



Dolores Huerta

“A Dual Language Charter Middle School”

1480 N. Main Street

Las Cruces, NM 88001

Phone: 575/526-2984 Fax: 575/523-5407

Regular Governing Council Meeting

Final Minutes

Thursday July 3, 2014 6:00 pm

Bertha Silva, Chair

John Vasquez, Vice Chair

Norma Martinez Arrieta, Secretary/Treasurer

Robert del Plain, Member

Saul Hernandez, Member

Christina Devereaux, Member

Rick Serrano, Member

1) Call to Order

Ms. Bertha Silva, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm and asked for a roll call.

2) Roll Call

B. Silva - Present

J. Vasquez - Present

N. Arrieta - Present

R. del Plain - Present

S. Hernandez - Present

C. Devereaux - Present

R. Serrano – Present

Total: (7) members present; (0) member absent. Let the record show that a quorum of governing council members is present, that this meeting has been called and that this meeting has been posted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

FACULTY/ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Ruben Diaz, Teacher; Chris Bardey, Teacher; Adelina Renteria, Teacher; Rene Salazar, Teacher; Rosana Ramos, Teacher; Cody Smith, Teacher; Emmanuel Flores, Teacher

STAFF PRESENT: Maria Olivas, Administrative Assistant; Mirna Rodriguez, Administrative Assistant

PUBLIC PRESENT: Genevieve Montoya, Daisy Garcia, Susana Casillas Long, Annette Luna, Manuel Cruz, Leticia Cortina, Vivian Allen, Melanie Hernandez, Pedro Ayala, Jackie M. Marquez, Victoria Atwell, Adrienne Loera, Maria Vallejo, Joann Carrasco, Keziah Garcia, Patricia Montoya, Olga Morales, Frances Marquez, Audrey Leonard, Noe Valenzuela, Sandra Muro, Raul Muro, Rosa Lopez, Araceli Melendez, Olivia Ponce, Elva Martinez, Brandon Flores, Javier Garcia, Cindy Hernandez, Jesus Dominguez, Beatriz Dominguez, Tina Olivas, Denise Gutierrez, Esteban Rodriguez, Nadia Ayala, Cecilia Romero, Chris Adams, Karla Martinez, Spencer Herrera, Gina Trujillo, David Trujillo, Eddie Padilla, Jennifer Allen, Josh Allen, Vivian Allen, Bonnie Salazar, Julia Barraza, Paola Hernandez, Lesley Ortiz, Maria Ramirez, Lizbeth Castaneda, Margarita Valenzuela, Valerie Perea, Ray Chavez, Maria Terrazas, Maria Hernandez, Perla Galvan, Carlos Sandoval, Brisa Simental, JoAnn DiMatteo, Mariana Casillas, David Saldivar, Israel Montoya, Jesus Valenzuela, Armando Casillas Long, Paul Long, Indira Sanchez, Karla Sanchez, Brissia Terrazas, Victoria Arrieta, Abril Casillas, Octavio Casillas, Audrey Leonard, Maria H. Leonard,

3) Approval of Agenda

Mr. Vasquez motioned to approve the agenda.

Ms. Martinez Arrieta motioned to amend the agenda to add an item before adjournment for New Business Discussion and remove meeting minutes of June 30th.

Ms. Devereaux motioned to amend the agenda to remove the meeting minutes of June 26th for approval.

Ms. Silva asked Ms. Martinez Arrieta to state what items would be included in the New Business discussion. Ms. Martinez Arrieta explained the “New Business” discussion would include the potential policy/requirement to use an approved AgendaTemplate for all regular governing council meetings.

Mr. del Plain motioned to also amend the agenda to add a statement regarding the an item after closed session to include a discussion/statement to administrator’s contract.

Ms. Martinez Arrieta motioned to add an additional discussion item to New Business: review with LADH staff the complaint policy and procedures between students, staff, parents, and administrators of LADH.

Mr. Vasquez motioned to approve the agenda with the amended items and removed items.

Mr. del Plain motioned to amend the agenda to move closed session after open public forum.

Ms. Martinez Arrieta motioned to amend the agenda to also include a discussion among governing council members in regards to any public input received not having to do with the administrator’s contract.

