

**MINUTES**  
**Regular meeting of the Laura Holland Uzzell Foundation Board of Directors**  
**January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Proper notice having been duly given, the Board of Directors of the Laura Holland Uzzell Foundation (LHU Board) met in regular session conducted on Wednesday January 28th, 2009, at the offices of Sterling Montessori Academy and Charter School, Morrisville, North Carolina.

**Call to Order and Attendees**

President Sharmila Bristol called the meeting to order at 6:45 PM. Directors attending were Pantea Dougani, Shari Padgett, Alexis Schauss, Saiid Davari, Tim Barker, and Cristina Gillanders. Also in attendance were Executive Director Bill Zajic, Betty Warren, Janet Littlejohn, Jill Stansbury, Michelle Rapp, Amy Hollyfield, Chandra Vyas from the Sunday School, and parents.

**Additions to the agenda and acceptance**

Increase in Academy tuition for 2009-2010

**Community comments:**

There were no community comments.

**Information Items:**

1. Teacher Licensure: Ms. Amy Hollyfield described to the Board her specific plans for obtaining her Teacher Licensure. She is working through a regional alternative licensing program and the cost of her program at Barton College is ~\$10K. She is expected to complete the program in 1.5 years. The cost of a similar licensing program via NC Teach online is ~\$2.5K to \$4.0K. Ms. Hollyfield requested that the Board provide financial support for her and other teachers who are in the process of obtaining the Teacher Licensure regardless of the program that they choose. The financial support could be similar to the support provided for the Montessori training. Ms. Sharmila Bristol indicated that the Board would consider her request.
2. Sunday School Contract: Mr. Chandra Vyas is the Director of the Sunday School "Swadya". It is a program focused on a study of the self based on the Templeton Foundation. The Sunday School has been renting classroom facilities at Sterling for 5 years and at the last meeting the Board had voted not to rent out the classroom facilities anymore. Mr. Vyas requested that the Board reconsider the cancellation of the contract to allow the school to use the classrooms on Sundays. Average attendance for Sunday School was 55-60 children and 35-40 adults. They had started with the use of one classroom but currently were utilizing classrooms in C building. Rental rates had not changed over the years. Mr. Vyas shared that the Sunday School has been extremely careful with Sterling property and had a good rental relationship. In addition the facilities were in close proximity to a lot of the families that attended the program. Ms. Bristol indicated to Mr. Vyas that the Board would reconsider his request.
3. PFA Report: Michelle Rapp in representation of the PFA reported to the Board that 300 presents and several grocery cards were distributed to children in need at Sterling during the holidays. This event called the Angel Tree was organized by the PFA. The distribution of T-shirts has been closed and the PFA is encouraging the members of the Sterling community to use the shirts during the Spirit days. Several events sponsored and organized by the PFA are coming up:
  - Book Fair: March 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>
  - Reading Day: March 6<sup>th</sup>
  - Staff Appreciation: March 16<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup>
  - Play: Almost Recess on March 17<sup>th</sup>
  - Family Science Night: March 26<sup>th</sup>

Ms. Johanna will be organizing a drama club for the middle school. Currently, members of the PFA are helping to find a location for rehearsals and presentation.

**Strategic Planning**

Ms. Lilly Skok Bunch presented to the Board the final version of the 2008-2012 Strategic Plan for approval. The Board made minor edits to the plan but were in agreement with the final document. Ms. Bunch indicated that going forward Mr. Zajic will be in charge of leading the implementation of the Strategic Plan – as it was largely operational. Ms. Bunch and the Board discussed different possibilities for communicating the final version of the Strategic Plan to other members of the community.

#### Actions:

- Ms. Bunch to finalize edits to the Strategic Plan and re-distribute it to the Board.
- Ms. Bunch and Ms. Bristol to meet and formulate the communications plan

### **Development**

Ms. Bunch described the process to initiate a capital campaign or an annual giving for the school. She recommended three steps to begin this process; first to communicate to the rest of the community the Strategic Plan; second, to begin developing at Sterling a culture of philanthropy and third, to develop a database of alumni as potential donors for the school.

#### Actions:

- Ms. Bunch to meet with Mr. Zajic and gather historical SIMS data to start developing the database.
- Ms. Padgett to share past handbooks with student and parent information to Ms. Bunch.

### **Finance Committee**

- Ms. Alexis Schauss presented the monthly budget to the Board. As of January 20<sup>th</sup> the school is financially on track with 53% of budgeted revenue received and at 50% of budgeted expenses. Ms. Schauss warned that given the current financial environment and the NC State budget deficit the School needs to be very conservative with its cash. Current surplus is \$142,760.
- A 5% increase in the Academy tuition was recommended which is consistent with the increases of other comparative schools in the area. This will increase annual academy tuition to \$7800. In addition a revised payment plan is recommended with 10 equal installments – the 1<sup>st</sup> month's tuition being due at the time of contract signing. There will be no changes in the fees for the Before and After care programs for K-8.
- Ms. Schauss as well as other members of the Board continue pursuing conversations with different banks to determine their interest to finance a bond for Sterling's construction projects. The credit market continues to be very tight. However financial institutions are much more knowledgeable and interested in charter schools today so we are not considered much more risky than regular public schools. Susan Winshall from Zion's Bank requested a pro-forma statement and further details on the financials for submission to third party.

