



# Rilke Schule Academic Policy Committee FINAL Meeting Minutes

## 8 October, 2009

### I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at **6:35 PM**. APC members attending the meeting were:

Jo Sanders, President	Joe Weinberger
Petra Nickerson, Vice President	Claudia Bittlingmaier, Teacher
Jeff Ullom, Treasurer	Debra Schwicht, Teacher
Liz Crafford, Secretary	
Frank Mächt	Crystal Wrabetz, Principal
Mary Mead, ASD Charter School Supervisor	

Other attendees at the meeting were:

Randy Solte	Janet Wuthrich
Ray Oakley	Klaus Mayer
Brett Wilbanks	Lisa Cooper
Natasha von Imhoff	Kim Nelson
Todd Manning	Stephanie Campbell
John Levi	Kathleen Dunning
Cindy (Norquist)	Jennifer Alexander
Sandy Lawrence	Myrna Jensen
Jeff Lentfer	Arlynda Hermann
Jerry Hermann	

### II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The meeting minutes from July 9<sup>th</sup>, August 13<sup>th</sup>, August 19<sup>th</sup> and September 10<sup>th</sup> were approved.

The votes were unanimous.

### III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A parent said she appreciates the response to her letter about the parking lot. Her concern is for a long term plan about the school and its location.

A parent noted that he appreciates the morning dropoff volunteers who help!! The APC appreciates all the traffic volunteers, too.

#### **IV REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES OR PERSONS**

##### **A. Supervisor of Charter Schools**

A staff member attended an Open Meeting Law training and reminded the board of the open meeting law and executive session restrictions.

Charter School supervisor Mary Meade noted that the school board wants to see discussions in the minutes. They don't want decisions made without the discussion happening in public.

Mary gave the board a reminder that it is important to keep on track with our reapplication. We received a letter from one of the school district attorneys about the possible move. They were cautioning us to be careful about how we define our relations with any future landlord.

##### **B. Principal's Report**

Crystal reported about the German conference. The visitors and German officials were impressed with the conference and felt that the quality of the workshops was very high.

Student numbers this year are currently at 265. One child had been counted twice.

##### **C. Rilke Schule Verein**

The Verein doesn't yet have results on money made during the fall fundraiser. Martinstag Lanterns are being made with the help of many volunteer parents. It was asked that we clarify with the teachers that when they are looking for supplies, they should speak with school staff and the APC first, rather than with the Verein. The APC expressed appreciation to the Verein for all the help with the food preparation for the German conference. The preferred location for the upcoming book fair is the multipurpose room. The Travel Club teacher asked about how the Travel Club money would be managed. It was announced that the Verein Annual Meeting will be on the 20<sup>th</sup> and they will be electing some new board members at that time. A parent asked about the \$10 fee to join the Verein.

##### **D. Building Committee**

It was reported that the new fence around the playground is just about complete.

Regarding the downstairs reuse certification, the architects have done the drawings, and we are working on exit lights. It is anticipated that the work will be done in a couple of weeks. There was discussion of the invoice from the architect which was clarified. We can move the music teacher down to the basement once the Fire Marshall signs off on the space. There had been a concern about adequate airflow in the basement since it was originally zoned for storage, but this has been resolved. The airflow will be adequate for music class.

A lengthy discussion was held to solicit input and feedback about the possibility of moving to a new building site for next year. Parents, staff, the APC, and our current landlords all participated in a lively discussion.

The APC summarized what they have done over the last few months. They have discussed the different possibilities for next year which include renewing a lease with our current landlord or exploring moving to another site. They gave authority to Rilke Schule Inc. to explore the suitability of another building on Sentry Drive, and tours of the possible site were held. They also met with the current landlords to discuss rental contract renewal options. Members of the building committee also met with another developer to see about the possibility of creating a new school from the ground up. This idea is not considered feasible for next year. The board is considering a long range plan, however, as well as something that will work in the short term. The board is actively considering the best number of new students to admit to the school next year and in future years. More students will generate more revenue and thus make it possible to afford a larger school (but also incur more expenses), while fewer students provides for smaller space needs and a smaller budget.

The teachers expressed that they thought the new site had potential, but several had reservations about the classroom sizes, and the disruption of a potential move process. Moving the teachers' belongings and contingencies in case remodeling isn't completed in time were also concerns mentioned. Other teachers had specific suggestions for changes that could be made to the new site to make it work. It was suggested that the teachers would be very uncomfortable in a setting similar to the original temporary setting of the school before they moved into the current building.

Parents expressed differing views about the building issue. They asked if there was a process timeline and a strategic plan for how to proceed. Several spoke of specific issues at our current location that they find challenging. The lack of a true gymnasium, the parking and traffic situation, and the small size of the outdoor playground were mentioned more than once as negative criteria. Also mentioned was the fact that the current building was retrofitted for E Occupancy, not originally built for it, making it an inherently less safe building. Other parents noted that we have to finance our own growth. We can't grow into something bigger unless we have the students to support it. A number of parents liked the idea of growth; however, a last minute rushed move was not seen as wise thing.

Parents cared most about their children getting a good education in a safe setting. It was pointed out that we need to carefully consider the new site along with the current site and not rule out either one in the coming months as we are gathering information and making decisions about the future. Several parents expressed that the new site seemed like a more suitable location for the future growth of the school than our current site, but cautioned that negotiations to purchase or lease

that building would take weeks or months and had no guarantee of success. It was suggested that the board should focus on the bigger issues facing the school about overall growth and finances and not so much about specific classroom sizes at this point in time, as any building will have its problems to be addressed.

Representatives from Rilke Schule Inc., the non-profit formed to explore purchasing a different property for the school, requested that the APC provide written approval for RSI confirming that the proposed new location is suitable, that they meet in executive session to work out a lease, and that we provide a building plan. They described that they have thought about ways to minimize the impact of a potential move using conex containers at the potential site. They have also considered remodeling options at the potential site to address concerns. In January, if all goes well, the APC will have to make a decision about which way to go. RSI argued that a benefit of leasing a building from them is that the rent would eventually build equity for the school which can then be used to expand the school. RSI is made of school parents. It will operate as a non profit under tax exempt status which would save the school money compared to leasing from a commercial for-profit landlord.

Cautionary voices from all groups warned that no decision on a future site could be made until the financial picture was clarified with a rigorous cost analysis. Understanding the costs involved in making another site suitable is essential and ultimately determines its feasibility. Our income is based entirely on the number of students, and as the number goes up, so does income, but so do our expenses. Comparing the costs at the two locations is essential to determine relative feasibility. Keeping our options open and not limiting ourselves to a single choice is essential at this point in time. Others cautioned that we need to keep in mind that we are moving to the next step and must think carefully about what we need and distinguish that from what we want.

The current landlord asked if we had done a cost analysis for making changes to the new site, and whether or not it would be affordable. He cautioned, based on experience that it is challenging to find a suitable building to be a school. He requested a more concrete comprehensive proposal from the board.

The need for a clearer definition of 'suitable' was discussed at length, as it is a difficult intangible to define. One possible measure is how it compares with the current location. It was noted that every individual would have a different idea of 'suitability'. The ability to separate 'needs' from 'wants' is seen as an essential step in the process.

Issues remaining for the APC to address are an appropriate timeline for the building decision process, and specific requirements of what we feel is important to the future of the school as we move ahead. Coming to a consensus on the size issue is also critical. The board needs to provide more specific information to the current landlord, as well as Rilke Schule Inc., and any one else interested in

helping the school with a future home. Of greatest significance is addressing the financial implications of our decisions. The board must determine what we can afford with a rigorous cost analysis before we can make specific decisions. The board needs to meet in executive session separately with each potential landlord. Mary Meade will provide the detailed financial information for calculating specific future budgets for the board to use.

**E. Curriculum**

No report about curriculum

**F. Finance Committee**

No report

**G. Goals Committee**

The board goals' meeting has been rescheduled to 5-6:30 on November 12<sup>th</sup> immediately before our regular meeting.

**H. Public Relations Committee**

No Report

**I. Optional Intensives**

The program is running more smoothly than before.

**V. Old Business**

The Foraker training for the board has been scheduled for November 5<sup>th</sup> from 5-8 PM at school.

The Charter renewal committee is starting. Mary needs the draft by November 30<sup>th</sup>.

**VI. New Business**

A board member will visit Albert Einstein German School in San Diego later this month.

The Healthy Futures program got Governor Parnell to issue a challenge to children to participate in the program for 3 months. This can be seen as a fundraiser for the school as the school that has the highest participation will win money. Providence Hospital is a prime supporter of the program. We hope to get teachers involved and children to document their activity.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 PM.

**Executive Session**

There was no executive session.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Crafford, APC Secretary