



MEETING MINUTES – WORK SESSION

Date: July 19, 2011

Time: 6:00PM

Minutes recorded by: Nancy Sousa

Minutes approved on:

Interpreters: Carol Fay, Maureen McEntee

Cart: Shelley Deming

RIDE: Jennifer Smith

Attorney: Sara Rapport

Call to Order

- a. Chair Travis Zellner called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to order at 6:13 p.m. in the Cafeteria of the RI School for the Deaf.

Roll Call of Board of Trustees

- b. **In Attendance:** Marie Lynch, Amy D Roche, Jodi Merryman, , Harvey Corson, Angelo Garcia

Excused: Mary Wambach - resigned, Westley Resendes, Iraida Williams

Adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (2) – Litigation - CBA

- a. **MOVED Harvey Corson AND SECONDED Amy Donnelly-Roche:** That the Board would adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2) at 6:15 p.m.. Approved unanimously.
- b. **MOVED Marie Lynch AND SECONDED Amy Donnelly-Roche :** That the Board would return to Open Session at 7:00 p.m.. Approved unanimously.
- c. **MOVED Jodi Merryman AND SECONDED Marie Lynch:** That the Board would seal the minutes of Executive Session. Approved unanimously.

Motions from Executive Session: None

d.

Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes

June 6, 2011 – approved by consensus

June 21, 2011– approved by consensus

July 12, 2011– approved by consensus

Discussion Items:

- Board Sub-Committees – no discussion, but will talk about Personnel Committee
- RFP for Transformation Team
 - Scope & Timeframe: **Jennifer Smith** – explained that a “Letter of Interest” went out on Friday 7/15 including comprehensive description of support we need for the school – it still needs to go through a signature process at DOA before posting; person to start in September, dollars can be utilized extending to spring 2012, so RISD will have several months of support.
Chair: concerned w/timeline and starting school w/o a consultant; will make an announcement to community mid-August to communicate what our plans are.
 - Interim Administration – much discussion ensued re an Interim Director/leadership;
Chair: proposed that with the Board’s approval – provide additional authority to Ms. Mary Pendergast and expand rotation for operational issues for all of July and August; RIDE is willing to provide another person for additional support with the calendar, assignments of staff, etc. Chair concerned that there is no one currently in Administration with Deaf education experience and decisions could be made by someone who doesn’t know about these issues; other members expressed concern that Ms. Pendergast is part-time and cannot consider coming on full-time (as she has another part-time position at a Charter school). Jennifer Smith assured all that this was just a bridge measure. Members voiced concerns about the Academic position being vacant – we need someone to focus on curriculum, school improvement, and family engagement – one person cannot be squeezed into an already important position.
Member Dr. Harvey Corson: offered his vast experience in Deaf education to serve the school as an Interim Director; he would be willing to ask Board of Ethics to give approval to this situation; would like to work with members of the administrative team.

Chair: agreed that it would be good to have someone with Harvey’s expertise, but with Mary Wambach’s resignation, BOT can’t afford to lose another Board member. On the other hand as someone with a Deaf family, we need to be patient to put right person in place; Ms. Pendergast and Mr. Delgado do wonderful job, but its too much for them.

Jennifer Smith noted that as a former principal in schools with a lot of instability, she found that she could not be three places at once and felt that if a schedule was set-up so that people could know who the contact person is on any given day, things could move smoothly; people here are already doing good work making decisions without the authority – right thing to do is to say that you have the authority to make sound decisions – from time period “x to y” – the person who all leadership decisions will be made will be Ms. Pendergast – she has demonstrated that she can handle the tasks.

Member still concerned about Ms. Pendergast being part-time, Corsino’s position being up in the air – Sharon is the only full-time person on the administrative team right now; there is concern about bridge being endless; and are we asking someone to do a really big (consultant) job for \$50,000? Having someone with Deaf experience starting the school year is really good idea because this school is like no other in this way.

Atty Rapport: read the state regulation/statute re an elected or appointed official (e.g. BOT member) cannot take any position to receive remuneration for work within one year of serving on the board without an approval from the Ethics Commission – highly unlikely we would prevail without proof of substantial hardship.

Member: not sure about appropriateness of this conversation; there are questions of fairness and protocol in place to post for a consultant; this conversation doesn’t feel equitable.

