# OnTECH Charter High School Minutes for April 19, 2017 Board Meeting

The Meeting was held at: Northeast Hawley District Association, 101 Gertrude St., Syracuse NY

# Present:

Ellen Eagen, Founder & President Stephen Kimatian, Secretary Treasurer Robert Gardino, Trustee

Bill Sanford, Trustee John Stegeman, Trustee

Edward McLaughlin, Foundation Representative Francis Coudriet, Administration

Victoria Giarratano, Trustee - Excused

The meeting was called to order at 5:10 PM

# WELCOME

The meeting was chaired by Founder and President, Ms. Ellen Eagen. Ms. Eagen welcomed the Board members and also those community representatives present. All parties introduced themselves to each other. She thanked all of the communities members for attending and welcomed them to comment throughout the meeting.

Ms. Eagen reminded everyone they could keep up to date on the activities of OnTECH by going to the OnTECH website. She encouraged anyone who did go to the site to sign up so that they would receive notices of meetings and events.

Prior to any business, Ms. Eagen asked for a moment of silence in recognition of the untimely passing of Mr. Kevin Walker. She mentioned how Kevin had been a tremendously enthusiastic supporter of OnTECH and that many of corporate relationships and memorandae of understanding were a direct result of his initiative. She also stated that she knows that OnTECH will continue to benefit from the work he did and the passion with which he fueled the mission of the school.

# APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

Prior to the instant meeting, minutes of the March 22, 2017 meeting had been distributed to the Trustees. Additional copies were made available at the meeting. The Chair asked for any additions, corrections or modifications. Mr. Gardino said that the minutes should be amended to include the statement he made during the construction presentation at the last meeting, that is, consideration should be given to a sign at the front construction entrance highlighting the school. A motion was made to accept the minutes as amended by Mr. Gardino and seconded by Mr. Sanford. There being no further discussion the motion was put to the vote and passed unanimously.

# PRESIDENT’S REPORT

The President reported on progress of securing a Directors & Omissions policy to cover the Board activities. One quote had been obtained. Mr. McLaughlin asked whether there would be other quotes. Ms. Eagen said that OnTECH was expecting to receive another quote. The matter would be voted upon at the next meeting.

Ms. Eagen brought up the need to expand the Board. Mr. Sanford asked about the criteria and how it would be done. Ms. Eagen replied that generally a good time to add members would be over the summer. The Board would look for individuals from the community who would have complementary expertise to the current Board. She felt an initial target of nine individuals would be appropriate. The Board would consider and post a process that would allow members of the community who were interested in being involved to apply and interview with the Board. She stated that she was delighted to received some inquiries.

Ms. Eagen then spoke to the Board about the schedule for OnTECH over the next 18 months in terms of milestones. She said the person the Board had met via a teleconference at a prior meeting, Ahmad Duwaik, who has been engaged as approved by the Board to work out a timeline of events for OnTECH leading up to a summer of 2018 opening.

Mr. Stegeman reported that in reviewing the timeline, it presented itself as a rather dense document and felt that breaking it out into 3 month chunks would made it more readily understandable. He and Mr. Gardino and Ms. Girratanno met to jointly discuss a meaningful outline.

Both the dense timeline (that includes the Charter School Office requirements) and the more simplified timeline will be put in the shared google docs folder for the Board to review.

Ms. Eagen noted that the density of the timeline is illustrative of the numerous accountability requirements in running a charter school.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Kimatian reported that the applications for establishing the financial relationships with the State of New York and federal government were moving forward timely. The firm authorized by the Board, Charter School Budget Management (“CSBM”), was in the midst of preparing the application in collaboration with the President and himself. Mr. Kimatian explained that they were interfacing with the software applications that govern the uploading of the information to the Grant Gateway and Sam.gov sites, but to make it more expedient and to save some of the costs, we were undertaking to provide CSBM with certain documents and responses to questions that we were able to produce which they are incorporating into the application submissions

