

HARAMBEE INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
CHARTER SCHOOL  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

---

**Board Meeting Minutes  
February 24, 2021**

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 via Zoom 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Open Session

**Meeting Called to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.  
by Board Chair, Maurice Baynard

**Libation**

Dr. Baynard asked the Cultural Leader and Board member Renee Whitby to lead members with libation.

**Roll Call: Members and Staff**

Dr. Baynard asked Board members and the senior leadership team to give introductions. Board members and the senior leadership team introduced themselves, stated their names and titles.

**Introduction of Visitors and Others Present**

There were no visitors in attendance at this meeting

**Board Members Present:**

Maurice Baynard  
Joseph Foster  
Renee Whitby  
Jan Gillespie- Walton  
C. Wade Mosely  
Donna Holmes- Lockett  
Larry Bell  
Charis Jackson

**Board members absent:**

Marirose Roach  
Lakiesha Creighton

**Others Present:**

Gregory Shannon	CEO
Michelle Thornton	CFO
Ericka Washington	Assistant Principal of School Operations
Sara Ferguson	Assistant Principal of Instruction

**Review of January Meeting Minutes**

Dr. Baynard, Board Chairman asked members if they had reviewed the Board meeting minutes from the January 27<sup>th</sup>, meeting. He asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the minutes. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were no additions or corrections. Dr. Baynard accepted a motion to accept the minutes as presented. All members agreed, there was a unanimous motion to accept

**Motion:** Accept minutes as presented

Approval AYE: 8      Nays: 0      Abstentions: 0      Absent: 2

**CEO Board Report, Greg Shannon**

Dr. Baynard gave the floor to the CEO Gregory Shannon and asked for an update from his leadership team.

**Annual Gala**

Greg reported that the Gala is scheduled for Thursday April 15<sup>th</sup> and they are currently working with the Roz Group and Mazda Miles, who specialize in virtual event planning to get things underway with the event. He indicated that all presentations will be virtual and will be pre-recorded. He also advised that they have hired a producer to tie all of the presentations together. The entire Gala will last 90 minutes in duration and for those members that commit \$1,500.00 for the VIP package or make a \$150.00 donation will have a thirty-minute VIP experience. He also mentioned that the portal should be up and running next week when Baba Obbina returns, so that everyone can begin making contributions.

**Property Acquisition**

Greg expressed that they are still interested in acquiring additional property, which will help them to continue to develop their mission, vision and core values along with their Stem focus. When asked about the Ford Road property later in the meeting, Greg responded that they are continuing to search for properties that meet their needs.

They want to ensure that they make a thoughtful and intentional decision that meet their needs not just for 2021, but the best property that will meet their needs for the future in both 2024 and in 2030.

Board member Charis asked if the meetings with the community groups for Ford Road were still happening or if they had already happened. She also asked if the property is off the table altogether now. Greg responded that they continue to search for the best property that meets their needs for the future. Board member Wade inquired whether officially as a Board they needed to amend the previous Board action that had given Greg and his team the authorization to further discuss the consummation of a deal with the developer. He suggested that perhaps the Board needed to officially close Ford Road since their last official Board action was recorded with engaging a project manager, sending surveys to parents and other official business surrounding the project. Wade also mentioned that that there is nothing indicating that they are looking for their best value, rather it appears that they are still in negotiations with the developer. He suggested that they officially close the matter, move on and continue their explorations for an additional property.

Dr. Baynard entertained a motion to discontinue any further negotiations and contracts relating to the Ford Road expansion.

**Motion:** Discontinue any further negotiations and contracts relating to the Ford Road expansion. The motion was seconded by Charis, none opposed, so moved

Approval AYE: 8      Nays: 0      Abstentions: 0      Absent: 2

### **Friends of Harambee Advisory Committee**

Greg announced that the Friends of Harambee Advisory Committee is scheduled for a presentation on March 2, 2021. He reported that he and Dr. Baynard will present to a group of 12 individuals that are interested in Harambee and may be interested in serving on the advisory board. Greg also reported that they have established an alumni association that meets monthly and an Umoja counsel. They have identified a few students for the alumni association and they are currently working with Roz McPhearson and The Roz group to obtain the student testimonies.

