

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

Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday, September 29, 2021

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday, September 29, 2021 via Zoom 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Open Session

Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.
by Board Chairman Dr. Maurice Baynard

Libation (Mama Rene Whitby)

Board member and Cultural Leader Renee Whitby lead members with libation.

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
Larry Bell
Donna Holmes- Lockett
C. Wade Mosely
Jan Gillespie- Walton
Monique Braxton
Renee Whitby

Board members absent:

Marirose Roach
Lakiesha Creighton
Charis Jackson

Others Present:

Gregory Shannon CEO

Michelle Thornton	CFO
Sara Ferguson	Assistant Principal of Instruction
Erica Washington	Assistant Principal of School Operations
Roslyn Adams	Director of Specialized Services

Introduction of Visitors and Others Present

There were no visitors in attendance at the public Board meeting

Review of the June 30th 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 Larry 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: 8 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Dr. Baynard turned the meeting over to Greg. He introduced Rosalyn Adams, the new Director of Specialized Services. Greg asked Rosalyn to share her background with Board members. Rosalyn stated that she has held several positions in the Special Education arena. She attended Widener University for her undergraduate work and later graduated from Cheyney University with her Masters degree. She worked in the Philadelphia School District for 13 years and the Chester Upland School District for 21 years. She has previously worked as a Special Education teacher, coordinator and liaison through out both School districts and is now happy to be with Harambee.

Leadership Report Greg Shannon, CEO

Greg congratulated the Board under the leadership of Dr. Baynard and the Senior Leadership staff on their five year Charter Renewal. He noted that they have not signed the Charter agreement yet, because they are in negotiations with the district around the Charter metric. He reported that there will be a weekly Charter CEO zoom call for all of the Black operated Charter schools in the city.

Organizational Leadership and Charter Renewal

Greg discussed Charter Renewal framework. He reported that he and Erica reviewed all of the tenants of the Charter Renewal framework. The framework outlines all of the things that that they need to do that will align with the framework and the ACE report. They are in the process of establishing a workflow tracker so that they know what needs to be done; who is responsible, and a deliverable date for the assignments. Greg reported that many of the things that are in the renewal framework have already been completed or are already in process.

Greg also discussed Organizational compliance and becoming a more systems

aligned and data driven organization. He indicated that the theme and focus in the next five years is to become more data driven and a systems aligned organization. They are establishing two protocols. The first will be a balanced score card, which establishes metrics across the organization for both students and staff. The second is that they have contracted with a data portal company where they can input all of their student and organizational data into the portal. This will allow them to track organization and student performance across the organization.

School Opening

Greg thanked the Board of Directors, Senior Leadership, faculty/staff students and parents for a very efficient and organized school opening. He reported that a great deal of planning went into preparing for the successful opening. He reported that their enrollment has increased and nearly 650 students have returned. He also noted that this has been the most challenging school year in 35 years that he can attest to, especially dealing with the COVID pandemic that kept students out of school for 18-20 months. He also mentioned the challenges that the students have had to face cognitively, emotionally and socially. He said that it has been an all hands on deck approach from everyone including the teachers who have had to use different approaches along with administrators who have had to step in and teach some of the classes. He gave credit to everyone that has been involved and to those that were able to lend a helping hand during the challenging process.

Greg asked if anyone had questions regarding his report. Board member Renee asked if the building is equipped to handle 650 students plus faculty and staff. She also asked how many students are in each classroom with the enrollment reported so high. Greg responded that Harambee is able to accommodate both faculty and staff and he estimated about 28-29 students per classroom. Dr. Baynard inquired about the data portal and some of the things that would be measured. He stated that he and other Board members namely Board member Charis would be specifically interested in Parent involvement and Student satisfaction. Greg responded that the information that he reported earlier was just hard data but it is there intent to collect and measure soft data as well.

Greg also mentioned that Harambee held their "Back to School" event on September 21st. The event was held in the schoolyard and they made it carnival style. To make it even more festive there were tables set up along with food trucks and exhibits. They had nearly 400 families and participants in attendance.

Curriculum and Instruction, Sara Ferguson

Greg turned the meeting over to Sara for the report on Curriculum and Instruction. Sara reported that they held their first professional development training for this school year on September 24

th and the training was held virtually with staff. The main focus of the training was use of online resources with the students and making sure that they are well versed in the programs. Sara reported that they will have Ready Math, their core resource provider for math in October and they will be focusing on the same thing, making sure that the students are well versed in utilizing the online resources. Sara noted that there are a significant number of students that really need intervention around some of their basic skills, especially in the lower grade levels.

