**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**Minutes of Wednesday December 20, 2017 Meeting**

**DRAFT**

**Location:** Central Library Main Conference Room, 447 S. Salina Street, Syracuse, NY 13202

**Time:** 4:30 – 5:30 PM Pre-meeting with Building Hope representatives.

5:30 – 7:00 PM Business meeting

**Present:**

Ellen Eagen, Founder & President

Stephen Kimatian, Secretary/Treasurer

John Stegemen, Trustee

Victoria Giarratano, Trustee

Bill Sanford, Trustee

Eskedar Getahun, Trustee

Fran Coudriet, Administration

**PRE-MEETING**

Prior to the official business meeting, an informal meeting and discussion was held with Building Hope representatives who were in Syracuse for the day inspecting St. Brigid’s, the proposed building site to be acquired by them and leased back to OnTECH. Tom Porter, Vice-President, Mid-Atlantic Region, and Seth Whetzel, Lending & Portfolio Manager, were the Building Hope team visiting. They went to see the St. Brigid’s complex, toured the city, and met with officers from M&T Bank with respect to creating a relationship for the acquisition of the property. They were accompanied at different times by Trustees Eagen, Sanford, Getahun and Kimatian and Mr. Coudriet.

**BUSINESS MEETING**

**1.** **WELCOME AND RE-ALIGNMENT OF AGENDA**

Trustee Stegeman chaired the meeting and first welcomed everyone who was attending, saying that if any community members had questions, they would have an opportunity to ask them at the end of the business meeting. He asked the Trustees to introduce themselves and then asked them to consider moving the Facilities discussion on the agenda previously mailed to the top of the agenda, since Building Hope representatives were present. On motion by Trustee Sanford and seconded by Trustee Getahun it was unanimously moved that the Facilities discussion be moved to the top of the agenda.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 29, 2017 MEETING**

Chairman Stegeman then returned to the normal order of the agenda and requested whether there were any corrections or modifications proposed to the minutes of the prior meeting. A motion for approval was made by Trustee Getahun and seconded by Trustee Sanford. Upon discussion, Trustee Getahun said that it was Trustee Eagen who read the Stanford University statement into the record on *Redesigning American High Schools for the 21st Century* and not her as stated in the draft minutes. Thereafter the motion was modified to accept the minutes as amended, which was unanimously carried.

**3. FACILITIES**

Trustee Eagen officially welcomed the Building Hope representatives to the business meeting saying she was glad they were able to stay, even though for a short while. She reiterated that having Building Hope as a partner was a very propitious opportunity for OnTECH.

The Building Hope team introduced themselves to the OnTECH Board and presented information on their company and background. The Trustees likewise introduced themselves and gave a brief individual bio background to the Building Hope representatives. The Building Hope representatives explained that their business was in direct support of charter schools. Over the course of several years they had worked with over 140 charter schools across the country. Typically, their interest was to help charters get launched by providing the financial means for acquisition, in many cases the costs of renovation, with the longer term goal of enabling the schools to acquire their property. They particularly expressed their enjoyment on visiting Syracuse and said it was a great city.

Trustee Sanford inquired whether they used an RFP approach to hiring contractors for the renovations. They said typically that is their goal and approach. Trustee Stegeman asked whether given the great number of schools they had worked with, had they developed a particular philosophy on the kinds of schools they liked to support. Tom Porter replied they look to work with quality charters, those charters who had the potential to make a significant difference in their communities and the charters who sought to provide alternatives to students who might not do well in traditional schools and who came from communities of minimal economic means.

The Building Hope team explained that what they do is a process of evaluation of the building site, determine the kinds of renovations needed within the time frame needed to get the school going for opening day. Often, they approached renovations strategically over a period of time. Trustee Eagen stated that OnTECH was fortunate to have the support and expertise of Building Hope, that she had become familiar with their work in New York City in schools she represented and that having a relationship with them was building on a solid foundation. Building Hope representatives said they would be able to stay for the initial part of the business meeting and then would have to depart for the airport.

Trustee Eagen then proceeded to give a report on the status of facilities. Trustee Eagen reminded the Board about the state of the facilities at the end of the last board meeting.. As the Board was advised, the ability to execute an agreement for the 484 West Onondaga Street site was precluded by the high expense of the lease, which was necessitated by the exorbitant cost of renovations. Even though the developer, Ed Reilly, believed there would be funds from the urban initiative programs, once the URI and the CFA refused to provide any support in the renovation of the building, it became impractical to consider that site. As directed by the Trustees at the last meeting, Eagen said there was a final discussion with the developer of 484 West Onondaga Street to determine whether the lease could in any way, even with reduction in the amount of space to be leased, be set at a level the school could afford. Unfortunately, it was not economically practical and ties were severed with the developer.

Fortuitously, as all know now, the opportunity for the St. Brigid site became available and has been pursued with the assistance of Building Hope. Chairperson Stegeman asked for approval of the report. A motion was made by Trustee Sanford and seconded by Trustee Girratano and was carried with unanimous approval.

**4. PERSONNEL**

Chairman Stegeman then stated the subject of personnel was next, particularly the search for a head of school. He further stated that this was the subject of discussion with Trustee Eagen and some guidelines had been formulated. Though not a rigid procedure, Trustee Stegeman stated that a timeline had been determined, a position description written, posting, distribution of the posting and ultimate interview process with a subcommittee and then Board. Trustee Sanford asked whether the State needed to approve the person. Trustee Eagen said that was not required but that the Charter School Office would be advised of our moving forward with a selection and the School’s choice. Trustee Stegeman circulated the head of school position description for all Trustees to review.