Jennifer Smith: not retracting earlier recommendation, but we do have to follow through with protocol; does not prevent us from further conversation; recommendation would be to have a date certain to end bridge; concern with identifying viable, strong candidate with a background in deaf education – do we need one for now and one for later? We don’t want to take too much energy away from finding the right individual for ongoing future work; and we do not want any more legal issues. For BOT’s protection, assign responsibility for this person; the pool of applicants is very small in a very short time.

Member: daunted by this statute; entertaining proposal for 1st quarter of school year, this is a lot to ask any one person to do in her spare time and assume leadership of the

school? Suggest teacher leaders also be available for welcoming families and establish a calendar of the leadership team.

Chair: It would take a lot of time and energy to post for an Interim Director; OK with current team and expecting more from teachers – more of a contribution – then I'm OK with the bridge. Dinaz Adinwalla could help with coordinating and Sean Gill – there are areas he could help with. Motion for approval or consensus tonight?

Jennifer Smith: I like the idea of teachers taking leadership roles; it's a way to do things differently;

Members: still concerned with Mary Pendergast being part-time; Corsino Delgado's job being uncertain and Sharon not here to speak for herself.

Mary Pendergast: We have been talking about this for some time; it is challenging to respond to staff's concerns without the authority; there are three people in front office and another across the hall; I have run a special education school with more students; I cannot do everything, I cannot let go of my other job. I have been guiding behind the scenes, but need to have a deadline; concerned with the Mr. Delgado piece because I do not have the authority to do what he does; learned a lot in last two years from A to Z; over-see every federal grant; definitely need to provide support in Secondary – guidance from RIDE.

Member: on June 7th, we agreed to an Interim role for the Director-what has changed?

Mary Pendergast: There was a Deaf administrator on the team, when the \$5000 bridge did not work, I went to Travis to express that I am not comfortable making decisions without BOT approval.

Jennifer Smith: With no Deaf educator present, Ms. Pendergast would be decision-maker until the end of the first quarter.

Member: Need to restructure interim leadership team, move Ms. Pendergast into full-time position and solve murky situation with Mr. Delgado-identify his exact role and position; perhaps make Ms. Pendergast full-time temporarily to put a plan together, e.g. Director of Special Education, Interim Finance with Mr. Delgado, and Dinaz Adinwalla will be on board till the end of August – and she can go back to her previous role.

Mary Pendergast: Dinaz Adinwalla was Secondary coordinator with some administrative responsibilities.

Chair: It's not doable to make decision this evening about Mr. Delgado, and is Ms. Pendergast even interested in a full-time position?

Mary Pendergast: I will not let go of other job; will be at other job some of the time – that’s why we have rotating system to have someone available.

Chair: Let’s take first step in identifying Ms. Pendergast and her decision-making and come back again to discuss Assistant Director.

Member: It’s good idea to talk about positions and not employees; making Ms. Pendergast Interim Director is too messy; day to day stuff still has to get done; authorize staff to do what they are already doing; all this was in letter from 6 weeks ago with current administrative team identified; update the issues and present it to us as this extends the duties first put to us when Ms. Dunsmore was leaving.

Jennifer Smith: Someone needs to be the go-to person – not necessarily through identifying an interim; want to have consensus of the Board for Ms. Pendergast to make decisions. She does not feel comfortable making teacher assignments without the proper authority.

Chair: We need to let people know that Ms. Pendergast is going to be continuing with support from RIDE – reassure people that decisions are being made as a team.

Consensus granted to give Mary Pendergast authority to make decisions.

Chair: Mary, are you sure that you want the authority to do that?

Mary Pendergast: Yes.

(8:40 p.m. – Jennifer Smith left the meeting)

- Ocean State Network for Children and Families – Network of Care– Mary Pendergast explained that functions are similar to those from Strategic Planning; will explore more functions e.g. offering ASL for families; left it open-ended; it works well with our strategic mission; she asked the BOT to review it to see if anything is extremely important to include to let her know.
- Association of RI School Committees – Members wanted to know more about it – e.g. cost, representation? Know that they offer forums and recommendations about doing our work better – good idea to join, move forward and commit to grow as a board.
- Student Performance – hold for next meeting – ongoing on agenda

Report from administration requested by Board members, e.g. benchmarking assessments – update on what data is collected, ongoing assessments; different models, etc.

On agenda for next meeting of August 2, 2011: Officer Positions – Westley Resendes is interested in Secretary position; Vice-Chair position is now open; will communicate with new commissioner’s office re: searching and recruiting board members. (Mary Pendergast may not be here for 8/2/11)

II. Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.