

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

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## **Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> 2022**

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday May 25th 2022 via Zoom at 6:30p.m.

### **Open Session**

#### **Meeting Called to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.  
by Board Chairman Maurice Baynard

#### **Board Members Present:**

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

#### **Board Members Absent:**

Lakiesha Creighton  
Renee Whitby  
Larry Bell

#### **Others Present:**

Gregory Shannon	CEO
Ericka Washington	Assistant Principal of School Operations
Michelle Thornton	CFO
Sara Ferguson	Assistant Principal of Instruction
Deleah Archer	Assistant Principal of Specialized Services
Nakia Brown	Succeeding Assistant Principal of Instruction
Jenita Lunsford	Board Liaison

#### **Libation (Mama Renee Whitby)**

#### **Introduction of Visitors and Others Present**

There were no visitors present at this public meeting

**Roll Call**

Board Chair Maurice 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.

**Review of the April Board Meeting Minutes (Approval of minutes)**

Dr. Baynard Board Chairman asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the April meeting minutes. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were no additions or corrections. Board member Wade made a motion to accept the April minutes as presented, seconded by Board member Joseph. All were in favor, none were opposed, and there was a unanimous motion to accept the minutes as presented.

Approval: 7    AYE: 7    Nays: 0    Abstentions: 0    Absent: 3

**CEO Report, Greg Shannon**

Dr. Baynard Board Chairman turned the meeting over to Greg for leadership reports. Greg asked members to take a brief moment of silence in honor of those that were lost as a result of the shootings in Buffalo, California and Texas.

**Organizational Leadership**

**Spring Fundraising Event**

Greg reported that the Spring Fundraising Event was an overwhelming success. He said that they had planned for 50 participants in the audience, but had to add additional seating to accommodate the number of people that attended. He reported that their final count ended with 73 participants. He said that there was a great panel discussion and great engagement from the student representatives. He thanked all of the Board members that attended and for their sponsorship of the students. He gave a special thanks to Board member Monique who was the MC and moderator for the event. He indicated that their fundraising goal was \$10,000 dollars, but the total revenue for the evening ended with \$15,375 dollars and that they have almost met their fundraising goal. The expenses were \$6,325 dollars and to date they have a net of 9,050 dollars. He said they have almost met their fundraising goal of 10,000.00 and are still waiting on two or three vendors to make their contributions. He added that everyone could obtain more information on Harambee's social media outlets. They are on Linked In, Face book, Twitter and Instagram.

**Annual Leadership Retreat**

Greg reported that the retreat will be held on Wednesday July 14

<sup>th</sup>, Thursday July 15<sup>th</sup> and Friday July 16<sup>th</sup> 2022. The event will be hosted at The Desmond Hotel again this year. Greg informed members that the information was forwarded to everyone earlier today, so be sure to check your inboxes. He said that there would be more information forthcoming on lodging arrangements.

### **Organizational Expansion/Property Acquisition**

Greg reported that they continue to source for property and that they have had recent communication with their developer and are working through an agreement with the school yard and parking space at the property located at 6710 Haverford Avenue. In addition, they were given another property to view in Winnfield, which is a former Charter school that has 17,000 square feet of space. He said that he and Michelle would be scheduling a time along with the Property developers to go out and take a look at that property.

### **Summer Program 2022**

Greg reported that they are finalizing their plans for a robust Summer School Program. He noted that Nakia Brown would be providing the leadership for the summer program. He reported that she will have three coordinators working with her. He said that due to the learning loss that occurred during the pandemic it is important to continue to afford their students extended learning opportunities. He also asked everyone to be on the look out for invitations to their African Street Festival that will be held on Friday June 9<sup>th</sup>, as well as information about their closing exercise scheduled for Thursday June 16<sup>th</sup> 2022.

Greg indicated that this would be the conclusion of his Board updates and asked if there were any questions. Board member Joe asked where the property in Winnfield is located. Greg replied that the property is located in the old Ad Prima Charter School and that it is already retrofitted as a school.

Greg announced that Dr. Archer and the Specialized Services team would be hosting a Career Fair this Friday May 27, 2022. The theme of the Fair is “ If you can see it you can be it”. He extended an invitation to members of the Board and hopes that some might be interested in attending. Dr. Baynard commended Greg on his fundraising efforts for Harambee at the Spring Fundraising Event.

Board member Wade asked for an update on Harambee's expansion efforts and asked if the School District and Charter School office are any closer to allowing annexing. Greg said that they have had communication with the Charter School office in terms of making sure that they have all of the specifics of what is needed for annexing. He said that there is an application process that they will begin in June and that they hope to have it completed and submitted by late August or early September.

Board member Wade also asked, that in light of all of the tragedies happening in schools and around the country, how is Harambee positioned with security in the

building. Ericka responded to the question and indicated that there are a limited number of people coming into the building and that most of their meetings are now held on ZOOM. She reported that they have also reviewed Active Shooter protocols with the security team and have focused on preparedness.

Board member Monique asked if there are external cameras outside of the building. Ericka responded yes, that they have state of the arts camera systems both internally and externally that are monitored by their security team.