# FACILITIES REPORT

Next, Ms. Eagen reported on the facility progress. She said that King + King Architects had been finalizing the draft of the design of the facility interior and exterior and in the next month the design would be handed off to the developer for obtaining an estimate of the overall costs. The renderings presented in prior meetings to the Board are the documents that will be used to get estimates for the renovations. Ms. Eagen specifically pointed out that the brick being considered for the exterior was intended to mimic the exterior of the original structure since that brick had become unusable as a surface exterior as it had deteriorated to the point of not being economically feasible to be restored. There was also a consideration of providing as much natural light as possible to enhance the educational environment.

Another consideration that the Board will have to make as the project progresses is the design and construction of a greenhouse. Since a considerable amount of glass is planned to be used in building a greenhouse and in other areas of the facility, the opportunity to obtain economic support from glass manufacturers was brought up by Mr. Kimatian. He suggested Corning as a company that should be approached. Mr. Sanford suggested that at Corning OnTECH approach corporate officer Ken Schmidt. Mr. McLaughlin suggested OnTECH approach John Dwyer of Syracuse Glass who is a Corcoran High School graduate. Mr. Kimatian agreed that we would evaluate the extent Board members have relationships with Corning or other companies and select the best individual to approach to make the presentation.

On other areas of the facility discussion, Ms. Eagen stated that King + King Architects will investigate the possibility of using wind power for a source of energy. A consultant has been working on what a hydroponic lab would look like; while the consultant could not be present at this meeting, we hope he could attend a future meeting. Ms. Eagen reached back to President Rogers of Morrisville State College with whom OnTECH has a MOU to arrange a tour of the college’s hydroponic and aeroponic labs. Mr. Sanford said he knew Mr. Rogers and would also reach out to request the visit.

Mr. Sanford stated that the General Electric company at one point had a huge hydroponic presence on Electronics Parkway in Liverpool. Apparently, GE is still looking to develop hydroponic growing as a commercial venture. All agreed it would be a good idea to reach out to them.

Ms. Eagen said she and Mr. Kimatian had visited two school sites in the area with King+King Architects as an example of how their instructional space was utilized. One was the charter school which is a part of the Lafayette School District and operates under the Big Picture Charter School consortium and the other a charter school which is a part of the BOCES operations in Liverpool.

# COMMUNITY MEMBERS DISCUSSION

The President then turned her attention to the community members present and asked for their comments on the Board discussions of the evening. Mr. Ralph Singh said he appreciated the opportunity to be present. He had devoted much of his work to teaching cross cultural understanding to students through common stories connected to religious and secular lines. His goal was to help students find their own unique voice and felt that OnTECH’s mission fit the kind of goals of his organization. He particularly pointed out the possibilities between marrying multicultural and agricultural ideas.

Ms. Eskedar Getahun said she was interested in how the students could experience the benefit of developing a relationship with the Cornell Extension Cooperative of which she is a part. Tim Rudd, a Southside resident, said he is a farmer at heart and likes the idea of smaller schools focusing on certain segments of learning such as agriculture. He also mentioned that the Syracuse City School District has established specialty small schools within the larger school context of the District.

Ms. Morgan Boerman from Henderson, NY, having lived in Carroll County, Maryland, said she was very familiar with an agriculturally based education. She said she was intrigued by the concept of OnTECH and that’s why she attended the meeting. She has a Masters in agricultural education, is certified to teach agricultural education and also Special Education. She was a member of the FFA (“Future Farmers of America”) all during high school and a participant in the AFB (“American Farm Bureau”).

Ms. Eagen told all the individuals making comments that the OnTECH Board very much appreciated their interest. She said the expertise and wealth of knowledge they possessed could be very helpful to OnTECH and its students as the school progresses forward.

# ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Stegeman and seconded by Mr. Gardino and unanimously voted by all to conclude the meeting.

The meeting ended at 7:15 PM