**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**Minutes of January 22, 2020 Meeting**

**Location:** OnTECH Charter High School 810 Willis Avenue Syracuse 13204

Time: 5:30 PM

**Present:**

Ellen Eagen, Founder & President, via teleconference

Stephen Kimatian, Secretary/Treasurer

Pastor Willie K Mitchell, Trustee

Victoria Giarratano, Trustee, Excused

Karen McMahon, Trustee

Beth Gavenda, CFO/Human Resources

Fran Coudriet, Administrator

Jana Rogers, Head of Academics

Ta’Quell Morris, Head of Community and Culture

Theo Jones, Dean

Dominique Elizabeth, Community Member

**1.** **WELCOME**

OnTECH Trustee, Steve Kimatian, serving as chairperson, opened the meeting and welcomed the community and staff present. He stated that a quorum was present and that in addition to the quorum, Trustee Eagen was present via teleconference.

Prior to the business portion of the meeting, Founder Eagen stated that Ta’Quell Morris, Dean of Students, would like to present the results of a special student activity concerning a mascot. Mr. Morris stated that in support of the student-centered social design model of OnTECH, the students designated the mascot. The criteria was that it had to be endangered species, present at our local zoo and have characteristics that were emblematic of an ONTECH Student. Together the School voted as a class on the mascot for OnTECH. The winner was the Gray Wolf, reasons being that wolves were smart, alert, quick and travelled in packs and were dependent upon each other for survival.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The chairperson asked for approval of the prior month’s meeting minutes of December 19, 2019. He asked whether there were any additions, corrections or modifications. There being none, the minutes were accepted as presented.

**3. GOVERNANCE**

The Founder brought up the need to formally appoint Mr. Don Miller as the Executive Director. At the previous Board meeting, in a personnel session, the Trustees had interviewed Mr. Miller for the position of Executive Director and had agreed upon formally appointing him at the next meeting. A motion was made by Trustee Kimatian, seconded by Trustee Mitchell to appoint Mr. Miller as Executive Director. There being no further discussion, the Trustees voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Miller as Executive Director.

The Founder then asked the Trustees to review the organizational chart in which the Executive Director and the Chief Finance Officer reported independently to the Board of Trustees. All financial matters were under the jurisdiction of the CFO/HR and all school operations were under the Executive Director. It was noted that the original organization of the charter school had a tri-partite leadership of the Head of Academics, Culture and Operations and that HR/CFO was outsourced. But the Charter School structure in New York State favored a headship and the school now could benefit from an internal CFO/HR. The Board Chair said that she would consult with the Charter School Office to ensure that this organizational chart did not differ substantially from the organization chart accepted in the fall of 2018 when the school opened. Trustee Kimatian motion to approve this organization structure, Trustee Mitchell seconded and the motion was carred unanimously.

**4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

The chair then called upon the Executive Director to report. Mr. Miller first presented the priorities of the school. One of the top priorities was the preparation of students for the June regents exams. Further discussion of that matter would be undertaken later in the meeting by the Head of Academics. Another priority was the development of the academic program for the FY 2020-21 school year. The Executive Director spoke about the steps being taken to develop the curriculum for the incoming 11th Grade.That included the requirements of staffing, facilities and planning of activities. A third priority was the presentation of a revised grading structure that varied the percentages allocated to student engagement and performance. To emphasize the need for increased student engagement in classes, student class participation was given 50% weight instead of 25%. He also spoke about Professional Development and classroom methodologies. Lastly, he addressed the need to recruit staff.

**5. FINANCIAL REPORT**

The chair called upon Beth Gavenda, CFO, to give the financial report. Ms. Gavenda reported the financials for December 2019. She reported that revenue was 12% under budget, expenses were 28% under budget with a net surplus 51% over budget. She then spoke about having investigated the potential of improving dental benefits with similar benetis but for better rates. To qualify for the coverage, 22 employees need to sign on. Discussion then ensued on this possibility and it was decided that action would not be taken at this time of the year but the matter reviewed at the conclusion of this fiscal year. Ms. Gavenda then reported on a program she had secured with Tops Markets. OnTECH staff and parents who shop at Tops would be eligible to request that 5% of their shopping purchases go to OnTECH. The Board thanked the CFO for establishing the relationship. That being the conclusion fo the financial report the chairperson asked for a vote to approve the report. A motion was made by Trustee McMahon and seconded by Trustee Mitchell to approve the report. There being not further discussion, the motion was unanimously carried.

