

January Board of Trustees Meeting

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

howard, finance committee meeting, families, employees, students, board, people, meeting, max, grant, year, school, motion, jade, good, jefferson parish, talking, seats, mfp, enrollment


SPEAKERS


Melanie Tennyson, Larissa Muetzel, All Board Members, Jade Brown-Russell, Susan Chapman, Sarah Murphy, Chad Rice, Grant Ligon, Max Correa, Howard Rodgers IV




- S** Susan Chapman 00:00
Okay, so I'll go ahead and admit everybody from the waiting room and then 15 seconds we should be good to go. Okay. Thanks. Okay everyone who was waiting has been admitted so we can start whenever y'all are ready.
- G** Grant Ligon 20:50
Very good thanks everybody for coming tonight. This was the board meeting of the International School for the January 27 meeting. We'll start with Jade to making sure to get roll taken
- J** Jade Brown-Russell 21:02
store, I will call the roll. Now, Grant Ligon president
- G** Grant Ligon 21:09

here.


 Jade Brown-Russell 21:10
Chad rice, Vice President Larissa Muetzel, Treasurer

 Larissa Muetzel 21:17
here.

 Jade Brown-Russell 21:20
Jade Brown-Russell Secretary here, Max Correa,


 Max Correa 21:25
Here.

 Jade Brown-Russell 21:26
Sarah Murphy

 Sarah Murphy 21:32
Here

 Jade Brown-Russell 21:32
Howard Rogers.

 Howard Rodgers IV 21:34
Here, Jade, Chad's here he's on mute. But he's here. If you can't see it.

 Grant Ligon 21:45
Thank you very much. Good. So I'm on the agenda tonight. The first item is a. I'm sorry, I'm, I'm trying to get back to that page hold on just a second. First the order tonight is an action item is a proposed authorization for hazard pay. The big question is whether we will

vote, vote to authorize the use of school funds for special distribution of hazard pay to employees. We talked a little bit about this in the finance committee meeting last week. And so we're, we're basically are looking to get a motion to approve the authorization of a hazard pay to the staff and teachers. Any board discussion about that.

J Jade Brown-Russell 22:37

I did not, I attended the strategic committee meeting. But that was not able to stay on for the finance committee meeting. Okay, what was what was the outcome at the finance committee was there any objection.

G Grant Ligon 22:52

Not that I recall now you can correct me if I'm wrong, I don't think so. Okay.

M Melanie Tennyson 22:59

And I just want to add Jade that since that meeting, we Emily, Mike, and I had met prior to the finance caning and post finance committee meeting Mike has come back with a revised budget and quarterly financials, and plugging in numbers to include and pay, we come out with a still a small surplus, so it wouldn't. It's not going to put us into a deficit at this at all We thought perhaps you know with the changes in enrollment and MFP, but it doesn't look like there's any that there's any chance of that right now. In fact, and that's exactly the feedback that I was hoping for.

J Jade Brown-Russell 23:59

Grant, if there's no objection, I'll make the motion to approve that I think our teachers deserve hazard pay and more. So I would make that motion.

G Grant Ligon 24:09

The motion

H Howard Rodgers IV 24:12

is a second discussion. Yeah. Hi, how long is the hazard pay for. Is it a one time thing, I wasn't on the on the on the call so is it a one time thing, or is it going to the end of the year, how is this. So,

M

Melanie Tennyson 24:33

Howard it's gonna be a one time payment for the Louisiana constitution and how we can use MFP. So, we would we would pay all employees the same amount. It's not like a, it's not a bonus or something, it is a single payment want that same sum of money to all employees, and it's in recognition of the hazard of all that been involved and coming in and out of the things with COVID. When we're open when we're not all the work on and. Ideally, we'd like to put it out in March. We don't have a February meeting on the agenda. So I wanted to bring it up now so that we could release those funds. In March, rather than wait until the end of the year.

H

Howard Rodgers IV 25:37

Gotcha

M

Max Correa 25:39

Grant, this is Max. I think this is well deserved, but it would be helpful to before we vote on something to get a small summary. If we have not been involved I was in that meeting but I don't recall seeing or understanding the magnitude of it the impact of it. What does it mean for teachers, are there other options so. So when we're voting for something we'll be good to get a little bit more background ahead of time so we can make an informed decision. Again, I do think this is well worth it on an extraordinary year so I'm not opposing the motion but but but yeah I think a little bit more information would be good.

