



**OnTECH Charter High School  
Minutes for January 30, 2017 Board Meeting**

The Meeting was held at: 312 Sedgwick Drive, Syracuse, N.Y. 13203

**Present:**

Ellen Eagen, Founder & President  
Stephen Kimatian, Secretary Treasurer  
Robert Gardino, Trustee  
Victoria Giarratano, Trustee  
Bill Sanford, Trustee  
John Stegeman, Trustee  
Edward McLaughlin, Foundation Representative  
Francis Coudriet, Administration

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 PM

**1. WELCOME**

The meeting was chaired by Trustee Stephen Kimatian. Founder and President, Ms. Ellen Eagen welcomed all to the meeting. Ms. Eagen proposed that item 3. FILING OF INITIAL DOCUMENTS of this meeting's agenda be placed as a subset of item 6. FINANCIAL. There was unanimous approval for the change.

**2. APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES**

Prior to the instant meeting, minutes of the December 21, 2016 meeting had been distributed to the Trustees. Additional copies were made available at the meeting. The Chair asked for any additions, corrections or modifications. Hearing none, the Chair accepted the Minutes as presented.

**3. FACILITIES REPORT**

Ms. Eagen stated that the discussions with respect development of the school on the site of the property at 484 West Onondaga Street, known as the Onondaga Commons, were proceeding expeditiously. She also said she and Mr. Kimatian participated in a tour arranged by King + King Architects of the Pine Grove Middle School of the East Minoa School District which had recently been renovated to accommodate the latest thinking in building configuration for learning environments. King + King, who have expertise in school construction, are taking into account the necessary Department of Education building requirements.

Mr. Kimatian discussed steps being taken by the Brine Wells Development Company with



respect to Onondaga Commons. Among steps taken were:

1. King + King was authorized to proceed with the first phase services.
2. EDR Landscape Architecture was retained to develop site design.
3. A Community Stakeholders meeting was arranged to inform the neighborhood of the progress.
4. It was anticipated that regular meetings would be scheduled in which representatives of OnTECH could participate.
5. OnTECH financials had been provided to Brine Wells and they were drawing up a lease agreement for review by the OnTECH Board.

Mr. Gardino asked about the timing of the neighborhood meetings of the Community Stakeholders. Ms. Eagen said that information would be forthcoming.

Foundation Representative Edward McLaughlin asked whether environmental issues had been considered concerning the Onondaga Commons property and whether there could be any roadblocks. Ms. Eagen stated that the developers were aware of that requirement and that fortunately the particular site had been reviewed by the city and county and is used for rainwater collection, so there is a good likelihood that the area had been given a clean bill with respect to environment.

Mr. Kimatian also reported that he visited another alternative site should Onondaga Commons meet any insurmountable hurdles for development. This property was previously the studios for WTVH Television, which had now been purchased by an owner for commercial development. Another property for consideration is the Coyne Building, which is located on South Salina Street. Both these properties will be held for consideration should Onondaga Commons pose an issue.

Ms. Eagen then said a Letter of Intent (LOI) with respect to the construction and renovation of the building had been sent to the Department of Education in order to obtain the project manager. She passed around a copy of the Letter of Intent for review, a copy of which has been attached to these minutes. Mr. Sanford asked about the density of the traffic in the area, to which there was a brief discussion of the access of the site from different areas of the city.

Ms. Eagen then explained the Visioning Document that the architects were using to get input from the Board on their thinking with respect to the construction materials and configuration needs of the school. The visioning document form will be placed on Google Docs for anyone to view as well as a copy being sent to the Board members. The Board Members were asked to add to the comments on the document as they saw fit.



#### **4. SCHOOL YEAR CONSIDERATIONS**

The Board then considered, given the projected time needed to construct and renovate the building what the best timing for school opening would be most effective. Ms. Eagen explained why a successful opening to the school was essential to insuring success in enrollment and in meeting the accountability standards of the Department of Education. She also said in conversations with the Department of Education, the Charter School Office said they were very enthused by the scope of the OnTECH project and wanted to maximize the possibilities for success and were amenable to having an opening date scheduled that would achieve the optimum opportunity for success. The various permutations of when OnTECH could schedule opening were discussed; Trustees discussed a soft opening prior to September 2017. Ms. Eagen discussed having a classroom model open to students and parents for touring and using building during the summer for professional development.

Trustee John Stegeman asked whether there were other properties on the Onondaga Commons Campus that would be affected by the construction of the school. In fact, Ms. Eagen explained that she understood the Onondaga Community College “Work Train” project would be moving to a next-door building. Mr. Gardino asked whether the building to be used by OnTECH would only house OnTECH. Ms. Eagen replied that was the understanding although we would be open to shared space areas. Mr. Gardino asked whether there were downsides to moving the opening to August 2018. Ms. Eagen said it could be considered a downside that the Science Academy would be opening in September 2017 and that their operations might draw students that might attend OnTECH. However, given the different missions of the schools, it seemed that this would not be a significant issue. Mr. Francis Coudriet mentioned that another downside consideration is that there was a high profile of refugee needs at the moment that could be beneficial to OnTECH recruitment, which might diminish over the year. Ms. Giarratano mentioned that securing the \$800,000 from the Charter School Planning Grant might be difficult to conclude within a time frame of just few months and that additional time would probably be necessary to obtain that funding which would be useful toward the opening.

