

**Olympic Christian School
Board Meeting Minutes—March 21st, 2017**

In attendance:

Board members: Ian Barclay, Mark Patton, Mitch Johnson, Dan Hendrickson, Betsy Flodstrom
Staff: Mrs Rudzinski, Mrs Lake, Mrs Oakes
Parents and others: Mike Reickhoff, Mike LaGrange, Nicole LaGrange, Marsha Shamp, Jim Gossard, Carolyn Adolphsen, Ben Allen, Raechel Allen, Pam Boyd, (Ian Barclay, Betsy Flodstrom, Jackie Lake)

Scripture and Opening Prayer: Dan Hendrickson

Dan read from 1 John 4:11: Since God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If we love one another, God lives in us and is seen in us. This is important to remember as we go through not only school affairs, but everything in our lives. He then opened with a word of prayer that we would be able to do this.

Finance Committee: Mark Patton

Mark reported that everything is looking pretty good at this time. Our budget is tight but viable. Past due debts are down and less money than before is owed to the school. There is a reasonable expectation we can repay the FOCS loan. We don't have a final end of the year projection yet.

Principal's Report: Mrs Rudzinski

- March has been great and we are glad there have been no more snow days recently.
- We recently hosted the missions group 'His Little Feet' in our chapel service. It was amazing. It was wonderful to see them worshiping God with their whole heart. It gave our kids a great example as they prepare for their spring program next week.
- Teachers are getting ready for the end of the quarter. They are putting together grades and honor rolls recognition. A “principal's breakfast” is an additional reward for highly achieving students.
- Fourth quarter, which follows spring break [April 3 - 7], is expected to be very busy as we have an art festival, Grandparents Day, and other activities planned.
- Betsy added that the preschoolers came to visit the main campus.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the February OCS board meeting were approved by e-mail, and have been posted on the OCS web site.

Staff report: Mrs Lake

- Science fair was held this month. Everyone really enjoyed it, and older students got to show their projects to the lower grades.
- The 4th grade class is going on a field trip this week to visit Olympia and the Washington State History Museum.
- The 3rd and 4th grades will be taking a field trip to Fort Nisqually and the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium on April 13th.
- The preschool came to visit the main campus.

- A master gardeners group visited the school and gave students some plants to experiment with.
- The spring program is coming up soon. It will be held on March 30th at The IBC Family Life Center.
- Students have the chance to earn “points” from their good behavior. With enough points earned, they can choose to have a “special day” such as pajama day, etc. The 1st grade class had a “party for Jesus” today; they invited the rest of the school and it was a blast.

Curriculum Committee: Betsy Flodstrom

Betsy said she and Mrs Rudzinski plan to meet with our new member, Tiffany Gillespie. Sometime before the next board meeting they plan to review each subject to see if there are any significant issues with the curriculum that need to be addressed. They will also try to determine whether we can offer courses in Washington State History and Health next year.

Gwen reported that the Science on Wheels program is a go. It will be May 11th and Mrs Gillespie is heading it up.

Development committee: Dan Hendrickson

- OCS was represented at the March 4th Preschool Kids Fest at the Vern Burton Center. This event is actually for children of all ages. Ms Novak helped Dan set up a booth for the main campus. Her help was a “godsend” and it worked out very well. A lot of brochures were given away to families with children of varying ages. It was a great day.
- The fund-a-need letter is going out shortly. This letter seeks to raise funds for tuition assistance for lower income families. Last year this letter raised over \$7000, which went directly to tuition vouchers. This year we made further improvements to the letter, combining Ian's writing (edited for brevity) and Jackie's artwork. This letter will go out to about 700 recipients. It is also going out to students' families, so they may be assured we are doing all we can to help raise money for the school.

Friends of OCS Committee: Dan Hendrickson

Dan related that this year the annual golf tournament will be held on July 15th. The committee now has fewer members and some work needs to be done on organization the day of the tournament. They will hold a meeting the first or second week of April to try to reach out to get this help. This is a great outreach opportunity and good publicity for OCS.