Trustee Eagen added that the process for defining the head of school mimics the social design process of the school. Certain phrases that are key to the design and mission of the school were incorporated into the position description. She also said that with respect to identifying teachers, several individuals had reached out to her even without advertisement having heard about the school. A motion was made by Trustee Kimatian and seconded by Trustee Sanford to approve the personnel report.

**5. FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Chairperson called upon Trustee Kimatian for a financial report. He stated that a report on monies that have been expended to date will be presented at the next meeting. To this point the operating monies have come from the contributions of the Founder and President, Trustee Eagen. He said that because additional operational monies are needed at this point, Trustee Eagen is willing to loan an additional twenty thousand dollars to OnTECH ($20,000) and that approval was needed from the Trustees to accept these monies. Trustee Sanford moved that the Board approve the acceptance of the additional loan from Trustee Eagen. The motion was seconded by Trustee Getahun and unanimously carried. The Chairperson thanked Trustee Eagen for making the monies available to continue the progress of OnTECH.

Trustee Eagen reported that the final document for the CSP grant was filed and that the school should see the opportunity for reimbursement of certain expenses within the next six weeks.

Trustee Kimatian reported that he had discussed the arrangement for Erate reimbursement with the Erate provider who would provide these services to the school, the Garber Consulting Group. The Erate reimbursement program is a federal program for schools to gain either 85 to 90 percent reimbursement for telephone and Internet services, depending on the nature of the service. He said an agreement will be submitted to the Trustees at the next meeting for approval.

The Chairperson requested a motion to approve the Financial report. Trustee Sanford so moved, seconded by Trustee Kimatian, and was approved unanimously by the Board.

**6. EDUCATION/ CURRICULUM**

Next order of business was a curriculum report which the Chairperson called upon Trustee Eagen to deliver. Trustee Eagen discussed with the board training that she and Trustee Eskedar partook, “Design Thinking for the Social Sector” presented by the Stanford Social Innovation Review. The webinar will be available to the entire board and she welcomed everyone to take it.Social design thinking will be applied to the development of OnTECH. Part of the design thinking approach is to frame the question to elicit meaningful responses. As an example, at OnTECH, rather than ask “what does a student need to know to pass a Regents exam?” ask “What does a student need to know to be successful young adult?”

Trustee Stegeman added that this kind of thinking took hold in the designing of computer and software products in Silicon Valley. That thinking has been adapted by educators evaluating curriculum. We are developing an OnTECH school curriculum with this mindset. The design-build approach allows for continual feedback and iteration. Using that model is how teachers will develop curriculum and how students will learn. Trustee Getahun stated that design thinking was used at the Cornell Cooperative Extension and led to an active beneficial discussion. She further stated that this approach would be of great benefit to the OnTECH students. Administrator Coudriet stated that there is a version of design build thinking that is an offshoot called “human centered design,” which acknowledges that the process is directly attuned to the way humans think and interact in all areas, including the classroom. Trustee Eagen said that this approach will be taken in developing language, science and agricultural curriculum. It was the general expression of all the Trustees that these were especially exciting times in education and that OnTECH would be in the forefront of this movement.

Trustee Eagen then spoke about the use of traditional bell schedules versus the more flexible schedules based on mastery and skill levels. Trustee Eagens presented a sample bell schedule

that had bands of the same subject taught at the same time period. This possible bell schedule had some benefits with regard to serving students and teachers. Students have different levels of

mastery, such as with respect to written skills and verbal skills. With the flexibility to move students within the curriculum to the next level in that particular skill, the learning curve is more efficient. At the same time, this enables teachers to more specifically address student needs and the ability to utilize teachers for focused part-time work, should they not want to work the entire day. She said that we continue to evolve our thinking away from traditional bell schedules and will continue to refine the schedule, bell schedule, and curriculum. One question raised was how many students would be entering the first year and how many cluster levels. In response, Trustee Eagen said that it would likely be approximately 90 students in 10 clusters.

Chairperson Stegeman asked for approval of the curriculum report. Trustee Kimatian moved and Trustee Sanford seconded, there being no discussion the motion was unanimously carried.

**7. COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

The Chairman then called upon Trustee Getahun to give the community outreach report. She stated that in consideration of the Board’s prior discussions, she addressed the objective of creating an advisory Board. Trustee Sanford inquired whether it was necessary to amend the charter to create an advisory Board. Trustee Eagen replied that it was not necessary to amend the charter, but the advisory board should be stated in the By-laws and she requested the Secretary to review the by-laws to that effect. Trustee Sanford commented that advisory boards have been helpful to organizations on which he has been a board participant. Trustee Stegeman asked about the kinds of functions the advisory board would have. Trustee Getahun said such a board could be helpful in suggesting job descriptions, assist in personnel searches as part of an outreach group and suggest on policy particularly as it relates to the larger community. After discussion, it was unanimously agreed that the individual board members would start by suggesting individuals who they thought would be good for an advisory board participation.

A member of the community attending asked what kind of community outreach was OnTECH seeking. Trustee Eagen replied saying that OnTECH wanted to have an interactive relationship with the community and was interested in hearing feedback from the community and finding ways that it could be helpful to support the community needs. She also mentioned that the school will include support social services - possibly, clothing, food pantries etc. and it would be helpful to have volunteers from the community ultimately involved in these capacities.

**8. NEW BUSINESS**

The chairperson inquired whether there was any new business. Trustee Eagen responded by saying next month would be re-election of officers, voting on any by-law amendments, and that the milestones of progress required by the Charter School Office would need to be populated. She said OnTECH met most of the milestone requirements and was generally ahead of schedule.

She also reported that she had a good conversation this morning with the authorizer liason in connection with finding teachers.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Sanford moved to adjourn, seconded by Trustee Kimatian, the motion being carried unanimously. The time was 6:55 PM.