

The Circle School Corporation
Annual Meeting of the Membership
November 3, 2019
Minutes

Attendees: Connor Tyrrell (Chair, Trustee), Ellen Abbott, Deborah Battisti, Dakota Bennett, Lori Bennett (Trustee), Johanna Bodnyk (Trustee), Lucas Bodnyk, Sean Bogle, Evelyn Eisenstein, Matthew Eisenstein, Simon Eisenstein, Amy Gerardino, Holly Glaser, Caitlyn Hensey, Anna Hewit (Trustee), Julia James (Trustee), Astraea Light, Clayre Linebaugh, Michelle Loucas, Pepper Loucas, Reb Loucas, Eli Mailey, Paige McKinney, Daniel Miller, Natalie Miller, Kirsten Reinford, Marina Reinford, Jim Rietmulder (Trustee), Mark Silver, Ann Sipe, Sarah Sipe, Eli Smigel, Jane Smigel, Lee Smigel, Ann Stillwater, JD Stillwater, Beth Stone, Scott Trask, Rob White (Trustee), Amelia Williams, Sonja Williams

Meeting Location: 727 Wilhelm Rd, Harrisburg, PA 17111

Meeting called to order at 1:10pm.

- 1) Icebreaker (led by JD Stillwater)
- 2) Review of Ends We Seek (led by Rob White)
- 3) Review of Governance Structure (led by Jim Rietmulder)
- 4) School Meeting Report to the Membership (*attached*, presented by Amelia Williams)
- 5) Board of Trustees Report to the Membership (*attached*, presented by Connor Tyrrell)
- 6) Nominating Committee Report (Ellen Abbott, JD Stillwater, Austin Vogt)
The committee presented a verbal report that they had nominated Jane Smigel for the Membership-appointed Trustee position.
- 7) **MOTION:** To appoint Jane Smigel to the Membership-appointed Trustee position on The Circle School Board of Trustees for the term running from March 1, 2020, through February 28, 2021.
(Nominating Committee)
Motion adopted.
- 8) Members' remarks (time for the Membership to address the Board)

Meeting adjourned at 2:18pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Johanna Bodnyk
Secretary of the Board of Trustees
April 7, 2020

School Meeting Report to the Annual Meeting November 3, 2019

Selected highlights from November 2, 2018, through October 31, 2019

Events

- 2018 Donor Reception, attended by about 100 people. (Nov 3, 2018)
- 2018 Annual Meeting, attended by 27 people. (Nov 4, 2018)
- 2018 Holiday Bazaar, attended by approximately 225 people. (Nov 18, 2018)
- The “Join the Conversation” book group, which began meeting in April 2014, continues to meet monthly.
- Two public Open Houses. (Mar 7, Oct 10)
- Winter Wonderland Dance, attended by 47 students and 7 adults. (Jan 11)
- Roller-skating party at Olympic Skating Center attended by 65 people. (Jan 28)
- Improv Night: Dinner and a Show, with performances by the Harrisburg Improv Theatre teams Aesthetic Dying Ducks and Magic Fairy Pirate Monkeys, attended by 110 people. Cool Things Outside Corporation sold dinner. (Apr 5)
- Ten students and two staff visited Arts & Ideas Sudbury School (Baltimore). (May 3)
- Six students ages 8 to 12, staff members Ellen and Lucas, and parent Jennifer Griest, had an overnight campout in the East Woods. (May 4)
- Book launch event: *When Kids Rule the School: The Power and Promise of Democratic Schooling* by Jim Rietmulder, at Midtown Scholar Bookstore, attended by over 100 people. (May 7)
- 2019 Spring Gala, attended by more than 215 guests. (May 11)
- Flashback Friday Dance, attended by 60 people. (May 17)
- Cool Things Outside Corporation held four fundraiser nights at Friendly’s.
- End-of-year picnic and overnight camping at Pinchot Park, attended by about 102. (Jun 8)
- Back-to-School Picnic, attended by approximately 101. (Sep 7)
- Nightmare on Wilhelm Street Dance, attended by 68 people. (Oct 18, 2019)

