

**Los Feliz Charter School for the Arts
Monthly Board Meeting Minutes
November 6, 2008 4:00-7:30pm
L.A. Leadership Academy Lincoln Heights, CA**

BOARD MEMBERS:

Present: Verna Dauterive, Karin Newlin, Gabrielle Samuels, Bob Greenberg, Sharon Sutton, George Abrams

Absent: Michael Bishop, Elise Buik, Marissa Chibas-Preston, Linda Johanssen

Quorum? Yes.

Also Present: John Vargas, Nancy Martorelli, Marta Alcumbrac, Mary Ann Gallo, Roger Lowenstein, Kevin Mulcahey, Jack Sutton

PROCEEDINGS:

- The meeting was preceded by a tour of the proposed new school location at 2670 Griffin Ave. in Lincoln Heights. The tour was led by Roger Lowenstein, of the L.A. Leadership Academy (L.A.L.A.) and Kevin Mulcahey, LFCSA parent & architect for the school.
- Following the tour, board members and others convened at the L.A. Leadership Academy campus nearby. George Abrams called the meeting to order at 5:25 pm.
- Abrams asked that Roger Lowenstein share the background of the L.A.L.A.
- Lowenstein gave some of his personal history such as his commitment to civil rights issues. He said that after relocating to Los Angeles he perceived strong racial/ethnic divisions and recognized how greatly in need of help the LAUSD schools were and became inspired by the idea of building an educational institution that would “break down barriers.” Viewing the improvement of education as a major civil rights issue for the 21st Century, he became involved in the charter school movement and ultimately opened two campuses: a middle school and a high school. The high school is located in Lincoln Heights in what was once the Frances Crittendon Center which had housed girls with unplanned pregnancies in years past. The middle school is currently in a leased space in Koreatown. Desiring to have the two campuses closer together, Lowenstein began looking for available space in Lincoln Heights. After beginning to develop a deal on 2670 Griffin, he realized it would have far more space than needed and began to look for an elementary school to share the space.
- Abrams opened a discussion of how LFCSA fits into the picture. He notes that we would be asking for 18 – 20 classrooms and a lease agreement for \$20,000/month.
- Lowenstein says that escrow closes in December.
- Abrams adds that the \$20,000/month would mean that the financial burden of renovations would be on us. If we agreed to a higher monthly, than Lowenstein would share burden.
- Michael Bishop joins via phone at 5:50pm.
- Lowenstein discusses what kind of a “partnership” he envisions with the school that shares this space, noting that a socio-economic mix benefits all students.
- Abrams asks Lowenstein about gang and safety issues in the neighborhood.

- Lowenstein says that they are cautious and careful and that there have been almost no problems with their school. He also notes that the neighborhood is changing due to some gentrification.
- Bob Greenberg asks about how LFCSA's arts integrated program will mesh with his school's curriculum.
- Lowenstein says that he is excited by the thought of further developing that aspect of L.A.L.A.'s program.
- Before he leaves, Lowenstein notes that he hopes to develop a deep and sincere partnership, believing that each school has much to offer the other.
- Karin Newlin suggests that Lowenstein visit LFCSA and says that she would like to meet with the principals from his schools.
- Verna Dauterive asks Lowenstein about parent participation. He replies that parents sign contracts requiring them to volunteer for a minimum of three hours per month.
- Lowenstein left the meeting at 6:05pm.
- Abrams asks that John Vargas from ExED present the revised 08/09 budget for Board approval. Vargas distributes copies of the budget then points out revisions.
- In response to Vargas' comment that they are expecting a 6% cut on general purpose funding, Bishop notes that since the governor's cuts have to go before the legislature, it may not be an immediate problem.
- Vargas adds that the school will be receiving the full SB740 funding.
- Abrams moves to approve the revised budget. Dauterive seconds. All others say "aye" via roll call. Motion carries.
- Abrams says that the total received for the Capital Campaign was \$121,000. He moves to restrict the Capital Campaign funds so that they are not used elsewhere.
- Bishop asks for clarification regarding the future usage of the funds.
- Abrams says that because the lease agreement would require Lowenstein to do no more than provide a "shell", we would need to use the money for modifications such as paint, carpet, furniture, etc. He adds that Lowenstein is offering a 10 year lease with two (10 year) lease renewal options.
- Bishop emphasizes importance of informing contributors about what their donations will go to. Abrams says that those funds will only be applied to the "big move."
- Abrams moves to restrict the \$121,000 in Capital Campaign funds from the 07/08 year. Sharon Sutton seconds. All others say "aye" via roll call. Motion carries.
- Vargas distributes the "Notes to Financials."
- Abrams opens a discussion of the proposed move to Lincoln Heights. He describes the four pillars on which the school was founded: Community. Safe Environment. Curriculum. Diversity. He addresses each "pillar" in terms of where we are now. In terms of community, our families come from many different neighborhoods. He notes that people are starting to feel safe in Hollywood and he references crime statistics for Lincoln Heights. He says the curriculum is succeeding very well. In terms of ethnic diversity, he adds that LFCSA is becoming less diverse.
- Sutton says that while she is inspired by Lowenstein's vision, she is definitely put off by the area.
- Marta Alcumbrac discusses the difficult task of finding any other viable options. She describes the last ditch efforts to make things work with New Hope Chapel.

- Gabrielle Samuels asks if anything promising has come up between the end of New Hope & the Lincoln Heights site.
- Abrams talks about having combed ever broader areas for possibilities.
- Newlin adds that the greatest challenge faced by charter schools is real estate. She believes that Prop 39 would be our only option if this doesn't pan out. She & Alcumbrac discuss possibility of staying at Selma if Prop 39 becomes necessary.
- Newlin gives a brief history of her five year experience at an Artesia school in gang territory. It became a blue ribbon school and never had any gang activity on campus. Newlin also notes that gifted children learn greater skills when they are in a mixed learning environment.
- Abrams says that the senior lead officer in the neighborhood said there has not been gang activity on campuses.
- Samuels is concerned that the proposed move could lead to a real attrition of families from an already discontented parent population.
- Newlin feels that perhaps this may not be the right program for all of our families.
- Kevin Mulcahey suggests taking a very critical survey of our parent population to assess their priorities.
- Abrams asks Sutton how her discomfort with the area might be mitigated.
- Sutton responds that making the school environment an oasis would be critical.
- There is short discussion of what could make this location work. Newlin notes that "marketing" will be an important issue. Alcumbrac emphasizes the short time frame.
- In response to a request from Abrams parent, Mary Ann Gallo and Vice Principal, Nancy Martorelli share their impressions.
- Mulcahey notes that it will take more money to build an oasis.
- Abrams states that we are far from being able to make a decision. He would like to move forward with exploring a relationship with Lowenstein. He would like Site Council to work on how this will be presented to the parents.
- Samuels suggests giving a detailed description of the entire journey of looking for a site. Greenberg strongly agrees.
- Dauterive wonders when LFCSA could move to the site. Mulcahey thinks not before January 2010.
- Abrams moves that the Board authorize Karin Newlin and the Site Committee to move forward with negotiations with Roger Lowenstein of L.A. Leadership Academy for lease of 2670 Griffin Ave., the results of which will be presented to the Board when ready for Board approval. Dauterive seconds. Samuels says "no." All others say "aye." Motion carries.
- Abrams asks for approval of September '08 minutes. Sutton seconds. All others say "aye." Motion carries.
- Abrams says that due to Lowenstein's timetable, the Board will have to meet again before the end of the year.
- Abrams moves to adjourn at 7:30pm. Samuels seconds. All others say "aye." Motion carries.

Minutes submitted by Mary Ann Gallo.