

Board of Governors Meeting
Washington Latin Public Charter School
5200 2nd Street, NW Washington, DC
Tuesday, April 8, 2014
6:00pm

Governors Present: M. Cave (late/phone); C. Culver (late arrival); J. Davis; T. DiBiase; A. Economou; C. Ejiasa; R. Greiff (phone until in-person arrival); S. Kimpel (late arrival); M. Lerner; M. Levasseur; A. Lovett; S. Schaeffler; C. Siddall; A. Wilkins

Head of School: M. Cutts

Guests: Geovanna Izurieta, WLPCS Director of Finance
Kate Cromwell, WLPCS Interim Director of Development
Richard O. Walker, Managing Director at Orr Associates, Inc.

1. **Call to Order:** President established quorum and called the meeting to order at 6:10pm.
2. **Report from Board President:** Mr. Ejiasa nominated Ms. Lovett to the Academic Committee and himself as Interim Chair of the Development Committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. DiBiase and passed unanimously.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** The Board approved the Minutes of January 2014 unanimously and with no changes after a motion made by Ms. Economou and seconded by Mr. Siddall.
4. **Report of Contracts over \$25,000:** Ms. Izurieta reported no new contracts.
5. **Head of School Report:** Ms. Cutts noted that the majority of topics in her report would be covered during committee conversations and so she would wait to discuss them at the appropriate times.
6. **Academic Committee:**
 - a. **Spanish as a language offering:** Ms Economou explained that during winter fundraising events, a few board members had fielded questions from parents and donors as to why Spanish is not offered at WLPCS. To provide clarification, Ms. Cutts explained that the charter required French as a romance language, not Spanish, and that she considers it a meaningful point of curricular differentiation from other schools. She also noted that WLPCS already offers four languages (Arabic, Chinese, French and Latin) and that funding an additional one would prove prohibitively expensive. Mr. Ejiasa inquired what would be required to add it, and Ms. Cutts predicted that WLPCS would need to drop a current language, likely French, to make it

financially feasible. Neither she nor the board saw a need, immediate or otherwise, to consider that course of action.

- b. Charter Amendment: Ms. Cutts explained that several of the academic goals articulated in the original charter are either outdated or irrelevant. She recommended amending the charter to replace those goals with PMF requirements ahead of WLPCS's ten-year review, a process that is both easy and encouraged by PCSB. Mr. Siddall explained that, as Board Chair at Meridian, he had discouraged the school from adopting the PMF amendment because it posed a regulatory risk. Mr. Lerner agreed, noting that a PMF amendment tied WLPCS's academic goals to an ever-changing political landscape. He recommended including a disclaimer sentence that essentially preserved WLPCS's right to rewrite its metrics should the PMF change in an undesirable way. Ms. Cutts appreciated that feedback and noted her intention to add that language. Mr. Levasseur expressed his concern that the PMF did not adequately capture the rigor behind WLPCS's academic goals and hoped to revisit this in the future. Ms. Schaeffler explained that KIPP had adopted the PMF amendment and, in response to Mr. Levasseur's concern, more broadly advocated that the charter is not necessarily the place to set the high bar. Mr. Lerner concurred and made a motion to adopt the PMF charter, including the disclaimer language. The motion was seconded by Mr. DiBiase and passed unanimously.

7. **Finance Committee:**

- a. Budget: Mr. Davis explained that the committee's main objectives in this meeting were to review the budget and seek its approval as well as review the new approach to teacher compensation. Regarding the budget, he reviewed a unique set of challenges associated with this year's budget, its assumptions, and an overview.
- b. Teacher Salaries: Ms. Cutts then explained WLCPS's new salary framework, outlining research conducted and reasons for developing it.
- c. Concerns and Debate: Mr. Lerner noted that the budget was predicated on the Mayor's proposal; he saw that as both unusual and especially risky, given how hotly contested the budget was. Ms. Cutts expressed her opinion that, given the surplus and high priority given to education by all council members, the budget will be protected. Ms. Schaeffler agreed but noted that KIPP is budgeting flat to be conservative. Ms. Schaeffler also commented on a significant jump in insurance costs and recommended that WLPCS meet with The Meltzer Group. A review of teacher benefits ensued. Given that teacher salaries are being revised to meet 85% of the DCPS salary scale, Mr. DiBiase asked if WLPCS in fact loses teachers to DCPS; Ms. Cutts answered no – that they were more likely to go to Montgomery County. Mr. Lerner expressed his sincere concern that board members had not engaged in a line-by-line review of the budget and that in fact they had not even received it; Mr. DiBiase clarified that in fact members had indeed received the budget in the pre-meeting materials, albeit 24 hours prior to the meeting. Mr. Greiff shared his own concern

