Special Meeting of The Odyssey School  
Board of Directors  

Monday, March 21, 2016  
4:00 pm

Board members in attendance:  
Christina Carlson, Marg Collins, Brenda Bautosch Dickhoner, Jason Fritz, Corey Goodrich,  
Chad Harman, Jon Liu, Andrew Mohraz, Brian Moore, Justin Silverstein and Jen Stefanacci.  
Christine DeLeon, Heather Lamm and Illana Poley were on the phone (Illana joined in  
person at 4:08). Heather left prior to the finance update.  

Guests included Larry Georgeson (left at 5 pm) and Nora Flood from the League of Charter  
Schools. Michelle Ferguson, an attorney working on behalf of the board, joined at 5:16 pm.

Agenda

- **ACTION ITEM:** Justin moved to approve the amended agenda. Jen seconded and all  
voted to approve.

Interim Leadership Team

- Staff feel like the current system is working well - three staff people (Jackie, Elki and  
Liza) are working with Jason serving as the final decision maker. There are areas  
where staff may seek additional board support, e.g. Illana around communication,  
Ami Desai working with Liza, etc.
  
  o Staff also provided feedback that these three (Jackie, Elki and Liza) are  
  already taking on a great deal of work. There is a request that the board  
  consider additional compensation for them. There are also questions about  
  staff evaluations with Liza and Jen Wood. Typically we get six evaluations  
  per year. So far this year, most of us have had one or none - at least on paper.  
  The specific question is what purpose this round would serve? Do we revert  
  back to last year’s results? Could we construct a meaningful system for the  
  remainder of this year? Is a bump in pay available given our budget this year,  
  and if not, do we need to put pressure on evaluations for this year? There  
  are big strands of discussion around the purpose of the evaluations and who  
  should do them. It could be Liza and Jen Wood, but the purpose of the six  
  visits has been to provide a continuum. What would that look like this year?  

  o Given Liza’s hat in the past of doing coaching, who does that influence this  
  year if she’s doing evaluations? People brought up in the past that it was  
  positive to have a separation between evaluation and coaching, but we  
  should recognize that this year, Liza has more experience and context. There  
  is concern about sustainability for her to have this additional, complicated  
  role.

  o We need to be mindful about sustainability issues going forward. But from a  
  week-to-week perspective, this structure seems like the best option for now.  
  But these three are really doing the work, and we need to honor that they
feel like this is a good division of labor broadly. We may need to bring in more resources.

- Question: does having three board members named mean that the three of you will be having public board meetings? Right now, the weekly meeting will be Jason, Liza, Jackie and Elki.

- We need to be on top of bandwidth problems before it gets too big to solve. Jason and this team have designated a meeting once a week as a way to make sure that we are on top of this.

- **ACTION ITEM**: Brian made a motion to appoint Elki, Jackie and Liza to the Interim Leadership Team along with Jason as designated final decision maker. Heather abstained, all others voted to approve.

**Interim Search Committee**

- Family Council last Wednesday night voted for Larry Georgeson to serve on the interim search committee and staff voted for Paul and Ali to serve. The entire committee met last Friday afternoon.

- We reviewed the Succession Plan for an untimed transition. It calls for specificity with flexibility and a tight time frame (two weeks to eight weeks). There is no specific mention of an interim search, only a plan for running a full search for a director. Our understanding is that we are looking for an interim director.

- We identified our objective/purpose. Find a candidate who can be in the building quickly. We focused a lot on the interim part, not on the full replacement part. We are looking at a capped interim term and thinking through what kind of leader we are tasked with finding.

- **Option 1**: maintain the status quo. Someone who can come in and identify changes and make those in a short time period, or someone who can come in and be directed by the board to make changes. This is a CEO model who can come in, make tough decisions and move on.

  - We contacted DPS and EL and asked for recommendations. DPS provided one suggestion and EL provided one suggestion. We also went back to applicants from last year’s search. In some cases, candidates were already interviewed for the first and second round. We excluded those who were not invited to second rounds. We called all candidates who were invited to second rounds, informed them of the opening and indicated we need someone who could start immediately.

  - There is a heightened need for communication and working through a big ED search next year.

  - We successfully contacted three of four applicants from last year. One was not interested; one was tentative, and one is interested and available almost immediately. Five other first round candidates not invited to second rounds last year have not been contacted. Four other individuals have contacted the committee but we have not yet connected.
• We are asking for the board’s advice. Should we pursue, review and recommend interested candidates who have already been vetted? In this case, the committee would bring one recommended candidate and one back up. We could do that with these existing candidates. Should we:
  o Call back the five others who were not invited to a second round last year?
  o Pursue recommendations to the committee?
  o Continue to ask for more suggested candidates? Word of mouth seems the best way to get candidates, but we haven’t expressly asked for recommendations.
  o Conduct a full process of posting description, etc.?