Infrastructure/Building report: Ed Kaetzel

Dan said that Ed Kaetzel is taking a leave of absence from the board for several months, for medical reasons. So we are looking for someone to handle infrastructure and building related affairs for that time. The main issues on the horizon are painting of the main campus buildings and fencing the property.

Mrs Oakes asked who was putting in the fence. Dan said Thomas Edgington is managing it but he would probably love some help.

Parent input:

Karalynn Adolphsen started off by bringing up the tuition increase, stating that we're increasing it by “a lot.” She continued, for those of us who are working parents doing everything we can, this is really hard. She asked if this increase would help pay for garbage control, expressing concerns

about health and sanitation. Dan said we need to take care of that now, and asked if we are addressing that already. Gwen said Mr Kaetzel was on top of that, and was working with someone named Guy, but that this might not be the best approach. Karalynn said garbage control is the best approach. Mr LaGrange asked where the garbage goes and how often it is picked up. Dan said John McNutt is supposed to empty them regularly. Mrs Rudzinski confirmed this was happening, but not as often as we need it. Mr LaGrange volunteered to pick the garbage bins up every Wednesday until the end of the year. Dan thanked him very much. Karalynn said Mike might not be able to do that for all of the school year. Dan said that if we had extra funds we could more easily pay for stuff like this. Karalynn asked whether anyone else had questions, because she had a lot. She said she came to this meeting because she won't be able to attend tomorrow night's "town hall" meeting.

Karalynn noted how the letter we just got today [announcing changes to tuition rates for the 2017-18 school year] described an increase in teacher pay, and asked how soon they will get it, if we know the same teachers are still going to be here, what class sizes will be, and whether there will be combined classes. She said that these are all issues we have had in the past, and asked how we plan to "keep teachers."

Mark said, let's answer one question at a time. "No one has a crystal ball" to know how many students we will have, or staff makeup. It all comes down to money. Mark confirmed they will get an increase soon. Dan confirmed the plan is to for sure give them a raise at the beginning of the next school year.

Karalynn asked whether we as parents are still going to pay book fees (quoting an amount higher than the actual book fee). Mark confirmed that we will because books cost that much.

She asked if we plan to offer students electives at school and "other options;" in essence, what will we offer that will make people want to enroll their children here at a higher tuition rate. Mark said, we have been paying "less than we should" because our tuition rates have not kept up with comparable schools or with inflation. Karalynn said it's not a business; it's a school. Mark said it still has to be run like a business or it will go out of business, and that we're trying hard to clean up the books and get a clear picture of where money is being spent. Money has been lost in the past because people have waived tuition payments without authorization, and there have been past due debts and other problems. We're trying to fix all these mistakes from the past. If you find someone who can contribute to the school for free, we'll take them. If you know someone who can teach music for free, that's great. If we don't have funding for these things, the problem keeps compounding itself. We are implementing a new school management software, so that many things can be done solely online.

Karalynn asked why we are paying for a new software program [PraxiSchool] when the one we have [Shelby] doesn't seem to be "broken." Mark asked her if she had investigated the existing system to determine how well it is serving us. Karalynn had not. Mark explained that the current software is designed for churches, and not for a school. Because it is very inefficient for the bookkeeper, it takes days to work out financial discrepancies. For example, it takes two days to determine who is past due on payments, whereas the new system is instantaneous. The bookkeeper will be able to log in easily and see who's past due with a click [of the mouse]. Going through the school office is also a problem, because things can easily get mixed up. The new system will pay for itself over and over again. It will help to keep parents on track so the school does not lose money.

Karalynn asked how much this software costs the school. Mark said it costs \$100 a month.

Nicole LaGrange asked about blocking parents' access to student grades [on unpaid accounts]. She said it sounds like a neat plan, but it seems wrong to block their access so they can't see how their child is doing. Mark replied that we're still only in the implementation stage: this software gives us the ability to implement these features, but it's not automatic, and that doesn't

mean we necessarily have to do it. The board has to decide about which of these features the school wants to use. Also, you would be able to click to pay right there [within the system] and then see the grades.