M

Melanie Tennyson 26:24

And Max we can put more we can, we can put more information forward once we get the authorization to do it and I'm happy to bring those to send those numbers out and for people to see them before we actually do it. Just wanted to make sure that I got a motion to proceed with it. Now, rather, okay. So, I, you know, that was part of it but we will, we can put those numbers out there and you can see what we're going to do.

G

Grant Ligon 27:03

Very good. For the board discussion on the matter, and the motion. Any public comment on the motion. Okay, we have we have a motion and a second, we'll vote on the, on the item members voting aye.

A All Board Members 27:21
Aye. Aye. All right.

G Grant Ligon 27:23
Nay. Eyes passed the motion is passed. Thank you. And I believe at this point we are on to them so I lost it again. Oh, we're on to Howard, please. If I didn't see a Sharon on the call. I don't think she she's not on the call. Oh gotcha.

H Howard Rodgers IV 27:52
But, Sharon Bartholomew, I am just going to say, we met we talked. She came to a couple of meetings, she said. Fulfill everything she needs to do. Pre board onboarding. She comes highly recommended from a former board president and board member, and I think that she will fit our community really well and lead the board into the next couple of years. So with that I'd nominate Sharon Bartholomew for board of directors for isl charter

G Grant Ligon 28:31
nomination for sharing both Bellamy, and we have a second on the nomination. Thank you, Jade, we have a nomination a second. Do we have any board comment on the, on the nomination to have any public comment on the nomination. Very good. So we'll vote on the nomination now the members voting aye.

A All Board Members 28:57
Aye. Aye.

G Grant Ligon 29:00
Voting nay. Motion passes. We would welcome Sharon if she was here but I concur with Howard I think she's made a very good board addition so thank you very much for your help in an hour.

M Melanie Tennyson 29:13
I just want to add that she visited the school. This past week. And she toured the Dixon campus. Rosie Susan and I, all spent time with her. And I do think she came highly recommended from as Howard said from previous board members and I've interacted

with her. Virtually but I've had a chance to talk to a little bit in person and her experience working with the city Treasury, and if she has some, a lot of knowledge about collection of our tax dollars and historic tax credits and if she doesn't know about tax credit she knows people who really understand tax credits and the kind of things that we've just started that I mentioned that the last couple meetings that we need more information so I think it was very fortuitous that we found her when we did like serendipitous at all, everything lined up, and I'm looking forward to working with Sharon.

G

Grant Ligon 30:19

I am as well I think she's a good addition So good work by Howard thank you very much and thank you everybody for that. That ends the action items. This evening the next part of the board meeting is the head of school report. I'll turn it over to Melanie.

M

Melanie Tennyson 30:35

Thank you grant current enrollment is 1294. Students right now Dixon we have 345 uptown 460, and the West Bank, 309 students. Presently, we have been doing enrollment and in the first round of enrollment. It looks like we are going to fill our seats I may have more information about that later in the report too but they go hand in hand and that's really exciting as there are fewer numbers of eligible kindergarteners in that city, right now, and across America in general. Thank you. And Max for increasing enrollment and Andrew in the future because kindergarten, the number of Kindles available kindergarteners is down there. No public schools announced today that kids will go back on Monday. We've been out, you know, for a month and I know, As I mentioned last week we've had individuals on both sides of the fence reaching out to us but many more families, desperate to have their children in school so a lot of families will be happy, come Monday morning, K through eight will come back into our buildings and we will be ready for them. As of January, 25 we have zero employees and zero, students who are positive, and we have two students and one employee who are quarantined that's those numbers are really great. We have been working with Nolan public schools again today we got more information with them about getting our teachers vaccinated. and so I'm feeling cautiously optimistic that that we're moving toward that happening. Each day, we're getting a little closer. State standardized testing is still scheduled for the spring. There is no evidence that children will be allowed to come into the building to test Demeter stay out of the building to test they're staying still that all children need to come in and test. Testing will take place. There are some challenges there. I think I mentioned last week that in the upcoming weeks with the new education secretary, that might change, because it's all tied to federal Every Student Succeeds Act funding, and that Monday there, Louisiana State Accountability Commission me, and they'll be talking about testing there, too. And so, I'll