• We have concerns as a committee about candidates being comfortable with role of ED. What is it we expect them to do? How do we communicate well, communicate effectively and have the community feel involved in the process while still moving quickly? We feel strongly about communications – we know people are really focused on this issue. We want the focus to be on hiring the right person for the long-term.
  o The first question will obviously dictate how we proceed.

• EL’s recommendation was an applicant last year. We decided not to move forward with the recommendation from DPS.

• Question: should we add to the list, when we decide what we want? Are we saying that the interim could be allowed to apply for the full position? Depending on what the board would want, they may not be interested?
  o Sometimes schools do find successful leaders with interims.
  o We need to be really clear if we are not blocking an interim from applying for the next position.
  o If we have specific hard tasks we are asking of the interim, that could be the reason for them not to apply.
  o Nora offered that this is a conversation around whether or not you are looking for a hatchet person. If the school was really broken, you could need a person whose job is basically to determine who stays and who goes. I don’t get the sense that is where you are. If you have a really good person, it’s not too late to find someone. Right now is when things are really starting to heat up. Usually around spring break that people will announce they are leaving. Be careful around the language of “interim” because there is a connotation that it is really temporary. It can put everyone at a disadvantage if you decide that leader should stay. Just look for a leader, unless you feel like you need someone to come in who is going to make cuts and revamp. I would still stay away from putting Interim in front of their title for next year.
  o In fairness, we need to be upfront with people that the expectation is that this will be a position for the next year and that they could apply for next year.
  o Can we phrase it so that it’s an interim with the opportunity to be considered beyond next year?
• Some of this is about the community. Last year we went through a very inclusive process. We did capture some lessons learned.

• The other question is what are we looking for? We spent a lot of time on a job description last year. It seems like keeping the ship afloat is important, but that doesn’t mean that we need to be stagnant. This person should have the skill to move the ball forward.
  ○ Someone said that the highest priorities had been a challenge in the last process.
  ○ Paul and Ali talked a lot about the innate leadership qualities that we look for. Were we as a search committee looking for the wrong things last time? Should we be looking for something different?
  ○ This person needs to have the power to keep the school going, but are we looking for something different because of where we are now?
  ○ Is there a middle ground? A leader who needs to be able to lead coming in the door? Look at Northfield as a model. We know there are some specific issues that need to be addressed: e.g. calendar, math scores. Regardless of whom we talk to, those are going to be two priorities. We could keep afloat forever and not grow.
  ○ From a community perspective, if we can lay those issues out that at least a majority agrees with, that would be really helpful.
  ○ Two or maybe three priorities are about the most we can ask.
  ○ If we can get someone in really quickly, maybe the rest of this year is a chance to assess, next year coming in the ED can work with the board to identify those three priorities.
  ○ I don’t know that we were necessarily looking for the wrong things before, but sometimes you just don’t know what you have coming in the door. We may have to embrace that – until this person is in here and working, we don’t know what we have until we get here. We definitely heard loudly from the community – concerns that Odyssey is going dark for two years – we can’t accept that. For those who have said that Odyssey is done, let’s prove them wrong.
  ○ I think for bucketing, if we say calendar and math, there is also community-building work that needs to be done. Agree we need only two or three, but I think that should be in the mix.
  ○ This person is not coming in to a blank slate, and not here to do exactly what we say, but we do have some priorities that we need to focus on.

• This is a continuation of a discussion we’ve had. Is EL experience something we want the committee to look for, specifically? It’s a struggle – it’s part of who we are but we also don’t want to limit ourselves. But it’s important to at least give some clarity to the community.
  ○ That’s something we might need to revisit for the bigger search, but in the short term is that something we have to address right away?
• Last year we had four candidates with EL experience out of 33 applicants. Of the 11 we’ve discussed, three have it.

• If there were two candidates and one had EL experience, I would think that is a definite plus. If we are hiring the person with the assumption they are here for 14 months, knowing EL is a definite plus.