Pam Boyd asked who manages this new program. Mark said at the moment he does. It was asked whether IBC was “on board” with PraxiSchool. Mark said Kim will still be the bookkeeper with PraxiSchool, but another bookkeeper will be trained in the use of it along with her. So, Mark said, he is doing a lot now, but it will eventually be handed off to the bookkeeper. As treasurer he can access the Shelby system, but he would rather have his teeth pulled because it is so difficult. Kim had shoehorned a school into their system to try to make it work. Karalynn Adolphsen and Mike LaGrange expressed concern about user privacy. Mark confirmed no other parent will be able to access your sensitive information, such as payments and report cards. Access to financial information will be the same as it is now. Right now the only people who have access to financial information are Mark, Kim and Jackie.

Karalynn asked if the board planned to keep our administration the same. Dan declined to comment, saying we don't know right now. Karalynn said the previous administrators were very expensive and asked if that's where our money was going. She asked what their salary was. Mark said their salary was a great deal less than they make at a public school. A major part of the difficulty with trying to plan the current school year financially was failure to anticipate enrollment numbers.

Ben asked if there are established guidelines that will protect our current efforts [to get the school on solid footing] and keep them in place, even if our administration changes. He said he thinks that is the biggest issue we will run into over time. He gave the example of setting guidelines for an advertising position. Dan replied that these things are in the OCS policy manual. Ben asked if the policy manual was available on the OCS web site. Mrs Lake said the policy manual is not online, but is available in the office. Dan said the policy manual was in the process of being rewritten by Ian and Mark. Mark noted an instance of where clarity is needed in the policy manual.

Ben expressed an interest in stepping in to help with advertising, saying he just needed to know what needs to be done. Dan asked him if we can meet again. Ben said advertising is the only way the school is going to survive. He told us that he went to IBC and didn't know the school existed for a long time despite having children at IBC. Mitch said he is available to speak publicly at any venue about the importance of Christian education, and the Christian worldview versus what's going on the public schools. If that is a need we may contact him. Mike LaGrange vouched for him that he will speak at any venue even if the audience is hostile. Mitch said pastors need to come out in support of us openly.

Mrs Oakes said she has “seen a shift.” She agrees with Mark the school is a business, but we have to balance that with the ministry end of things. She would like to see implemented more clearly the parent voice in a lot of decisions that are made, especially concerning a lot of the turnover that has been in the last few years. She wants to let our parents have a say, even considering employment or retention of administrator. We should not be taking away from parent input. Mitch said we should have more parent volunteers and we need to focus on that. Mrs Oakes said any parent who is here now has opinion that has value. We should consider things like parent evaluations or questionnaires, to ask parents what they think about these things. Betsy said we used to do that with teachers, asking them how your school year was, and more. Mark said that when PraxiSchool is online it has electronic ability to allow parent input. Mrs Oakes said we need a public forum for it. We have to remember that we have a bunch of parents who wonder whether we want to hear them, and we have to make it as inviting as possible.

Dan said we have a parent-teacher fellowship which hasn't been active for years. Ben suggested putting a bullet point agenda on the board meeting. Betsy said parents can see that there is a parent input section on the agenda.

Pam asked where the board sees OCS two years from now. Dan said we're doing everything we can to have it be as viable as possible with everyone working together. 110 students would be absolutely magnificent. Betsy said the reality is we hope we can just keep the doors open. Pam asked what if there are not enough students to keep the doors open, and whether it would be possible in that case to relocate to the IBC Fellowship Hall. Betsy said we ought to know in May. Mark noted that salary and benefits take up 72% of OCS' income, so even if we moved it wouldn't save us very much. Nicole noted that if Jesus can feed 5,000 people on a few fish and loaves of bread then God will provide for the school. This is God's school and He will provide, and that's what it feels like He's doing right now. We can't do it ourselves; we have to fall on our faces and ask God to provide for our school. She asked, are we doing that or is this just about money? Mark said that we can't dictate to God to provide things on our terms. Ben said, at the same time, God gives us these talents for us to act on them. That is what the financial discussion is about—doling out what he gives us and using it in the best way possible. That is what Mark is doing, identifying problems and making us more [fiscally] responsible. We have to fix this now or we may miss our chance.

