



RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

One Corliss Park

Providence, RI 02908

MEETING MINUTES – General Meeting

Date: January 6, 2015

Time: Minutes recorded by: Helen Edwards

Minutes approved on: February 26, 2015

Interpreters: Maureen McEntee, Carol Fay

- **Call to Order:**
 - a. Board Vice- Chairperson Jodi Merryman called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to order at 6:05 pm in the Cafeteria of the School for the Deaf.
- **Roll Call of Board of Trustees**
 - b. In Attendance: Jodi Merryman, Joseph Fischgrund, Jonathan Henner, Jane Newkirk, Lindsey Medeiros, Amanda Montgomery, Heather Niedbala, Danielle Loughlin

c. **Excused:**

Public Comment:

- Vice Chairperson Merryman allotted time for public comment. There were three people who spoke. The first was Sheila Ressinger who stated that she came to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf as a student teacher in 1975. She then worked in the high school and middle school until her retirement in 2011. Ms. Ressinger's concern relates to the adoption of the Common Core Standards and the implementation of PARCC as the state-wide assessment. She does not feel that these programs are appropriate for use with our deaf and hard-of hearing students.
- Dinaz Adenwalla read a letter on behalf of the School for the Deaf Teachers Association. Ms. Adenwalla referred to letters that were presented to all teachers reminding them that the assessment will be administered in February. Those not scoring at least INTERMEDIATE PLUS will be recommended to the Board for termination. Teachers expressed their concern and feel that they should not be terminated based upon their ASL skills only. Ms. Adenwalla, on behalf of the teachers association asked that the Board decline the recommendation to terminate a teacher who does not achieve ADVANCED in February.
- Susan Ward, the ASL literacy Specialist on staff, was the third person to speak. As a former deaf child in school, Ms. Ward stated that she would like all the students to have the same experience that she had in school. She depended upon teachers who were strong language models in ASL to help her advance. Her parents did not sign fluently and teachers who could were very important to her literacy development. In her role as ASL Literacy Specialist, she has assessed the language skills of the students at RISD, from elementary to high school and is greatly concerned that they

are not proficient in ASL for their age and require a commitment to strong language models. These students need basic interactive communication skills.

- **Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes:** (6:15 – 6:25 pm)
 - December 2, 2014 - General Meeting Approved by consensus
 -
- **Gala Update Presentation**
 - Ann Marie Clarkson, Chair of the planned RISD Birthday Bash, gave an update on the plans for the gala event, which will be held in April 2016. Ms. Clarkson stated that on April 29, 2015 at 5:30pm is the kick-off date and time to keep in mind. This is when we are going to bring awareness to the RI Legislature that the School for the Deaf has a long and historical relationship with the Legislature. We would like them to be part of our celebration. The kick-off event on April 29, 2015 is very simple, but as the year progresses approaching the actual birthday in 2016, we would like to highlight things going on in the school and this may include the inviting the media. Many community supporters have volunteered to serve on the Birthday Committee.
- **Reports:** (6:40pm – 7:00pm)
 - Report of the Board of Trustees Chair:
Before Vice
Chairperson Merryman went into the Chairperson report she read a thank you note from Marie Lynch, outgoing Chair of the Board. She expressed her pride in the school and the work of the Board and wished the new Board continued success.
 - Update re: Board Training
 - Vice
 - Chairperson Merryman reviewed the two proposals we have received for the future Board training. The Board asked each trainer who responded with a proposal for further clarification and only one responded, Maureen Cotter. She answered all the Board's concerns. After discussion, the Board approved Ms. Cotter's proposal. Assistant Director Wu stated that we would prepare a purchase order, so that Ms. Cotter can be paid. Ms. Merryman will notify Maureen Cotter of the Board's decision.
 - Update re: Board Member Recruitment
 - We have two nominees that were submitted to the Board of Education for Board appointment. They have been appointed. They are Nora Meah a new applicant to the Board and Amanda Montgomery as the chairperson of the Board. There is still one vacancy left on the Board.
 - Reports of the Director and Assistant Director of Finance: (7:00pm- 7:20pm)
 - Update re: School Activities