Greg asked if there were any questions for him from the Board before he turned it over to Sara for an Instructional update. Board member Larry Bell asked two questions, 1) What time will the Gala event take place on April 15<sup>th</sup> and Greg responded between 5:30 -7:00p.m. 2) Larry also asked when would the materials be ready to send out to prospective attendees of the event. Greg responded that the information should be on

the website next week. The graphic designer is currently putting the finishing touches on the cards, which should be printed and sent out shortly. Dr. Baynard announced that there was a really nice landing portal with all of the Board member's listed that would direct people who wanted to support the event in each person's name. Baba Obbina was managing the portal, however, Dr. Baynard shared with the Board that Baba Obbina has been out, but they hope for his return soon.

### **Instructional Programs, Sara Ferguson**

Sara provided an update on instructional programs and began with an update on where they stand with their PSSA testing. She reported that PDE will not be asking for a waiver this year. They will be testing, but testing may not happen this spring, it is likely to be extended until the fall of this year. They are asking The Department of Education to shorten the testing and also asking for online or remote testing. Sara indicated that testing will include all eligible content because they need a gage of the potential learning loss. She reported that statistics indicate that 53% of fully remote students are considered economically disadvantaged, with 18% in special education, 6% are English language learners, 25% are Black and 18% are Hispanic students across the state of Pennsylvania. There had been talk of a waiver to opt out of testing, however that will not happen, but the testing will be pushed back until students are back on their school footprint and back to face to face learning.

### **School Operations, Ericka Washington**

#### **Facilities**

Ericka reported that they are still in the process of having their door access and surveillance camera systems installed. Most of the hardware and wiring has been done with an expected completion date in early March. They have looked at companies and identified the same company to do their alarm system. Once the work is completed they will have a fully secure up to date building. Roof and HVAC system have minor issues that they will continue to monitor. They are correcting minor problems with the heating system on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the building.

#### **School Operations**

Ericka reported that Harambee is participating in the school COVID vaccination program with the city in conjunction with CHOP. Ericka confirmed that 47 staff members opted in and signed up to be vaccinated, some as early as tomorrow.

Board member Larry asked a question regarding Ericka's earlier report on the facilities progress. He asked if the team had sought to hire any minority companies for the door locks and security systems. She replied that they did not seek out any, they reached

out to ADT, Berkshire and Johnson Control Group for quotes. She explained that they wanted to have the same package and that monitoring is a part of the system that they currently have. Dr. Baynard asked Larry if there is a better way to ensure that they give minority contractors the opportunity to bid in. Larry indicated that there are many minority companies in Philadelphia that provide security and he would like them to look into using minority companies, especially being an African centered school. Greg stated that he understood and in the future they would be sure to include minorities in their capital projects and open request process.

Board member Wade suggested that they keep statistical information across the board, not just with facilities, but with all of their vending opportunities so they reflect how well they are doing in that regard. He suggested that they exhaust every effort to reach out to minority contractors. Board member Joe asked Board member Larry if he possessed a database of black businesses so that he might be a point of contact in locating minority businesses. Larry said this his company does have a list and that the city of Philadelphia also has a database of every minority company that is certified in a certain trade that is easily accessible to everyone. Board member Jan shared that she has green book of black businesses in the area and will forward it to anyone that needs it. Greg stated, for the record, that much if not all of the capital projects that were performed in the last two years were performed by minority businesses. He said that the projects included building new classrooms, offices and the remediation of water in the building.

Board member Wade reported that they conducted their first facilities meeting yesterday. He reported that it went well and invited other Board members to join them. The meeting will take place on Tuesday's before the Board meeting at 5:00 p.m.

### **Specialized Services, Angela Dennis**

Greg spoke on behalf of Angela and reported that the Specialized Services department had been under audit from the School District of Philadelphia for their special education records. He informed members that this was part of their Charter renewal process. He announced that all special education records were within 100% compliance and there were no audit findings.