Action: Ms. Schauss to follow up with Susan Winshall on whether a specific portfolio was created for Sterling that could be presented to interested third parties.

### **Executive Director's Report**

#### **I. Enrollment**

Mr. Zajic reported that last summer between Lower & Upper Elementary almost 25 new students were received. This created a challenge for classroom teachers who need to bring these students up to speed with the Montessori curriculum while continuing to work with the other Sterling students. Mr. Zajic recommended that with student attrition the Board consider backfills from the wait list through the first term of the school year. This year four new 4<sup>th</sup> graders and two 1<sup>st</sup> graders were enrolled in the first term due to student attrition. The specific grades were selected for enrollment of new students to ensure that these students will remain at Sterling for a longer period. The school will not receive state funding for these students but will receive county funding. Enrolling students in the second semester of the school year is too late to allow these students to catch up with the curriculum and perform adequately at the EOGs. Therefore, Mr. Zajic recommended making it very explicit in the information provided to the parents about the school that new students will only be admitted - if required to address attrition - during the first term of the school year. Filling open seats with new students will be dependent on current enrollment. All backfills will be taken in priority off the waitlist.

The school will send to the parents a letter asking about their intent to return for the 2009-2010 year. This information will be vital for next school year planning. Mr. Zajic and Mr. Oberst will make plans for the raising 6<sup>th</sup> graders since it is expected that the middle school will be at full capacity. The school lottery will be held on March 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### **II. Open House:**

The Open house will take place on January 31<sup>st</sup>. There will be a 30 minutes presentation followed by a Q & A session. Then prospective parents will be able to visit the classrooms where members of the staff will be available for questions. Members of the PFA and the Board will be present at the Open house. It has been advertised in the Cary News and the News and Observer.

### **III. Calendar Planning:**

On March 20<sup>th</sup> there will be a make-up day due to inclement weather.

Mr. Zajic has begun making plans for the 2009-2010 school year calendar. The school year will be comprised of 180 instructional days and will begin on August 24<sup>th</sup>. Fifteen days will be dedicated to teacher workdays distributed as follows: 5 days for setting up classrooms, 2 days for parent-teacher conferences, 2 teacher workdays dedicated to upgrading classrooms, 5 days for in service training, and 1 day for tear down. The Board will approve the 2009-2010 calendar at the March session.

Action: Mr. Zajic to identify and propose to the Board how teachers will make up their workday that will be converted to a make-up school day. Teachers are required by law to complete the required number of school days.

### **III. Other items:**

- Mr. Zajic has determined that for the remainder of this school year it is best to reorganize the schedule of the current Spanish teacher (Ms. Marisol) to fulfill the obligations of the lower and upper elementary classes. This would mean that each class will receive two classes of Spanish a week. There will be up to 2.5 hours of planning time each day for the teacher.
- Mr. Zajic is working with the Town of Morrisville on a grant to get a new traffic sign at the entrance of the school with the speed limit. This should help remind drivers of the school traffic and help with safety concerns.

### **Building Committee**

- A Traffic Impact Analysis will not be completed at this time. Enrollment of the school is pretty small compared to other Wake County schools and will not help with current master planning so we do not need to rush into it now.
- Completion of the master plan has been revised to include
  - required additional 8 classrooms
  - worst case planning additional 4 classrooms
  - covered pavilion/sport court (for gathering space as well as keeping PE off the parking lot)
  - carpool loop (that address the safety issues)
  - Town of Morrisville "required" site improvements (storm water, fire lane and parking issues)
- Architects have been requested to provide a Photoshop rendering of the master plan to show the additional parcels of land behind the school and the how they will address safety issues. We also need to prepare a presentation around the two plans before we can meet with the Fire Marshall.

### **Policy Committee**

We are very close to having all required policies completed and legally reviewed. Mr. Zajic is in the process of reviewing the policies for finalization.

Action: Mr. Barker to determine if there is an effective procedure for reviewing policies on a regular basis and ensuring timely updates.

### **Consent Agenda**

- On motion and second the Board approved (7-0) to accept the minutes from November 19th regular session with required feedback incorporated and approved by email..
- On motion and second the Board approved (7-0) to approve the final version of the 2008-2012 Strategic Plan including the changes discussed in the present Board meeting.
- On motion and second the Board approved (7-0) to increase the tuition of the Academy by 5% for 2009-2010 with a revised payment plan of 10 equal installments. The 1<sup>st</sup> payment will be due at the time of registration and contract signing. There will be no changes to the Before and After Care Program fees.

The Board recessed to executive session at 9:15 pm.

The Board returned to open session and adjourned at 10:35 pm

Submitted respectfully,

Cristina Gillanders