

**Boston Renaissance Charter Public School
Board of Trustees
December 14, 2016**

Attendance:

S. Kumahia, A. Kesler, A. Faturoti (phone), L. Bispham, S. Dibinga, S. Copeland, H. Raymond, E. Alphonse

Guests: F. Shearer, P. Littlehale, A. Buckmire, M. Taylor, Tom Colomb, Esq.

Call to order: 8:11 a.m.

Public comment:

Ms. Dandan Xu: I am a technology teacher at the school and I want to thank the board for considering sponsoring my visa.

Ms. Theaker: I am a 1st grade teacher at the school and am in support of sponsoring Ms. Xu's visa. Ms. Xu has been a great asset to the classrooms and entire school. We recently had an event where families were able to learn and celebrate about Chinese culture and got more requests for students to get into the Chinese program.

Ms. Hsu: I am a Mandarin language teacher here at the school and have been working with Ms. Xu. Ms. Xu is a person of character and integrity. She started out as a volunteer and then became a fellow and is now a teacher. She has built relationships with many students and made a video of the school's White House trip that was really moving.

Ms. Lee: I have worked with Ms. Xu for the last two years and she has gone above and beyond when asked for assistance. She is responsible, very well-rounded and definitely an asset to the school.

Mr. Provenzano: I work at the school and I am also in support of Ms. Xu's visa sponsorship.

S. Kumahia: Thank you all for your comments, they are appreciated and will be considered.

S. Kumahia: Motion to approve audit as submitted. Seconded by A. Faturoti. All voted in favor.

Sponsorship of Ms. Xu – Presented by Attorney Tom Colomb

A. Buckmire:

- Right now the school does not have a policy in place for visa sponsorship. We have a representative from the school's law firm here to talk to us about what we want to do as a school for visa sponsorship. We have sponsored two employees in the past. We need to make a decision as a school as to how to move forward in this area.

Attorney Colomb:

- Ms. Xu has a nonimmigrant visa; a 3 year visa that is eligible to renew one time for an additional 3 year period. The application is submitted in March or later next year to take effect in Sept 2017 for 3 more academic years. This is an H1B visa and the likelihood of it being approved for her is high.
- Even though she has 3 years, she needs to know soon if the school will sponsor her for permanent status.
- Educator for green card sponsorship for employment is a 2-step application process: 1) Department of labor approval and then 2) immigration services needs to approve.
 - o The Department of Labor certification is an adversarial process => costs: time and legal intensive process that might not work
- One of the requirements for both temporary and permanent employees is that the person be paid the prevailing wage in the market place. The legal fees are subtracted in the salary for purposes of determining prevailing wage.
- If applicant obtains permanent residence, that person is in the same place as any other U.S. citizen and he/she can go elsewhere. It is illegal to have a contractual obligation in order to maintain the employee.
- An employer can sponsor a green card for a different position than the one now in place.
- We can help in a statement of commitment of policy, criteria and guidelines to direct the administration in making determinations for the future.
 - o A. Buckmire: In regards to the school having a policy – what about having a policy that is open to sponsoring but then deciding to sponsor some and not others?
 - o Attorney Colomb: That could potentially open you to discrimination cases but it is specific to facts. The biggest way to protect against that is to have generally broad recruitment efforts.
 - o Kumahia: What about having a quota, for example 2 employee visas per year? Attorney Colomb: I don't see why not, but you could still potentially run into discrimination cases.
- Usually colleges and universities have policies on employee visas; few middle/high schools do.
- The standard to approve the application for the visa is whether there is no one else in the U.S. (citizen) that cannot do the job.
 - o Budgeting: \$10k per person for sponsorship of green card
 - When looking for sponsorship, there is joint representation. Laws make rules for who has to pay for what. By law the applicant cannot pay all the fees – all filing fees have to be paid by school; the Department of Labor process is paid by the employer.
- Follow up:
- A. Buckmire: We should talk to Academy of Pacific Rim Charter Public School and see a sample policy as that could be helpful.