Ecumenical Retirement Community (our next-door neighbor)

- Ten students and two staff visited Ecumenical to perform music for approximately 30 Ecumenical residents. (Nov 12, 2018)
- Eight students and two staff performed Christmas carols at Ecumenical Retirement Community. (Dec 20)
- In a storytelling event at school, three Ecumenical Retirement Community residents told stories about their lives and answered questions. Two staff from Ecumenical, plus 22 School Meeting members, attended the event. (Oct 29, 2018)
- Fifteen School Meeting members went to Ecumenical’s Fall Fest. (Oct 4, 2018)
- Ten students and two staff attended a Valentine’s Day event at Ecumenical Retirement Community. (Feb 13)
- Eighteen students and two staff attended a Saint Patrick’s Day Social at Ecumenical. (Mar 15)
- Five residents of Ecumenical Retirement Community visited the school to tell stories of their World War II experiences and answer questions. (Mar 27)
- Twenty-four students and three staff went on a field trip to Ecumenical for an Easter egg hunt. (Apr 11)
- Five students and one staff member went on a field trip to Ecumenical to play a “Minute to Win It” game with residents. (May 21)

Visitors at school

- Philly Free School staff member (and Circle School alum) Simon Eisenstein visited. (Oct 15, 2018)
- Adebo Ifesanya, founder of Creativity Challenge camps in America and Nigeria, visited to learn more about the school. (Oct 18, 2018)

- Parents Molly Rahe-Randall and Briana Pierce offered marketing workshop sessions at school. (Oct 25, Nov 1, 2018)
- Educators Travis Cooper and Billy Pasour visited from New School (a descendant of Summerhill School) in Woodbridge, Virginia. (Nov 1, 2018)
- Nashville Sudbury School staff member Lara Brothers visited to see a “high functioning” democratic school. Nashville Sudbury School opened three months ago. (Dec 4)
- Susquehanna Township School District’s school nurse and four helpers from the District performed student health screenings. (Dec 12)
- Dance instructor Carla Crowen visited to provide swing dancing lessons, paid for by the participants and an anonymous donation. (Dec 18, Jan 8)
- Orrstown Bank representatives Miro Gojmerac and Mike Jaeger visited for a photo opportunity with students, presenting a ceremonial check for their EITC gift (Feb 7)
- Angela Rodgers from the Clinical Simulation Center at Hershey Medical Center presented a slideshow and talk about clinical simulations, and demonstrated a high-tech infant simulator manikin (with pulse points, visible respiration, lips that turn blue, and more). (Feb 27)
- Susquehanna Township police sergeant Jason Reber visited to discuss their response protocols in the event of an emergency call from the school. (Mar 19)
- Six alumni visited for most of a school day, and sat as panelists for Q&A: Clayre Linebaugh, Dakota Bennett, Astraea Light, Simon Eisenstein, Jimi Eisenstein, and Stefi Morris. (Apr 9)
- Alumn Jancey Mallory ’04 volunteered at school approximately weekly to help students learn computer programming, and brought her baby Juniper with her. (Feb - May).
- Educators Chris Steinmeier, Neesha Davy, Al Zama-Chi, and Tess Liebersohn visited from Natural Creativity, a schooling program in Philadelphia for registered homeschoolers from 4 to 17 years old. (Apr 12)
- Circle School Trustees Connor Tyrrell and Johanna Bodnyk visited school for most of a school day, following the Board’s retreat. (May 6)
- Two staff members, two 11-year-old students, and two moms visited from Oikos Centre, a democratic school in China. The two moms spoke mostly Mandarin, so the others interpreted. (May 14)
- A representative of the Progress Fire Company visited to collect information about building fire safety. (May 15)
- A UGI Storage company official and a representative for state senator Mike Folmer visited (Jun 12) to take a PR photo of UGI Storage presenting a ceremonial check to the school under the OSTC scholarship program. (The actual check was received back in January 2018.)
- Educator Oliver Quinton visited (Jul 17) from The International School of The Hague. He is the director of a newly forming program within the school (which enrolls 1,200 students). The new program will be more self-directed than the school’s main program. The purpose of his visit was to learn more about self-directed schooling.
- At the request of Meadow architect Rich Gribble, his prospective client Alex Guk toured the school. (Sep 28)
- Two officers from the Susquehanna Township Police Department visited to introduce themselves and took a student-led tour of the campus. (Oct 10, 2019)