### **Business and Finance, M. Thornton, CFO**

Michelle announced that she would provide a few highlights for this month. She reported the following:

- The 990 federal tax return has been prepared and filed, it was presented to the finance committee this week. Michelle will provide a copy for the next board

meeting. All filings for last school year have been completed including their audit and annual financial report (AFR).

- As part of the second wave of the Cares Act, Harambee will receive 1.8 million in Covid relief funding.
- Michelle will be meeting with Greg and the AP's to identify how the funding will be used. Some areas will include facilities, cleaning, training, purchase of supplies along with staffing and improving the air quality for return to the building.
- They will also discuss funds for support staff in every grade and possibly extending support staff for K-8 as well.
- Michelle also reported that they have started their budget meetings for the 2021-2022 school year. They will have a presentation to the finance committee next month with intentions of presenting it to the Board in their next meeting.
- Michelle reported that there are still vacancies in Special Education. They have made an offer to one of the candidates that they interviewed and are currently awaiting a response. They are planning early interviews for the new school year to ensure that they have certified school teachers.

Greg indicated that this would conclude all updates for this month and turned the floor back to Dr. Baynard. He opened the floor for any questions or comments and asked if there were any further discussions from any of the working groups.

Wade asked if there is a waiver for IEP's and if they still need to comply with those agreements since they are currently in a virtual environment. He also asked about the status of the Charter Renewal process. Greg responded that there is no waiver for IEP's and that federal IDEA laws are still in effect with all of the services on virtual platforms. With regard to their Charter renewal status, he said that they are still in a holding pattern. They have done everything that was asked of them and everything has been submitted on time. They are now awaiting communication from the Charter School Office and the School District of Philadelphia on their standing.

Dr. Baynard turned again to the AD Hoc committees and asked if there was any feedback from the groups.

## **AD Hoc committees**

Board member Renee spoke for the Cultural Committee and shared that they met last Wednesday. The meetings will be held monthly on the third Wednesday of each month at 10:30 a.m. She also indicated that she was expecting someone from the leadership team to attend the meeting. She explained that it is important to have someone from leadership present, in order to hear their concerns and suggestions. Greg indicated that they had planned to attend, however, there was a mix up in communication. Apparently, there was some confusion around the zoom links that were sent to each other. Greg indicated that Board member Joe will share his link with the cultural committee and going forward the meetings and zoom links should work out fine.

Board member Donna expressed that her schedule had been difficult to manage in January; therefore, the Education Committee had not met. She stated that most of their concerns were answered in today's meeting with regard to PSSA testing and engagement with students virtually. She informed the committee that some of her meetings are over now and she should have more time to meet with the committee going forward.

Michelle asked Dr. Baynard if the Board would consider continuing the Board meetings via zoom, as they seem to be more efficient and productive. Some members voiced their support for zoom meetings and Dr. Baynard indicated that it is something that the Board would consider if they could get their work done efficiently in this way.

Board member Wade asked Greg to provide an update on plans for re-opening the school. Greg stated they are continuing to plan and the most important part of the plan focuses on getting staff vaccinated. He announced that they had great news with the overwhelming majority of staff opting in to get the vaccination, and that they will continue to plan from there. Wade asked if there was a projected date to bring the children in grades K-2 back to school. Greg responded that they would have a better idea of a specific date for those students return, once they poll the parents and their constituents. They want to consider parent's interests and desire to opt in or opt out of their children returning to the school.

Dr. Baynard asked Greg to explain the metrics around what would impact their decision to return to school and what would hinder them from returning. Greg explained that the two biggest metrics that they are considering would be 1) staffing and staffing patterns 2) the data around how many parents have a desire and interest to opt in.

**Old Business**

None

**New Business**

None

**Action Items**

None

**Public Concerns**

None

**Adjourn Board Meeting**

Dr. Baynard entertained a motion to adjourn, all were in favor, none opposed

**Motion: Adjourn Board Meeting**

Approval AYE: 8      Nays: 0      Abstentions: 0      Absent: 2

**Next Public Meeting:**

The next public Board meeting will be held on Wednesday March 31, 2021