



## RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

One Corliss Park

Providence, RI 02908

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### GENERAL MEETING

**Date:** February 15, 2011

**Time:** 6:00PM

**Minutes recorded by:** Nancy Sousa

**Minutes approved on:**

**Interpreters:** Jon Henry and Richard Schmiegel

**Cart:** Nicole

#### Call to Order

Chairperson Travis Zellner called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to order at **6:05 p.m. in the Cafeteria of the RI School for the Deaf.**

#### Roll Call of Board of Trustees

- a. **In Attendance:** Travis Zellner, Marie Lynch, Harvey Corson, Westley Resendes, Iraida Williams (arrived at 6:30 p.m.), Jodi Merryman, Angelo Garcia
- b. **Excused:** Mary Wambach, Amy D Roche

#### Adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2)

- c. **MOVED Harvey Corson AND SECONDED Westley Resendes:** That the Board would adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2) at 6:07 p.m. Approved unanimously.
- d. **MOVED Angelo Garcia AND SECONDED Marie Lynch:** That the Board would return to Open Session at 7:00 p.m.. Approved unanimously.
- e. **MOVED Westley Resendes AND SECONDED Iraida Williams:** That the Board would seal the minutes of Executive Session. Approved unanimously.

**Motions from Executive Session: Board agreed by consensus to authorize administration team to seek mediation with Union regarding CBA – RIGL 2,8,28,9.3-9.**

**Chair noted that some agenda items may have to be tabled – move to -**

## **New Business and Reports**

Chair: Not much to report – will push more issues in March – and asked Director to report first.

Director Dunsmore: (Signed from her written report)– addressed Race To The Top (RTTT) diploma changes, NECAP results just came out and will be reported at next BOT Meeting, NWEA results in July; continued discussion re: Strategic Plan is scheduled for March; handbook must be finalized; CBA-ongoing process; address grievances in March; FFS hearings; budget and Groden. Caebers program is ongoing; Commissioner Gist will visit school to observe class 2/18/11. We will be celebrating the Read Across America event with displays, characters in costume, there will be a competition. Noted that formal letter of approval for Dinaz Adenwalla as Assistant Director Academics was received and appreciated.

Assistant Director Adenwalla: Noted that there are two new students in high school program – both Spanish – learning English well; getting one on one support for reading for 15 students (money is limited) all students have IEP literacy goals, these 15 students need additional support-chosen according to family income; trying to become a fully-funded Title 1 school; results of NECAP arrived and results will be in March report; noted new schedule of 7 periods at 55 minutes each. Two block periods were developed to work with new graduation requirements.

Special Education Administrator Pendergast: noted that federal Title 1 funds are based on the percentage of students who receive free and reduced lunch; support based on a formula; we designed a formula to look at lowest 15-20% of students across all grade levels.

Assistant Director Delgado: reported that Budget projections were done; there is a question with the Fee For Service (FFS) monies. We may end the year with a modest surplus if we get FFS funds; if we do not, we will have to maximize all federal funds first before State will reinstate and make us whole. We have had larger than anticipated expenditures, e.g. snow removal; we budgeted \$8K and we have paid over \$19K thus far. Legal expenses are over budget, but other than that, we are doing fairly well.

- March 1<sup>st</sup> Teacher Notifications/Layoffs – Director noted that administration went through an intensive student needs assessment before lay-off notices were given to seven teachers – lay-offs based on student needs, drop in enrollment and budget constraints, looked at seniority – noted that there may be a reduction of 10% in our budget; uncertainty in FFS system. Director notified affected teachers on Friday; must meet the 3/1 deadline; asks that the Board take her recommendation into consideration.

Member voiced concern about the drop in enrollment for next year and asked why there was that projection. Director Dunsmore noted that there will be 5 students graduating and other students have indicated their move to other districts, but we do have possibility of new enrollments.

Assistant Director Delgado clarified that there are no directives about reducing our budget at this time; there are issues with FFS (\$572K in this year's budget); 90% of our budget is payroll related – if we do have to cut 10%, all personnel will be looked at. All of the lay-off positions, right now, are teachers because we have to give notice to teachers by 3/1/11 – this is just an exercise in preparation.