Grading guidelines

Sara reported that she was charged with creating grading guidelines. The process will help to standardize how they are grading and assessing students across the organization and it will make the grading process more equitable. She reported that the procedure was rolled out on September 24th as well. Sara also reported that in addition to grading guidelines, Greg charged her with upgrading the coaching model. They have designed a tiered coaching model that is designed to address the individual needs of the teachers. Individual plans and online trainings are prepared to support the teachers, to provide personal development and to improve learning.

Assessment

Sara announced that their preliminary PSSA results are in. She reported that they only tested a very small sample with only 49 participants. However, there were some areas that showed proficiency. For example, in 3rd grade ELA, 33% scored proficient, in 4th grade ELA 1/3 scored proficient, in 4th grade science 83% scored proficient, especially due to hiring a new science teacher. In 5th grade ELA 25% scored proficient and in 6th grade ELA 30% scored proficient; in 7th grade ELA 18% scored proficient and in 8th grade non-were proficient in ELA, Math or Science. Only 4 students were tested in that grade level. There were no proficient scores in Math at any of the grade levels.

ACT 13

Sara reported that the Governor rolled out Act 13 in March 2020. It is the new teacher effectiveness model. There are three trainings that staff are required to take. Staff has already been given one of the trainings in August and a refresher on September 24

th. The next training for module two will be held on the next full day of Professional Development on October 22nd 2021. Sara asked if there were any questions regarding her report. Board member Renee asked how has Emoja circle has been affected by return to school under COVID conditions. Greg responded by explaining that Emoja circle has not been affected, that it still takes place, but due to COVID restrictions they conduct it over the PA system and the students participate in their classrooms. He also reported that when weather permits, once per week they form a circle outside in the schoolyard to allow for Emoja circle to take place. Greg assured members that they are still committed to all of their cultural norms and are formalizing all cultural norms and practices while working with protocols and guidelines around COVID. Sara added that she received the information that Board member Joe sent to her and they will resume meetings with the cultural committee once per month.

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. They are working through the facilities master plan using the ESSER funds that were mentioned months ago to perform Capital Improvements. They have continued with the services of ICS. They are planning the design of the projects and accepting request for proposals and putting the projects out for bid and project managing the work. They plan to meet with ICS on Friday to continue those efforts. They are also continuing to build out their facilities staff to meet the needs of the building. They are entertaining proposals from three companies and have narrowed it down to one. They will be visiting the sites of those facilities that this company services to make a final decision.

Food Services

Ericka reported that they have received their fresh fruits and vegetables food services grant they anticipate starting that program in the next few weeks. They want introduce the program to the students and educate on the importance of fresh fruits and vegetable and the importance of healthy eating and lifestyles.

Technology

Erick reported that they are in conversation with their technology consultant to develop a technology master plan. She noted that more information will be forthcoming as they map out what that looks like for the future. The goal is to look at what they have now, especially what technology should look like especially in a technology based school. She indicated that they had planned to have smart boards in every classroom, but thought differently about whether that is forward thinking and would that meet the needs of students in the years to come. They are currently in conversation with their technology consultant to work out and develop a master plan to present to the

Board.

Ericka reported that they have issued all chrome books to date, to eligible students. Eligible students include those who have signed a loaner agreement. And for those who returned their equipment from last school year, they are also eligible to receive one this year. The students were informed that chrome books belong to Harambee and were issued for student instruction. Those students that meet both criteria have received them for this school year.

General Operations

Ericka reported that they are continuing to implement their Health and Safety plan as it relates to their COVID prevention and response measures. She noted that they had a meeting with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health yesterday to walk them through their protocols and layers of prevention. She reported that the meeting went well and they were very pleased with their actions and did not feel that they needed to add anything to the protocols that have already been implemented. There was one area that they recommended for improvement. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health suggested that Harambee educate the parents about COVID and about best practices that have been laid out by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health and the CDC. They have offered to provide an educational session for parent's staff and students. Ericka indicated that they would be planning an outside event that will happen within the next month.

