ISL Board of Trustees Meeting
Sept. 19, 2007
ISL Library

Call to order: 7:09 pm

Present:
Enrico Sterling
Scott Aiges
Grant Ligon
Tonya Morrow
Karen Dwyer
Carolyn Chandler

Clarification of public comment policy

- Public can comment on items up for a vote during public comment period, but Board cannot respond
- For those wishing to address the Board on a particular issue, they may submit a matter for consideration by US Mail only (e-mail is not acceptable); it's the discretion of the Board president as to whether to allow the matter onto a Board meeting agenda.

Approval of Aug. 9 minutes: Unanimous.

ISL Fest presentation by Lynn Reeves

- Lots of parent participation
- First meeting Sept. 20
- Theme of this year's event: Celebrating Growth
- The committee selected a design for a T-shirt from designs submitted by students.
- Question from Board: "What can the board do to help?"
    - Lynn: Open up the pocketbook
        - Grant: Now collecting checks from Board members for a matching challenge.

Executive Reports
President's Report:

- Committee members named
- Dates for meetings must be posted
- Notes must be taken and minutes submitted
- Committee Structure:
    - Chair (must be board member)
    - Other members may be Board members or not
- Discussion of whether committee chair can be a non-Board member or school staff
        - Scott says chairs should be board members

- Carolyn says that's the usual model. Some exception might be if a person is an expert in an area. But never a staff member. Staff member could serve the committee, but not chair.
- Scott reiterates that the staff does the work and drives things forward
- Grant says Governance Committee will bring in more non-Board members to help with the tasks
- Rico says committees should be headed by a Board member, not staff person. Never seen it any other way in any nonprofit.
- Tonya explains that a decision had been made by the Executive Committee to appoint the staff Marketing and Development Director as the chair of the Marketing and Development Committee. She's now rethinking that proposal after Scott objected.
- Karen says she at first like the idea of staff chairing the committee but now agrees with Scott's position; if it works for one committee, should work for all committees.

Head of School Report:
Sean asks Melanie to give Academic portion of Head report

- Melanie:
- 450 is the current enrollment; recruiting continues
- Two prospective students from Thailand who speak Spanish and Tagalog; we have two staff who speak Tagalog
- These wouldn't be the only non-English speakers; their English progresses very quickly: Outscoring native English speakers on tests
- French enrollment is down all over the city. Doesn't think we can pick up any more French students.
- Good orientation for new parents
- Received all text books; last year was huge problem, especially for French.
- Teachers, students all adapting well. Students seem very happy. Teacher assistants and new teachers all seem happy and well adjusted.
- Glitches are still at drop off and dismissal, but getting faster. Will publish student directory and will then encourage carpooling.

Sean:

- Replacing sub-flooring in Spanish kindergarten due to termite activity.
- Library floor also had live termites; termites found in many parts of the building over the summer
- Painting
- New electrical drops, Ethernet drops.
- Redesigned front office
- Development: Grant worksheet that talks about what's happening in development
- Global Green grant for $75,000. Mikhail Gorbachev will be here Oct. 5 to announce the Global Green grant, which part of an energy audit. The grant is

to begin the process of making the building energy efficient. It's a restricted grant.

- Fully-developed action plan will come out later this year to determine goals for coming year
- Security: security advisors patrol school daily, finding areas of safety concern and addressing those issues. There is protocol in place to address situation if a child gets out of hand. The "security advisors" are Julius Wilson and Corey Henderson, school employees, who also deal with building maintenance.
- IDs not yet issued for new staff, but coming soon.
- Jeff Davis property: we have received the $30,000 that was in escrow because potential buyer defaulted on Aug. 9 closing; they have until Oct. 29 to close. If they don't, we get $5,000 per month holding cost (not part of purchase price) until sale closes. The $30,000 is credited toward purchase price. Zoning change request hadn't been submitted until recently, so Sean was able to collect. Zoning meeting is scheduled for Oct. 5.
- Visitors and tours: extending hours; Tuesdays at 10 a.m. is the target time.
- Future: school is at 92% capacity; projected to grow 22% for next year. So space issues persist. Still exploring modular buildings for classroom needs; lower/middle/high school facilities.
- Discussion of "gap funding"
- Overall, hearing lots of praise from parents. Great faculty and staff.

