

Harambee Institute of Science and Technology Charter School Board of Trustees Public Meeting Minutes

Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday, October 27, 2021

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday, October 27, 2021 via Zoom 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Open Session

Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:09 p.m.
by Board Chairman Dr. Maurice Baynard

Libation (Mama Rene Whitby)

Roll Call

The Board Chair 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.

Board members Present:

Maurice Baynard
Joseph Foster
C. Wade Mosely
Jan Gillespie- Walton
Monique Braxton
Charis Jackson

Board members absent:

Marirose Roach
Lakiesha Creighton
Larry Bell
Donna Holmes- Lockett
Renee Whitby

Others Present:

Gregory Shannon CEO
Michelle Thornton CFO

Sara Ferguson
Ericka Washington

Assistant Principal of Instruction
Assistant Principal of School Operations

Introduction of Visitors and Others Present

There were no visitors in attendance at the public Board meeting

Review of the September 29th Meeting Minutes (Approval of minutes)

Dr. Baynard 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. Board member Joseph made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by board member Wade. All were in favor, none opposed, and there was a unanimous motion to accept.

Motion: Accept Board meeting minutes as presented

Approval: AYE: 6 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 5

Dr. Baynard turned the meeting over to Greg to provide the Leadership report.

Leadership Report Greg Shannon, CEO

Greg indicated that his Leadership team would be reporting on their respective departments.

Organizational Leadership and Charter Renewal

Greg told the Board that they have conducted a series of meetings since receiving their five-year Charter Renewal. He indicated that they have had meetings with the Board and the Senior Leadership team, and most recently they had a meeting with the School District of Philadelphia, Charter School Office around their Charter agreement. He stated that their team had a number of questions regarding the conditions in the agreement and some of the language in the agreement. He indicated that the Charter School Office provided a data metric for academic and instructional performance. They also changed the language from “shall” to “May” be in danger of losing the charter should they not meet the metric. The Charter Office agreed that they will do research on some of the questions from the leadership team and they will meet again with School District on Friday.

Charter Renewal Framework

Greg indicated that they have reviewed the Charter Renewal framework and he has charged Danielle with developing a workflow tracker. This will assist in knowing what needs to be done, and to designate who is responsible, and which department the task lies in so that they can progress monitor towards completion. He noted that they would be tracking the progress over the five-year term.

Greg also reported that they are working towards their charting the course theme. He indicated that they are becoming a more systems aligned and data driven

organization. In doing so, they have a data monitoring tool known as the balanced score card. He has charged each senior leader in their respective domain to develop key performance indicators, which will align with their ACE report and Charter Renewal. He also stated that they would be monitoring the data and benchmarking their progress throughout the school year. In addition, they will utilize the data to make course corrections.

ACT 55 Training for Board Members

Greg reported that the goal is to have all Board Members trained on ACT 55. He indicated that there are still a few members that are not trained and The School District has asked for an Epicenter Upload by November 30th so they are hoping to have all Board members trained on or before November 30th.

Friends of Harambee

Greg reported that the Friends of Harambee Committee is up and running. He announced that they had their first official meeting today and seven out of the nine invited guests participated. He announced that their next meeting will be held on November 17th. The participants will be coming into the building for an in person walk through to get a close up observation of their school operations and especially, the wonderful the children. Greg concluded his report and asked if there were any questions regarding his report.

Dr. Baynard requested that Greg place the Charter Renewal document in Google Docs to share with every member of the Board. He indicated that it is a 47-page document but asked all Board members to acquaint themselves with it. Dr. Baynard also asked Greg to set up a brief meeting to illustrate how to navigate the portal.

Curriculum and Instruction, Sara Ferguson

Greg turned the meeting over to Sara for the report on Curriculum and Instruction.

Professional Development

Sara reported that their October professional development training consisted of Ready Math, which focused on the use of online platforms both with teachers and students, making sure that they are well versed in the programs. They had previously conducted their first of three ACT 13 mandated modules (module I) training in August, which is the teacher effectiveness model that PDE mandated. They decided to conduct a review of module I, again in early October, since the training was new to teachers and it was felt that some of the teachers were uncomfortable with that particular training. She reported that they also held a PVOS training; by which student growth is measured at all levels. She noted that teachers also receive a score, which shows how they are instructing and how the students under their direction are making progress.

