

Twin Cities German Immersion School Board Meeting
Charter District 4152
May 26, 2009, 6:30 p.m.
1745 University Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55104

Opening Remarks

Board Chair Dr. Michael Dorneich called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

Board members Dr. Mary Zellmer-Bruhn, Dr. Michael Dorneich, Dr. Andrew Oxenham, Rebecca Hauth-Schmid, Stefan Knep, Scot Stephenson, Ken Greener and Gretchen Nessel were present.

Board member Dr. Jürgen Konczak was absent.

School officials Judi Ingison and Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh were present.

Also present were several parents, teachers, and GAI representatives.

A. Approval of May 26, 2009 Agenda

Dr. Dorneich proposed striking policy updates, SOPA results, and action items list from the agenda.

Dr. Dorneich proposed, Ms. Nessel seconded that the agenda be adopted as amended. The motion was carried 8:0.

B. Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was:

- a) Approval of April 28, 2009 Minutes
- b) Approval of May 12, 2009 Minutes
- c) Donation register
- d) Payment register – found in SBS packet
- e) Committee Update Brief
- f) Enrollment/Recruiting

g) Approval of Director Offer Letter

Dr. Dorneich proposed, Dr. Zellmer-Bruhn seconded, that the consent agenda be approved. The motion was carried 8:0.

C. Strategic Planning I

a. PTO Update

Leslie Watson gave a presentation on progress in establishing the PTO. The PTO is now set up with bylaws in place along with a board, treasurer, etc. Fundraisers have so far raised around \$9,000.

Other initiatives include creating a photo directory of all staff and teachers, and a number of social events for the coming year. Classroom support committee is working to institutionalize the classroom parent set-up. In charge of teacher-appreciation lunches, etc.

The educational support committee will work more directly with school on things like field trips and culture week, and will help with promotional tours to take some of the burden off office staff.

Priorities are to meet with the new director, Annika Fjelstad, once she arrives, and to coordinate with school to avoid duplication of effort or miscommunications. One grant opportunity will be pursued, which is available only to PTOs – from Lowes. The PTO could also help, as needed, with providing assistance to teachers from overseas, including short-term loans to help with rent, etc. before the first pay check.

The classroom support committee is coming up with new manual to help new teachers when they arrive.

The general goal is to remain open and accountable, and responsive to needs of the community.

Dr. Dorneich expressed thanks on behalf of the board for all the energy and enthusiasm that went into founding the PTO. The board member who will be the parent liaison should act as contact person with the PTO. The transition team will ensure that the new director gets to meet early on with the PTO representatives.

D. Financial Oversight

a. Budget review 2008-2009

Ms. Ingison provided an update of this year's budget. Two issues included in the updated budget are security and inventory, which are not well organized currently. Addressing inventory, Holly Wiste will be attaching metallic nonremovable tags to all major items (e.g., computers and electronics) and then preparing the asset tracking software database. Asset tracking should be online by the beginning of the school year. All major items and purchases will be included in this database, which will be maintained by office staff and audited annually. According to Ms. Ingison, we are operating at or under budget, by about \$9,300.

Dr. Dorneich moved, Ms. Hauth-Schmid seconded, that the revised budget be approved. The motion was carried 8:0.

b. Treasurer's Report

Dr. Knep gave the treasurer's report. The relatively high accounts payable is due to policy of delaying payment within allowed limits to improve cashflow. The net loss of \$28,245 was due to the hold-back of about \$98,000. One problem in the finance committee meeting is related to special education funds, where state aid still needs to be paid. But there is some uncertainty from both SBS and the State regarding how much we are owed; this should be as much as \$50,000-60,000. This money won't be forthcoming until September.

Cash balance projected to be around \$12,000 in June, and our current line of credit is only \$10,000. This margin is fairly thin. It is still not clear what the State hold-back will be in the 2009-2010 school/fiscal year. Once decided by the legislature this could have significant impact on us.

Ms. Ingison spoke with Parks Midway Bank, who work with other charter schools. They currently have a moratorium on accounts for charter schools, but may be willing to waive it for us, as a neighborhood school. We might consider switching to them, from Bremer Bank. Switching banks would require Board action, perhaps at a special meeting. Parks Midway Bank had a representative to the TCGIS finance committee for a time. Perhaps it would be wise to time the switch to the arrival of the new director, but we may need to switch before the end of June in order to meet expenses.

c. Approval of teacher contract template

The template has been reviewed by our legal representative. Ms. Ingison reviewed some of the changes:

- p. 2, item #6 reflects the changes in premium;
- p. 3 employees complying with the insurance policy;

- adding Dec. 23rd as a holiday;
- tried to keep leave time flexible, but in order to recognize that we still need to make sure we have enough staff present on any given day, there is more director oversight;
- family leave is really for emergency care and specific situations and does not carry over.

Dr. Knep asked for clarification on what exactly can be carried over. Sick leave days can be (could allow bridge time, if we ever get to short term disability coverage). Also, it was established that staff members' spouses' parents would count for emergency leave purposes. There is a need to add domestic partners, in addition to spouses, to the wording. Specific definition of qualifying periods are not in the contract, because it could vary based upon a number of factoring, including re-bidding. Mr. Greener asked that "TCGIS" be made more specific by referring to the director, rather than the school entity.

Another point of discussion was the clause that allowed for a penalty if an employee quits without two weeks' notice. Ms. Ingison observed that most schools have some such clause.

The new contract will be made available to staff as soon as possible, with a cover letter detailing any changes.

Dr. Dorneich moved, Mr. Stephenson seconded, that the teacher contract be approved with the caveat that emergency leave definitions be amended as discussed. The motion was carried 8:0.