Developer, Brine Wells, reported to Ms. Eagen, that after reviewing the necessary permitting requirements and zoning changes, that it would be a premium cost to complete the project for a September 2017 school opening. Taking into account, the needs explained by Brine Wells Developers and those of the Board in discussion of the matter, Ms. Eagen recommended scheduling an opening for August of 2018.

The Chair entertained a MOTION to move the start of the OnTECH school year from September 2017 to August 2018. A MOTION to that effect was made by Mr. Stegeman and seconded by Robert Gardino. Hearing no further discussion on the matter the Chair called the question and the MOTION was voted upon and passed unanimously.

Ms. Eagen stated that a resolution was needed to be adopted by the Board and submitted to the



Charter School Office to formally request the scheduled opening date moved to August 2018 from September 2017. She said that would be discussed at the next Board meeting.

Trustee Bill Sanford proposed that milestones be set for the critical dates leading up to the launch of the school opening. It was agreed that was a good idea and that the Chair would accomplish such timetable for presentation.

Ms. Eagen stated that an MOU of the relationship between OnTECH with the Developer, Brine Wells, and owner, Martin Yenawine was being drafted by the Developer and would be presented to the Board for review.

## **5. FINANCIAL/FILING OF INITIAL GRANT APPLICATION**

Ms. Eagen raised the matter of securing the Charter School Program and Planning Grant (CSP). The entitlement for this federal grant administered through the State was an amount of \$800,000. In order to obtain the necessary approvals for payment of the moneys to OnTECH required an application process that was somewhat complex. The President had requested two quotes from knowledgeable firms who are agents of charter schools for the application of such grants. One firm is called Charter School Budget Management (CSBM) and the other is called BoostED. In each case the quote was solicited for the application of the grant monies with the management of the applications materials continuing through the duration of the grant, which is 18 months. After discussing the pros and cons of each company, the Board decided to empower the President to employ the firm most favorable in her opinion with the cost being no more that \$10,000 in total for the application and administration. Toward that end, a MOTION was made by Mr. Gardino and seconded by Mr. Stegeman authorizing the President to retain one of the firms discussed at a cost no more that \$10,000. The question was called by the Chair upon which the MOTION was voted upon and unanimously approved by the Board.

## **6. CURRICULUM**

Ms. Eagen spoke about resumes that she has been receiving for teaching positions. She discussed a candidate, Ahmad Duwaik, to fill the position of the founding principal for the planning year and proposed that the Board speak to Mr. Duwaik at the next board meeting, after reviewing his resume. Mr. Duwaik is currently a math teacher at the Bronx Guild School, and he is assisted

Ms. Eagen in creating the curriculum for the application. He has a background in finances, education and the law. The Board agreed that the Board would vet at the next meeting and that in the meantime Mr. Stegeman would reach out to continue the conversation with Mr. Duwaik.

Ms. Giarratano mentioned that she has ideas about considerations for staff and faculty that are connected with the Cornell Cooperative extension.



## **7. BOARD DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Eagen then stated that in order for the Board to be properly constituted, there needed to be an election of officers for the Board. The officers to be elected were, namely, President, Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer. Mr. Kimatian proposed that nominations be made to the floor for a slate of officers. He proposed that Ellen Eagen be nominated as President with the suggestion that he would accept the position of Secretary-Treasurer. A brief discussion ensued on the position of Vice-President. Trustee John Stegeman had worked over the last weeks with Ms. Eagen on curriculum and it was proposed by Mr. Kimatian that Mr. Stegeman be nominated as Vice-President. No other nominations were placed in contention. This being the slate, an invitation to place the slate formally in nomination was requested by the Chair. Trustee Gardino made a MOTION to affirm the slate as stated. There was a second by Mr. Stegeman. Discussion on the question was invited by the Chair. There being no further questions, a call for the vote was made with the slate as Eagen (President), Stegeman (Vice Chair) and Kimatian (Secretary/Treasurer) being unanimously elected by the Board.

In addition the Board discussed committee work. Ms. Eagen discussed that during the initial year it is important for all of the board members to be part of and apprised of all aspects of operations but that we would also work in committee, capitalizing on the expertise of the board members. Committees must recognize that all governance is pursuant to Open Meetings Law. The Bylaws recognize the standing committees.

Ms. Eagen stated that with the Board formally constituted she would initiate the insurance coverage of a Directors & Officers Policy. She then suggested it would be in the best interests of the Board to have consistent monthly meeting dates scheduled through the rest of the school year ending June 310, 2017. After some discussion of alternatives, the third Wednesday of each month might be the most workable starting at 4:30 or 5:00 PM, subject to changes that might be necessary to accommodate special situations. A communication to that effect will be sent to the Board designating the dates by Mr. Coudriet and posted to the public in accordance with Open Meeting Law.

Ms. Eagen brought to the Board's attention the recent Executive Order of President Trump concerning refugees. She stated it was important for OnTECH as an entity to stay apolitical. It was anticipated that refugees would comprise a significant percentage of the OnTECH student body. As such, OnTECH wants to be in a position of compliance with the laws and at the same time understanding for the concerns of refugees.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**



Board members reviewed their bios to be posted on the OnTECH website and discussed the use and purpose of business cards in order to enhance the profile of OnTECH in the community.

Mr. Stegeman and Mr. Coudriet discussed using the current political/social news trending in a meaningful way to promote OnTECH.

#### **9. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business brought before the Board, the Chairman stated the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Stephen Kimatian, Secretary-Treasurer