



Minutes – Approved
Ocean Charter School Special Board Meeting
January 17, 2008

Ocean Charter School
12606 Culver Blvd., Los Angeles 90066

Called to Order 6:13pm by Joan Wicks, Board Chairman

Present: Lori Andrade, Jeannie Elmstrom, Jason Haas, Stacey Lisker, Beth Rendeiro, Peter Samaranayake, Cissy Stanford, Wendy Teeter, Leo Trujillo-Cox, Joan Wicks, and Julie Yarnall.

A quorum was present.

Vice Chairman Leo Trujillo-Cox thanked attendees for coming and reviewed the change in agenda format for this Special Board meeting.

Finance – Review of Budget Revisions

Treasurer Wendy Teeter reviewed the 2007-2008 OCS Budget revisions.

MOTION: Dr. Wendy Teeter moved to approve the revised 2007-2008 OCS Budget dated January 14, 2008. Jason Haas seconded the motion. Lori Andrade, Jeannie Elmstrom, Jason Haas, Beth Rendeiro, Cissy Stanford, Wendy Teeter, Leo Trujillo-Cox, and Joan Wicks voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

Tammy Stanton of ExED reviewed the Governor's proposed funding cuts of \$360 million to K-12 schools in the next six months, with another \$4.3 billion after July 1. We anticipate an \$86,000 decrease in OCS funding for the 2007-2008 school year and at least that much of a decrease for the 2008-2009 school year. The Governor's proposal must be finalized on March 15.

The Board and community discussed how to address this budget crisis. Director Peter Samaranayake suggested that we double our fundraising efforts and repeated his prior recommendation of creating a separate 501(c)(3) for fundraising. Jason Haas explained that the OCS Fundraising budget line item is restricted to 10% of its total income. Parents recommended informing the community that programs will be cut and to consider re-opening the Pledge Drive to improve upon our current participation of 59%. Beth Rendeiro reminded the community that we had an upcoming Art Auction scheduled for March 21. Joan Wicks spoke about deficit spending and the negative impact this would have on our successful audits. Joan also emphasized OCS's commitment to small class sizes, however, this means we take in only approximately 70% of the revenue the state



Minutes – Approved
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January 17, 2008

offers. Joan further emphasized, that as a result, we forgo \$300,000 of funding annually yet we provide additional specialty programs that no other Los Angeles public school offers, and without a significant increase in fundraising, program cuts may be inevitable.

The next Finance Committee will be January 31. OCTA President and teacher Charlene Haney requested that the faculty and Finance Committee jointly review the budget to provide input and help prioritize. Stacey Lisker requested changing the meeting time to 3:00pm to allow faculty to attend.

Charter Renewal

Joan Wicks announced that the OCS Charter Renewal Petition had been officially submitted. Joan then discussed the next steps in the Charter Renewal process, such as Board training and the Board's interview with LAUSD. The first Thursday in April is our tentative hearing date. Beth Rendeiro informed the community that the new Charter Renewal Petition was available for review at both campuses.

Bonnie Rivers, a highly trained and experienced Waldorf educator and OCS faculty mentor, was present for her final day visiting with our faculty and Board. She intends to write to the Charter Association to report on the health of OCS.

Acknowledgement of Board Correspondence and Discussion

The Board acknowledged and discussed a letter from the OCS Teachers' Union to the OCS Board and Community dated January 10, 2008. Leo Trujillo-Cox explained that the Board does not respond immediately to, or debate, any issues brought to them during Open Forum, because those issues are not properly noticed, and the public would have no notice of a discussion of those topics. The Board could now respond to the letter from the OCS Teachers' Union, as it was agendaized for this meeting.

Joan Wicks thanked the faculty for submitting their letter, but expressed concern about discussing issues like those in the letter, in public, while site negotiations are in progress. She clarified that Director Peter Samaranayake has not demanded a salary of \$120,000, nor has he demanded a 3-year contract. At no time did the Board ever consider a \$20,000 to \$30,000 increase in Peter Samaranayake's salary. Joan explained that his initial salary offer was \$95,000, which at the time was based on our decreased revenue due to poor student attendance. The Board also asked ExEd, a financial services vendor, to consider reducing their fees, which they did. However, once ExEd corrected a recording error that increased our revenue from attendance, the Board honored ExEd's original contract costs, and Peter Samaranayake simply requested that the Board reconsider the possibility of a



Minutes – Approved
Ocean Charter School Special Board Meeting
January 17, 2008

similar readjustment. He never demanded a specific dollar amount. Joan stated that it was crucial that our property owner understand our true financial limitations.

Dr. Wendy Teeter explained the faculty's salary step schedule and how they have already received an average raise of 7% for the current 2007-2008 school year.

Leo Trujillo-Cox reminded attendees that Labor negotiations for the current 2007-2008 school year are still underway.

Stacey Lisker stated that two meetings where any salary increase is discussed constitutes serious discussion. Jason Haas clarified that the discussions occurred because he believed Peter Samaranayake deserved a minor increase as a result of the attendance error being discovered.

Several community members questioned any increase without a performance review and suggested more transparency to increase community awareness and participation and minimize inconsistent information.