Publications, public appearances, and public relations

- Published a listing in the Alliance for Self-Directed Education’s Resource Directory. (Oct 24)
- Hosted a mini-conference of the Open Syllabus Education group from several universities on a Saturday. (Jan 12)
- Jim attended (by invitation) an online meeting of the Self-Directed Education Research Network, attended by 18 university researchers reviewing proposals for studies in self-directed democratic schools. (Jan 21)

- Jim attended six other invitational conferences of the Self-Directed Education Research Network, attended by about 25 members from about 10 countries. (Feb - Aug)
- Jim attended two invitational planning meetings of the Alliance for Self-Directed Education. (Nov 18, Feb 21)
- Jim attended the first AEROx Virtual Conference, with about 50 participants. (Feb 23)
- On two occasions, students, alumni, and staff attended virtual meetings with Professor Eugene Matusov's education classes at University of Delaware, to talk about The Circle School. (Nov 29, Apr 10)
- Five volunteers and three staff members staffed an exhibit table at the YWCA's Race Against Racism. (Apr 27)
- JD Stillwater visited Hudson Valley School to serve on their Diploma Committee, which evaluates diploma candidates and awards diplomas. (May 13)
- Published two blog posts: "Trained at 12, Saved a Life at 15" by student Cheyenne Malarz (Mar 13), and "Explaining The Circle School Made Easy (or less hard)" by Beth Stone (May 15)
- Ellen attends quarterly meetings of the Dauphin County Safe Schools group.
- Published two slideshows: "2018-19 Year in Pictures" (Featuring "A Million Dreams" by P!nk), which is available on the school's website and YouTube channel; and "Faces of 2018-19" (Featuring "Growing as We Go" by Ben Platt), a version of which (without student names) is available on the Current Families section of the website. (Jun 7)
- Published 18 editions of the email newsletter (approximately 687 recipients).
- Produced a new edition of Practicing Life in July 2019, including about a hundred new pictures, additional and updated alumni profiles, and additional new material.
- Launched a new website. (July 2019)
- TheBurg published a feature story ("As in Life, As in School") about Jim's book and the school (August issue).
- Jim Rietmulder attended the annual conference of AERO (Alternative Education Resource Organization) in Portland OR, gave a talk, and received a Lifetime Achievement Award as a "pioneer in alternative education." (Jun 26-30)

Staffing

- Changed Lucas Bodnyk's employment as a staff member from temporary to regular. (Dec 1, 2018)
- Retained Ann Sipe, Beth Stone, Ellen Abbott, JD Stillwater, Jim Rietmulder, and Julia James (part-time, off-campus) from 2018-19 school year to 2019-20.
- Engaged Noah Whelan as an adjunct staff person, to be available on call. (Oct 23, 2019)
- Changed Lucas Bodnyk's hours from full-time to two days per week (as of Nov 1, 2019).

Alumni news

- Molly Lemke '09 lobbied Pennsylvania governor Tom Wolf for animal rights.
- Alumn Josh Bullock (attended 2006-2008) died suddenly on January 16.
- Jamie Tyrell '00 appeared as a contestant on Jeopardy! the quiz show (Oct 24-25, 2019).

