

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the OTA Board of Directors / OTA Site Council
November 10, 2015
Old Town Academy, 2120 San Diego Avenue, San Diego, CA 92110
Approved: November 17, 2015

Item 1 – Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance

Call the meeting to order 7:15 p.m. Kevin Olenick led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CC- presiding

Roll call-Callan and Garb absent, Morris, Olenick, Celentino, Cain (Via posted teleconference site), Sick, Gartland, de Rossiers present.

A quorum of members physically within the jurisdiction was present.

The following members of the public were present based upon the voluntary sign-in sheet (there may have been other members of the public present, who did not sign the sign-in sheet):

Maya Howry, Chris Cantzler, Bob Hamm, Reid Warrick, Gordon Hess, Michael Rosenbaum, Chris Cole, Jeremy Turner, Lucy Covington, Marisa Calderon, Steve Shupper, Samantha Olenick, Lynn DiFilippo, Julie Gabrielli, Cathie Berlin, Marie Brikfield, Jim Keith, Jon Centofranchi, Sarah Cook, Crystal Baum-Soltero

The Board moved directly to the Special Agenda.

Item 2. Public Comment: Public Comments/Correspondence

Steve Shupper -requested the Board consider adding to the uniform policy the ability to wear plain no name grey or navy cardigan zip-up sweaters for cold weather, please add to the next board agenda.

Item 3. Board Member / Site Council Comments / Correspondence

None

There being no further comment, the Board moved to the next item on the Agenda.

Item 4. #4) Report on our meeting at SD Unified

CC-Overview and timeline of events leading up to our merger with TVLC, Subcommittee formed of Mireille, Anna and Ryan sent to visit TVLC and report back their recommendation to the board for combination, never mention of back-office only. 6/30/14 Board unanimously approved 5-0, also vetted and approved by Tom, for merger to be effective 7/1/14. MOU needed

modifications finally signed on 7/29/14 by Donahue, 8/2/14 by TVLC. 8/20/14 mixer between TVLC, OTA Board, parents. All concluded this was great for OTA economically and for collaboration with teachers. Ryan Callan and Ken Morris invited to mixer as it was intended for them to become Board members after their service to the Foundation.

9/14/14 TVLC came to our school and all of our employees became TVLC employees, all signed employee handbook. Tom agreed and told the board he would notify/amend our charter with the district and never did, we found out the truth several months later.

Two things were not implemented:

- 1.) Communication with SD Unified was not sufficient; we as a Board agree we should have demanded proof of Tom's communication with the Board.
- 2.) Formation of the principal search Committee was to have commenced in the fall 2014, not Spring.

March (2015) meeting never happened because the agenda posted was NOT the one we created, in fact Tom submitted an agenda with a proposal that he remain principal for a six year commitment. This obviously was not in line with our MOU and created consternation for TVLC and the OTA Board. Tom did not ever present his concerns in public to the Board for discussion.

5/22/15-Tom said he was in favor of the merger; yet, at the 5/27/15 - Board meeting, upon the implementation of the principal search committee, Tom threatened to resign if the school added parents to the board.

CC- Expressed he was surprised by Tom's outburst, felt very sorry for his friend Tom, felt it was a very disturbing meeting, tried his best to keep order. Quoted an email from Tom on 5/28/14 where he states TVLC will be a good fit for OTA and teachers are informed and onboard.

5/29/15-Tom retained a lawyer (May Harris) in the name of OTA to file a lawsuit against TVLC and CC. Tom resigned on 6/4/15, was fired on 6/5/15 and the Board confirmed his firing on 6/7/15. Tom's attempt to force his reinstatement was denied on 6/9/15. The school received an injunction to remove Tom on 6/11/15, and that injunction is now permanent.

Over the summer on a daily basis we addressed the concerns of SD Unified, from missing docs in the office, to faulty postings, missing policies and procedures, inadequate special ed, etc. -- we worked very hard to get our house in order. We received advice on best practices from both TVLC and SD Unified.

We are now in the Charter Renewal Process with SD Unified, and we have had the opportunity to work with TVLC for the last 6 months. This is an open forum, against the factual backdrop outlined above, for the stakeholders – Teachers, Parents, Students, Board Members – to express any concerns or reservations with the school and its operations with TVLC input.

Pro's of TVLC - financial strength, curriculum development, collaboration with teachers, best practices administratively and most important a new found commitment our school to do right and meet the needs of our students in special education. Before SD Unified criticized that we had

significantly decreased the number of students with IEP's (down to a low of only 9) and now we have thirteen with three additional undergoing screening.

Invited by the district to submit renewal early. Prior to our public hearing they expressed a list of concerns and we addressed them in detail. At the meeting, trustees expressed concerns and still want answers, primarily targeted at trying to understand the meltdown between May 27, 15 and June 17, 2015.

CC- My perception is that SD Unified is concerned that any school in its jurisdiction lose local control over their school. They do not know who TVLC is, only what Tom has told them after he decided it wasn't a good fit for him, but apparently not much about the two years that he championed them as a good fit for OTA. Celentino's view, we have more local control than ever before because we have an open and transparent Board, an administration that understands its role to be responsive, not subversive. Also SD Unified has already approved two other schools- Magnolia and Kipp, which have non-local control similar too, or stronger than, the OTA/TVLC approach. Under charter law you are required to offer first right of refusal within 60 days. You can appeal to the County Board of Education and if they don't approve than you go to the State Board of Education. Those decisions will be made and known to us before 3/1/15.

