

Met Board of Trustees
May 15, 2014
E-Center Conference Room
Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical Center

Present: Omar Ajaj, Herb Cummings, Stanley Goldstein, Lela Morgan, Keith Oliveira, Nancy Diaz Bain, Dennis Littky, Lucas Lussier, Kas DeCarvalho, Rob Gallo, Charles Walton

Meeting called to order at 8:14 by Chairman Stan Goldstein.

Stan requested that in the future all minutes should be sent out prior to the meeting in order to study them at leisure and be ready to approve them at the meeting. He suggested the board approve February's now, and any subsequent corrections can be sent to Nancy. Motion approved.

Lucas presented the budget information for the remainder of the 2013-14 year and the results of this quarter. Revenues were reported to the end of the 3rd quarter, March 31st, both actual and adjusted.

Herb pointed out the significant variance regarding the lunch information and reminded the board that this topic had been discussed before, but an issue still persists. Lucas responded that the Met implemented a system that now counts the actual number of meals served. Prior to this, lunch reimbursements were based on total student enrollment numbers. When the Met began tracking actual student participants, the numbers became significantly lower. There is a new direction for next year which will figure lunch totals based on the number of students already part of a 'community eligibility' program. The Met will automatically receive a lump sum no longer based upon counts. Next year the Met approximates that 70% of the student body will be receiving other entitlements. That number will be multiplied by 1.6 to give the new lunch revenue. At this time it remains unknown what that revenue will look like.

Herb asked if those changes would really impact the number of eligible students who choose to eat a school lunch. He asked if the board did not have a responsibility to see that students eat properly and healthily. Furthermore, since the Met controls only 'one square', as he stated it, the Met is missing the boat on this one, not doing their job to ensure a healthy choice for the student which is one of the board's objectives—seeing that kids are getting what they need. Dennis stated that Herb's point was well taken, but that it was difficult to reorient thinking around this, especially for teenagers. Herb reiterated that as an educational institution, the Met needs to teach healthy lifestyles.

Nancy informed the board that the Met social workers do teach healthy lifestyles, but Herb observed that in this case it's not working. Lucas reminded everyone that the Met was focused on this issue and had created a very healthy in-house option that offered students much healthier and more diverse lunches than the average school lunch program. After a short discussion, Kas stated that the Met has made a lot of progress and needed to make it a point to use only the best practices now and in the future. However, he suggested this might not be in the top 3 things of what to focus on for everyday

experiences for student success. Dennis concurred and Stan asked that the board return to the budget at hand.

Lucas returned to the budget review stating that the Met has a new telephone provider. The previous provider wasn't providing Internet service, which led to some overlapping bills. The Met is contesting the amount paid to the prior vendor. Herb asked if there were any cutting-edge services the Met could implement that would save costs: electricity service providers, for example, or installation of a sprinkler system instead of watering, to save money. Lucas reminded the board that there are a few solar panels on Unity, more will be installed at East Bay, and the Met continues to explore alternate sources of energy in conjunction with RIDE. Lucas also explained that the solar panels don't provide a lot of kilowatts, although his team has investigated solar and wind options and will continue to do so.

Lucas returned to the fiscal accounts which showed 3.6 million in the bank with investments totaling just over 4 million. There was 7.6 million on hand. Stanley stated that there must be a much higher interest vehicle. Lucas acknowledged that the board has mentioned this previously, but the money the Met receives is state aid-- money that can't be invested with the same rate of return as private money. However, Lucas will be meeting with the state comptroller's office to see what other options exist. Stanley suggested that instead of waiting until next fall, Lucas and Herb decide something that would result in a higher percentage yield. Dennis agreed that it's important to do it as quickly as possible.