Academic Advancement

Sara reported that they are in the process of administering their diagnostics in

Ready Math and their IXL diagnostics for ELA. They will be wrapping that up and it should be completed on Friday. She also noted that they have created teacher intervention materials in ELA and Math from grades K-8. She explained that these are a series of lessons that do not have to be taught in any particular order. She indicated that teachers can pull out these lessons where they see the need to help reinforce any skills that students may be lacking or even enhance in areas that students may be performing well.

Observation Protocol

Sara reported that they have started with quick visits and the purpose is to identify strengths and growth opportunities. Following that she reported that they started the informal observations, which are ongoing throughout the school year. Teachers perform self-assessments using the Danielson Framework which helps them to set goals for teachers and along with the teachers. Sara also reported that they will be conducting announced formal observations with staff starting next week. She also noted that they have a school wide tiered coaching model this year with their three academic coaches. Also, this year, teachers will be using video reflection so that they can see themselves, as well as those teachers who have volunteered to video their lessons. Sara reported that they are working in six-week cycles with their individual coaching plans and evaluating the effectiveness of the plans. They will also have the diagnostic assessments (baseline data) done by October 29th.

School Operations, Ericka Washington

Greg turned the meeting over to Ericka for the operations report.

Facilities

Ericka reported that they are still in the process of implementing their facilities master plan working with the consultant ICS, who worked to develop the facilities master plan. The project continues to move forward towards completion of the capital improvements using the ESSER funds. She reported that their focus over the last 30 days has been on their facilities contract with a custodial company as well as their search for maintenance personnel. They hope to have both finalized within the next week.

Technology

Ericka reported that they are working with a consultant on the structuring and developing of a technology plan that will take them over the next three to five years. They are looking at how to build the schools technology platforms. She reported that they are focusing on the infrastructure and staffing and all areas that would help to meet twenty first century standards as well as industry standards. They hope to have a draft of the plan before the Board in early spring in the beginning of the budget season.

Reading Under the Stars

Ericka informed members that Harambee will host an on campus event for students,

parents and families tomorrow entitled "Reading Under the Stars". She invited everyone to attend and shared that they will highlight Reading and Literacy. During the day they will have fun activities around Reading and Literacy and will have a dress down day where all students and staff will come dressed in their pajamas. The administrative team will be going around to classrooms reading to the students. In the evening at 6:00 pm they will have Story Tellers reading to the students and their own Baba Calla will be reading to grades four to seven. The eighth grade students will be helping out as Literacy Ambassadors.

Transportation

Ericka reported that one hundred eleven (111) parents have signed up for the transportation re-imbusement. This means that those parents will receive from 150.00 to 300.00 dollars per month because the students were not able to receive the yellow bus transportation that was supposed to be provided by The School District of Philadelphia. She noted that Harambee works with The School District on a monthly basis to certify that those students are enrolled and are attending in order receive the re-imbusement for unused transportation. Ericka asked if there were any questions regarding her report.

Dr. Baynard asked her to elaborate a bit on the Story Tellers that would be participating in the Reading and Literacy event tomorrow. Ericka reported that they will have an African American vendor (Its Story Time Any Time) that will come out to read African American books to the students. She indicated that teacher, Nicole Brown has followed the groups work across the country for years and that the group came highly recommended from Nicole. They will hold the event in the schoolyard, as their aim is to create a cozy campfire feel. Participants will wear pajamas and will bringing their chairs, blankets and flashlights. Harambee will have pre-lit trees, lanterns and lights, and will serve hot chocolate and cookies to create warmth and ambience.

Specialized Services.

Greg gave the report for Specialized Services.

Operational and Organizational Compliance

He indicated that they continue to monitor and maintain their Special Education student records.