Board member Monique also asked if the security guards are armed and if they have metal detectors at Harambee. Ericka replied no to both questions. She said that the Dean of students and the counselors are constantly monitoring. The Board Chairman asked how many actual incidents of weapons have they had and how do they monitor social media. Ericka said that there have been zero weapons incidents and no violent or serious incidents over the past several years. She said that the most serious incident to take place at Harambee was a mutual fight that was resolved through conflict resolution.

She informed members that based on the relationships that they have with the students, their dean of students and counselors are very up to date on social media platforms. She stated that they are able to detect and monitor the real pages and the fake pages simultaneously. She also stated that they have access to all of the social media platforms including Twitter, Tik Tok, Facebook and Instagram, which all are monitored regularly. In addition, she said that the students trust the adults and friend them on social media platforms. She stated that the students will come to the adults and show them if they see something that may be a level of concern. She also noted that the parents get involved and will report anything that they see that is inappropriate or of concern that is posted on social media. Dr. Baynard turned the meeting back to Greg. Greg turned the meeting to Ericka for the presentation of the Technology Master Plan.

### **Technology Master Plan Presentation: Ericka Washington**

Ericka shared her screen with members and reviewed elements of the plan. She indicated that the plan is not static, but very dynamic and fluid and should be evaluated at least annually to include any improvements that are needed for the technology infrastructure throughout the building. She informed members that there are goals in three specific areas with measurable objectives. The three areas are Academic Technology, Professional Learning and Administrative/ Organizational Technology.

### **ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGY**

Ericka noted that they have developed objectives and actions focused upon creating and maintaining robust digital learning environments for Harambee students. She said that this starts with teachers having the tools to create and implement digital learning environments in their classrooms. She said that one example would be

seeing evidence of students having digital portfolios with snapshots that capture digital activities that they participate in. She noted that teachers would select certain technology tools for tasks that are assigned and that they would lean heavily on the lead technology teacher, Mr. Fountain to work with the instructional team to create this environment in the classroom. Ericka added that it is also important to prepare the students to be safe, responsible and innovative digital citizens when searching, consuming, creating, and sharing content. Ericka moved to the next goal in the plan.

## **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

Ericka stated that they want to be sure that they are developing a culture that is collaborative, where teachers have the opportunity to develop and grow, engaging with each other to discuss how to integrate technology in their classrooms. She said that they want to increase staff technology literacy that supports staff in their daily work and inspires and prepares them to integrate technology with curriculum standards. Ericka emphasized the need to be sure that their professional development reflects this goal and the objective around creating a culture of collaboration and personalized learning using technology.

She indicated that one of the main areas of focus would be the technology standards that are in the Pennsylvania core standards and enabling the integration of those in the classroom. She stated that as an organization they also want to look at their systems to ensure that they create and maintain a safe and secure learning environment in the building. They want to be sure that they are engaging teachers in the process with assessing their technology needs and building their capacity to use technology in their classrooms while meeting the technology standards.

She noted that as an organization they want to also look at their own systems and review their Internet Filter Systems and their Acceptable Use policies, some of which are new and have been revamped over the last few years. Ericka indicated that one of the actions that would be needed in the future would be to develop a Disaster Recovery Plan for the building. She said that as a technology driven school they should have a plan to operate in case of a disruption. Ericka moved to the next goal in the plan.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE/ORGANIZATIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

Ericka reported that they have grouped the actions under three categories

### **Teaching and Learning**

Ericka pointed out the areas on her slide that they spent a great amount of time focusing on and highlighted the areas that are most needed. She elaborated on each of the following key areas.

Professional Development  
Technology Integration  
Supporting Resources

## Student Achievement

### **Infrastructure Needs**

Ericka highlighted all of the key elements that will be included under Infrastructure Needs.

#### UPGRADES

- Network switches
- Firewall
- Electronic boards in classrooms
- Phone system
- Internet to 5 gigs
- Internet capabilities
- WIFI system
- Anti-virus software
- Document management cameras in classrooms
- Upgrade and Install new Electronic Smart boards as needed in the classrooms
- Fiber connected Data racks
- Asset Management system

### **Infrastructure Budget**

Ericka reviewed each of the items needed and walked members through the cost of each item listed. The Infrastructure Budget included the line items, the quantity of the items and the purchase cost of each item, which is included for members to review in their packets.

Dr. Baynard commented that almost ten years ago a Harambee first grader became the youngest coder nationally, which was an opportunity for Harambee to really commit and expound on technology in the Harambee name. He said that now that they have a Technology Master Plan to build infrastructure that will adequately support what they plan for in technology, they should shoot really high to ingrate technology into the learning process. He said that they should be the most technology conversant school in the city. Ericka responded to Dr. Baynard's comment and told members that it is the heart of and intent of the Technology Master Plan. They want to work closely with the Curriculum team and Instructional team to make technology the common thread that is woven across all disciplines. Dr. Baynard turned the meeting back to Greg and he turned the meeting over to Michelle for the Budget Presentation.

