



Minutes for October 25, 2018 Board Meeting

Place: Administrative Offices of OnTECH Charter High School, 810 Willis Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13204

Present:

Ellen Eagen, Founder & President
Victoria Giarratano, Excused
Bill Sanford, Trustee
Stephen Kimatian, Secretary/Treasurer
John Stegeman, Trustee/ Chairperson
Eskedar Getahun, Trustee
Francis Coudriet, Administrator

1. WELCOME

Chairperson of the meeting, John Stegeman, called the meeting to order at 5:40 PM. He welcomed everyone and said it was exciting to be meeting in the school building that was now in its second month of operation.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Chairperson then ask for a vote approving the October 25, 2018 meeting minutes. There was one correction to attendance in that Trustee Giarratano had been excused from that meeting. There being no further additions, modifications, or corrections, a motion was made by Trustee Getahun to approve the minutes as corrected, which was seconded by Trustee Eagen, and carried unanimously.

3. FACILITIES / OPERATIONS

The Chairperson called upon Keil White, Director of Operations, to give the facilities report. Enrollment was reported at around 77 , with students still enrolling. Mr. White stated that given the time of year and impending possibility of snow, he had solicited offers from eight snow removal companies, with six responding. He said that he spoke to references and the one that ranked best was Andy's Property Maintenance. The references proved highly complimentary. Mr. White then presented a contract to the Board requesting approval to execute. A motion was made by Trustee Sanford, seconded by Trustee Kimatian, to approve the contract between OnTECH and Andy's Property Maintenance for snow plowing. After discussion, a vote was taken, and the contract was unanimously approved.

Trustee Kimatian then reported on the status of the fire alarm update installation. He said that the school was in full compliance with the required "fire walk" which has been overseen by John King from KFK consulting. The final installation of the equipment was scheduled to be accomplished over the Thanksgiving holiday. Trustee Sanford asked whether the heating plant in the building was in good condition for the winter. Trustee Kimatian stated that the repairs



were underway using the company that had given the lowest bid for the work and were planned to be completed during Thanksgiving week.

4. ACADEMIC REPORT

The Chairman then called upon Trustee Eagen who said there was a special presentation to the Board with the visit of Pastor Mitchell and two students from the school who wanted to talk about their experiences. She introduced Pastor Mitchell to the Board members. Pastor Mitchell said he was attracted to the project-based learning approach as a good way for students to learn subjects. He said youngsters in the 9th grade were trying to define their own identities while at the same time many are struggling with violence and abuse in their communities. He said it was important for the OnTECH staff to understand the background of these students. It is important for the students to learn that being aggressive is not the answer.

Trustee Eagen stated that in recognizing the need for order the school has hired individuals for security in the halls. Hall monitors and professional security firms have been used by the school. The important thing she said is to find individuals who are compassionate and can deal with the students knowing their challenges. Most schools, she said, use the “command and control” approach in controlling the mindset of the students. She said that OnTECH wants to, as much as possible avoid that approach and would rather help the students grow in understanding how they should behave so that when there was no presence for policing behavior, they would realize it was in their best interest to behave properly.

Pastor Mitchell introduced two OnTECH students with him, Jirah and Unique. Trustee Eagen asked them to tell the Board members about their school activities including the career Lunch Talks. Jirah spoke about a lunch for students when an attorney came to speak about what it was like to be an attorney. She said that an interior designer also came to speak to them today and a friend of hers who attended said she wanted to be an interior designer. Josh Schneider, Head of Academics, said that the luncheons for the students at first were limited to 12, but now many of the students asked to participate. Jirah continued by saying that she enjoyed her classes because she could do her work without being interrupted. Unique then spoke about her classes. She said she liked math class because you know what to expect. He has a process of going from station to another within the period. Some is individual, and some is interactive with others.

Josh Schneider, Head of Academics, further spoke about the plan to have projectors in all the rooms and the need to figure out how to best use the laptops. Administrator Coudriet said that Google accounts had been created. Mr. Schneider said the students will be learning how to live and learn in a digital world. He said that students traditionally learn at their desks, but that at OnTECH students learn through multiple approaches including hands on and experimental. Having talks at lunch was a step in that direction. Taking the students to a farm was another example.



Trustee Sanford asked whether he felt any pressure to conform to state standards. Mr. Schneider said that he was mindful that the State metrics had to be met and that he and his team are working on a developing a curriculum that serves the state standards and progressive education.

5. PERSONNEL & STAFFING

With respect to personnel, the Chairman called upon the Head of Academics for a faculty personnel report. Mr. Schneider said there was a need for the availability of a substitute teacher in circumstances where a teacher was out. Two substitutes were identified who could be called upon in such instances. Trustee Kimatian said that to insure orderly behavior in the hallways, a security service had been hired as a trial to see whether it was helpful. Mr. Schneider said he thought it had been helpful for the period of time the service was used. Hall monitors also proved to be helpful as well. Trustee Eskedar asked whether enough was being done to keep teachers safe. Trustee Eagen said we will continue to look for the right balance. Mr. White said that there was one matter of needing Board approval for the purchase of a student assessment evaluation. Of all the evaluations done by schools of students, the STAR evaluation was one of the most common. It is a computer aided evaluation that allows for showing the level of student capability on a scaled progression level achieved by that individual student. He asked for a motion approving the expenditure of no more than \$10,000. On motion by Trustee Eskedar, seconded by Trustee Sanford, a motion for approving the purchase of the STAR evaluation up to \$10,000 was passed unanimously.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Chairman called upon Trustee Kimatian to give the financial report. Trustee Kimatian reported that the cash flow put OnTECH in a position where the school was in a positive position for the next two months. He also said that the next state payment would most likely be within the next three weeks and that would support the positive cash trajectory of the school. He said that the school was still waiting for payment of the CSP funds. That was important because it was a designated source for equipment and furniture payments which at the time were being paid out of operating cash flow.

7. GOVERNANCE

Chairman Stegeman asked about the current model of school operation which reflects a tripartite head of school model. There was discussion and, in response, Trustee Eagen said that decision would be made at the start of the New Year to search for a single Head of School. Trustees would determine whether to go forward with an immediate search for a head of school starting in the spring, or whether it should be initiated for a start in the beginning of the next school year. The budget would be a factor. Chairman Stegeman said he would support what the teachers felt most appropriate.

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote of the Trustees.