**6. ACADEMIC REPORT**

The chairperson then called upon the Head of Academics, Jana Rogers, to give the academic report. Ms. Rogers presented data, including the past performances up to the present, on the STAR testing of students, as well as a summary of student performance on test and regents performances to date. Thereafter ensued a discussion on how students needed to be better prepared for the regents exams. Trustee Eagen stated that this was critical to the education of the students and was an important criterion for the assessment of charter success. Both Trustees Mitchell and McMahon had questions and suggestions on considerations that should be given to achieve better results. There needed to be a calendarized schedule for planning, classroom work, pretesting and the specific needs to be addressed on the day of regents day down to knowing there were sharpened pencils for the students. She charged the Executive Director and the Head of Academics to put together such a schedule for the June Regents.

**7. HEAD OF STUDENT CULTURE REPORT**

The next report was from the Head of Student Culture, Ta’Quell Morris. He stated that several issues were being addressed with the students. One was the issue of tardiness. He said that for students who arrive between 9-10:30 am a call is being made to parents and also letters are sent home to the parents. The importance of being on time is discussed with them and how that will relate later to when they are in the workforce. He said the deans are also developing incentives to encourage the students to be on time. Consistent communication by text is also undertaken. The Founder added that a key design element of the school is to continually iterate on better ways to approach students. Trustee Mitchell suggested that a youth advisory group would be a benefit. Trustee Eagen said that we presently have an youth advisory group to the Board but it should be expanded to include ninth graders.

Mr. Morris then reported on several events of student participation. One was a talent show that had taken place before the holidays. In another, a group of students had attended a stage play. Fourteen students volunteered at the zoo. Seven submitted applications to work at the zoo. The Founder explained that one of the goals of OntECH was to find jobs for students after school and during the summer. This also tied in with developing entrepreneurial business activities for the students to pursue. An example of this could be one student who created a music video on getting ready for regents. Along that vein Mr. Morris reported that OnTECH was now a Chapter of the Future Farmers of America, which encourages students to think of business ventures. Trustee Kimatian complimented Mr. Morris on the approach to reach the students in different ways and to encourage their abilities.

The next report was from Theo Jones, Dean of Students, who reported on student athletic activities. The boys basketball team recently played Cazenovia and though they lost it was a good game. The team’s behavior was complemented by the competing coach. Three games remained. Girl’s volleyball was scheduled to play two games in January and February. Trustee Mitchell stated that having athletic teams motivates student participation in school and to date it looks like this is happening with the beginning of the OnTECH program.

**8. FACILITIES REPORT**

The chairperson then called upon the Director of Facilities, Keil White, for his report. Mr. White first reported that two students had enrolled within the last week and two others had sent in information. To date the school had 13 applicants for the 2020-21 school year. Several families said they had heard the radio student recruitment spot.

He stated that the Fire Inspector had done a walk through of the Rectory and had identified issues that needed to be cleared up. Nothing was particularly difficult to address.

With respect to the gym floor, he said that the company who did the initial work was scheduled to come back to repaint the basketball lines that were blue, green, and also to insert an OnTECH logo in centercourt. There would be no charge for the repainting. Bathroom sinks were remounted in the boy’s bathroom and assessment would be made of whether we wanted to do the same in the other bathrooms as the sinks remounted were now made much or secure. Previously, proposals had been submitted for a possible change in janitorial service. The Board concluded at this juncture that it would be disruptive to change services during mid-year and any change considerations would be deferred to the end of the school year.

Recycling of food products and composting had been initiated. He further reported that the security cameras were now operational.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The agenda being completed and there being no new business, the chairperson asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. On motion by Trustee McMahon, seconded by Trustee Mitchell, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.