log in to that meeting and see what they have to say. Everything I've heard from. I directly I hear from one of my other heads of school, colleagues that sits on that committee. She says that the superintendent doesn't want to penalize children or schools, um, they're just trying to figure out how to work through all of the red tape and the reporting that the states have to do, to the federal government to make sure that this can go as smoothly as possible, schools get the information they need to be able to help students because standardized testing does give us information and it's just one of the tools we use. And ideally, we'll be able to test students that are eligible to come into the building and be tested get that data and use it to help them and move forward with educating our kids, next year. Um communications and development. We got another \$10,000 grant from pro bono the rec foundation for more shade. We're going to determine where we are going to put that which one of our campuses. We met with the Marcello family and Welch's today who are the custodians of the kindy fund the kindy fund that was a donation that was given to ISS, or some parents along. And then we added some of their PTO funds when that school closed down and those families merged into the type. We have a pretty substantial sum of money, we're talking about building a performance Pavilion. With those dollars we need to make sure we can get permissions. There's like \$50,000 there and like a high shaded area and platform, either at uptown or Dixon camp could put the kindy label on there so we met with them today Carla, Emily and I and so we're trying to move that so we'll have two more shaded outdoor areas. At our school, which will help a lot with the, you know, tremendous heat of the spring and summer that our students and teachers endure doing PE and circus arts, outside the family directory is completed that was a, a bigger project than we thought it would be. But we have over 200 families who now have access to first some emails, and that so that they can communicate with one another, set up playdates and birthday parties and whatever it is they need to do directly, without going through the school and there's no violation of anybody's privacy. I think that's really exciting parents have wanted that for a long time and we have finally made that happen in keeping with our really strict privacy laws and tend to return we sent out our intent to return form as we do annually and this year, 96.7, or 212, employees indicated that they intend to return for the 2122 school year. That's great news we always have a couple of people who have life you know intervene whether partners job is transferred or something comes up, and they leave us but those are the outliers so we feel really great about going into next year with a stable workforce employees. Health insurance participation is currently at 81% of our employees and 78% of our employee, employees are participating in the retirement plan. Finally we got more Chromebooks or Mr. Big orders back in December and January the IT department distributed also a number of additional hotspots to families who needed them for this wave of virtual learning. And we talked about in finance committee last week that both the MFP for Jefferson Parish and Orleans Parish went up Jefferson Parish went up significantly \$850 per student Orleans Parish, only about \$50. They said it could be more either way Jefferson Parish had passed

a millage out there which increased their collection of revenue. So that has offset. The loss of students that we had this year and so in terms of budget we're breaking even now, as we mentioned in the finance committee meeting, it will be interesting to see how that works. Next year when they start collecting taxes, and there are many fewer I'm not sure that the assessments can off. Set the empty hotel rooms, but that's just my personal aside editorial comments there. But, Jefferson Parish is millage should continue so that's really good news for us, um, the school nurse school's annual audit was completed for people who were at the finance committee meeting car Ingram Riggs was there, and there were no major findings, the probably the. Well, the biggest finding was that the labor certifications for our title one employees, which was something we had always done in the past and it dropped out of our radar, and that it was having people who are play paid with federal dollars, acknowledge that they understand if you are the family liaison, you know that your salary is paid with federal dollars not state MFP and we already have put things in place to make those corrections food service revenue was up in January when the kids came back. Then it dropped again. Two days later, but we anticipate that it will increase. Again, this upcoming week. As I said earlier, the main round application window closes on January 29 for kindergarten and first grade spots but we've already heard from enroll know that we have more than sufficient applications to fill those spots covered vaccine, we're working with another public schools to make sure we have and Children's Hospital thrive and Ochsner to make sure we have things in line. Our renewal visit for our charter annual charter review is on February 3 we don't anticipate that there will be any issues there, they'll come into the building. The next step is to make sure that all of our fire extinguishers have green tags Miss Eva, and they'll pull a few random employee files or spend. They'll ask us some questions and. And that's generally a very nice experience facility search. We visited a couple of properties in December. And as I talked about in strategic planning, everything that we're looking at now would require major renovations and historic tax credits and what that, what does that mean for the school to enter into those large scale construction projects with historic or older buildings versus new buildings and share. Sharing new board member has fallen right into place there. So we'll keep looking. But for now with the anticipated loss in revenue, and potentially decreased EMI. We may need to pause that search anyway and keep our reserve high and dry so that we don't to lay people off there were a couple of articles and advocate this past week talking to some of the big. The two biggest CMOS in town and they're already talking about. Then, how they anticipate having to lay off employees next school year and we've fortunately are not in that position. Any questions.