Mr. Vasquez motioned to approve the agenda with the removal of approval of meeting minutes of June 26th & June 30th and added item of New Business to include the following discussions: a policy to include new business in all future agendas, a workshop for LADH staff in regards to complaint policy and procedures, a statement in regards to the administrator’s contract and any other public input received today. Ms. Martinez Arrieta seconded the motion.

Roll Call vote: Silva (Yes); Arrieta (Yes); Del Plain (Yes); Hernandez (Yes); Devereaux (No); Serrano (Yes)
Total Yes: 5 No: 1; Motion was approved

4) Open forum-Public Input

Public comments and observations regarding education policy and governance issues, as well as the strategic planning, are heard at this time. (Two-Minute Time Limit Per Presenter. Persons from the same group and having similar viewpoints are asked to select a spokesperson to speak on their behalf. Multiple and repetitious presentations of the same view will be discouraged and may be ruled out of order by the Chair.)

Adelina Renteria, Special Education Coordinator at LADH, (paraphrased): Was grateful to be the first person to go. Wanted everybody to have a mindset of why there are Charter Schools in our country: First came about (from) teachers who had a passion and a heart and dedication for students. It wasn’t about pay; it was about their heart for the future and to make a difference. Wanted everyone present to keep in mind that there are students (present) at La Academia, that attend here, that were former students and they are the reasons why we are here and are working very hard to make a difference. Stressed that everyone understand that charter schools were developed from the dedication of professionals and parents from their passion for students.

Dr. Chris Adams, Co-Founder & Member of LADH Foundation, (paraphrased): Wanted to address the council regarding a few items related to the purpose and function of the LADH Foundation.

Dr. Adams yielded to his colleague Ray Chavez.

Ray Chavez, Member of LADH Foundation, read and presented the following letter to the governing council: “As an incorporating committee we have worked over the past weeks to achieve certification as a Non-Profit Foundation in conformity with state statutes. We are now informed that certification has been issued; we now can move forward to completing our by-laws and operating policies. But to do so we must assure that school bylaws and policies exist that will allow for negotiation and execution of bilateral agreements that will insure and protect the integrity of both entities as regards to accountability, transparency, and fiduciary responsibilities. Our purpose is to

assist the school to acquire resources and/or initiate programs that are not fundable through budgeted and allowed public education funds—but may be funded through private sector grants, loans and donations available only to non-profit entities such as foundations. We have committed ourselves individually and collectively to that end because we want to see the school grow in every aspect possible. We have had to rely on your Director to serve as an informational source and as a bridge between us and this Council. As a result of your recent termination of the Director that connectivity has been severed. We have little confidence that in the short term his replacement can serve effectively in that capacity thus further frustrating our ability to move forward. We understand that your Director has been in discussions with owner of a property under consideration as a new facility, along with discussions with potential funding sources, and that those discussions were lost to negotiations. We also understand that he also has been working closely with design and engineering outlets with the result of achieving design plans looked favorable upon by the NMPSFA – thus bringing the date of our potential involvement ever closer. It would seem that if these discussions and negotiations are not finalized and approved, and financial is not forthcoming, the 2015 date for the school to meet facility requirements imposed on charter schools may not be met, which in turn may negatively impact the school's ability to meet stipulated enrollment levels and the potential loss of public funds for each student under the stipulated levels. The need for a foundation has long been known but over the years has been set on the back burner due to lack of interest or initiative by either previous Directors and/or Governing Councils—but tonight, thanks to the Director's initiative in fulfilling the task assigned him by this Council, we are at the door steps of achieving the obvious. If the Foundation is to assume legal responsibility for financial commitments on behalf of La Academia it will be necessary that: the aforementioned bylaws and policies protecting against liability to either or both entities have been mutually executed and implemented; that all parties feel confidence the school can guarantee repayment of the loan and; that the schools' Governing Council shows evidence of its ability to establish and sustain internal stability over the near and long term. That being said, we request that: the Governing Council tonight give us a verbal consensus of its willingness to establish and sustain a working relations with the Foundation; and similar verbal consensus of its willingness to meet with us to initiate negotiations or bilateral bylaws, policies, and procedures; and that the Governing Council move to reinstate the Director or replace him immediately with someone qualified to move the inter-entity relations and processes forward without loss of time and momentum. Madam Chair we again thank you for this opportunity to present ourselves to you, and make ourselves available to respond to question at this time.