CC- We want to give you an open dialogue so that you understand there is a chance this may not go in our favor at SD Unified. Trustee McQuary came to our school and was greeted personally by student ambassadors from every class. He commented it was the only school he has seen with 100% engagement.

We will have a meeting this Thursday with SD Unified regarding our special ed and a TVLC representative will be flying down to participate in that meeting.

Ken Morris- Regarding the 6/30/14 meeting, I was the former foundation president and had concerns about TVLC, Tom told me it was the right thing to do, if the plan would have happened accordingly and the MOU with TVLC was presented accurately to the District we could have spent this last year vetting TVLC. I've always had concerns about our special ed. program because we lost good families and kids because our former program did not meet their needs.

Sandra Gartland-I can speak to special ed because I fought for 2 years to get my son his IEP because the former director (Tom Donahue) did not believe in it nor support it. Now we have TVLC and Mr. C's influence and I am thrilled to report that my son is thriving and getting all his IEP hours every week.

Kevin Olenick- Last year my son Parker was only on campus half time; now he is here full time because he is finally getting what he needs.

CC- Anna can you and Mireille speak about your experience when you went and visited TVLC?

Anna Sick and Mireille de Rossiers- We were well received and embraced. Impressed with the elementary school as it was a well oiled machine from safety procedures for volunteers, to pick up and drop off procedures, library and PA system, banners through out school promoting diversity, positivity, and respect. We also toured their HS and its International students program,

advance arts and media classes, presi system for each grade level, etc.. We instantly felt it would be a great collaboration between the two parties, especially because from the get go TVLC promised that OTA would keep its autonomy and local control. They proved to us that even with their other schools they did not place mandates or restrictions on individual governances. We felt we could learn from them especially because we were operating with such a skeletal crew. Tom our former principal was elated that we went and encouraged us to see the benefits of establishing a partnership with TVLC. We made our recommendation to the board and adopted an MOU to merge with TVLC, and Tom supported our recommendation.

Cain-I decided to get involved when things got weird and they got weird because of Tom, he dropped the ball and the Board stepped up to fix his misdoings.

Cathy Berlin- Anything parents can do between now and Dec. 3rd?

CC- Assuming that tonight we vote not to try to undo our combination with TVLC, then yes an email will come out shortly offering suggestions on how you can help. I wanted this special meeting to happen so we have total transparency with all of our stakeholders. We will have our school thru 6/30/16 no matter what, every 5 years each charter must go thru the renewal process.

Michael Rosenbaum- With all due respect I appreciate the recap of events leading up to this point but 90% of this doesn't matter, we need to focus on what it's going to take to get our charter renewed. We can't look to the past and mistakes Tom made.

CC- Both of my kids will graduate from this school, our discussion tonight is not about a back up plan, it was to give those an opportunity who may or may not have heard how we got here a chance to speak about moving forward or not, to express any misgivings they may have after 3 months of operations with the support of TVLC. We as a board really want to know what the general population is thinking.

Cain- Can the public please stop sending CC FB posts?

CC- I will respond to all inquiries

Ken Morris-I agree with CC, this meeting is important to discuss how we got here because this is exactly why SD Unified is upset with us – not upset because of how we are operating now, but because of the chaos caused by the misinformation campaign over that 30-day period in May/June 2015.

Steve Shupper - How are things going with TVLC? Do we have options?

Mr. C.- Our support from TVLC is overwhelming, Stephanie Pavlenko is flying down for this Thursday's meeting with the district regarding Special Ed. I'm flying to Livermore on Friday to meet with all the principals from their schools. We sent 10 teachers up there over the summer and our teachers are finally getting the professional development they need. We run they school, as promised – they support as requested.

Michael Rosenbaum- Please answer part 2 of Shupper's question?

CC- Yes, we do have options, TVLC has openly stated that if it's not working for us, then we can act to change it, however TVLC intends to stay with us.

Chris Ford-If our community is really behind this renewal than it will happen. we need to acknowledge that OTA mislead the District even though it was unintentional on the part of the Board itself. Is there any value in writing to City council members?

CC- Yes, I think we should reach out to them and ask them to ask SD Unified to treat us fairly. They should not discriminate against us on the basis of outside local control to deny best practices that are improving the lives of our students.

Kevin Olenick- Are there pro's and con's vs. city schools vs. county or state schools?

CC- Yes, at the end of the day it's a question of supervisory fees and support. State has the lowest. I believe there is one county and two state schools currently in SD County (i.e.: Thrive)

Chris Cantzler - Did we know that Bill Bachelor was leaving and is that ok?

CC- We knew at the end of the summer that he would become a consultant for TVLC and about his involvement with the private Prep School academy that rents facilities from TVLC, and his commitment to develop a Chinese exchange program there. He still continues to help us at OTA and we communicate with him regularly.

Sarah Cook Rock- I'm a teacher here and I can say that the faculty and staff support our collaboration with TVLC and its business as usual here.

Mr. C.-TVLC offers us a better benefit package, increased salaries for our teachers, admin and best practice advice, curriculum collaboration and professional development to name a few..

Jeremy Turner- You mentioned at coffee with the principal that there is a lot of work to do with our project based school, Is this something TVLC can help us with?

Mr. C.-Yes, they help give us whatever we need. For example, with TVLC's support we are looking for a new math curriculum that better aligns us with Common Core.

CC- My resolution is to stay the course with our combination with TVLC and move forward with Charter Renewal. Cain-2nd

All present voted, 7-0 approved to move forward with our Charter Renewal in conjunction with TVLC.

Item 5. Adjournment. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.