

**Hyde Leadership Charter School
Trustees Meeting
January 9, 2016
410 Indian Trail Ridge Rd, Darien CT
Minutes**

Trustees Present: Herb Fixler
Herb Kaplan
David Steadly
Maureen Singer
Oz Hanley
Wilder Baker
Dennis Mehiel

Trustees Absent: Deborah Dumont
Jeanette Melendez
Rob Kramer

Also present: Thomas Sturtevant, Executive Director
Michael McNamara, Chief Operating Officer
Joanne Goubourn, Hyde Foundation
Cindy Warnick, Hyde Woodstock School

With a quorum present the meeting began at 9:05 AM, Mr. Fixler presiding.

1. December 14, 2015 meeting minutes

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved by the Trustees present to approve the minutes from the December 14, 2015 Board meeting.

2. Strategic Review

Mr. Fixler set the stage for the Board meeting by explaining the meeting would follow a different format dispensing with regular committee reports and would instead focus on key short- and long-term issues affecting the school.

Board growth and development:

Mr. Baker stated his belief that the board lacks professional in public relations. Opportunities to promote ourselves in positive ways but expertise does not currently exist on the board.

Mr. Fixler suggested school needed a politically-connected South Bronx member.

Mr. Steadly stated that the Bronx is still a largely forgotten borough and has more difficulty than other low-income areas attracting charitable activity. He believes the most logical board members for Hyde-Bronx are through the Hyde Foundation and the Hyde boarding schools.

They should provide trustees (HAPAs and Hyde graduates). Fixler responded this has been an issue over many years.

Sturtevant asked the trustees to first identify the characteristics desired in new trustees. (Money, mission-driven, etc.)

Mr. Steadly said he has not asked anyone to join the board because his contacts resist the give/raise money constantly.

Mehiel said we need skills + money in the same person. Skill without money not worth 'burning a board seat'. Skills are definitely needed—in legal, real estate, finance, etc. but skills alone will not complete the desired board member profile. The school needs a steady stream of fundraising to close the gap between State and Federal revenues and the funds needed to support mission-driven activities and higher teacher pay. Former Hyde parents fit this profile.

Mr. Hanley wonders if we need rich people on the board or committed people on the board who can find people with money.

Fixler says current make up is people committed to the mission. He wouldn't want 'money only' people. Mehiel said this was up for discussion. What's wrong with someone not super-committed, wouldn't come to board meetings, but would write big checks.

Singer said it keeps coming back to professional fundraiser. Could be committed or not.

Fixler says there is a leadership council for people like this. This council is for individuals who don't want to be on the board but will give. Not a great success except for one individual. Baker said we should do an annual retreat for these guys. Fixler says we should celebrate this group, bring them together.

Steadly says PR should be focused on recruiting teachers and getting us in to graduate schools.

Mr. Baker says we can't lose sight of individuals but Foundations are where the big money is. Kaplan disagrees.

Mr. Sturtevant said best play is people connected to Hyde, committed to public education generally, and wealthy.

Mr. Hanley says individual giving is tied to relationship with the board trustee as an individual, not the school.

Singer asked how do you systematically engage people with money?

Fixler says best candidate is one who retired in PR business so can approach former, not current, clients.

Hyde Foundation

Fixler says current contract is being 'radically modified'. What can Hyde Foundation do for us at this point? And what can Hyde Bronx do for the Hyde Foundation? He asked Ms. Goubourne to speak to this. Big component is 'delivery' to Hyde Bronx of new Board members.

Ms. Goubourne says progress from past where there was a firewall between HAPAs and Hyde Bronx. Ms. Goubourne now can speak to individuals she thinks would be a good fit. Finally a sense we are all moving together for same thing—serve more kids, more families. Big issue is capacity at the Foundation. Ms. Goubourne needs more clarity on what Hyde Bronx is asking of the Foundation. Fixler replied that the Hyde Foundation’s 50th anniversary will have a lot of people. Allow Hyde Bronx a 30-45 minute opportunity to speak to them. Ms. Goubourne—there will be ‘something’ about the public schools at the 50th anniversary. Need to celebrate public school effort. Kaplan says this is consistent with Joe Gauld’s national vision of Hyde. Ms. Goubourne—what is the event? Is it a presentation? Is it more than that? Malcolm says let me know what you want to do.

Mr. Sturtevant stated we need to find money for things public school funds don’t fund. Ms. Goubourne don’t think we’d make a presentation and ask for money—another fundraising effort is going on by boarding schools. Joe Gauld always believed his vision should be available to anyone (private or public).