Carla Martinez, Parent of Cristiano Ortiz, (paraphrased and translated from Spanish): Would like to have a workshop for parents on how the governing council works. Feels that the parents have the right to know the reason why Mr. Casillas was removed. Doesn't understand why all information from governing council is published in English – isn't La Academia a dual language school? All information should be available in English and Spanish.

Dr. Spencer Herrera, Professor of NMSU, (paraphrased): Explained that he has been in higher education for over 13 years and knows what it takes to succeed at the university level. From having visited this school last spring he can see that the kids are on their way to attending college. He continued that they are on their way to attending college because something here is right; they are doing something right. Dr. Spencer attributed the success of LADH to staff but especially the administration, "You have to have the right leadership." He explained that he is not currently a parent of a student of LADH, but, he is a parent of a future student. For years he has known that LADH was the school for his daughter. "Dear Board Members I ask you to think about your decision and the impact it will have not only on the children, but on the community and the next generation and years to come. And I ask you to reconsider your decision and to renew the contract with Mr. Casillas and to keep Mr. Casillas as the Principal of LADH."

Cody Smith (yielded his time to O. Casillas)

Octavio Casillas, Former LADH Principal, read and presented the following letter to the governing council: "Good Evening Madame Chair and other Governing Council members as well as the Public. I'm here tonight because school is scheduled to open in a month. There's a lot of work to be completed, the problem is, even if this work is completed, the change in leadership is damaging enough to the school. When you change a leader, you completely change the school's structure, potential, efficiency, and future. I ask the GC to remain student focused today. Listen to what the students and parents want, no one is more qualified than the parents and the students to determine whether I should go or stay. As you make your decisions today, don't think about me. Whatever differences in philosophy that may exist between you and I can be worked out. As a matter of fact, you and I both have the ethical responsibility to put our differences aside and find a way to work together in the best interests of our most important stakeholders; the students. I'm here today because I'm ready to act in the best interests of the students. Whatever has prevented you from offering me a contract can be resolved by sitting with me today after the meeting to discuss a short term contract that will benefit our students.

Estoy aqui ahora porque clases comenzaran en solo un mes. Hay mucho trabajo que hacer en este mes, pero aunque el trabajo se complete, el cambio de lider es bastante danoso para la escuela. Cuandos cambias a un lider, completamente cambias a la escuela la estructura, el potencial, su eficiencia y su futuro. Le Pido a la mesa directive que se mantenga enfocada en los estudiantes. Eschuchan a los padres y los estudiantes y hagan lo que les pidan.

Nadie esta mas calificado para decidir si me quedo or me voy que los estudiantes y los padres. Cuando hagan sus decisions ahora, no piensen en mi. Cualquier diferencia en filosofia que podamos tener ustedes y yo puede ser entendida y arreglada si podemos platicar con respeto. Ustedes y yo tenemos la responsabilidad etica de poner nuertras diferencias al lado y encontrar un modo de trabajar juntos para el interes de los estudiantes. Yo estoy aqui ahora porque estoy preparado para trabajar con ustedes con el interes de los estudiantes en mente. Cualquier cosa que les layga prevenido de ofrecerme un contrato puede ser resuelta ahora si ustedes se sientan conmigo despues de la junta y me ofrecen un contrato hasta de corto termino que beneficie a los estudiantes.”

Chris Bardey, Art Teacher of LADH, (paraphrased): Explained he has about 9 years experience teaching high school, some experience teaching college, holds a master’s degree, and, he loves this school and loves teaching this level. He explained at this point he only has one or two options: (1) Mr. Casillas comes back and he gets to enjoy his job; (2) Mr. Casillas doesn’t come back and a lot of bad things happen and he will take a whole different look at this school because he knows that it will change his life dramatically and thinks a lot of the students feel the same way.

Eddie Padilla, School Counselor (Booker T. Elementary)/Grandfather of current LADH Student (paraphrased): Knows that many of his ex-students have and do come to LADH. He says the kids ask to come, want to come, and need to come here because this school provides them with what they need. He feels that if some of the students would not have finished school if they would have gone to a regular school. He has known all the previous and current administrators of LADH. He believes Mr. Casillas is different because he has a long-term vision for the school, i.e. wants to make the school a senior high and wants the kids to get an Associates in Arts by the time they graduate. One of the things that impressed him the most was that the students come to LADH speaking one language and don’t play an instrument, but leave playing an instrument and knowing two languages. He asked the governing council to look at the kids, take care of the kids, and do what is right for the kids and not change the dynamics of the school.