PIMS Report

Greg reported that the PIMS reporting on October 1 was completed with 100% accuracy. He also indicated that they currently have fifty nine (59) Special Education students and they are in the ongoing process of securing records for incoming students. He stated that students who transfer in from other schools might have IEP's that they are unaware of, so they are in the process of gathering and updating

the IEP's so that they can provide those children with specialized services. He stated that they have a number of children that have come in with an Early Intervention IEP. They are also in the process of issuing the permissions to evaluate those children for specialized services. He reported that most of those children are in kindergarten and there are a total of seven (7) to date.

He informed members that they have four (4) students for the 2020/2021 school year that they owe Compensatory Education from the last school year and they are currently in the process of finalizing those compensatory ED agreements. He announced that the gifted program is also moving along nicely. He reported that they have 5 gifted children in the program so far, and that others are in the pipeline waiting to be tested for services. Greg opened the floor for questions.

Dr. Baynard asked him to speak to the Board regarding the loss of so many women in leadership positions. Greg noted that each person that has held the leadership position in Specialized Services has left for individualized personal reasons. He explained that some have left because of travel distance, others have relocated and the most recent departure was due to retirement. He announced that they will be bringing in Dr. Delia Archer to assume the role.

Business and Finance, Michelle Thornton

Greg turned the meeting over to Michelle to give the financial report.

Enrollment

Michelle reported that every October they receive their actual funding from The School District of Philadelphia for their enrollment. In the months prior to October they receive their revenue based on estimated enrollment numbers from the prior year. She noted that over the next two weeks they will be reconciling the actual enrollment. She reported that at a glance it looks like they are doing well and their current enrollment is at six hundred (600) students.

Audit

Michelle reported that they are continuing with their audit and that they had some field work activity today and they will be working on that over the next thirty (30) days in order to meet their deadline. She indicated that so far, they do not have any findings or issues.

Cares Act Funding

Michelle reported that they will be receiving close to 3.5 million dollars within the next 30-60 days. She recommended that they establish a separate bank account for those funds to be sure that they are separating and earmarking those funds for their facilities construction projects. She also suggested that they review all of their current accounts to be sure that they have the correct signatures and signers as the Board desires.

COVID Testing

Michele reported that Harambee has made a shift from the initial COVID testing program that they were working with originally. They learned from the state that they couldn't work with that agency that they must work through CHOP. They found out after going through some of initial training with that agency, but fortunately had not rolled it out to parents or faculty. She noted that one of the good elements of working with CHOP is that they offer rapid testing and they will be able to get results within fifteen minutes, whereas, the other program would have to send the results to a lab and wait for results with a longer turnaround time. Michelle asked everyone to stay tuned, as she will provide more information soon. Michelle asked if there were any questions from the Board.

Dr. Baynard asked if there is any possibility of offering the COVID vaccine at Harambee. Greg responded on behalf of the team and indicated that it is something worth taking into consideration, but they would first have to determine if they have the infrastructure to facilitate it. Dr. Baynard asked if they had identified any African American physicians that could be a health information person for Harambee to answer questions for the community in a public forum. Greg indicated that they have already moved toward that end since the last conversation. He announced that the Philadelphia Department of Public Health would have a table set up at the "Reading Under the Stars" event tomorrow evening. They will provide a brief presentation and will answer all questions concerning COVID.

Board member Jan informed members that she and Board member Monique were able to find two physicians that have asked to partner with Harambee. The physicians are a part of the Health and Human Services Department of the Delaware Links. Dr. Baynard thanked both Board members for their efforts in finding those physicians. Dr. Baynard opened the floor for final questions before adjourning the meeting.

Board member Wade asked if Harambee has held a parent teacher conference and if so, what is the attendance like and what is Harambee doing to engage the parents in the process of educating the children. Greg addressed the question and indicated that they are entering the conclusion of the first marking period, after which they typically hold their parent teacher conferences. He stated that historically at Harambee their parent teacher conferences are well attended and they receive a great deal of support from the parents. Sara announced that the next parent teacher conferences would be held on November 18th and 19th.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Board member Joe made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Board member Jan, all were in favor, none opposed

Approval: AYE: 6 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 5

Next Public Meeting:

The next Public Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 17, 2021.