**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Monday, March 16, 2020, noticed Monday March 16, 2020 at time of announcement of County Executive through text and by posting online.**

The Board convened at 12:30 PM by conference telephone connection. All members were present as well as the Administrator.

Ellen Eagen, President

Pastor Willie Mitchell, Vice President

Steve Kimatian, Secretary/ Treasurer

Karen McMahon, Board Member

Vicki Giarratano, Board Member

Fran Coudriet, Administrator

Don Miller, Executive Director

The Founder stated at the outset that the approval to meet by telephone conference was authorized by Governor Cuomo in waiving the specific requirements of New York State Open Meetings Law. In addition she had spoken to the Committee of Open Government which confirmed that under these emergency circumstances good faith efforts to hold public meetings accessible to the public was acceptable. She stated that the COVID 19 virus, known as the Coronavirus issue, was one that was obviously directly affecting school operations and was an evolving situation. OnTECH was using a risk analysis to handle the risk of the analysis. Ms. Eagen had been applying this risk analysis on the west coast with schools and had used it with schools downstate; Ontech iterated it and was applying it for the last week.

She brought the Trustees up to date on the edict from the Governor of the State and local authorities. The County Executive had stated on Sunday, March 15, that the school would close this Friday unless there was a confirmed case. A confirmed case was announced by the media on Monday morning. Hence, this special meeting was called. Ms. Eagen said that should the school close, it should be done by board motion.

Prior to a motion, there ensued a discussion of the steps being taken in other school districts. The Founder brought information from the other schools she was working with on the impact and closures due to the Coronavirus. The actions by the State were discussed as well as how the New York City schools were handling the situation. The Founder cautioned the Trustees that there were still many unanswered questions.

Trustee Giarratano, as the State Extension Specialist for Food Services, was asked what her experience was to date in coping with the Coronavirus. She said that there were many directives from the Governor on what should be done, including shutting down all the restaurants and bars except for takeout, the closing of the Thruway food operations at stops, which was one of her responsibilities. She said that department heads would still be meeting through ZOOM and a YouTube channel was being developed. Cornell, where her offices were, went completely to on-line education and all personnel were asked to use distancing in their interactions.

Thereafter, Trustee McMahon offered a motion that it be Resolved that in accordance with the order of the Governor of the State of New York and in compliance with the Onondaga County Executive directive for all schools in the Syracuse District to close, OnTECH Charter High School would be closed effective end of the school day today. The motion was seconded by Trustee Mitchell.

Thereafter further discussion continued. Trustee Kimatian stated that it was premature to close schools and said that OnTECH should consider staying open until more information was gathered. He further questioned whether students would really be better off at home. In some cases the students had very challenging home lives, with little supervision and often not enough to eat. In addition, being at home increased their exposure on the streets which could be a dangerous environment. In balancing the risks, he felt that school would provide a safer haven for the students and hold greater opportunity for security. Reference was then made to the Governor’s order and to the Onondaga County Executive’s order to close Onondaga County schools which was published in the media today. Given this, there was a call for the vote. On motion duly made and seconded, based on the Governor and County Executive’s mandate, the Board unanimously voted to close the OnTECH effective as of 4:00 PM today.

Following, specific matters were discussed including the academic and teaching approach that instructional staff would be using for the students, even though they were not at school. There was familiarity by the students with Google Classroom which would be a tool for distance learning. The Head of Accountability, Ms. Rogers, had good experience in distance learning from her prior work. Students would be able to take their computers home, provided they intended to use them properly and parents signed off on the responsibility for its safekeeping.

Joining the Board was the Executive Director of the school, Mr. Miller. The Founder asked him to give a status report to the Board. Mr. Miller reported that the administration and faculty had extensive discussions on the best way to handle communications with students and the continuance of their learning while not in school. He said that the plans continued to be refined but that all agreed on how the school should go forward to ensure that the students were able to make good use of their time so that the academic metrics would not falter during this period.