Transportation

Ericka reported that the transportation issue has impacted Harambee. They have approximately 150 students that normally use school bus services. Since transportation is provided by the resident school district they are unable to control transportation and the scheduling of the route. Unfortunately, Harambee was scheduled for later routes that would have Harambee students arriving at 9:30 in the morning and being picked up at 5:30 in the evening. Many of the parents were unhappy about the schedule and decided to opt out. They had two families that decided to return to their neighborhood schools. The School District of Philadelphia offered families \$300.00 a month to opt out of transportation and \$150.00 a month to travel one-way. Ericka noted that Harambee is providing parents with information on how to opt out and how to receive those funds and re-imbusement for unused transportation. Ericka also added that HASA will be starting in the next few weeks and will provide activities for students that take bus transportation in the afternoon. So far they only have one student participating in the transportation program and they have made provisions for that student.

Enrollment policy

Ericka reported that they had to make adjustments to the Enrollment policy. These changes have been mandated by The School District of Philadelphia. There are two minor changes.

- 1) Harambee can no longer require an application for enrollment; they must

remove that statement from the policy. They will still use the application for parent's to enter into the lottery, but not for enrollment.

- 2) The language must be changed to reflect that parents have several options of returning the enrollment application. Parents may return the application by mail, in person, by fax or @histcs.org. This language has been included in the policy. Ericka informed members that the new policy will need a vote this evening and opened the floor for questions on her reports. Board member Wade asked when does the HASA program normally begin. Ericka responded that it typically begins in early October.

Specialized Services, Rosalyn Adams

Greg turned the floor over to Rosalyn to report on Specialized Services

PIMS Report

Rosalyn reported that the October 1 PIMS report is in compliance with their special education records. They have two proposed APS placements that are full time Autistic Support students that are incoming placements for Harambee. They had one outstanding permission to evaluate that has been resolved. Effective today the outstanding speech IEP is now in compliance. They are in the ongoing process of securing any records that they do not have from incoming students.

Gifted & Talented Program

Rosalyn reported that they have identified five (5) gifted and talented students and that they are looking at a multifaceted approach to identifying students. They are looking at referrals from both the teachers and parents and she and Sara will be reviewing the PSSA scores to identify advanced students.

Business and Finance, Michelle Thornton

Greg turned the meeting over to Michelle to give the financial report. Michelle informed Board members that there were three (3) items included in the board packets.

The Financial Report

Michele reported that the Board packets include the May and June financial and overall performance for last school year. She reported that Harambee ended the year with a little greater than \$400,000 and noted that the projected net was to be \$800,000. She explained that part of the difference is related to the year-end adjustment for the per pupil rate because there was a downward decrease that was retroactive to the beginning of last school year. The other factors were the projection of student enrollment and the projection of the number of Special Education students. They projected student enrollment at 620 students and the actual enrollment ended with 572 students; in addition to the actual number of special education students, which ended with less than projected. Michelle highlighted

other areas of the report and pointed to some of the key elements that affected spending. She pointed to activities like the purchase of chrome books, the Leadership Retreat and the dollars that were spent hosting the event. She also highlighted the quarterly PSERS payment, finalizing their Special Education vendor payment and paying for their summer program.

Michelle reminded the Board that they are in the last year of their twenty first century grant with the current cohort. She indicated that they intend to apply again for cohort eleven when the application is available. She noted that there might be a lag in the timeframe for the grant to be released, so in the meantime they will use some of their ESSER ARP funds to fund the After School program.

HR Report

Michele directed members to review the HR report for activity from June 2021 through September 2021. She reviewed the report and noted that there were fifteen (15) separations, along with a number of retirements and people leaving the organization. Also included in those numbers are transitions from both the Maintenance and Technology departments. She reported that they have also had additions to the staff and were able to hire certified teachers. She announced that most of the existing teachers that were not certified; they have worked with and are now or working towards becoming certified. The number of certified teachers has risen from 47% to 77%.