Mitch said emphatically, YES, we need more parents involved: we need every one of us to tell our Christian friends who are parents how important Christian education is. It is crazy, given what's going on in public schools, that our enrollment is declining. He wants parents to WAKE UP. It grieves him that his own grandchildren are in public school. So ALL of us have a job to do. If you don't think public schools are pulling them the other way, you're crazy. It's been going on for a long time, and now it's accelerating, and it's not easy [for Christian kids in the public schools].

Mark said that we love parent input, and we wish we had this turnout [for board meetings] and more every month. We don't know everything, but we do the best we can with the time we have to try to fix things. With over 50 families, we have the potential to make things a lot better. If even half of them stepped it up we would be ecstatic.

Ben said what we need, as a very high priority, is a list of structured needs that are sent out to all parents every week. Mike said, they have to be structured needs that people can respond to. Ben said it's possible to do this via a network of text messaging, etc., and this is already done at the classroom level. Dan asked how we can get that structured list organized, and is there a board member or someone else who can do it. Pam noted it takes a lot of people and a lot of commitment, and all it needs is someone to head things up. The problem is that only 10% of the folks do 90% of the work. It's fun to get together, although we do have to be aware of liability issues with certain projects. So we have to watch out for issues that require more oversight. Betsy noted Ed Kaetzel had that role, and Mrs Ruzdinski reports the school's needs.

Pam said she hoped that in all this money talk (and she knows as well as anyone who owns a business) she doesn't want to lose sight of our mission. She asked if we have any teachers right now asking for wage increases. Mrs Ruzdinski said no, we do not, because our teachers are not here for the money. Pam said that since the mission of the school is to give a Christian education and equip them to go into the world (any way they want to do that), our teachers are here as missionaries. So she hopes we don't lose sight of why we're here in the first place. She asked how we can fine-tune what we have, and if we can do any better to make it run smoothly without ruining the school.

Dan said, let's hope God does a wonderful thing here for the school in the spring. If we get to the point in May where it doesn't work we can reassess matters.

Mark affirmed that the group of teachers now on staff have made it clear that they are here as a ministry, but asked what we should do if we need teachers next year but we can't attract them at the current rate. Pam said, then we have to ask if it is about the money or the mission. Mark responded, let's say we stay at 75 students next year. Supposing most accept the incentive to enroll by May 1st, That's only going to give us \$50,000 more per year. We have debt, and we still have to pin down what it is and where it came from. We would love to see 100+ students.

Raechel asked what happens if we lose ten students. Along with that you'd lose ten students that are not being ministered to. Ben said that in his parents' business, it was important to make money off of volume selling burritos, because they knew they would lose customers in this market even they raised prices by even \$0.10. Mitch acknowledged that's true to a point, but this is a different situation. We have to depend on the spirit of God, and say, "God we can't make this work unless you provide the students." He predicted an increase in students and there is reason for optimism. He is not going to accept someone saying that enrollment will keep dropping. We are a week or two from open enrollment.

Ben asked, how do we know about enrollment, given the lack of advertisement that OCS even exists. We all should know, as we go to church and our pastor should tell us. Public school has had a banner about open enrollment for kindergarten on display for some time. Mrs Lake said that we can't hand out packets now because it's "been declined" and she "couldn't tell you what the reason is." Mark said that he didn't say no packets could be handed out, but that enrollment would be online. There was some discussion about the best way to proceed with enrollment. Karalynn said that they tried online-only enrollment for 4-H club, and enrollment dropped by 40%, which was a tremendous problem. Dan said we could do some of this stuff [enrollment] for them. Karalynn said these things [online forms] are not always user-friendly. Pam said it takes all the human element out of it; with just technology things are not as personal. Mike LaGrange said that with first-time enrollment you want to come and meet people, but re-enrollment is fine to do online. Mrs Oakes said let's grab them any way they'll come. Dan said sure, give them the packet, though it will still have to go online and someone has to enter it in. Ben said enrollment packet still has to be available; they need to walk out of here with a paper in their hand. More discussion about this matter followed.