Lucas continued with the budget showing an anticipated 1.5 million surplus for end of year, which is in addition to the 7.6 million and cash on hand. Lucas stated that he will redisplay this information for next board meeting [Action Item]. Herb suggested that when the boundaries are established, a couple of investment people, even volunteers, could help the Met with the bottom line. In response, Dennis suggested talking with Francie Heller, an investment banker on the BP Board. Stan asked if the committee could simply be Lucas and Herb and asked them to make an investment decision. [action item]

Lucas distributed the CHIPS NE Collaborative for High Performance Schools. He explained that it is a policy the Met would like to ask the board to adopt. It's been adopted by the state Department of Education. When schools implement upgrades and new constructions, they must address certain things about the environment, students and staff. For any construction or upgrade the Met has to comply with these standards and work closely with RIDE in the process. One requirement is that the Met have a policy such as this one that recognizes what the board and the Met will do and that the board adopt it. Stan made a motion for approval. All in favor; motion carried.

Lucas introduced the topic of Employment. The board, in prior meetings heard information on three employment matters. Update: there have been no appeals on any of those actions. Two of the three have acknowledged they are leaving the Met. The third's counsel has responded to the Met that they are foregoing the appeal.

Regarding the upcoming audit, Lucas explained that historically the Met has had a financial audit every year for the past 18 years. The Met used one particular firm until a 2008-09 investigation by the U.S. Department of Education revealed that some monies were defrauded from the Met. Because of the

investigation, auditors could not perform the usual audit until the investigation was complete. The audit was delayed one year and since then The Met has been one year behind, unable to catch up. Recently, at the beginning of this year, the Met sought additional services and a new auditor because of the inability to catch up. Lucas received a call from the state regarding an edit to an accounting standard that required the state to look at component items as part of the audit. The state now has to manage the Met's audit. The Met gets to select the auditor, but all reports go to the state and are uploaded to the state's complete audit report. In late October that was the process the Met was told to follow. The state will come in to bring the Met up to current by June 30th.

Lucas introduced the Health topic and reminded the board that the Met had been looking at health benefits. Under the Affordable Healthcare Act, there will be changes. The Met will have to cover any people who work over 30 hours per week. Right now the Met covers anyone who works over 35 hours per week. The cost to the Met to cover anyone working over 30 hours would be from 47K to 122K based on whether the plans are individual or full family plan choices. There are seven people at the Met who work under 30 hours. These individuals would go through the Exchange to purchase that benefit. If the Met takes them on it would cost between 40-105K. The Met's broker has mentioned that these employees can have individual meetings with the broker and the Met to see what they would receive through the Exchange and what the Met could provide. The Met would be subsidizing a portion of their plan, making sure everyone at the Met is provided health coverage but at the same time trying to be mindful of future expenses. Dennis asked the board if they felt this was a fair decision, and there was general agreement.

Dennis addressed the House Bill that the Met is currently actively supporting. He explained that the Met is fighting the current funding formula that gives every school the same amount of money. He continued saying the Met's research has shown that over 30 states currently give more money to Tech schools. The Met pushed to get a bill into the legislature that would give the Met and Davies 33% more. It is expected to be a close vote decision.

Nancy added that the Met is working on an advocacy plan that has parents, staff and student mentors writing letters to their legislators regarding the Bill. Lucas added the legislators have also been invited to campus. The fact that the Bill has gotten to the House and Senate is great, since it has never gotten that far before. Through discussions with the legislators, the Met has gotten better know. Kas observed that the Met can't stop having those kinds of conversations—they can only help. Nancy added that she would send the advocacy letters to the board members for them to send to their legislators. [Action Item].

Dennis asked the board to look at the Report Card in their folders. The first page of the data shows people criticizing the Met for math scores, but compared to other Providence schools the Met is high achieving. On the next page the state puts out student success questions; the Met scores high on every question and has for the past 10 years. No other school comes close to the Met's results. Dennis explained that although these results have nothing to do with the "tests", this information reflects why people come to the Met—because the Met engages people. He went on to explain that data shows that the Met prepares students for college in a way that surpasses other school and that parent involvement

is over to top. The Met is doing a good job and this data reflects that. Nancy pointed out that the next paper in the folder shows the colleges Met students have been accepted to this year.

Students then arrived to share their Met stories and experiences, followed by the distribution of invitations to the June 12th Met Graduation ceremony taking place at PPAC. In closing, Dennis thanked the board for the time they invest in supporting the school and asked the board to look at the various PR articles in the folders pertaining to the Met including one student who broke a Guinness World Record and fed over 1000 people.

Meeting adjourned 10:10 AM.