Ms. Goubourne ask this board to truly reconsider its relationship with Hyde Foundation. Hyde Foundation is trying to have a bigger impact on public education. Ms. Goubourne stated she has heard Sturtevant say Hyde Bronx is the best example of an urban Hyde model. She accepts this in general. Ms. Goubourn stated the contract between the Foundation and Hyde Bronx is not an arms-length agreement for services. Mr Handley pressed on this. What would be different in the agreement specifically? Ms. Goubourn replied that public Hyde schools should be fed by bigger vision. Research, articles, etc. She didn’t have a definitive answer and asked the Trustees to help shape that.

Mr. Kaplan asked what is the mission of Hyde Foundation? Ms. Goubourne replied it is to bring Hyde vision to more kids. Mr. Fixler if this meant through more charter schools. Ms. Goubourne said that for right now, the Foundation is stopping to shore up what we’ve got. Haven’t put a new charter out there. She stated that current academic performance at schools doesn’t warrant charter expansion

Mr. Fixler asked if there any thought of revenue sharing toward Hyde Foundation from Hyde Bronx? Ms. Goubourne replied Foundation fundraising would have a box to direct money to public schools. Mr. Sturevant suggested the Foundation give thought to shifting Hyde Foundation role from instructional support to board development support.

Teacher retention and stability

Mr Fixler said two things. Leadership (which we have a lot of) and money. Has turnover gotten worse? Or stayed the same? What do the data say? **[MAC FOLLOW UP]**

Mr. Sturtevant: Teacher competition from DOE, other charters, higher labor costs.

Mr. Baker: what can we offer in professional development? Doesn’t it matter?

Mr. Sturtevant: Teacher retention committee: Support individual teachers’ individual development needs. Bigger picture—teachers who are successful stay. Virtuous cycle.

Mr. Baker: Is there a common thread for unsuccessful teachers? Mr. Sturtevant: Yes. Lack of ability to manage the classroom. Greater focus on academic outcomes putting pressure on them too. Mission-aligned staff stay. Demanding and limited market.

Mr Fixler said hiring practices in the past haven't been as successful as they should have been. What are doing to improve that? Don't have Recruitment director right now, what are we changing in recruitment process?

Mr. Sturtevant: Staff in it for the long haul identify with our community and are aligned with the mission.

Mr Fixler said Single most issue is pay scale?

Mr. Sturtevant: Yes. Need to look at how to do better with fewer staff. Board can help identifying our unique characteristics.

Mr. Baker: Go back to individual giving...have individuals underwrite specific staff PD ideas.

Keep Character Culture Alive

Mr Fixler said Hyde culture is the reason trustees are here and underpins everything at the school. Hasn't spent enough time at the school to have his own data to state Hyde culture is alive at the school. Just doesn't know. Mr. Hanley agreed.

Mr. Hanley: Have FED department report to the board.

Mr. Sturtevant: Come to Discovery night.

HK: Forum to talk to teachers? Students?

Mr. Sturtevant: Board needs to operate at a higher level. Could talk to students but due to governance, reporting relationships...board shouldn't meet with teachers.

Ms. Singer: Heard about Hyde through Staci and YPC. She came to YPC/student session about college application process. YPC more engaged with the school. Board engagement less tangible. More strategic at Board level.

Mr. Sturtevant: What about sending monthly calendar to board with activities they could attend?

Leadership Growth and Continuity

Mr. Fixler: Board should be thinking about this. Tom should discuss what current players might be candidates to replace him and how should we help them develop?

Mr. Sturtevant: 3 candidates for ED. HS candidates exist. No viable internal candidates for ES, Ms. Singer Director, COO.

Mr. Fixler: How do we develop ED skills in key staff?

Mr. Sturtevant: Great question. Need to think about it?

Mr. Hanley: What would happen if Tom disappeared tomorrow?

Mr. Sturtevant: first, ask Celia.

Mr. Fixler: Acting ED (someone from within), hire the search firm....Tom should designate who his interim replacement should be and let the Board know.

Long Range

Mr. Fixler: Wholly-owned sub of Civic owns the building. Financing was provided by Civic, LIIF and Goldman. Lots of ways we could refinance a takeout—bonds...

Mr. Hanley: We should be able to find mortgage (recorded).

Bryant Avenue:

Mr. Fixler: No great ideas. Sturtevant and McNamara should put together a list of things in the building we want. Maybe we can find someone to pay attention.

Board Survey

Mr. Fixler disseminated and led a discussion of the Trustee's self-assessments of the Board's effective across a range of topics. Trustees generally challenged themselves to do better on determining a cohesive fundraising strategy but felt they met or exceeded their obligations on fiduciary responsibility, school leadership performance and strategic vision.

3. Public Comments

None.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:55 pm.

Minutes prepared by Michael McNamara