Motion to approve S. Kumahi, A Faturoti seconded – all in favor

Head of School Report – Presented by A. Buckmire

Charter Condition:

- Recommendation from Commissioner around charter:
 - o We received a call from Ms. Bagg that the Commissioner decided to expedite decision on the condition and recommended that the condition be continued until the next charter term because the state is switching to a new assessment. This will allow us the opportunity to meet the condition.
- It seemed clear to them that all of the stakeholders were aware of the decline in the school and its correlation with leadership changes.
- The packet went to the Board of Education and they have the authority to have it as a board item. This means they could bring it to a vote and change the recommendation.
- The board meeting will be on Tuesday morning at 830 a.m. in Malden and we will know by the following Friday if the recommendation changes.
- A. Kesler – I agree that the recommendation is very fair.

School Incident:

- Some parents have been very supportive
 - Areas of improvement:
 - o Buses need to be improved. Although some are out of our control, we need to look into what is in our control: assigned seats; doing a run through with a bus with assigned seats one day, etc.
 - o Bathrooms – we are going to hire 2 bathroom monitors and will block off bathrooms so that classroom trips will have monitors. We will have practice in place for afterschool programs as well for all grades.
 - o Community building: I met with the chair of the Boston Charter Alliance – wanted to see what role they play in supporting one another. Only one charter school has reached out. It was recommended to reach out to connections at mayor’s office and they expressed that they would like to visit the school at some point and they are supportive of the school.
 - We are also attending community events along with Mr. Shearer. There is one on Friday and there is also a Boston Foundation event to try to make some new connections and restore other ones.
 - o Parent executive committee in place to work on ways to improve communication, etc.
- A. Kesler – I am really impressed with leadership and the response to this incident

A. Buckmire: Meeting with lawyer of parent involved and talk on putting services in place, etc.

Other Events:

A. Buckmire: Hosting event on MLK day – to come together as community post-election and talk about ways students are being impacted; still in developmental stages but we will be hosting.

S Kumahia: We should try to get board representation there as well.

A. Buckmire: Trip to The White House – it was a great event; we met POTUS and had an event to welcome back students and unveil the picture we took there.

Financial & Operations – Presented by P. Littlehale

- We hope to have parking before snow arrives. We do think that 50 cars can fit across street. The leadership at Shaws has changed and we will talk to them as well.
- HVAC system – engineer came in to look at automation system. The recommendation is to get the system recommissioned to make sure it's working the way it's supposed to work.
- S. Kumahia: What about cost for the recommission?
- P. Littlehale: The costs fall to us – about \$10k
- There will not be a finance meeting this month; we will get caught up in January now that we are 6 months into the school year. We will see if there is an adjustment with tuition.
- Quickbooks has been good for budgeting but transferring to another program.
- Met with Eastern Benefits group and we are coming up with a renewal for next year.
 - o Staff will be able to make their own changes online for benefits and not have to deal with paperwork, this should be rolling out in January
- Upcoming changes on public records law:
 - o Jan 2nd – we will be hit with public records requests
 - o Big changes in the law: have to have records access officer – point person for public to go to for requests. This person has to be appointed and contact information on the website and that person has to respond to requests.

Committee Updates:

- Governance and Nomination:
 - S. Kumahia: Currently talking to Eron Osbourne, potential candidate for the board.

- Parents of Renaissance:
 - S. Dibinga: last Monday's meeting went well and we are excited about the meeting tonight and Head of School and Upper school leader attending as well. One of the parents is working on the website. 2017 events calendar done and so we should be getting that soon.
 - China – I have been talking to a few parents about how much money is in China budget for potential tour in China for students. We did it last year and it was very beneficial for the students, schools in China and the school.

- Executive Committee Update:

A. Faturoti: We have been working on job descriptions for HOS and CFO/COO. Goal is to complete work with lawyer in drafting contract including these job descriptions. We have been working with Ms. Buckmire on details of these descriptions and will have feedback from our lawyer and the Board before anything is official and the Board votes on it. Will probably be more like middle of next week to hear back.

A. Faturoti – The idea is for us to finalize job descriptions and complete contracts with retroactive salary increases to July 1st before year is out
S. Dibinga: Which contracts are we talking about?

A Faturoti: The ones the lawyer will be working on – contracts for both Ms. Buckmire and Littlehale. These contracts will go before the Board to vote once documents are completed.

A. Faturoti: We will communicate by email by the end of the week as to any edits for these descriptions.

- Upcoming events:

A. Buckmire: Student-led conference night from 7-9pm tomorrow and Voices of Renaissance performance this Friday morning.

Meeting adjourned 9:59 a.m.