Parent Greg Wong suggested that the OCS Board meetings should be recorded for those who cannot attend.

Parent Karen Wolfe questioned whether salaries should be discussed in Closed Session.

Beth Rendeiro announced that the Board takes the teachers' concerns very seriously and had begun interviews to investigate the allegations made in OCTA's letter. OCTA President Charlene Haney recommended that the Board also interview parents for their input. She requested clarification on what can and cannot be discussed in Closed Session and stated that the faculty wants to trust the Board.

Jason Haas clarified the Brown Act supports Closed Session discussions of labor negotiations, site negotiations, unrepresented employees, and pending and existing litigation to protect the privacy of parties involved and the nature of the negotiations.

Seventh graders Atalya Boytner and Beth Bolas expressed their concern regarding the amount of money spent on each campus that impacts the furniture, computers and programs available at North Campus. Atalya submitted a signature page from some of the Seventh graders to reflect their support of these concerns.



Minutes – Approved
Ocean Charter School Special Board Meeting
January 17, 2008

Open Forum (Opportunity for Public Comments)

Parent Jetty Stutzman discussed applying for a campus beautification grant for North Campus.

Parent Ran Boytner presented an analysis of data including the teachers' average annual raises, the teachers' salaries as a percentage of the budget, and Peter Samaranayake's salary compared to directors of same-sized, Westside charter schools.

Parent Eileen O'Sullivan commended the Board on their volunteerism but asked if they could remain objective while conducting Peter Samaranayake's evaluation. She recommended re-activating the Director Search Committee.

Teacher Debra Bryant read a letter to the OCS Board and Community dated January 17, 2008.

Teacher Sara Maun expressed her desire for improvements that are not budget-related, such as school-wide assemblies, yard supervision, rhythm of the schedule, organization and communication.

Teacher Debra Bryant discussed her decision to forgo new 3rd grade desks to assist with budget cuts and questioned the subsequent use of those funds for other grades.

Parent Kate Savage-Friedman stated that she did not see Peter Samaranayake or the Administration interfacing with the North Campus community.

Parent Claudia Reisenberger said that she did see Peter Samaranayake often however she requested more communication from him.

Joan Wicks stated that the Board's next step would be to execute a formal evaluation of Director Peter Samaranayake. He stated that he would address the teachers' letter once the Board's investigation of the letter was complete.

Assistant Principal and Resource Specialist, Michelle Hedge, requested that the faculty provide her with feedback specific to her directly.

Office Manager Valentina Vega discussed her role in relation to the staff, faculty and the Director but stressed that the most significant part of her job was to interact with the



Minutes – Approved
Ocean Charter School Special Board Meeting
January 17, 2008

students. She asked that the community come together to work towards solutions rather than focus on what is not being done.

Joan Wicks acknowledged that despite having only one and three-quarters Administrators this year compared to two and one-half Administrators previously, the Board assigned Administrative resources towards Charter Renewal efforts rather than risk cutting any programs.

Teacher Marlene Nichols requested storage equipment for her classroom.

Parent Christine Nazareth expressed that investigating the teachers' letter would not address the communication issues.

Leo Trujillo-Cox recommended the community join together and work towards positive action.

Parent Lance Richter requested that the Board consider securing another Director if Peter Samaranayake is not the right fit for OCS.

Parent Josh Campbell stated that conflict is healthy and to work through it with communication and action. He also offered to assist with Ms. Marlene's storage needs.

Teacher Jamie Gazzaniga thanked Joan for clarification on the reduced Administrative structure and requested more face-time with the Administration as well community-building events such as assemblies.

Teacher Karen Fenswick suggested that a successful model would be to have a Site Director and a Pedagogical Director.

Parent and Administrative Assistant Nancy O'Rourke reached out to parents to volunteer for recess supervision.

Parent Kat Howell expressed her desire for clear communication and to develop a Parent-Teacher Association for positive action.

Parent Lisa Aycock recommended that our community work towards improving our communication and attend the ACG meetings.



Minutes – Approved
Ocean Charter School Special Board Meeting
January 17, 2008

Beth Rendeiro asked everyone to take responsibility for what they say.

Jeannie Elmstrom invited anyone to ask her any question they might have.

Parent Karen Wolfe questioned the manner in which some Board terms were constructed. She requested that the Board increase community involvement and transparency.

Jason Haas clarified that Board terms were extended to stagger exiting knowledge and experience. This Board action was agendized and publicly discussed in full.

OCTA President and Teacher Charlene Haney asked that the Director's job performance be held to the same standards as the faculty.

Closed Session

The Board convened into closed session at 9:35pm pursuant to Brown Act section 54957.6 (Labor Negotiations). Director Peter Samaranayake, Assistant Principal Kristy Mack-Fett and Office Manager Valentina Vega were in attendance. Stacey Lisker and Julie Yarnall left the meeting at 9:45pm. The Board discussed Labor Negotiations. Joan Wicks left the meeting at 10:04pm. No actions were taken during the closed session.

The Board reconvened to open session at 10:26am.

Meeting adjourned at 10:27am.

Respectfully submitted by
Lori Andrade, Secretary
OCS Board of Trustees