withdrawn.
 - v. **Motion** was made by Carol Dorros to attempt at the next meeting we set aside at least a half hour to define what it is that we are looking for when we talk about strategic planning. Seconded by Tracy Karasinski. Approved unanimously.
- b. Faculty & Staff Handbook
- i. Steve Florio suggested that a future amendment to the handbook would be for the possibility of chemical or biological attacks. He also suggested that the Sexual Harassment policy include a report to the police.
 - ii. **Motion** was made by Carol Dorros to approve the Faculty & Staff Handbook as is. Seconded by Steve Florio. Approved unanimously.
 - iii. Tracy Karasinski said the plan is that everything in the policies will be looked at by legal counsel.
 - iv. Wayne Hannon informed the Board that most of the policies are State mandated policies and therefore have already been looked at by legal counsel.

VI. New Business

- a. Student Handbook
- i. Trustee Karasinski asked for the latest copy of the Student Handbook to be sent to Carol Dorros.
 - ii. Discussion took place regarding who makes the final decision regarding disciplinary action.
 - 1. John Plante responded that it is listed in the Student Handbook that the final decision is made by the Director or Assistant Director.
 - iii. Trustee Wheeler said that hopefully at the next Board meeting we should be able to sign off on the Handbook.
 - iv. Trustee Karasinski requested that if there are changes that board members see, they be emailed to Tracy Karasinski and John Plante.
 - v. Trustee Wheeler suggested that the student handbook also be looked at by legal counsel.
 - vi. **Motion** was made by Steve Florio that legal counsel reviews the draft of the Student Handbook. Seconded by Carol Dorros. Approved unanimously.
- b. Approval of New Hires
- i. John Plante informed the Board that it is a courtesy that we inform the Board of Trustees of new hires.
- c. Development of Satellite Program
- i. John Plante informed the Board that for the better part of the last year he has been a part of an Oral Ed Task Force. Involved on the task force are several Special Education Directors and interested parents; there is also representation from RIDE (Sally Arsenal, Tom Dipaolo).

- ii. They have perceived that there are limited options for Deaf children in RI. It all started because of concerns of girl from town of Johnston had been commuting to Clarke School for 2 years.
- iii. It was the feeling of this Task Force that this little girl wouldn't be the last child for whom this would be an issue.
- iv. About 3 weeks ago, he received a call to go to a meeting of the task force at the Providence School System. There were 3 parents of young children with cochlear implants. These parents were 3 of our current parents.
- v. This has pushed the question to the forefront. People who want an oral program immediately.
- vi. Part of the Board's responsibility is to address needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing in RI and this is an issue that goes beyond the RI School for the Deaf. Right now we are at a critical point because the numbers of children with cochlear implants is growing.
- vii. The School for the Deaf can either say that we will be a part of this or we will not be part of this. John Plante expressed concern that not being part of this would pose a serious threat to the School for the Deaf.
- viii. The State is making is very clear that they want the School for the Deaf to run this program. They want this to be a satellite of the School for the Deaf.
- ix. There is a follow-up meeting on September 10, 2004 at the Providence School System and will expect some response from the School for the Deaf.
- x. Steve Florio asked what the difference is between a satellite program and outreach
 - 1. In the Outreach program, we are invited by communities to provide services.
 - 2. A satellite program: providence would provide classroom space and we would provide staff and own the program. The satellite program would use our own curriculum.
- xi. In addition, the State has written a grant for funding; build in additional services (cochlear implants and additional speech resources).
- xii. Mary Jane Johnson clarified that we would not lose any resources here.
- xiii. Providence School System has assured us that this would not be limited to Providence students. It would be offered to all students in Rhode Island.
- xiv. Steve Florio asked if students at this satellite program would integrate with students at the School for the Deaf. He asked if they would be able to join the same sports teams, etc.
 - 1. John Plante confirmed that it would work like that if we go with this model because it would be a part of the RI School for the Deaf.

- xv. Discussion took place regarding the School for the Deaf's participation in this joint venture
- xvi. **Motion** was made by Steve Florio to endorse the concept with the understanding that the students have exposure for their self esteem and self identity. Seconded by Carol Dorros. Approved unanimously.

VII. Adjournment

- i. The meeting was adjourned at 9:01PM.