E. Academic Oversight

a. Science Update

Ms. Zachmeier-Ruh gave the update. Some training money will now be used for supplies, since the teachers they were going to train this year will not be returning. She has contacted our incoming science teacher for her recommendations. They are ordering some Foss kits for all grade levels, but not the text books. Ms. Nessel asked if we have explored options beyond the Foss kits. Her concern is that they are too scripted. Comparable German kits also require extra shipping costs. It was pointed out that having kits does not necessarily imply that the teacher has to stick to the script. Kits can also be useful by helping to ensure that standards are aligned. A parent observed that the mark-up is high, and that the school might be better off ordering individual items, rather than full kits. It was emphasized that the kits are viewed as a supplement to the science curriculum, not the full curriculum. We will now have a qualified science teacher, who will work with the director to articulate our curriculum needs. We are in the

process of finalizing a membership to the Minnesota Science Museum. Ms. Bausman-Watkins asked whether there are funds in the grant that would allow for supplementing the science section in the library. The grant money will go toward books for teachers, but the library is getting attention about this.

c. Kindergarten

Ms. Ingison presented the plan for how the KG curriculum will be updated over the summer. The goal is to have a draft of the Kindergarten curriculum by June, with input from the incoming staff and new director. They are looking to account for accommodating students with varied abilities, the immersion setting, the new K-Plus plan, staffing needs, training needs, methodologies. The training cannot be outlined until the curriculum is set. Ms. Ingison is seeking one or two outside experts to work with her. Ms. Nettet cited a recent article about the importance in play in best practices for Kindergarten.

F. Strategic Planning

a. Board elections

Dr. Oxenham reported on the recent Board elections on May 14th. He expressed gratitude to all of the candidates who ran and named the three incoming Board members – Kim Kompel, Holly Wiste, and Susanne Grimm.

b. Policy approvals

Postponed.

c. Hiring

Ms. Ingison gave a general update. The school has three positions that currently remain open – Kindergarten, Special Education and a part-time English position. Interviews are scheduled for this Thursday. There are currently no applicants for the part-time English position, but the school is actively searching.

Ms. Ingison met with Anne Kile regarding special education para-professionals (paras). Some needs are changing. Some students will no longer need full-time paras, which can be considered a successful outcome for those students. There is a noticeable improvement seen in those students who have German-speaking paras, and so from now on the school will place more emphasis on seeking German-speaking paras.

Dr. Dorneich moved, Dr. Knep seconded, that Elena Heindl be appointed at 1 FTE as a Special Education Para-professional. The motion was carried 8:0.

Dr. Dorneich moved, Ms. Hauth-Schmid seconded, that Ginelle Wein-Bunde be appointed at 1 FTE as a Special Education Para-professional. The motion was carried 8:0.

Dr. Dorneich moved, Dr. Knep seconded, that Margaret Sims be appointed at 1 FTE as a Special Education Para-professional. The motion was carried 8:0.

Dr. Dorneich asked if Ms. Nessel and Ms. Hauth-Schmid would work with Ms. Ingison on identifying other avenues to explore in getting the word out on the English position. They will share ideas.

Ms. Ingison said that the other paras from whom there may not be contracts in the coming year, would be contacted in the coming week. Ms. Ingison also reminded the board that we will be adding another full-time Special Education teacher, who will provide our current special education coordinator, Anne Kile, with some more in-class time.

d. Grants

Dr. Zellmer-Bruhn reported on behalf of the Grants Committee. Ms. Ingison identified a technology grant that Ms. Wiste led. Computers will be needed in the classroom, especially with the science testing, and can also be used to address the key issue of differentiation. The grant has been submitted, but the Board needs to approve it. The one caveat is that the school needs a technology plan. One is in the works and the Board might consider making the technology committee a less informal group. They will find out if we receive the grant in 4-6 weeks.

Dr. Zellmer-Bruhn moved, Mr. Stephenson seconded, that the grant application be approved. The motion was carried 8:0.

The question was raised whether the school should pursue another FLAP grant. The possibility was pursued by Ms. Zachmeier-Ruh and others. However, in consultation, given the upcoming transition in leadership and other grants in the works, it was decided that the school should wait and consider applying again next year, should be opportunity arise.

G. Other business

a. Action item list review

b. Update on the new charter school law

Dr. Dorneich attended a webinar and reported on what he learned about the law that went into effect one week ago. Conflict of interest rules were strengthened. Board members have 12 months to get training, or are automatically off the Board. The role of

the sponsor has been changed. They are now authorizers, not sponsors. There are now several models for governance, only one of which is teacher-majority. All models must have at least one teacher, one parent, and one community member. He will send out the link to the other webinars that will be offered. He suggested that a small committee be formed to research and understand these changes. The committee should have a TCGIS Board member, a GAI member, and others to work with MACS. The spot-light is on boards and charter schools now, so we need to be sure we are compliant.

Dr. Dorneich moved, Dr. Knep Seconded, that we establish a Charter School Law Committee. The motion passed 8:0.

c. Thank you to out-going Board Members

Dr. Dorneich thanked S. Stephenson and S. Knep for their service for the last three years. Dr. Oxenham thanked Dr. Dorneich for his tireless service.

H. Adjourn


Dr. Dorneich moved, Dr. Knep seconded, that the meeting be adjourned at 8:20 pm. The motion was carried 8:0.

Next Regular Board Meeting: June 23, 2009, 6:30 p.m.

Location: TCGIS School Building

Twin Cities German Immersion School Board Secretary

Name: Andrew J. Oxenham

Signed: 

Date: June 23, 2009

Date May 26, 2009 minutes approved by TCGIS Board: June 23, 2009

Date May 26, 2009 minutes sent to MN Dept. of Education: _____