



**RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

One Corliss Park

Providence, RI 02908

---

**MEETING MINUTES – General Meeting**

**Date:** September 10, 2013

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

**Minutes recorded by:** Nancy Sousa

**Minutes approved on: September 24, 2013, as corrected**

**Interpreters:** Jonathan Henry, Carol Fay

Cart: Shelley Deming

RIDE:

Attorney:

**Call to Order**

- a. Chairperson Marie Lynch called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to order at 6:03 p.m. in the Cafeteria of the RI School for the Deaf.

**Roll Call of Board of Trustees**

- b. **In Attendance:** Travis Zellner, Amy Donnelly Roche, Jodi Merryman, Joseph Fischgrund, Amanda Montgomery
  - c. **Excused:** Westley Resendes, Lindsey Medeiros, Heather Niedbala
- **Public Comment: None**
  - Acknowledgement of **Travis Zellner's** leadership on the Board of Trustees: **Marie Lynch:** read a letter from Maureen McEntee (first Chair of the Board) celebrating his tenure and accomplishments with the Board. She also gave him a card from RIDE. **Nancy Maguire Heath** presented him with a plaque in honor of his service to the Board and **she and Joseph Fischgrund** spoke to give their personal thanks and congratulations to Travis Zellner.
  - **Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes:** (6:15 – 6:25 pm)
    - May 21, 2013 - Work Session – Consensus to approve**
    - June 4, 2013 - General Meeting – Executive Session – Consensus to approve (as corrected)**
    - July 16, 2013 - General Meeting – Consensus to approve (as corrected)**
    - July 16, 2013 – Work Session – Consensus to approve**
    - August 6, 2013 - General Meeting – Consensus to approve (as corrected)**
    - August 6, 2013 – Executive Session - Tabled**
  - **Reports / Action Items:** (6:25 - 7:45pm)

- **Report of the Board of Trustees Chair: Marie Lynch:**
  - Appointment of Nominees – Amanda and Joe are here tonight – all new members were voted and approved at the Board of Education meeting....at this point, we have a full Board.
  - BOT Training – New members need procedural training as well as general training and team-building; with the help of RIDE and Sally Arsenault, will create a training venue –looking at October to start. Other suggestions to help new members were to get Scott Muehler in and to join the Association of School Committees (fee involved); also Open Meetings training provided by the Secretary of State’s office.
  - 2013-2014 Board of Trustees calendar – **the calendar was approved** with an addition of a September 24, 2013 meeting (for a Budget review and approval) and a second meeting in February – the 13<sup>th</sup>, in anticipation of any March 1 deadlines.
  - Schedule mid-September ‘Special Meeting’ to review/approve RISD budget – approved for September 24, 2013.
  
- **Report of the Director: Nancy Maguire Heath**
  - General Updates – We had a smooth opening and are fully staffed; we are bringing in a Speech Language Pathologist through an agency and we have a PT person one day a week – we are close to providing all needed services.
  - Introduced Ron Struminsky from the NYC Leadership Academy who was part of the Leadership Conference that she attended, along with Mary Pendergast and the two new Teacher Leaders; happy to announce that he will be our Leadership Coach for one year, following our attendance at the Academy.
  - Ron Struminsky spoke about his position; it started out as coach to New York City principals (over 300);and they are supported by the Wallace Corp., they are in 26 states and 6 foreign countries; this coaching is funded by RIDE and RTTT; major emphasis is to help under-performing schools focus on leadership – we are “thought partners”. He noted that he is impressed with the school and tried to register for an ASL course, but the course was filled in 10 minutes – he was shut out. He and Nancy Maguire Heath have known each other for years and it is a pleasure to be able to help in this situation; he got a real education on Deaf Ed – we can call on him for anything.
  - The Director noted that she is grateful for Ron’s coaching and the time spent on leadership training; it helped her to grapple with issues facing her and the school; the training offered a blend of good solutions along with the leadership training. Our new teacher leaders particularly benefited from the training.
  - The Director reported that we kicked off Deaf Awareness month with an activity here; Perspectives is occupying an office here – on Wednesdays – for our students and families only.