Finance Report, Karen:

- Finance Committee met on Sept. 12th.
- Will report monthly
- Will develop annual report to board with projected cash reserves, to deliver in October
- Multi-year financial plan
- Need decisions on high school and facility
- Recruiting committee members. Someone who is either banker or works with investment company, someone comfortable with financial statements. Contacted someone from Merrill Lynch.
- Reviewed grant worksheet
- Asked administration for cost investigation on modular classrooms if needed.
- Meetings will be second Wednesday of each month, 8:30 am, at the school.
- Details of financial report read
- We have spent more money than we took in during past two months, but will even out by end of the year. Actually spent $100,000 ahead of where we expected to be at this point.
- Compared to previous year, doing well for July-August.
    - Grant: looking at student count – do we get paid for what we projected even though we've lost students? Sean: we can absorb the variance, and it won't be significant, only 2%. If there will be a decline in state payments, it'll be after February student count.

    - Grant: trailers, need to figure it out in the next month or so. In budget for next year, can we afford it? Sean: We will have to find new financing and make other cost savings.

Governance Committee: Grant

- Mark Rubenstein has resigned. Moves to accept resignation. Karen seconds. Public comment: none. Vote: all yeas.
- Nominate Rico Sterling to be vice president of the board to take Mark's place. Committee moves to appoint Rico. Public comment: none. Vote: all yeas, no nays.
- Board recruitment: goal of three new members in next 60 days. Meeting with one tomorrow. Has a list of interesting candidates with necessary skills.
- Working on evaluation system for board.
- Filling up Governance committee in next month
- Current members: Grant, Karen, Marc Rosenblum, Sean, Dina LeBlanc.
- Tonya: Winnie Lee is interested in being a board member.
- Committee meeting: Second Thursday of each month, 3 pm
- Carolyn has a nomination as well.

Facilities Committee: Rico

- Rico is chair; Sean is a member. Others welcome.
- This is our biggest challenge – the facility.
- Obtain facilities to accommodate our primary responsibility: K-8.
- Maintain current facility
- Explore options for future ISL sites for various grades
- Schedule will be posted: Every other Tuesday, 8 a.m.
- Will create Yahoo discussion group for committee activities
- Sean: We did submit a proposal to RSD to obtain John F. Kennedy site on Wisner and Jean Gordon site in Lakeview. Neither was chosen. Kennedy building is contaminated.
- Jean Gordon is an elementary school that could house K-4, 500 or so kids. Would either be completely new construction or fully renovated; we signed up to be the school for that site; we are still in contention; no one has been chosen for that site.

Education Committee:
Mark Rosenblum is out of town. Sean will present the education report.
Sean:

- Discussed what ISL high school would look like in future
    - What are obstacles or challenges that would prevent us from having a high school?
    - How can we take advantage of challenges?
- Partnership with other school, with some items that are nonnegotiable
- Talked about contacting BESE to re-charter ISL or add a new charter so that high school could be of a different nature

- Talked about Sean contacting other schools to talk about potential partnerships, and to look at best practices
- Talked about school improvement plan. Nov. 3 (ISL Fest day) there is a meeting to get school improvement plan done.
- Professional development needed: "Every Day Counts" training; French and Spanish teachers in conferences for immersion training in Baton Rouge.
- In the end we decided that the Education Committee would recommend to delay opening of a high school with notes that we would talk to other schools about partnering to make sure there are tracks for our students to attend, and to be academically prepared wherever they go.
- Tonya: committee will make recommend to the board, allow for discussion and public comment, then will come back next month with full recommendation.
    - Recommendation: To delay a decision on whether to move forward on opening an ISL high school for one year.
    - Sean: what that means is that currently we have 26 kids in 7th grade. In two years, if we continue with attrition rate, would probably 22 kids in the year we would need to start high school.
    - We need one year to delay a decision of what a high school would look like; curriculum planning; full complement of high school subjects and courses.
    - Not saying no to high school, but need time to make decisions on best practices.
    - What are economic factors that have to be overcome?
    - Even with 30 kids in a 9th grade class, it's not viable for a stand-alone high school.
    - Continuing discussions with potential partners
    - Announcement of a decision:
        - Melanie: we said (in long-range plan) that in January we would announce a decision.
        - We do have a timeline by which we will tell parents one way or another.
        - If we vote next month to accept recommendation to delay high school, we are pushing that deadline back.
        - Committee is making a recommendation to delay high school, not sure for how long.
        - Does not mean that we are saying that we will not have high school classes in 2009.
    - Carolyn: Has the committee decided to take off the table the idea of having our own, 30-student high school?
        - Sean: To do both French and Spanish classes, we would need a double complement of teachers, plus extra-curricular activities and special courses. Can we truly fulfill their needs?
        - Sean: Language immersion high schools in the country are few; they tend to be private schools.

