

Los Feliz Charter School for the Arts
Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 14 2011 6:00pm
2709 Media Center Drive Los Angeles, CA
Approved

Board Members present: Karin Newlin, Tony Butka, Matthew Shenoda, Gabrielle Samuels, Juan Devis, Darcy Mellinger, Bob Greenberg, Michael Garces (joins at 7:45) Michael Bishop (joins via telephone at 6:30), Sharon Sutton (joins via telephone at 7:15)

Quorum? Yes.

Also present: Mary Ann Gallo, Rebecca Heneise, Marissa Chibas Preston, Nika Serras, Phil Ross, Tish Hicks

Bob Greenberg called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm and Tony Butka moved to approve the August 18 Board Minutes (Agenda Item II). Matthew Shenoda seconds. Motion carries by general consent.

Bob Greenberg asks for public comments (Agenda Item III). There are none. Rebecca Heneise's Site Council report (Agenda Item VIII) is moved up. Heneise, 4th Grade teacher and Site Council Chairperson, presents on the Site Council's goals for the year, highlighting their desire to focus on the Single School Plan (GRASP) and to look to the Board for partnership. Per a question from Juan Devis, Heneise gives the outline of what GRASP is. She talks about the importance of tending to the plan and keeping it current. Newlin explains that the Board had voted to implement the GRASP plan as LFCSA's Single School Plan. Newlin adds that she and Phil Ross will be adding some elements as this is the single school plan that will be submitted to the State for Title 1 funding.

Greenberg reads from an email he received from a parent expressing dissatisfaction among 6th grade parents and concerns about moving forward with the middle grades. Newlin suggests that she and Phil put together a meeting for 6th Grade parents in addition to Back to School Night. Butka notes that although they cannot respond to public comment, he would like to see this issue on the agenda for next month's meeting.

Greenberg points out that Sharon Bradley from LAUSD was scheduled to be here. Since she is not attending the meeting, he suggests that they engage in this conversation nonetheless. Gabrielle adds her perspective, having "polled" several parents who have pulled their kids from the school & the #1 reason they listed was lack of middle school. Gabrielle feels it is time to have a very substantive conversation about where the school is headed. Should it become K - 5 & develop relationships with Middle Schools? Devis notes that he, as a Board member, is very much in the dark on this subject and would like more information such as financial impact, location, etc. It is suggested that some Board members and Co-chairs of the middle school committee meet in early October. Devis will be part of that meeting, as will Butka and Greenberg, schedule permitting.

Devis asks for clarification about what the Middle School Committee was empowered to do. Discussion follows. Bishop notes that his biggest concerns are facility & cash flow. Newlin underscores the significance of the cash flow issue.

There is a brief discussion about how to respond to the proposed benchmarks that the LAUSD Charter School Office submitted. It is noted that the school's goal has always been to hit 40 % of free and reduced lunch population.

Greenberg asks for the report on the opening of the school (Agenda Item IV) from Phil Ross and Karin Newlin. Ross says that LFCSA opened with 20 classes, 7 new teachers, 7 new instructional aides/yard supervisors & a new special ed resource teacher. He mentions the success of the 10 day teaching institute that was held b/4 the school opening. Ross considers the greatest challenge has been parents' concerns about the blended class. Per a question from Gabrielle Samuels about ADA, Newlin says that there are currently 14 spaces to fill. Newlin notes that some of the biggest issues for the kids in upper grades are the playground and lack of a sports program. She brings up idea of using Rio de Los Angeles for P.E. with the possibility of using public buses. Newlin notes how well the teaching staff is doing. Mellinger echoes the sentiment.

Mellinger notes the tremendous efforts of the Build Committee (Stephanie & Ben Ragle, Tish Hicks, Dennis Rooney and the huge difference it's made. Samuels will draft a thank you note from the Board. It is also proposed that the Board host a party as a thank you.

Butka begins the Budget Update (Item VI). He says that things seem to be on target, but ExED is crunching the numbers and will give a full report at the October Board meeting. Butka then raises the issue of the sidewalk project. Because of additional fees for permitting, it looks like there may have to be a \$20,000 adjustment to the budget. They are trying to determine whether or not the fees can be waived. However, the work cannot begin again without the permits. The \$80,000 bond held by the city that will be released for Blackwell Construction to pay its subcontractors is noted.

Devis asks for clarification about the increases in salary for the co-directors. Discussion follows. It is also noted that one of the directors is now titled "Director of Curriculum and Instruction/Principal.

Newlin gives her STAR Test results summary (Item VII). She notes that LFCSA students score especially high in the questions that require the higher order of thinking. She also points out the success of the 4th Grade in Language Arts. The majority scored in the advanced category. Re: the math results, she says that she & Karolynne know that the math program for the upper grades need to be improved. She says she feels that we did really well all things considered -- moved in to a new facility, added nearly 200 new students, 11 new teachers, 3 new teaching artists, etc. She is confident the score will trend back up to where it was and beyond. Samuels says that she thinks some parents are concerned about the drop even when taking last year's challenges into account.

Mellinger begins the update on the Co-Director search (Item IX). She notes that the committee is now comprised of Samuels, Mellinger, Phil Ross and Juan Devis. Mellinger says that the committee has phone -interviewed or met in person all the candidates that rose to the top of the list. Mellinger says that at the moment, the committee has been focusing on the AP position. There are several very strong candidates and Mellinger feels confident that they could have someone in place by the end of September or beginning of October. Samuels begins a summary of the Director of C & I search. She talks about the difficulty in finding consensus. Discussion follows. Shenoda wonders if there is a problem with the process of evaluation.

Samuels asks if the Board is giving the committee direction. They wish to the committee to communicate to the parents about the status of search & to continue search.

Shenoda asks what the least trainable skill is that priority must be given to finding in the candidate. He feels it should be curriculum and that the "running the school" component is the most trainable. As a point of clarification, Samuels asks if the committee should revisit candidates who have never been a principal. Discussion follows about where these candidates could be found. Possibility of expanding the criteria is discussed.

There is a discussion of what is meant by LFCSA's curriculum and mission statement.

Marissa Chibas Preston begins the discussion of the leadership & the mission of arts integration (Item X). Chibas Preston notes that the committee (of which she was a member for the bulk of the search) had determined that as they looked through the applications they would disregard any candidate who had not been a principal. She underscores the need for the new leaders to really and truly understand, and be able to implement arts-integration. Chibas Preston points out that a Board level discussion of what arts integration means has yet to occur.

Newlin and Devis talk about a new partnership with the Armory. Newlin urges all Board members to read the charter. Samuels mentions that the Board retreat wasn't held this year. She suggests that the retreat could focus on this area. Possibility of this retreat is discussed. Mellinger urges all Board members to tour the school while class is in session. Garces asks if a day of focusing on the charter is the same as a day of focusing on arts-integration. Sutton notes that the letter that Chibas Preston wrote suggests that the arts-intergration is not happening in the classroom.

The Board decides that all Board meetings will be at 6:30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of the month for October and November. Additionally, they decide to tour the classrooms as a group and will pick a date to do so.

Meeting adjourns at 9:50pm.

Minutes submitted by Mary Ann Gallo