Chair asked about an offset if the Groden Center lease went into effect- to which the Assistant Director noted that there would be approximately \$100K realized from the Groden lease; it is unknown if the state will restore monies not received for FFS.

Member noted that under State law, special education services must be provided for deaf and hard of hearing children; Assistant Director noted that he would like to see the money before he counts it.

Questions by BOT members about the lay-offs were directed at the Director re: enrollment, the certainty that all student needs will be met, and the possibility of call-backs for teachers who received lay-off notices. Comments were made about the impending effect of morale on staff when lay-offs happen. Director responded that we have to make a decision on what we know today and asked the Board to approve her recommendation.

**Chair asked the Board to agree in consensus to support the Director's recommendation to lay-off seven (7) teachers – all agreed.**

**Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes:** January 4, 2011 – **acceptance moved to March meeting.** There was a discussion - re wording on Strategic Plan (choices vs. decisions, schooling vs academics, etc). Secretary commented that it is very difficult to get exact wording when there are so many words – can revisit the language if need be; Lori Dunsmore asked that the correction be made to say that she will be leaving on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011, not “after”; Director also challenged the use of “Member” vs. using the member’s full name in meeting minutes. Chair noted that, as long as agreement is by consensus, members do not have to be identified by name.

Marie Lynch announced that she will be stepping down as Secretary of the Board in June – her primary work responsibilities will be increasing dramatically.

BREAK

**Public Comment:** President of Teachers’ Union noted that all teachers are concerned with the lay-offs; handed out letter from their attorney (Board was already in possession of the letter)

**John Carty – retired RISD teacher-** spoke about the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population in RI and expressed concern that our enrollment is down; suggests putting teachers who otherwise would be laid-off into the districts to recruit students who need our services.

Member noted that there is concern with Outreach-need to move ahead with the Strategic Plan to help our enrollment situation. Another member noted that it is a State issue- students in districts are not getting the services they need – this matter needs to be addressed.

**Michele Florio – RISD Psychologist** – noted that she has three sons, born in RI, with needs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing services, but she has put them in an out-of-state school to receive quality education; The Learning Center is big competition for RISD; we need to look at how we can provide these services.

**Old Business:**

- Update on Groden Center Collaboration – Director highlighted some new areas in the Groden lease: reduction in square footage=reduction in price; lease will start

May 1, 2011 and be in effect for eighteen months; four consulting services will be provided, with some of the hours reduced. Questions were answered by Wayne Hannon regarding the delay in the lease agreement-Groden personnel were difficult to reach, but agreement has been made and we should move forward.

- Board Work Plan-2011 schedule of Board of Trustee Meetings – Chair reported that we have a schedule for the rest of the school year. Board meetings are to be held on the first Tuesday of every month and work sessions on the third Tuesday, when there are no school vacation days. Member asked if there is a need to make-up the 2/1 meeting cancellation, according to the by-laws. It was noted that all approved minutes are updated on Secretary of State’s website.
- Director Search Committee: Director Dunsmore noted that the Director’s job duties are outlined in the job description included in folder; search process is still up in air; asked members to jot down ideas as they read through the Director’s responsibilities so that next month they will have more to work with. She described the hiring process that brought her to RISD; noting that there was a nation-wide search- the school’s human resource department did not handle the search; a Board member was the point person; interviews were done in April; also via video phone. She cautioned that the BOT needs to consider the budget as part of this process.

Members observed that they need to determine the job description precisely and goals should be tied to the Strategic Plan; advertising should be very transparent; there was consideration and composition of search committee-should include two members of deaf community; consider budget issues in search; need a timeline for making decisions-process cannot be done in summer to hire in fall-lengthy process should be started now. Chair noted that at the next meeting, they will need to meet and set a timeline.

**Next Meeting Agenda Items (tentative topics):**

- Review and finalize Strategic Plan language
  - Director’s Job Description & timeline
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**II. Adjournment**

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.