- The website refurbishment is moving along; the template is completed;
- The School Reform Plan (our list of tasks is very different from other schools), has been reconfigured to an accountability dashboard; we will have some help from RIDE (Courtney) - will come in to walk us through it – it should be a good measurement for us; we are going to embrace it and be positive about it. I will bring the results back to the Board.
- We have seen an increase in our facilities rentals; we are serving the public – most days the field and gym are being used by outside teams; we must maintain the property. However, we did not get our rental with Mariposa – there was a glitch with the tenant and DOA; maybe will be able to do in January or next year; right now we do not have a Sharing Program.
- Need: a Health and Wellness Committee and a School Improvement Team
- Issue: a non-deaf student has applied; she has special needs with significant medical issues (including a central line); we will need to review our policy and I will bring this issue to the Board again next month. Members asked if we had a medical consultant – the answer was yes we do.
- ‘Focus for Year 2’ presentation – Director handed out a Power Point presentation to all members of the Board to review, as well as: Deaf Education Teacher rubric; Teacher Leader job description; soccer schedule; school calendar and PD calendar.

**Maureen Wu: Budget Update:** final books will be closed in November; our appropriated budget in General Revenue was 6.2 million and we spent almost all of it; for FY14 it is almost 6.1 million; however, every department is assigned a 7% reduction (would mean \$425,000 to us); on the 24<sup>th</sup> our goal will be to discuss the options with this issue. It is not a “definite reduction”, but FY15 is a fiscal cliff and there will be a shortfall; there is a lot to consider, including impact statements to justify what the reduction would mean to our IEP services, etc.; we cannot violate the ADA and IEP requirements. Perhaps we can negotiate with RIDE to help us make up the 7% reduction. The School Improvement Grant is still set aside for us. We were able to come in at budget last year without that money; RIDE was very grateful for that and they have placed the amount into this new budget. We need a plan to spend down that money. RTTT money ends in FY15....we will try to get you all the materials to review before the meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

○ **Report of the Board of Trustees Policy Committee:**

- Action Item: Handbook – Final Vote – **approved by consensus.**
- 1st reading - Restraint Policy and Teen Dating Violence Policy – **needs to be reformatted and sent to Jodi Merryman before the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.**
- Proposed additions to the Staff Dress Code and Grooming Policy - Final Vote – **approved by consensus**

- **Report of the Board of Trustees Personnel Committee: Marie Lynch:** members had a lot of questions – re the “evaluator”, the 360 evaluation, at what points do we check on Director; it was noted that this timeline was adopted from RIDE’s version; this school is unique, especially because the Board is in director contact with the Director, but it is the position that is evaluated, not the person. Member voices concern about the Director’s professional growth plan – she is confident that she is receiving the PD she needs and the yearly CEASD is in her contract.
  - Action Item: Acceptance of RI Deaf Director Evaluation Timeline – **Tabled for consideration at next meeting.**
  
- **Report of the Board of Trustees ByLaws Committee:**
  - Action Item: Submittal and review of revisions; 1<sup>st</sup> reading. - **Travis Zellner** presented the old By-Laws document and a draft of the new proposed By-Laws. He noted that the old requirement that the Board should meet monthly is changed on the draft to have the Board meet a minimum of 4 times during the school year, with special meetings or work sessions scheduled as needed. He asked that members review the old and new side by side to consider for a vote at the next meeting.
  - Members had questions regarding the powers of the Board – are they a school committee, an LEA, a district??
  - **Nancy Maguire Heath:** assured members that we are not a full, traditional, district – we are a limited Local Education Authority; **Travis** noted that the wording was taken from RI General Laws; more study needed on that....will confer with RIDE and our attorney before the vote at the next meeting.

**Adjournment:** 8:25 p.m.