Julia Barraza (Passed)

Valerie Perea (Did not come forward)

Brisa Simental, Parent of former student at LADH/Past LADH Governing Council Member (paraphrased): Said her daughter’s 8th grade year was the most miserable year that she has spent in school. She personally doesn’t like Mr. Casillas; but that was not the reason for her presence. She wanted the public and council to know her daughter was contacted to sign a petition at Young’s Park that was supposed to be so they would not reinstate Mr. Casillas. She explained her daughter is only fifteen and not of legal age to make decisions. Afterwards she found out the petition was to reinstate Mr. Casillas. She does not want her child included in the petition.

JoAnn DiMatteo, Community Member. (Saul Hernandez translated in Spanish/paraphrased): Thanked the Governing Council for doing what is right for the school, the students, and their parents and for having their best interest at heart. Secondly she wanted to ask, “What is wrong when parents, students, relatives, and teachers are afraid to speak up because they fear retribution from the former Principal Octavio Casillas?” She thanked the Governing Council for their time and said they had made a very wise and sound decision in removing Mr. Casillas as the Principal of the school.

Indira Sanchez, Former LADH Student, (paraphrased and translated from Spanish): Students who come to La Academia are prepared, succeed at the college level, and in life. LADH provided many opportunities for her as a student and continues to provide those opportunities for current students.

Maria Vallejo, Parent of LADH Student (paraphrased): Has a child that attends LADH and has been here since last year. She has a lot of questions and would like to show her support for Mr. Casillas. She feels as a parent she deserves an explanation of what is going on. She wanted to make clear that she is not in support of Mr. Casillas because they are friends. She appreciates that her child brings her a good grade, or that he recently won an award for academic excellence. She knows it was because Mr. Casillas was always after him and made an office assistant to keep an eye on him. “Who does that?” She felt that was a remarkable. She thanked the governing council for the opportunity to speak. She also wanted to thank the parents for the opportunity to have her child, who is a 6th grader, sign that petition because “he has a voice and he loves this school”. She added that she makes the round trip of 10 miles every day and if things change she does not think she would be willing to do that. She asked the governing council to please reconsider their decision.

Keziah Garcia yielded her time to her daughter, Carmen Garcia, Student of LADH (paraphrased): Wanted to make the request to the Governing Council to re think the decision about Mr. Casillas. She asked to please consider the students. “My education is at stake.”

Patricia Montoya yielded her time to Olga Morales

Olga Morales, Parent of Former Student of LADH (paraphrased and translated from Spanish): Explained she was speaking on behalf of the parents present today. She said it really doesn't matter the reasons why you (the governing council) came to the decision that was made. She asked, "Why is it possible that the majority of the members on this board do not understand the dynamics of this school?" By-laws state that (2) parents should serve on the governing board—and currently there is only one parent. She feels this is an injustice to the parents and students of LADH. She stressed that all decisions made by the governing council should be student focused. She brought forth a petition that students and parents have signed that demand Mr. Casillas' contract be extended or renewed. She stressed that over 76 signatures are of parents which represents more than 50% of parents at LADH.

Ruben Diaz, LADH Teacher (paraphrased): Stated that as a governing body the LADH council sends a message to staff. "If this can happen to my leader, what is my future at this school?" He asked the governing council to consider the message they are sending to staff and future professionals of LADH.

Elva Martinez, Parent of Former LADH Student (paraphrased): Feels that LADH has a very hostile environment and her son was treated. She does not see Mr. Casillas as a role model. Wants the governing council to know that the students are succeeding because of teachers not because of Mr. Casillas.

Genevieve Montoya, Parent of Former LADH Student (paraphrased): Spoke in support of Mr. Casillas. She feels like he gives students a brighter hope for the future. He never let her daughter fail. This is not just a job for Mr. Casillas. Not everyone here is in favor of him, but, the majority is and we are here. Here for the education of our children.

Susana Casillas Long, Parent of (2) LADH Students, (paraphrased): At LADH the students are not surrounded by thugs because gangs are not tolerated. This is a safe environment for students to learn and grow. The petition that was signed and given to the board was to reinstate Mr. Casillas and show support for him as a leader of LADH.