COVID Power Point Testing presentation

Michele reported that there is a Power Point Testing presentation included in everyone's packet. She informed members that she would not show the Power Point presentation tonight, but she would be issuing additional information regarding the program to members. She announced that Harambee is embarking on a COVID testing program and that they plan to test both children and adults. She asked members to review the information in their packets and to go online and follow the instructions for the interactive video. She informed members that there were several options for the program and they have selected the option to do pooling. There is video that outlines pool testing and how the process works and she encouraged members to review that video as well. Michelle indicated that they would be working in conjunction with Concentric, the company that is contracted by the state to work with schools on COVID testing. They will also have a team working with the kids to monitor the testing. Michelle stated that they think that this will help to increase in person instruction. She said that they will be rolling the program out to the parents along with the presentation from the Health Department over the next couple of weeks. She noted that they received training today and have already received all of the testing materials in the building. She feels that they are ready to begin once they finalize the logistics around all of the procedures. Michelle concluded her report and asked for questions and comments.

Dr. Baynard commented on both the COVID testing presentation and the training

that the Health department plans to provide for Harambee. He suggested that it would be better to have the logistics figured out on paper and disseminated to parents by someone from Harambee first, before having it presented by a third party. He fears that the information will already be met with some skepticism and for that reason it should be explained to parents by someone they know and trust before having outside experts present the information. He thought it important for Leadership to master the information thoroughly in order to share it with and convey it to parents and the public. Michelle responded that they would like to have 100 % participation and the comments were well taken.

Board member Wade asked what measures are being taken in the building at Harambee regarding Corona Virus. Greg reported that they are following all CDC guidelines as well as guidelines from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. They are bringing in fresh air during the day and doing an air flush at the end of the day every evening. They do not reduce the air quality in the evening; they keep the airflow on high even when the building is not occupied. He also reported that Harambee's COVID safety measures are now included in their normal course of business. All cleaning protocols are aligned with CDC guidelines and the Department of Public Health. Greg also indicated that they are managing student travel in the building and attempting not to have students cross. He indicated that they use a very strategic method of admitting students in the morning and dismissing students in the afternoon, and as they move cohorts around they are following the guidance and the science designed by the CDC. In common areas like the cafeteria, they are reducing the number of students that eat at the same time; some students eat outside while others eat inside and they reverse the order during the lunch period.

Dr. Baynard inquired about what protocols are in place when there is positive or confirmed cases amongst students or staff. Greg asked Ericka to respond to the question. Ericka indicated that the first thing they do is their own contact tracing, based on the Department of Health guidelines, which reports anyone that has been within six (6) feet of the individual that has tested positive for fifteen (15) minutes. If a student becomes infected it is assumed that they are not vaccinated based upon their age, and the parent is notified and the student is placed on a ten (10) day isolation from school. They communicate with the parent using a standard template letter that was developed by the Department of Health indicating that their child has come in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID. For confidentiality reasons, they do not divulge the name of the person or student. They also communicate with other classes within the same grade level and with staff and the entire general school community using the same methodology. When a cohort has to quarantine, they are immediately switched over to virtual learning and are in class with their teacher on the virtual platforms just as they were last year. Students are informed of the dates that they are designated to return to the classroom in person.

For staff, Harambee looks at the vaccination status of all adult contacts. With looking at the status, Harambee determines when the person first became infected and has developed a portal, which asks the staff for any adult contacts. For staff that are unvaccinated, they are required to quarantine for ten (10) days and for those that are fully vaccinated they are advised to get tested and get rapid results, but are not required to quarantine according to CDC guidelines.

Board member Wade asked how the test for students and staff are being paid for. Ericka noted that the tests are covered under Harambee's health insurance and that they also help parents with free testing sites. Board member Jan asked if there is any regularity for testing unvaccinated staff. Michelle responded that they do not have a requirement just yet, but with the new testing program that they are embarking upon, they plan to test both children and adults.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Action Items: Vote on the Student Enrollment Policy

Board member Monique asked for clarification on the sworn statement that appears in the policy. Ericka explained that it means that you are attesting that the information is correct and if it is not correct the parent can have their child's enrollment revoked. Ericka also added that they use a template that comes directly from the state and they use the template with Harambee's letterhead. Board member Monique also asked if there should be an exemption from immunization for political reasons included in the policy. Ericka noted that they are unable to add or change anything in the policy, as they are bound by the school code. She stated that the policy comes directly from the School District, which scrutinizes the policies and Harambee is unable to change anything outside of the Pennsylvania School Code.

Motion: To accept the Student Enrollment Policy

Board member Wade made a motion to accept seconded by Board member Joe, all were in favor; none opposed

Approval AYE 8: Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

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

Approval AYE 8: Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Next Public Meeting:

The next Public Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 27, 2021.

