**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**Minutes of May 27, 2020 Meeting**

**Location:** Meeting held via Zoom teleconference at 5:30 pm.

**Present:**

Ellen Eagen, Founder & President

Stephen Kimatian, Secretary/Treasurer

Pastor Willie K Mitchell, Trustee

Karen McMahon, Trustee

Vicki Girratanno, Trustee

Bill Sanford, Trustee Emeritus

Beth Gavenda, CFO/Human Resources

Don Miller, Executive Director

Fran Coudriet, Administrator

Jana Rogers, Head of Academics

Keil White, Director of Facilities

Ta’Quell Morris, Head of Community and Culture

Theodore Jones, Student Culture

Nakisha Graves, Student Culture

Fahtima Manuel, Student Assistant

Morgan Boerman, Teacher

Omar Gonzales, Teacher

Samantha Vernold, Teacher

Earl Evans, Teacher

Teresa Greene, Teacher

Jeff Clark, Teacher

Jaime Raines, Teacher

Cristin Aboff, Teacher

Tailor Edmund, Teacher

Colleen Bland, Teacher

Nashawn Stenson, Student

Zaire White, Student

Dominique Elizabeth, Community Member

Jimmy Oliver, Deputy Commissioner, Syracuse Parks & Rec

**1.** **WELCOME**

OnTECH Trustee, Steve Kimatian, serving as chairperson, opened the meeting and welcomed the Trustees, staff and community members. He stated that a quorum was present for the conduct of business.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The chairperson asked for approval of the prior month’s meeting minutes of April 29, 2020. He asked whether there were any additions, corrections or modifications. There being none, the minutes were accepted as presented. The chairperson also requested the Trustees to consider approval of the Special Board Meeting held on May 11, 2020 with respect to accepting the PPP loan. A motion was made by Trustee Eagen for approval of the May 11th minutes. The motion was seconded by Trustee McMahon. The chairperson asked for further discussion if desired. There being none, the motion was voted and carried unanimously.

**3. REPORT OF CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

The chairperson asked for the report of CFO, Beth Gavenda. She reported that revenue was under budget by 8%, expenses were under 25%, making the net income 55% over budget. She further reported that she was in the midst of completing the annual audit. Another matter brought up was that the Finance Policy Manual had May 22nd recognized as a staff holiday, but given the restructuring of schedules under the COVID environment, not all staff were able to take advantage of the holiday. Accordingly, in order to recognize this May 22nd as a day when all staff could have an opportunity to enjoy a day off, she asked for consideration of motion that would enable a holiday to still be granted. Accordingly, Trustee Eagen made a motion to enable senior staff the authority to set a day for staff who did not receive the May 22nd holiday to take a day off sometime between next week and June 30, 2020. The motion was seconded by Trustee McMahon and unanimously approved.

**4. REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES**

The chairperson then called upon Keil White, Director of Facilities for his report. Mr. White said he was glad to report that the school’s E-rate application was accepted and would be helpful to off-set IT and telecommunication expenses. He further reported that the issues to be addressed for opening in September were building capacity, cleaning and scheduling. He said that recruitment was progressing and we now had 51 applicants, 41 accepted and 18 enrolled. Trustee Girratanno, who heads up state facilities for service areas across the state said that there would be very specific guidelines promulgated for all companies and schools for reentry. She said the school would need to identify sources for supplies needed for health screening, such as thermometers, make sure there was adherence to distancing guidelines indoors and outdoors and develop a written plan that would set forth the school’s intentions. Trustee Eagen stated that OnTECH would formulate a specific plan.

Trustee McMahon spoke about recruitment plans and stated that a digital campaign was underway. She and Trustee Kimatian had dealt with the Cowley Advertising Group to create the campaign which consisted of a digital reach to parents within the Syracuse area on Facebook and Instagram as well as using Spectrum Digital Reach marketing. Trustee Eagen stated that we also now had two radio recruiting campaign spots, which she played for the group in attendance.

**5. REPORT OF HEAD OF STUDENT CULTURE AND ACADEMICS**

The chairperson called upon Ta’Quell Morris, Head of Student Culture to give his report. Mr. Morris stated that one of the great needs of many of the students was for money. If there were ways they could work for money, that would be a great step forward. So he and Ms. Greene and Mr. Evans spoke about how they could help one very eager student, Jaciel, accomplish that. An arrangement was made for Jaciel to mow lawns. He mowed the lawn of Ms. Greene’s house and was paid for it. Mr. Morris matched the money earned. He then continued to mow other lawns. Mr. Morris said that it was in different creative ways that he hoped to continue this approach of finding what the student could do and try to match that with earning money.