Annette Luna, Parent of student of LADH, (paraphrased): Explained she has a daughter who currently attends LADH and struggles with learning. She brings her daughter from Mesilla Park because this school makes a difference for her. Her daughter learns here. When a child has their parents, teachers, and Principal behind them it does make a difference.

Leticia Cortina, parent of LADH student, (paraphrased): Her older daughter attended LADH and had some personal problems. Mr. Casillas was an English teacher at that time. He was there for her during school and after school. He made time for her academically and it helped her succeed. Now she continues to succeed not only in school but in all areas of her life. She currently has a younger daughter attending LADH and if Mr. Casillas is not brought back as the Principal of LADH – she will remove her daughter.

Action items

5) Approval of consent agenda items

- Approval of June 5th, 2014 meeting minutes
- Approval of Special meeting of June 26th, 2014 meeting minutes
- Approval of Special meeting minutes of June 30th, 2014

Mr. Del Plain motioned to approve the agenda with the deletion of the approval of the June 26th and June 30th meeting minutes and Ms. Devereaux seconded the motion.

Roll Call vote: Silva (Yes); Arrieta (Yes); Del Plain (Yes); Hernandez (Yes); Devereaux (No); Serrano (Yes)
Total: Yes (5); No (1); Motion was approved.

6) Approval of SPED Policy and procedures for LADH as recommended by PED

Mr. Vasquez motioned to approve SPED Policy and procedures for LADH as recommended by PED and Mr. Hernandez seconded the motion.

Roll Call vote: Silva (Yes); Arrieta (Yes); Del Plain (Yes); Hernandez (Yes); Devereaux (Yes); Serrano (Yes)
Total: Yes (6); No (0); Motion was approved in the unanimous.

7) Approval of Student Cap Amendment as recommended by PEC

Mr. Vasquez motioned to lay on the table approval of Student Cap Amendment to next special meeting and the motion was seconded by Mr. Devereaux.

Roll Call vote: Silva (Yes); Arrieta (Yes); Del Plain (Yes); Hernandez (Yes); Devereaux (No); Serrano (Yes)
Total: Yes (5); No (1); Motion was approved.

8) Approval of BAR for IDEA B SPED application

Mr. del Plain motioned to approve IDEA B SPED application and Ms. Devereaux seconded the motion.

Roll Call vote: Silva (Yes); Arrieta (Yes); Del Plain (Yes); Hernandez (Yes); Devereaux (Yes); Serrano (Yes)
Total: Yes (6); No (0); Motion was approved in the unanimous.

9) Closed Session (§ 10-15-1 (H)) to discuss items relevant to Section 10-15-1(H)(2) and Section 10-15-1(H)(7).

Motion to convene into closed session was made by Mr. del Plain and seconded by Mr. Vasquez

Roll Call vote: B. Silva (Yes); N. Arrieta (Yes); R. del Plain (Yes); S. Hernandez (Yes); C. Devereaux (Yes); R.

Serrano (Yes) Total Yes: 6 No: 0; Motion was approved in the unanimous. Meeting convened into closed session at 6:05 pm.

No action was taken during closed session.

Motion for meeting to reconvene from closed session was made by Ms. Devereaux and seconded by Mr. Serrano.

Roll Call vote: B. Silva (Yes); N. Arrieta (Yes); R. del Plain (Yes); S. Hernandez (Yes); C. Devereaux (Yes); R.

Serrano (Yes) Total Yes: 6 No: 0; Motion was approved in the unanimous. Meeting reconvened from closed session at 9:05 pm.

10) Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Vasquez and seconded by Ms. Devereaux.

Roll Call vote: B. Silva (Yes); N. Arrieta (Yes); R. del Plain (Yes); S. Hernandez (Yes); C. Devereaux (Yes); R.

Serrano (Yes) Total Yes: 6 No: 0; Motion was approved in unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

*Any individual attending a board meeting may sign in to participate in the Public Input section of the Agenda, if any. Such persons may speak on any item after the individual is recognized by the President of the Board and introduces himself/herself at the podium. The Governing Council of La Academia Dolores Huerta will not take action on any item presented under Public Input, until an opportunity to do so is afforded. La Academia Dolores Huerta will provide an interpreter for the Hearing Impaired upon request. Requests should be submitted to the head administrator's office three days prior to the meeting. Simultaneous Spanish translation will be provided at the meeting.