- Director Maguire Heath stated that December is a short month but the school has been a busy place. Some of our students competed in the Gallaudet University Northeast High Schools Academic Bowl. Our team came home with the Sportsmanship award. They all had great attitude and put the best effort into this Academic Bowl.
- The senior class continues with their fundraisers. They were hoping to go to Paris for their Senior Trip, but they changed their minds and now will be going to Canada for four days.
- Director Maguire Heath also stated that the elementary students will be competing in the Marie Jean Phillip ASL Poetry contest. This national ASL competition highlights poetry, storytelling and Deaf Art. This Competition is held annually in Boston and many schools travel from long distances to compete.
- Two seniors will attend Close-Up in DC this year. They have been running many fundraisers for this event. Our social studies teacher will be accompanying them again this year.
- The elementary students are planning an overnight trip in the spring to the Boston Museum of Science, and they will also be having fundraisers to defray the costs to families. . The cost is about \$65 to \$75 per student. The children are really excited about going. The Museum will supply ASL interpreters.
- Other school activities are listed in your Board packets.
- Outreach has started to grow. When a district asks for support with a student, RISD sends out a multi-disciplinary team rather than one person to assess the student. Our first observation/visit is free and once a service plan is developed, then we charge a contracted hourly rate. Districts have responded well to the team approach.
- Update: PARCC
 - Director Maguire Heath passed out information to the Board on PARCC. This information was intended to answer questions the Board may have regarding PARCC. Director Maguire Heath also stated that a lot of appropriate accommodations are available that were not available before. The Board did have questions, which Director Maguire Heath answered. Students at RISD from both Rhode Island and Massachusetts will be taking this. This first year will likely be a good learning experience for everyone involved. The school is aware that these tests will be very challenging for our students. The close reading that is required will be a barrier to some of our students.
- ASL Proficiency

- Director Maguire Heath verified that a letter had been given to all teachers reviewing the ASL proficiency required by the Transformation Plan. The teachers have until August 2015 to demonstrate ADVANCED level, as demonstrated on the ASLPI. If they do not reach the target achievement level they will be recommended for termination. We have offered free ASL classes for the teachers as well as numerous workshops and classroom modeling on ASL Literacy. Some teachers may have taken classes on their own. Board member Jon Henner asked for clarification as to the various levels of achievement and the exact nature of the classes that were paid for by RISD. The achievement levels range from Below Survival, to Superior Plus. Advanced is the first instructional level. Assistant Chairperson Merrymen asked a three year block of time to get all our teachers a chance to practice and really focus on developing instructional and content level skills. This is imperative to meet the needs of all of our students as we deliver the Common Core, a more complex set of Standards.
-
- Update re: Budget/Finance
 - Budget for FY 2015 and FY 2016 – Assistant Director Wu stated that since Gina Raimondo was sworn in as governor just today, it is understandable that we have not heard anything from the Budget Office. Assistant Director Wu stated she will have more information at the February meeting.
 - Safety for Bus Transportation

Assistant Director Wu offered an updated draft of a letter from the Board to the Budget Office regarding the Board’s concern about the appropriate nature and safety of the 15 passenger vans. Joe Fischgrund stated that he did not feel the letter was strong enough. He would like to see the letter state the Board’s concerns more directly. Sara Rapport, the school attorney, reviewed the federal law related to these vans. Assistant Director Wu explained that vans are essential to our programming, if we took these vans off the road now with no replacements our students would not be able to attend activities after school and this would violate their rights. After lengthy discussion, letter was approved by consensus.
- Executive Session: (8:30pm – 9:09pm)
- Report of the Board of Trustees Policy Committee:
 - 3rd Reading: Med Delegation on Field Trips
 - The 3rd Reading of Med Delegation on Field Trips was tabled. Jon Henner had some feedback and was told he could send it to Director Maguire Heath.

- **Adjournment by consensus at 9:09pm**