BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Minutes of October 25, 2017 Meeting

**Location:** Northeast Hawley District Association Offices,

101 Gertrude Street, Syracuse NY 13203

**Present:**

Ellen Eagen, Founder & President

Stephen Kimatian, Secretary/Treasurer

John Stegemen, Trustee

Victoria Giarratano, Trustee (excused)

Robert Gardino, Trustee

Bill Sanford, Trustee

Fran Coudriet, Administration

**1. WELCOME**

Trustee, John Stegeman, was Chairperson for the meeting. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM. The Chairperson welcomed all the Trustees and those in attendance to the meeting. He asked those in attendance to introduce themselves and say a few words about their interest in OnTECH. He said the Board would conduct the business portion of the meeting first and then attend to questions that any of the community members might have.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PRIOR MEETING**

The Chairperson stated that the minutes of the September 20, 2017 meeting had been previously distributed to the Trustees and he asked for any comments or modifications. There being none, he called for a motion to approve. A motion was made by Trustee Sanford and seconded by Trustee Gardino to accept the minutes as presented. There being no further discussion, the Board unanimously adopted the minutes.

**3. PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

The President reported that a top priority for OnTECH as discussed at the last Board meeting was the securing of a facility for OnTECH and for that reason brought up the matter early in this Board meeting agenda. The site most favored for several months was 484 West Onondaga Street, but because of the investment required to bring the building into a usable condition plus renovate for use as a school was more than could be justified through lease payments by OnTECH, grant support was needed from the CFA or URI. Unfortunately, neither of those grants came through despite the fact that OnTECH ostensibly met all the requirements of the grants. Apparently, there were political reasons but they were never fully explained. She said that she had met with the county executive to see if there was any economic support that could be secured. The county executive said she would look into the possibilities, but had not gotten back to this point. Trustee Sanford also reached out to elected officials to see if any assistance could be given. The facility plans remaining are the following. (1) Determine whether it is economically feasible to renovate and lease the single-story portion of 484 West Onondaga, exclusive of the two story section. Have the contractor determine the least expensive cost of renovation that would yield a building that was totally functional. (2) Go to an alternative site visited on James Street. (3) Seek purchase of the third alternative on the west side through the auspices of Building Hope. The President stated that she would keep the Trustees up to date and would have a recommendation to be voted on by the next Board meeting. Trustee Gardino asked about the viability of Plans B and C, the second and third alternatives. The President responded by saying that evaluations were underway to determine the viability of those alternatives. Trustee Sanford mentioned that Nojaim Supermarket was closing, located right off West Street. Trustee Kimatian responded saying that the location had been visited with OnTECH’s realtor, that Paul Nojaim was not sure of what the use would be at this point. He further said the building was approximately 18,000 square feet in size which was smaller than what was needed for the school. The President concluded her report by stating that further evaluation would be done of all sites and that information brought back to the Board.

**4. FINANCIAL REPORT**

Trustee Kimatian was called upon by the Chairperson to give the financial report. He reported that the final forms for MWBE requirements had been submitted to OnTECH’s financial consultant, CSBM. This would ultimately allow access to $800,000 of CSP federal funding. However, as explained in the prior meetings, operating monies were needed to proceed with the pre-opening agenda for OnTECH. He referred to the August 2017 meeting where the Board had accepted the offer of Ellen Eagen, President and Founder, to loan up to $20,000 for these purposes, instructing the Treasurer to have drafted for presentation loan documents at the next meeting toward this end, and the September 2017 Board meeting at which time the Board approved a Promissory Note for acceptance of the loan and promise for repayment. He said he was glad to report that the authorizations of the Board had been carried out and that OnTECH thereby had interim operating funds to continue the pre-opening work. The Chairperson asked for approval of the Treasurer’s report. A motion was made for approval by Trustee Sanford, seconded by Trustee Girrantano. There being no further discussion, the report was unanimously approved.

**5. FACILITIES REPORT**

The matter of facilities was discussed in the President’s report above.

**6. EDUCATION/ CURRICULUM**

Founder, Ellen Eagen, was called upon by the Chairperson to report on curriculum. Trustee Eagen stated that she has weekly conversations with Ahmad Duick who is the OnTECH consultant for developing curriculum during the pre-opening period. She stated that consistent progress has been made, that the subject matter of English was first being address with math being a subject for this January. Trustee Gardino asked about the availability of teachers and whether they needed to be certified teachers. Trustee Eagen stated that was a good question, because teachers do need to be certified, with the allowance that for certain disciplines and in a limited number there was the ability to hire teachers who had a special skill set that was needed for the school. She further stated that a number of teachers had applied hearing of the school and were particularly interested in teaching in a school like OnTECH. She said that OnTECH would cast out a wide net for hiring, including newspaper advertising, online and special interest publications. Trustee Sanford asked about the number of the initial class, to which the response was 110 students.