- Carolyn: So if parents of present 7th graders said we don't care about band and football, just language, what would you say?
    - Sean: When we count the numbers of those parents, we're down to 17 or 18 kids.
- Grant: The core K-8 school – it will take a lot of work just to perfect what we have.
- Melanie: In terms of the number of students, we can't use the staff we have now to cover the number of student contact hours in the course of a day. We'd have increased staffing needs.
- Carolyn: Where is our demand? Maybe we should flow with the demand rather than push to open a high school.
    - Melanie: The demand for kindergarten immersion is tremendous, especially in Spanish, but also other languages. Not as much interest in upper grades.
    - Sean: As you look at the numbers in lower grades as they matriculate to 8th grade, it may be easier to make the move (to open a high school) later if we have larger numbers in middle school. I don't envision (creating) a high school that's limited (just) because we can't afford more.
- Karen: I know that kids by age 13 make up their own minds. If they have interest in music, sports, etc, they won't come to a language school. We want to offer an entire package; high school is about full-person development, not just language. With 17 kids can we have a football team? That's one reason we're interested in talking to other schools about partnering.
- Scott: We should make sure we have high school options for our matriculating students that maintain a language focus
- Tonya: Education Committee will make full report at next meeting and full board will sign off. They will be in investigation stage for some time to come. Lots more work to be done.

- Public comment:
    - When are education committee meetings?
        - Second Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. at the school.
        - No public comment at the meetings
        - Q: If at end of this year it is decided not to do a high school, what about in years to come? Will you revisit the issue if have more kids in upper grades?
            - Sean: Yes. It's not a definitive answer. We need time to gather more info. If in the future we have enough kids to create a viable 9th grade, we would reconsider.
    - Tonya: Will allow board to respond to public comment on this subject only because it is so important. Will allow responses to public comment at next Board meeting, too.
        - Q: Interest is lacking in upper grades?
            - Sean: Yes. But there are many models we are considering and will look at all of them.

- Q: Often kids matriculate into high school at 9th grade level, so an ISL high school could accept coming from other schools
    - Sean: That's a double-edged sword. How to integrate kids coming from K-8 foreign language immersion with kids who have not had that language experience?
- Q: When talking about partnering with other another school, are you still looking to keep target language immersion?
    - Sean: In our vision of a partnership, possibly with an existing high school, our kids would go and still get advanced language courses but share other courses with other students.
- Q: I've heard that upper level kids were falling behind in English. How would they fit in at a non-ISL high school?
    - Sean: Our kids meet the entry criteria for every high school in the city.
    - Melanie: We might say to another school: "You must take all of our students." There are some schools that do have admission criteria.
- Q: We take all our core subjects in foreign languages. Will we be able to understand the teachers who teach in English?
    - Rico: The only thing this would affect is our English instruction.
    - Carolyn: We need to be very careful not to put our kids in a difficult situation.
- Q: Do we have any potential partner schools in mind?
    - Sean: Yes
- Q: At any time you may be forced to go to a different school, like after a hurricane. So we have to be prepared to speak English at any time.
    - Pam: More than 94% of our kids passed the LEAP in English readiness. Our kids are ready to go to any school in this district.
    - Sean: We are actually better preparing our kids than non-immersion schools
- Q: For a potential partner school, we need to make sure they realize this would offer them an opportunity to advance what they're able to offer.
    - Tonya: We carry the cachet in any agreement. We should be the ones being sought.
- Q; Have any partnerships with colleges been considered?
    - Tonya: That has been part of the discussion. Everything is on the table, and that has been discussed.
    - Melanie: If we were to partner with a high school, what would we want our high school to look like?

- Tonya: There are so many options on the table - so many that the committee needs more time to come back and report.
- Tonya: We will never leave our inaugural class in the lurch.
- Melanie: We don't want to wait until middle of their 8th grade to have this discussion.
- Sean: To give people two years to make a decision (about where to send their kids to high school if ISL does not have one) is more than enough time.

New Business: none

Public meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Executive Session