G

Grant Ligon 43:48

You stumped me here for a second if I might, so that on the 29th is when you hear from NOLA that which which kids are applying for ISL.

M

Melanie Tennyson 43:58

So they'll close the window we get regular what they call demand reports from them at tell us how many people have applied to date, and if they were to fill our seats on, you know, Thursday, January 12. Right. And that day they you know they'd be able to fill all of our seats and so we have received those go to Susan, and last week or the week before we found out that if they had to pull that you know, hold the lottery that day all of our seats would be filled. So the last couple of days. As always, your human nature right people wait right up until the last day to apply, and we have eighth grade parents I'm bet Laura I got six phone calls today about you know that deadline is coming up my child needs to go to high school and I you know need everything right now. So we know we'll get a small, like bomb. And these last few days, even so we feel very good about both the French, and Spanish seats for next year our Spanish seats, always fill up first. Our French seats, less so. Because there are four other French programs and all of them have a have French pre k attached but we did a, a virtual open house and tour and a panel discussion on Facebook. Two weeks ago, and after that we saw upsurge in our applications so all of our seats filled and we know that some people will drop out after round one. And if they got a seat somewhere else, they're going to try, there'll be movement and even over the summer, there are people who drop out. But that happens and then there are people who really want to die so like, a long time ago I Max's daughter was applying he was a parent who really wanted his child. And we said, Don't worry there's always at the last minute. There's always that shifting, that happens, and there are people like the Correa family who want ISL and they're willing to come in five days after school starts or something I think that I can't remember exactly but I think that's how it happened you know school has started but those seats, then become so we're good. That's probably more information than you wanted, Grant.

H

Howard Rodgers IV 46:43

Melanie, Melanie and Grant, I think this is a great time to go back and revisit the strategic plan that Max and, and you all were starting to really get into last year or the year before last Melanie, especially when you're talking about the fluctuation and MFP and potential revenue coming in from, from the state also looking at additional properties and all the different balls that you're juggling in the air. So that for the next three years or four years we have something in place that we feel confident that we're moving in the right direction. You know, I've been on the board for six years. This is my last meeting with you all. so it's been a constant, constant topic that we keep brushing on but we never really dive deep into, and I think is very important when when you. You're talking about everything in the future that we do have that strategic plan, and no I know, I know that we started on it in the 19 but we haven't really finished it. And that was the mostly looking at properties but if we do it right I think iisl will be set up in a good way for the future. Thanks.

So,

M

Max Correa 48:13

if I if I were to second what Howard just said, I look at us and obviously we got to be careful with the movements and we have to be financially responsible and kind of keep that in mind, but I also see us. Discussing food revenue and things like very small movements are not discussing what can really move the school forward, and the kind of, I would love to see us. Look at that. See what if it's not our facilities this year because COVID happen, What are the top three initiatives that would significantly increase the education of our kids or significantly increase the position of the school in the city, and have that type of discussion well how are we making this school better. I suppose to be discussing, we might have a 2%, less than revenue we're in a fortunate position to have a healthy financial have healthy financials so obviously responsibly by being able to evaluate two or three strategic moves that we will work together and we move through the year would be incredibly beneficial whether it makes sense. Obviously to make a student's education will hold so more better. And I feel like we're missing a little bit of that, or that opportunity and I think we're in a golden position, given our financials.

G

Grant Ligon 49:44

Gotcha. Okay thanks max. Any other Board comment, while we're here on the head schools discussion. Very good. So before we go to public comment I certainly want to make sure and acknowledge Howard for his, his last meeting tonight, six years now that's a pretty long stead. A lot went on during that time you you're critical to a lot of it. So thanks very much for your board service. We appreciate it. Look forward to seeing somewhere I'm going to run for Mayor or something like that; who knows maybe we'll see but thank you.

J

Jade Brown-Russell 50:17

Hey, Grant? Can you hear me This is Jade I'm sorry I was having problems getting off of mute. Can you guys hear me.

G

Grant Ligon 50:28

We can hear you now. Yep.