Trustee Eagen further stated the need to be sensitive to the practical need of designating the grade levels of the classes. Since it was likely that OnTECH would have students who were overage and under-credited, the normal classification of Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior might not exactly apply. In addition, some students may be in school for six years before graduating. Accordingly, she said OnTECH needed to have a different vocabulary of classification. Though still in a draft stage, she suggested that one consideration was classifications of Beginner, Associate and Master. Another consideration of curriculum was the Regent courses that would be taught to satisfy the graduation requirements. One choice for sciences could be Living Environment along with English, History and Math. With respect to math, there was the consideration of whether all aspects of geometry should be taught. Within the Project Based Learning approach, there were certain practical aspects of algebra that would be incorporated, as well as geometry, but it might be more effective to teach geometry in a non-traditional approach when combined with PBL.

Trustee Eagen displayed a chart of curriculum progression for review of the Trustees. Trustee Stegeman asked whether there was consideration for the student who might excel and might want to progress from geometry to trigonometry. Trustee Sanford agreed that we should anticipate that some students would be able to go faster and further than others. Trustee Eagen explained that OnTECH would use a mastery of skill approach and where a student mastered a certain level, he or she would be able to continue on to the next level. One thing that had to be considered, though, she continued, was the required seat time. She said this was a good discussion and she would take the comments into account in developing the curriculum. That being said, Trustee Sanford made a motion to accept the curriculum report, which was seconded by Trustee Gardino, and approved unanimously by the Board.

**7. COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Chairperson Stegeman requested a report on outreach. Trustee Eagen said the goal was to have a continuing relationship with the community and particularly reaching as many segments of the community as possible. The purpose would be to inform community members about OnTECH, and reach parents who might feel that OnTECH was helpful to their child. She further spoke about her luncheon meeting with members of the Congolese community. She said there was an example of a student who could have benefited from the OnTECH, Albertina Muska, who had a high school diploma in Portuguese and wanted to go to nursing school. There is a good possibility that OnTECH could have enabled that. Trustee Eagen also met with Rob Simpson of Centerstate with respect to the possibility of grants. Though he agreed that the location was key and that the school provided a great benefit to the community, he did not indicate that grant money would be forthcoming. Trustee Girratano spoke about her visit to the John Bowne school in Flushing, Queens, which has a particular focus on agriculture.

**8. BOARD DEVELOPMENT**

The Chairperson then moved to next order of business of Board development. A person who has been considered by the Board and who has passed all her procedural requirements for becoming a board member is Eskedar Getahun. Eskedar was in attendance and was invited to make a few comments. She then spoke about her background and education experiences, how she could be a contributor to the Board, of meeting with Ellen Eagen and other board members and how she would like to participate in the mission of OnTECH. The President then asked the board for a motion to formally recommend Eskdar Getahun as a Board member to the State Education Department as follows.

**RESOLVED**, that the OnTECH Board of Trustees, having conducted a thorough background check via a fingerprint scan as required and having discovered no State or federal criminal history, or having provided such history to SED if found, has voted to select Eskedar Getahun as a final candidate to its Board of Trustees, with a term expiring on November 2019, pending approval by SED.  The resolution approving Eskedar Getahun is formally adopted upon SED’S approval.

The motion to approve such resolution was made by Trustee Sanford, seconded by Trustee Kimatian. There being no further discussion, the board unanimously approved the adoption of the motion. The Trustees and community members in the room applauded the passing of the motion.

Trustee Eagen informed the Board of another individual who had intended to attend the present meeting, Johanna Rogers, but was unable to be here tonight. Trustee Sanford spoke about the Trustees identifying other individuals who would be complementary to the kinds of expertise that would be valuable to the Board. A member of the community attending the meeting spoke about how she would benefit from the teachers and school administration understanding the narrative of her life and appreciating what she had gone through as a New American. Trustee Gardino acknowledged the statement saying, when you are valued, you are empowered.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no new business to discuss, a motion was made by Trustee Sanford, seconded by Trustee Stegeman to adjourn the meeting. In unanimous agreement the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM