

**Paul Cuffee School**

**Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting**

**November 20, 2008**

**A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Paul Cuffee School was held on November 20, 2008 at the Paul Cuffee Lower School in Providence, Rhode Island.**

**Present: Kathleen Alvarez, Luz Avila, David Burnham, Russell Carey, William Clifton, Sr., Elizabeth Colon, Joan Canady Countryman, Stefano Crema, Philip Gould, Barrett Hazeltine, Keith Mathews, Robin Y. Miles, Martha Newcomb, Esq., Carolyn Pemberton, Sarah Reis, Babak Taleghani.**

**Excused: Su Almeida, Jon Bennett, Maria Monteiro, Joop Nagtegaal, Fraser Preston, Ana Cecilia Rosada.**

**Paul Cuffee Staff Present: David Bourns, Jonathan Conklin, Nina Giannotti, Paul Graseck, Julia Karahalidis, Nell Sears, Suzie Shaw.**

**Guests: Sara Donaldson, Olinda Matos, Jim Vandermillen.**

**The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Vice President Keith Mathews, stepping in for President Joop Nagtegaal who was traveling. Keith welcomed all to the November meeting of the board**

and introduced the guests in attendance. Keith asked Dave Burnham to begin the meeting with a reading. Dave noted that 2009 will mark the 250th anniversary of Paul Cuffee's birth and read a passage from a book of his writings. Martha Newcomb noted that Paul Cuffee was the first African-American to visit the White House as a guest through the front door and the connection in history to the recent historic election of President-elect Barack Obama. Keith thanked Dave for the reading.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the September 18, 2008 meeting of the Board were approved unanimously. The motion to approve was made by Martha Newcomb and seconded by Dave Burnham.

### **Committee Assignments**

Keith reviewed the listing of committee assignments which had been distributed in advance of the meeting. Minor corrections were noted to Nina and there were no questions.

### **Head of School's November Report**

David Bourns began his report with an overview of the State of Rhode Island budgetary situation and its impact on education generally and planning for the Paul Cuffee High School in particular. Recently David

received an e-mail notification from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) indicating that the Commissioner would not support an expansion of enrollment at Paul Cuffee School, required to expand into the high school grades, nor a waiver of the statutory provisions regarding housing aid reimbursements due to the state's financial position. The board discussed this development and the consequences for the School, especially the desire to maintain the momentum which has been realized regarding planning for the High School and the goal of opening a high school in 2010, if it is not feasible to do so in 2009 as had been originally hoped. Following discussion the Board agreed to take the following steps:

- Draft a letter from Joop, on behalf of the Board, to the Commissioner describing the Board's position and views and seeking a meeting for further discussion of potential options;
- Seek meetings with other officials as appropriate and necessary;
- Direct the Head of School to communicate appropriately to students, parents, and families regarding plans for the high school as soon as possible'
- Consider opportunities to engage parents and families and friends in support of the high school planning effort during this challenging period.

Joan, Dave and Russell agreed to help David Bourns and Joop in the drafting of such a letter to the Commissioner.

## **Standards Based Report Cards**

**Keith introduced the presentation by Sara Donaldson, Science Curriculum Consultant at the School, regarding Standards Based Report Cards and the manner in which they are used at Paul Cuffee School. The key to this grading system is assessment based on clearly defined standards and measures which communicate to students and families the level of understanding achieved and detailed feedback about progress made during the marking period. Sara provided an overview of the differences in practices and benefits between traditional and standards based grade books and noted that the standard based grades used at Paul Cuffee School (1, 2, 3, 4 with each numeral signifying a level of achieved proficiency) are the same as those used to measure the NECAP tests. She reviewed what each grading numeral means and noted that 3 is the goal for all children in each assessment category by the end of each grade level. There were questions and discussion, and Keith thanked Sara for the excellent presentation.**

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Nominating Committee**

**Joan Countryman delivered the report of the Nominating Committee. She referred the Board to the Conflict of Interest Policy and forms**

**which had been distributed in advance of the meeting and asked that all members complete and sign their forms and return them to Nina. She reviewed the board assessment and evaluation discussions the Committee is having, and also requested suggestions from the Board of names of potential new Board members.**

## **Finance Committee**

**Babak Taleghani delivered the report of the Finance Committee. The committee met with the school's external auditors who reported being very pleased with the business operations at the school. He reviewed the discussion the committee had had of the utility of establishing replacement reserve funds for the lower school building and debt service reserves. Following discussion, it was moved by Judge Clifton that:**

**The recommendation of the Finance Committee that Paul Cuffee School establish a Capital Reserve – Replacement portion of the Board Designated Reserve be endorsed and approved, and that \$400,000 be transferred thereto from operating funds.**

**Liz Colon seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously by the Board.**

**Carolyn Pemberton moved that:**

**The recommendation of the Finance Committee that Paul Cuffee School establish a Debt Service portion of the Board Designated Reserve be endorsed and approved, and that \$400,000 be transferred thereto from operating funds.**

**Joan Countryman seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously by the Board.**

**Jon Conklin provided the Board with an overview of the 2008 – 2009 operating budget of the school, which had been distributed to the Board at the September meeting. Following discussion, Martha Newcomb moved that:**

**The 2008 – 2009 operating budget of Paul Cuffee School, as recommended by the Finance Committee, be endorsed and approved.**

**Judge Clifton seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously by the Board.**

**Babak and Jon Conklin explained the need for the School to establish a qualified plan document for the TIAA CREF 403(b) group annuity retirement that the school offers to employees who are not eligible to participate in the Employees' Retirement System of Rhode Island. New IRS regulations require such a document to be in place and submitted to the IRS for qualification by January 1, 2009. Following discussion, Judge Clifton moved that:**

**The recommendation of the Finance Committee that the Secretary's Certificate and related Exhibit A be approved and that Jonathan Conklin and Babak Taleghani, acting individually or jointly, be authorized to execute documentation necessary to effectuate installation of the 403(b) plan by January 1, 2009, be endorsed and approved.**

**Joan Countryman seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously by the Board.**

**Babak concluded the report of the Finance Committee by briefly reviewing the status of potential property acquisitions under consideration.**

### **Institutional Advancement**

**Dave Burnham delivered the report of the Institutional Advancement Committee and reviewed the activities of the Committee since the last Board meeting. He recounted recent good news with regard to grants received as well as guests who have visited the School and encouraged all members of the Board to bring visitors to the School. Julia reported on the Craft Bazaar which will be held at the Middle School this coming weekend as well as the event planned for the spring to benefit the Wiggins Collection on the Library which will**

**feature acclaimed author and Brown University professor John Edgar Wideman. Dave and Julia reminded the Board of the importance of supporting the Annual Fund and achieving the goal of \$175,000 which had been approved by the Board at the September meeting.**

## **Board Retreat Report**

**David Bourns summarized the discussion and feedback from the October 18 Board Retreat on the topics of the high school location, sustainability of the School, and Board assessment and evaluation. He and Keith thanked members of the Board for attending the Retreat and fully engaging in the discussion.**

## **New Business**

**No new business was brought before the Board. The next meeting of the Board will be held on January 15, 2009.**

## **Adjournment**

**Babak Taleghani moved to adjourn. Martha Newcomb seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Russell C. Carey, Clerk**