May 7th was declared a day of celebrating teachers by the city/county. To recognize that event Trustee Eagen created a promotion that involved the students and with the help of Mr. Morris engaged several students in the celebration. She and Mr. Morris contacted the media which resulted in coverage of the event.

May 11th was a drive by and shout-out event by the teachers and mentors passing the homes of the students. Many students and parents were in their driveways to return the shoutouts.

Head of Academics, Jana Rogers, reported that the had started a GSA club, a Gay and Straight Alliance group. Their first meeting was last Thursday. Mr. Jones assisted the group. The students were enthused. They shared stories and they expressed a desire to connect with the Q Center.

Trustee Eagen said a law club had also been founded. The students wanted to talk about justice. A judge and a lawyer were being scheduled to speak to the students. She also said that Dominique had been a helpful resource in the process of creating a legal club as she had great connections in the City. Trustee Eagen said it was not that the clubs were intended to be a focus for the career of a student, but rather an outlet for the student to follow a passion about a particular interest and act on that. Ms. Rogers added that she had arranged for a NICU Nurse from Glens Falls Hospital to speak with the students.

Thoughtful Thursdays have been a positive element for the students. It is a day when the focus is on mindfulness, deep breathing, and developing Emotional IQ. Ms. Morgan helped with this.

A Cinco De Mayo Zoom party was held with students and staff having a chance to virtual dance. Mr. Morris said that videos from people in the community addressing the students were presented to them - one from Mayor BenWalsh and another from Parks and Rec Commissioner, Jimmy Oliver. Mr. Morris said he planned a college chat with the students and will present that next month. He said mentors also have a full plate and continue to stay with the students to encourage their progress. Founder Eagen said the work the mentors are doing is terrific and the exact reason for what the school was designed to do.

In continuing her report of Academics, Ms. Rogers said that OnTECH 2.0 is a six week project on health and then pivots to the Digital Passport, where students download their individual “Passport” which has a series of sections each representing a project or task they have to accomplish. Students will earn grades. 64 students are projected to complete their passports by June 19th. The last week of school will be OnTECH CON, a week of social-emotional learning.

Founder Eagen said that OnTECH will continue classes through June 26th and not stop the week before in an abbreviated year like the school districts. She said that OnTECH will have three graduates, its first graduates. Two of the three students are from the New American community and had accumulated high school credits prior to enrolling at OnTECH. They had interrupted education and were turned away by the school district. One of the three students is over-age and undercreditted. Founder Eagen thanked Ms. Rogers for getting them to the finish line; she stated it was the work that OnTECH set out to do.

Ms. Rogers further stated that to address the issue of student engagement and to continue to promote interest, the staff was trying an approach of gamification incorporated into the teaching. Interested students met with representatives from the company ClassCraft to identify areas of interest. Their program connects with Google Classroom. To evaluate the offering, Mr. Gonzales said a student centered focus group was created. He said students got together and asked the representatives questions. The representatives were amazed at the quality of the student questions. Ms. Rogers says she believes the students like the program.

Founder Eagen stated the improvised approach to learning being taken by staff is an example of how nimble the school is in addressing issues and unexpected events. At the same time this brings out the passion places of the students and is a key design element of the school.

Executive Director, Don Miller, reported that teacher evaluations were being concluded and that a significant number of good candidates had been identified in the teacher applications. Overall, there were 40 applicants and 22 were good candidates. Interviewing will continue. He said the school would be participating in the Plattsburg Candidates Fair.

**6. GOVERNANCE**

Founder Eagen said that there is a Center for Innovation of Education grant in which we could participate. Vickie Smith of the Charter School Office had asked whether we would be interested. It is tethered to FTE growth rate over the next few years. The grant provides additional compensation and a bonus to teachers participating. We would be part of a consortium of schools applying. The next step requires us to sign an MOU expressing our intention to participate. Even so, we would not be committed. Founder Eagen said she is asking for a Board resolution authorizing the participation in signing the MOU. Accordingly, Trustee Kimatian moved to approve OnTECH’s participation and signing of the MOU. The motion was seconded by Trustee McMahon and carried unanimously on vote.

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no new business or further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote.