

March 10, 2016 UPWS Board minutes

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of Urban Prairie Waldorf School was held on March 10, 2016. Present at the meeting were Sharla Stewart (SS), Heather Berhalter (HB), Michael Levine (ML), Peggy Lofgren (PL), Peg Kern (PK), Fabiola Saucedo (FS), Ted Shieh (TS), David McClellan (DM), Karen Hartz (KH), Dan Ryan (DR), and members of the community.

Agenda

Study: Board study was led by Karen Hartz. The subject was the "Social and Anti-Social Forces" lecture by R. Steiner.

Enrollment Update

The meeting was held March 10, and the enrollment deadline was March 15, so there were no firm numbers to report. HB related the following:

- there were 10 transfer/new students still in the in the admissions/interview process
- 1st grade was still projected to double track
- attrition was expected to be below budgeted range (10% or lower)

SS reminded the board that the amount of the tuition increase was based on enrollment, and that the decision would be made after March 15 enrollment deadline. DM worried that other factors should be taken into consideration, and did not want the tuition increase based solely on enrollment numbers if it hampered our ability to face unforeseen costs.

SS reminded the board that the credit (or reduction in the amount of tuition increase) would be "up" to \$200. Several board members pointed out that there was always the risk of the unknown, especially as tuition is set each year before the budget.

The potential of trying to finance a new permanent facility was discussed, and whether that would factor into tuition or the tuition increase. It was determined that that was not at issue this year, although the goal is always to put money in the bank for our future home. A community member felt that not setting a firm tuition in the fall undermined the school's credibility.

Action item: set 2016-2017 tuition based on enrollment numbers as of March 15.

Long-term Facility and Strategic Planning

SS reported that negotiations for a lease extension with the arch-diocese to stay at OLP were ongoing, and that the committee was also looking into the options (financially and physically) for overflow when OLP is no longer big enough. It was reported that the Pershing school would probably be the only possible

option for leaving the current location before a lease extension would be necessary.

Regarding the Pershing school, the resignation of the alderman in question has put the sale of Pershing on hold. We were still hoping to have the faculty and community members tour the school.

TS and SS talked about the need to get back the "vision" our facility. To refocus our energy, TS reminded the board that the long term facility planning started with the pioneer teachers' idea of what our ideal home might look like, and what answered the question: "what does a Waldorf teacher need [in a school building] to make a great Waldorf school?"

SS quoted our vision statement: "We aim to be at the forefront of Waldorf education in America," and noted that that meant also in our permanent facility. City Garden was held up as an example: successful because of Jone's vision and the school's reverence for beauty, which make the school "worth the commute." It was asked: how can UPWS do the same, and how can the school ensure the teachers and students have the space to do what they need to do? A discussion of what work that would be ensued, including: handwork, agriculture, animal husbandry, our own place for sports, a place that is financially and environmentally sustainable, accessible, serving all of our community (made up of different income brackets), healthy to soul and body, full of natural light and good air.

ML added that the original ideal was that it become more than just a school, but part of the larger community, whether through an art center, a residential area for the elderly, a community space that reached beyond the school, etc.

Several board members envisioned a beckoning space that draws people in. All agreed that our own green space is fundamental, where the children have a stake in creating the school and have a role in its evolution as part of their will-based learning. It was later noted that this could be different than what had originally been envisioned, but that having control over it was essential (and in counterpoint to Arrigo Park). City Garden was again used as an example, where Jone has the autonomy to fulfill the vision she sees for the school. HB commented that the children enliven whatever outdoor space they are given access to.

ML suggested we reflect on the name, which was a big decision the school made in the early years, and reminded the board that "prairie" in our urban sense means also a hidden oasis, something that surprises.

DR reflected that it is the people that provide the sense of the school, and not just the building.

The potential to buy land and build was discussed if we went further outside our search zone (to the west side in particular). The board was reminded that it was not the cost of land that was prohibitive, but the cost of building to suit.

It was reported that the faculty were taking up the task of "visioning" for the facility, and that pieces of that vision would be communicated to the Board as they were developed. A community member commented that it needed to be

communicated to the community in a way that could get people to embrace it and be excited about it, and that it need to be revisited periodically to make sure it was still relevant.

HB reminded everyone that much of this work had been done during the RFQ process, that the thinking it through had largely happened, it just needed to be communicated.

Action item: Continue lease negotiations with OLP and investigation of potential overflow space in the area. Pursue a visit of the Pershing school for faculty and community. Have the faculty work on the school's vision for a permanent facility. SS to draft a vision statement to submit to the board for approval based on the previous work done. Engage the community as soon as possible by communicating the faculty's vision.

The meeting was adjourned on time.