• Do we have consensus? Are we opening the door to having a director in place while running a full search?
  
  o Question: What was the conversation within the search committee? We didn’t really talk about it. We want to focus on nailing down the right candidate. Can we send this question back to the search committee?

  o At Northfield, the school was clearly broken. Those issues had to be resolved quickly.

  o Communications and community input are concerns.

  o Nora offered that there are blessings and curses either way that you go. There is not a right and a wrong. Within your community, if you have someone in place who puts their name in, you will have people who are happy and people who are upset. But you will know more. Is it just 15 months, plain and simple? If you do that, you may limit your pool.

• As a reminder to the committee, if you need the board to come back together, we need 72 hours of notice for the board and 24 for the community. If we need to have discussions for Executive Session, we must notice that as well.

• Question: What does the committee need from us? Our thought is the search committee recommends and then the board moves forward.
  
  o Question: Can we authorize the committee to set interviews as they need to?

• Last year we had a salary range that was communicated to candidates.

• We have candidates that are interested. If we meet tomorrow, we could make a recommendation. Or we could interview additional candidates.
  
  o Question: Can the search committee make that decision? You have the most information, can you make the call?

  o If a few of the names you have on paper look like people you should talk to, consider that. And send any names to Nora for more feedback.

Finance

• Our fund balance looks really good for the year. We are getting a little more money from PPR. Wes’ resignation shifts things slightly. For purposes of this meeting, there are really four asks:
  
  o For staff, retention bonuses. We built into the budget $20,000. We ask that the board approve that allocation and then the finance committee figure out a way to structure that with something that is equitable. For staff who sign a contract for next year, they would receive something this year and something when they return.
- From a compensation standpoint, for Jackie, Elki and Liza we set aside $10,000 for the finance committee to equitably spend up to that amount as additional compensation.

- For the search committee, $5,000 that we may or may not need to post job descriptions, bring in candidates, etc.

- For adventure, we are running concurrent trips. This wasn’t in the budget, but Paul, Wes and Jackie were having conversations about bringing on a staff person who could run a full-level adventure. We have used Dina in the past but she didn’t have some of the technical certifications needed. Paul has identified somebody for $3,000 to run concurrent trips (incorrectly marked as Chad in Kendra’s budget).

  - Legal fees estimated at this point in time to be $20,000. We want the board to approve that for the budget.

  - Question: According to the current budget, we are still barely on the good side for the year. We have about a $75,000 surplus; these actions would leave us with a $15,000 surplus.
    - We are running such a strong surplus for this year and we have in the past; with that, our staff does a lot for us.

  - **ACTION ITEM:** Justin made a motion to set aside $20,000 of surplus for staff for the 2016-17 year and to delegate to the finance committee authority to structure a bonus. Brenda seconded. All approved.

  - **ACTION ITEM:** Justin made a motion to set aside additional compensation for the staff taking on additional duties as part of the leadership team with the finance committee designing how to pay that out, up to $10,000. Brian seconded. All approved.

  - **ACTION ITEM:** Jon made a motion to pay $5,000 of the surplus for the search committee. Justin seconded. All approved.

  - **ACTION ITEM:** Justin made a motion to use $3,000 of the surplus for an assistant for the spring tips and to authorize the leadership team to hire for this year. Chad seconded. All approved.

  - **ACTION ITEM:** Justin made a motion to spend up to $20,000 for legal fees for the board. Jason seconded. All approved.

**Governance**

- We need to formalize steps we are already doing with Michelle.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Brian made a motion to invite and request the attendance of a representative of the League of Charter Schools between now and the summer retreat unless, at the opinion of a chair, there is no need for input. Andrew seconded. All approved.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Brian made a motion to direct the chair to invite the Colorado League of Charter Schools to provide Governance training at the board retreat and authorize up to $1,000 and to include best practices for a role of Executive
Committee and the evaluation of an Executive Director. Christina seconded. All voted to approve.

- Brian, with input from the League, will consider and recommend changes to the by-laws. The board should solicit input from the community to changes that would take place at the following fiscal year (17-18).

**Executive Session (§ 24-6-402(4)(b), C.R.S.) for legal advice**

- **ACTION ITEM:** Andrew made a motion to go into Executive Session for legal advice pursuant to §24-6-402(4)(b), C.R.S. and to invite Nora Flood from the League of Charter Schools to attend. Brian seconded. All voted to approve.

- The board entered into Executive Session at 5:17 p.m.

- The board returned to public session at 5:49 p.m.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Brian made a motion to approve a statement from the board with adjustments to be made by Brian, as discussed. Jason seconded. All voted to approve.

**Adjournment**

- **ACTION ITEM:** Illana made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 p.m. Corey seconded. All voted to approve.

____________________________
President of the Board

6/1/14

Date