Nicole asked if OCS is looking to hire a music teacher. Dan and Betsy said we don't know right now because we're just trying to keep the school open, and to pay off and cover our debt. Nicole asked if we are still looking at hiring two more teachers. The response was again, it all depends on enrollment.

Pam asked whether our ongoing debt could be postponed so that we can throw more money at the school [in the short term]. Dan responded that we still haven't figured out "where the debt went" [meaning the reason this debt shows in the books]. We borrowed from FOCS, with board approval, \$25,000 [to ensure OCS' financial viability]. Ben said that frightened him. Dan said that's why we're getting new financial software. Mark said his best guess is if we have a budget that is more than we're going to bring in, we're asking for debt. The reason we've been able to keep going is we do have limited restricted funds that we can't touch, so we aren't totally out of money. It's a mess that can be sorted out once we are on the new software.

Dan thanked everyone for being open and honest, and said we are really trying to do the best we can for the school. If we keep taking money out of FOCS, we're kicking the can down the road. The best thing we can do is all come together in love and say in spite of past mistakes by the board, etc., we still all love Jesus and we should still tell everyone to bring your kids here. Ben suggested a

reward program for referring families to the school. Dan said his dream is that somewhere down the road we have extra money to give to the parents.

Pam and Carolyn said it's really hard to convince parents to send children here when "other schools offer a whole lot more." Karalynn said this is especially hard when we as parents can't tell them what's going to happen to the school. That's her hard earned money and she's not putting her child in a school that is not best for her. Mark noted, there was an opt out added in case parents don't like the changes. This did not go into the letter. Mrs Rudzinski said by June 1st she should know who staff is going to be. Mark said, then we can announce this to parents by July 1st, and we can allow parents to opt out of enrollment until August 1st. We're not asking for parents to pay in advance; we just need enrollment numbers so we don't have a repeat of last year, which was crazy [because so many parents put off enrollment until the last minute].

Ben said he really appreciates the OCS board. "We do a fine job," and he appreciates our work, and being up here in the hotseat.

Mark said this is a really good example of where we get feedback. He affirmed we need to come up with an alternative to online enrollment because not everyone will be able to do it that way. Nicole asked when will this start and when we can enroll online. Mark had asked "our new webmaster" [Ian] when it will happen, who replied unfortunately it can't be by tomorrow night.

Dan reminded everyone that tomorrow night we have the Town Hall meeting. And said (jokingly) we have used up the parent input time for the next two board years. Ben asked us for a copy of the budget tomorrow. Mark said if he sends an email he'll send it to him (excepting sensitive information).

Marsha Shamp said, Queen of Angels' school tuition is \$5,280, and a second student discount only applies to students that are part of their church. This fee includes books. Her opinion was that tuition needs to increase, so we can increase teacher pay "so they can eat." Betsy thinks the Catholic church supplements Queen of Angels' income [offsetting tuition costs].

Mark told of a church that paid anyone's Christian education in the church who needed it. Ian noted that's how this *should* work, and encouraged people to tell that to their own church elders. Dan expressed optimism about Betsy DeVos' voucher program allowing more funds for OCS. Mr LaGrange said Washington State would be certain to ruin that.

Mark noted IBC is in "wait and see mode" because they are concerned about the school's past and the money they have lost. Dan objected and said it is just not true. Mark said that is their perception. Betsy mentioned a much larger debt that was written off many years back.

Karalynn said in recent years our enrollment has really dropped off terribly. Each year it gets lower. She said she thinks there are a lot of other factors. The school doesn't have the same vibe it used to have. Its not as open, friendly and upbeat, though the teachers are great. "There's a vibe between the board and school and you can feel it." Mike LaGrange said the parents are also part of this vibe and have to take ownership.

Carolyn asked if we are truly going to keep it a Christian school, or just a regular private school. Dan said absolutely not, a commitment to being a Christian school is part of our policy. Mitch said not as long as he's on the board.

Mrs Rudzinski asked Mitch to close in prayer. He offered a fine prayer that God would bless the school and bring us all together to work as team.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Submitted by Ian Barclay on 3/31/17.