Building and grounds

- Installed a "flower border" on the west side of the building, consisting of a 24" wide strip of finely ground dark brown mulch adjacent to the stone facing and around the stone bench. (Oct 2018)
- Removed the basketball system in October 2018 and replaced it in October 2019.
- Installed a new projector and wall speakers in the Commons. (Nov 2, 2018)
- Endorsed the Cool Things Outside Corporation's efforts to install swing set on campus, and authorized a video crowd funding campaign. (Jun 5)
- Permitted Samara The Center for Individual and Family Growth to use the Meadow Campus grounds 2 nights a week for their children's program. (Sept 2018 – Jun 2019)

- The Board of Trustees sold the school's old campus at 210 Oakleigh Avenue to Samara: The Center for Individual and Family Growth. (Jul 8)
- Aerated, over-seeded, and fertilized the mowed grounds, attempting to build up the lawn. (Oct 2019)

Legislative Actions

- Chartered the Dance Corporation to conduct school dances. (Dec 12)
- Temporarily banned the possession, sale, and consumption of ramen noodles and Cup o' Noodles. (Oct 17 – Jan 3)
- Temporarily banned the use of skate park equipment, pending development of Skate Park Corporation safety rules. (Dec 5)
- Adopted 24 new laws, 28 amendments to existing laws, and two repeals. Some examples follow:
 - To avoid inconveniencing parents and to minimize the staff time required to oversee visitors, created a new rule that states: "You may not delay the departure of your home bound private transportation. You may not keep your parent or other private transportation provider waiting for more than one minute if you know of their expected arrival time and they arrive in the building approximately as expected. Otherwise you may not keep them waiting more than four minutes after you know of their arrival in the building." (Dec 5)
 - To prevent damage and injury, created new rule 4853.65 (No drones indoors): "You may not operate a flying drone indoors." (Jan 23)
 - For safety from injury and to reduce large motor rowdiness indoors, amended 4853.13 (Rowdy play prohibited indoors) to add a sentence: "Carrying anyone on your back that is heavier than you or anyone on your shoulders at all is considered rowdy play." (Mar 12)

Other

- In order to provide for mutual assistance among nearby schools during emergency incidents, the school joined the newly formed Dauphin County Joint School Safety Task Force (JSST) and executed a Memorandum of Understanding. (Dec 19)
- Received business donations from eight businesses: Radish & Rye Food Hub, By Design Consulting, Greenworks Development LLC, Avalon Insurance Company, Orrstown Bank, Fulton Bank, Philadelphia Insurance Company, UGI Storage Company.
- Awarded Sol Giannelli a "Lifer Fellowship" for the 2019-20 school year. (Mar 6)
- Experimented with the times of regular School Meetings.
- Current enrollment is 83 students.
- Cooking Corporation held three cooking contests in the 2018-2019 school year.
- The fourth annual LipSync Battle was organized by students. (Jun 6)
- The first annual Trash & Splash day was held in the ravine. (Sep 27)

TCS Board of Trustees Report
November 3rd, 2019
For the period 11/5/2018 through 11/3/2019

Trustees who have served since the last annual meeting

Trustee	Trustee Since	Term Expiration	Officer	Notes
<u>Current Trustees</u>				
Lori Bennett	3/1/2018	2/29/2020		
Johanna Bodnyk	3/1/2013	2/28/2022	Secretary	
Anna Hewit	3/1/2017	2/29/2020	Treasurer	
Julia James	3/1/2019	2/29/2020		
Jim Rietmulder	3/1/2010	2/28/2021		Reached term limit
Connor Tyrrell	6/9/2009	2/29/2020	President	Reached term limit
Rob White	3/1/2017	2/28/2023		
<u>Trustees with Expired Terms</u>				
Marianne Barton	3/1/2010	2/28/2019		

Number of meetings since the last annual meeting

- Eleven meetings held on the phone
- Three meetings held over email in which motions were voted on
- Two two-day meetings held in person

Policy Changes

Policies Adopted

None

Policies Repealed

None

Policies Amended

None

Capital Purchases and Sales of \$50,000 or more

- Sold 210 Oakleigh Avenue to Samara: The Center for Individual and Family Growth for \$275,000 in July 2019. Minus the \$15,000 deposit + signing payment, the school is financing the remainder of the loan.

Other Notable Actions and Information

Over the past year the Board has primarily focused on ongoing fundraising, potential acquisition of neighboring land, and staff succession planning.