

## **Paul Cuffee School**

### **Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting**

**May 14, 2009**

**A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Paul Cuffee School was held on May 14, 2009 at the Paul Cuffee Lower School in Providence, Rhode Island.**

**Present: Kathleen Alvarez, David Burnham, Russell Carey, Elizabeth Colon, Joan Canady Countryman, Stefano Crema, Philip Gould, Barrett Hazeltine, Maria Monteiro, Joop Nagtegaal, Martha Newcomb, Esq., Ana Cecilia Rosado, Sarah Reis, Babak Taleghani.**

**Excused: Su Almeida, Luz Avila, Jon Bennett, William Clifton, Sr., Keith Mathews, Robin Y. Miles, Carolyn Pemberton.**

**Paul Cuffee Staff Present: David Bourns, Michelle Bush, Jonathan Conklin, Nina Giannotti, Julia Karahalis.**

**Guests: Michelle Cortes-Harkins, Stan Cobb.**

**The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by President Joop Nagtegaal and began with a moment of silence. Joop welcomed Michelle Cortes-Harkins, who will be joining the board in the coming year. He also welcomed Michelle Bush, interim academic head of the middle school, and Stan Cobb, university relations navigator for the**

**school and founding head of the marine biology department at the University of Rhode Island.**

**Joop commented briefly on events and developments affecting education outside of the school, including the challenging budget situation in the State of Rhode Island. He noted the good news that unlike in some other states there is no effort in Rhode Island to single out charter schools for cuts, and he reviewed a number of threats to charter school funding in other states. Joop concluded his remarks by noting that it remains important to maintain close and positive working relations with leaders in the legislature and education at the city and state levels.**

### **Approval of Minutes**

**The minutes of the March 19, 2009 meeting of the Board were approved unanimously. The motion to approve was made by Dave Burnham and seconded by Babak Taleghani.**

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

**David Bourns referred to his written report, circulated to the Board in advance, and asked if there were any questions. There was discussion of placement of eighth grade students in high schools, and approximately a dozen students have been admitted to Classical for the fall. There were questions and answers regarding the lottery**

**process, which was an open lottery for the second year pursuant to the guidance of the Rhode Island Department of Education, and David noted that the results continued to reflect the diversity of the city. It was also noted that the middle school will be staging a performance of The Odyssey on May 29.**

### **Report on URI – PCS Plans**

**Joop introduced Stan Cobb to present a report on the partnership activities between the School and the University of Rhode Island. Dr. Cobb reviewed the origins of the partnership, the current activities and advantages to both the School and URI, and presented a look ahead.**

**The partnership centers around the maritime theme and began with a URI undergraduate working with Paul Cuffee students. Today a number of URI students are involved with Paul Cuffee School classes, several of them around the codfish unit which studies the biology of codfish through dissection, ecology, and fishing patterns. There is a tremendous amount of interest among URI students to work with Paul Cuffee students. Dr. Cobb spoke about exploring the lobster life cycle with second graders at the lower school, and celebrating Darwin's 200th Birthday with a focus on adaption and evolution. Students also participated in a shoreline exploration of Narragansett Bay aboard URI's expedition trawler the Cap'n Bert.**

**Dr. Cobb worked with Paul Graseck to draft a model tenth grade biology curriculum with a maritime focus which meets all Rhode Island standards. He noted that three URI students interned at Paul Cuffee School last year and URI students in the marine program are getting valuable experience in teaching. Dr. Cobb has taken on the role of university relations navigator for the school and he reviewed a number of program-building activities he and colleagues are involved in, including the EPsCoR program which provides funds for scientific research infrastructure in Rhode Island and a National Science Foundation proposal for experiential learning and research. The partnership has clear benefits for both Paul Cuffee School and URI.**

**Looking ahead, Dr. Cobb said that the focus will be on sustainability and continuing to build partnerships that can be very useful. He noted the opportunity presented by leveraging the School's maritime theme to address science, engineering, technology and math disciplines and the strong support at URI for being involved in these efforts. There was question and discussion, and Dr. Cobb's leadership and devotion of time and energy to this effort was especially noted and lauded. Joop expressed the Board's gratitude for Dr. Cobb's excellent presentation and his dedication and contributions to Paul Cuffee School.**

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Nominating Committee**

**Joan Countryman delivered the report of the Nominating Committee. She began by reviewing a recommendation from the Nominating Committee that the process by which members of the Paul Cuffee School Board are elected be revised. The process since the founding of the School has been for the Nominating Committee of the Board to recommend candidates for Board members and officers to the Sailing Institute and for the Board of the Sailing Institute to then elect those individuals to the Board of the School. The Nominating Committee feels, and the Rhode Island Department of Education concurs, that this two-step process is no longer necessary. The recommendation is that the Nominating Committee be authorized to recommend candidates for vacant positions directly to the Board of the School, and the Board be responsible for electing individuals to these positions. The members of the Committee believe that this will be a more effective and efficient process for all involved parties. Such a change requires the written consent of the Board of the Sailing Institute and approval of the Board of the School of revisions to the School By-laws. The By-Laws Committee will take up this work over the next several weeks with the goal of presenting a proposal for consideration by the Board at the June 18 Annual Meeting.**

**Joan also reviewed the responses to the Board Evaluation Survey and distributed a summary of the results. She noted that the Committee plans to draft an orientation and ongoing education program for Board members and she also asked for suggestions for**

**names of potential candidates for the Board.**

## **Human Resources**

**Jon Conklin delivered the report of the Human Resources Committee in the absence of Carolyn Pemberton. Matters reflected in the Committee's written report were briefly reviewed, including the project to review, update, and publish on-line the School's Human Resources Policy Manual and the EEO Plan.**

## **Strategic Planning Committee**

**David Bourns delivered the report of the Strategic Planning Committee. There was discussion of the process and progress of locating a potential site for the high school and also the status of potential acquisition of the Living Room property and what might be done with that land if acquisition is successful. The Plant & Property Committee is in the process of being re-activated and will be charged to focus on these issues.**

## **Finance Committee**

**Babak Taleghani delivered the report of the Finance Committee. He reviewed the current year budget projections and issues related to funding the committee is tracking. Babak then moved that, as recommended by the Committee, the Board approve the expenditure**

**of up to \$25,000 of Capital Reserve – Expansion Board Designated Reserves for site evaluation of the Living Room property. The motion was seconded by Phil Gould and passed unanimously.**

**Babak reviewed an issue related to the short term credit rating of Citizen’s Bank and the possible limited impact on the School. There was discussion of the process of budgetary projections for next year and David Bourns described the discussions and consultations taking place with teachers regarding possible contingencies if revenues are less than expected due to the state’s financial situation.**

### **Other Business**

**Joop reminded members of the Board of the importance of the Annual Fund and 100% participation by the Board, no matter at what level of individual contribution, in annual giving. There was no other business brought before the Board.**

### **Adjournment**

**Barrett Hazeltine moved to adjourn. Babak Taleghani seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Russell C. Carey, Clerk**