that 24 hours had not provided sufficient time for meaningful review and wondered if the by-laws did not specify a different timeline. Ms. Economou reviewed the by-laws to locate such guidelines but could not find any. Mr. Ejiasa apologized for not sending the materials sooner, noting that his business travel had delayed their distribution. He further explained that the board had historically reviewed the budget in March ahead of DC's budget approval because of teacher salaries. After some discussion, Ms. Schaeffler made a motion to approve the portion of the budget establishing pay scale so that Ms. Cutts could move forward with offer letters; Mr. Siddall seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Mr. Davis concluded by articulating his desire that all board members ultimately feel comfortable with the budget process and his plan to regroup with the committee to devise contingency plans and next-steps to that end.

8. **Strategic Committee:**

- a. **Succession Plan:** Mr. Cave noted that the succession plan is still being finalized but will be ready for review in May.
- b. **Expansion:** In follow up to the retreat, Mr. Levasseur confirmed that everyone supports expansion in some form over the next five years. He asked those who do not to raise their hands; no one raised his or her hand.
- c. **Sustainability:** Mr. Levasseur then questioned how the board would know when sustainability had been achieved. Ms. Cutts explained that she had given this much thought and, in her opinion, isolated the answer to four components: 1) reaching maximum capacity and plateauing in terms of students, staff, faculty, etc. 2) completing facilities development 3) reinforcing board development and growth and 4) migrating teacher salaries to a desired standard. She felt that once those four variables were in place, WLPCS would be sustainable and ready for expansion.
- d. **Debate:** Mr. Levasseur wondered if it is not possible to parallel process the achievement of those four goals alongside future expansion. Ms. Schaeffler argued that in many ways, expansion strengthens sustainability, for example attracting more and better students and board members. Mr. Siddall agreed and resisted the notion that facilities completion should preclude or delay expansion. Mr. Greiff observed, however, that is unusual to define expansion alongside so much uncertainty around future leadership. Mr. Levasseur reminded the group that part of the need to define the collective opinion is so that members can message it appropriately, which is becoming increasingly urgent.
- e. **To be continued:** Ms. Cutts noted that, with fifteen minutes left in the meeting, time was running short, and she had much to share regarding development. Mr. Ejiasa agreed and moved discussion on to the Development Committee.

9. **Development Committee:**

- a. Kate Cromwell - Ms. Cutts introduced new interim Director of Development Kate Cromwell and asked each board member to introduce him or herself.
- b. Barbara Rossotti – Ms. Cutts announced a donation of \$100,000 from Barbara Rossotti, an important DC philanthropist, with whom she shares a Mount Holyoke connection.
- c. Alumni Gift - Ms. Cutts shared that a recent WLPCS graduate had recently made a gift of \$4,500.
- d. CityBridge - Ms. Cutts also noted the attention that WLPCS had garnered as a result of CityBridge’s First Fridays event and was pleased to report the WLPCS would be highlighted on May 16 for an event for 100 of the country’s most prominent education philanthropists.
- e. Prospect List: Dick Walker, Managing Director at OAI, reminded the board that he and his team were serving as WLPCS development consultants through the end of June. He circulated a prospect list in hard copy and asked board members to cultivate potential contacts.
- f. David Catania: Catania again pledged to Ms. Cutts that he would support \$2 million funding for the gym; Ms. Cutts highlighted current political uncertainty.

10. **Project Steering Committee:** Mr. Davis explained that, despite the committee’s clear requests for more affordable estimates on a modified gym design, the most recent proposal nevertheless came back very high. The committee is again in the process of pushing for lower estimates.

11. **Old Business & New Business:** Mr. Ejiasa reminded Ms. Kimpel, Mr. Greiff, and Mr. Siddall to please take the Board Diagnostic Survey at their earliest convenience.

12. **Adjournment:** After determining that there was no other business before the Board, Mr. Ejiasa made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. DiBiase seconded the motion, and Mr. Ejiasa adjourned the meeting at 8:35pm.