J Jade Brown-Russell 50:30
Hello.

M Melanie Tennyson 50:31
Yes we can hear you. We

J Jade Brown-Russell 50:36
hear grant I'm sorry, I just, I just wanted to. I just wanted to quickly piggyback on what Howard and Max talked about so one of the things that I think we focus on a lot, even at the strategic committee level, you know of course we we focus on how we can expand our physical facilities which I think is a critically important conversation. But Max just said something that triggered a thought in my mind that I've been thinking about, and just hadn't articulate it but I also think that we got to, we got to make an intentional focus on how to further develop our people. Right. So, how do we further develop our, our children, our families and our educators, and I know we do that. I know we do that on a, on a daily basis. But I'm speaking about it from more of a strategic perspective, right and so I'm on a number of other boards and I've made this recommendation on a couple of them to to really focus in on pulling someone in, and it could be a consultant or something like that who could help us move our strategic plan along. I think it is very, it's incredibly difficult for a volunteer board of filled with people who have regular nine to five jobs to commit to you know the level of strategic planning that an organization like ISIL needs. And so I think, and it would be just ridiculously over burdensome for us to ask a staff member to focus on that with all of the other things that you all are doing. And so I really I you know I know we have a little bit of a surplus, I would you know really push us maybe in our next strategic planning committee to make a decision on whether we could afford, you know, a small price tag on a consultant to help us prioritize those, those things that are again our children, our families, our teachers really are calling upon us to prioritize as it relates to the growth of the organization, and how we do that right the strategies and the tactics that we use to get paid. And I think that that's very important and we can't overlook it. That's. First thing, another thing really quickly that I wanted to mention is, you know, I think, of course, there are millions of teachable moments and this whole COVID crisis that we're in. But I also think that it is now the opportunity to really focus in on some types of some type of surveys for our families and our teachers to really get again a better understanding of, you know where they are, who they are, what they want to want us to prioritize, because I think our vision really rests upon their vision, right and their what they want to see me to see for the organization for growth so I just wanted to throw that in, but I 100% agree with Max and Howard, but I do think we should focus on developing some measurable objectives with someone who does this for a living, and really visit revisit those

measurable objectives every month or every other month when we meet, and really talk about our progress in that regard. So

G Grant Ligon 54:25

I've got it written down we can take a look at that for the script plan meeting that's coming up next time. Thanks very much. We'll do that.

M Max Correa 54:33

Very nice meeting before we never worry about enrollment because it's always full we never worry about kids leaving because it's never leave and it is the opposite, kids from other schools want to get in, anytime they could like I did a few years back so. So I love to see that and

G Grant Ligon 54:51

that you begin. Okay, any other board comment before we move to the public comment period. So Susan we have, we have some parents in the queue who have some questions for public comment, or comments, I should say.

S Susan Chapman 55:10

I'm not seeing anyone indicate right now that they would like to speak but if anybody wants to you could type your name in the chat and that way Grant can call on you in order. Okay, I'm not seeing anybody who's wanting to comment.

G Grant Ligon 55:42

Very good. So with that, we will normally invite the new member onboarding to adjourn the meeting should I ask Howard to do that, since you're walking out the door.

H Howard Rodgers IV 55:56

I can do it, I'll be at the hopefully strategic planning next next month,

G Grant Ligon 56:00

no good. Okay, sounds good.

- M** Melanie Tennyson 56:03
Grant I just want to interject Howard. There is February is the only month this year, where we don't have strategic any meetings scheduled.
- J** Jade Brown-Russell 56:17
Prior to that we
- M** Melanie Tennyson 56:19
used to do every other month for Strategic and finance but this year we've done every month of the year but we skipped February because it was short and we have Mardi Gras break in there.
- H** Howard Rodgers IV 56:33
So, with that, I move for adjournment.
- G** Grant Ligon 56:37
A second on the motion to adjourn ?m
- C** Chad Rice 56:40
I'll second.
- G** Grant Ligon 56:41
All in favor say aye.
- A** All Board Members 56:45
Aye.
- G** Grant Ligon 56:47
Any member saying Nay? Very good. Thank you very much, and at this point we are adjourned. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you.



Melanie Tennyson 56:56

And thank you, Howard, so much.



Howard Rodgers IV 56:57

I'll be around; y'all know where to find me.