### **2022-2023 Budget Presentation: Michelle Thornton**

Michelle reported that we would be looking at the 2022-2023 budget. She noted that the agenda would include an update on the **process** and give an **overview** on the focus of the budget for the new year. She stated that she would review the number of **assumptions** that are included in the budget and share details about the **revenue and expenses**. She noted that she would also talk about next steps and hopes that

the Board will vote to approve the budget tonight. Michelle noted that everyone has a copy of the proposed budget from last month's meeting and that members will have the opportunity to ask questions after the presentation.

### **Process**

Michelle reported that she and the CEO have an initial review of where they are in the current year and discussions regarding their strategic plan and their outlook over the next year. She said that those discussions begin in December. She reported that they look at the strategic plan in consideration of the needs of Harambee and then bring in other executive leaders from their respective departments. She noted that one of the things that they did differently this year was to meet with front line staff members about their needs, likes and dislikes and what is working and what is not working. She said that this process led to good feedback from other staff, which they continued from December through March. Following that process they came up with a proposed budget that they shared with the Finance committee in April. She said that they had some adjustments that will be included in this presentation. She mentioned that it was done a little different this time because the presentation was really supposed to take place last month in the April meeting, but they got a little off schedule. She noted that the effective date is July 1, and that the Board has had a chance to review it at least 30 days in advance. She noted that they use a multi method approach to their budget process. Michelle moved on to the Overview.

### **Overview**

Michelle reported that one of their main areas of focus for the year has been student enrollment because it drives the revenue. She advised that Talent Acquisition was another focus as well making sure that they are always bringing in the top talent, certified teachers and having professional development with teachers that are not certified and having that process in place. Another area of focus was to bring in long-term full time substitute teachers as well as investing in technology to ensure that they were prepared for in person instruction and the staffing around instruction.

### **Rate reduction**

Michelle reported that another area of focus for this year is their rate and the possibility of a rate reduction. She noted that they are issued a per pupil rate at the beginning of the year and throughout the year there is at least one adjustment to that rate. She said that they did not know if that would be an increase or decrease. They had been waiting for the announcement and found out yesterday that they will receive an increase of 1% in their current rate that will be retroactive to the beginning of the year. Michelle also noted that they are still waiting for the announcement for their 2022-2023 rates. She said that the preliminary information that they have been receiving is that there will be a significant decrease, which could still happen therefore, they are still bracing for that announcement. She said that they are proposing an adjustment in the event that they receive a significant decrease. She is proposing a non-traditional allocation of resources. They will be pulling their support staff out of their regular operating budget and shifting it to the

ESSER funding budget. She noted that the budget would also address learning loss, professional development and talent acquisition.

**Key Assumptions**

Michelle indicated that based upon the prediction that they would have a decrease in their current budget, they planned for a 6% decrease in their per pupil rate. She said that the key assumptions still include the decrease because they still may have a significant decrease in their 2022-2023 rates and she wants to leave it in as a precaution. Michelle continued to point out key areas in the budget with members and shared details of some of the budgeted items and revenue streams. She discussed ESSER funding, the 21<sup>st</sup> century grant and funds from Cohort 11. She reminded members that they recently submitted an application and are hoping to hear the outcome soon.

**Next Steps**

Michelle indicated that the next steps would be listening out for the final rate announcement from the School District and getting a vote this evening on the budget. She asked members if there were any questions regarding the budget presentation. Dr. Baynard opened the floor to members for questions.

Dr. Baynard asked Michelle, if in the planning for next year they had considered or had conversations about Pre-K. Michelle responded that they had not had any conversations recently because their biggest concern would be space. She said that one of the things that they want to focus on over the next few years would be solidifying their space and how they would grow even where they are with out considering Pre-K. She said that there had been conversation about Pre-K a few years ago, but for now, the idea is pretty flat in their minds right now.

Dr. Baynard asked about other ways to increase and raise revenue other than the per pupil rate. Michelle acknowledged that as a Board and an Organization, they should be planning fund raising goals and that they need to implement a development team or appoint an individual to focus on and help to drive fundraising as a part of their priorities. Dr. Baynard suggested that Friends of Harambee could have a great impact in that area. He said that next year they should really focus Friends of Harambee’s energy in that area.

**Action Items:**

Vote on the 2022-2023 Budget

**Motion:** Board member Wade made a motion to approve the 2022-2023 Budget as presented, seconded by Board member Joseph. All were in favor, none were opposed.

Approval: 7    AYE: 7    Nays: 0    Abstentions: 0    Absent: 3



**Old Business:**

None

**New Business:**

None

**Public Concerns:**

There were no public concerns

Dr. Baynard again opened the floor to members for questions and comments. Board member Monique shared that her husband is involved with a group named The Philly Student Doctors. She said that they are students that are enrolled in Medical School and some that have graduated with many different specialties. She said that she has reached out to them to ask if they would be interested in providing mentorship to Harambee students. They responded to her indicating that it sounded like something that they would definitely be interested in doing. She said that she would also be reaching out to people that she has worked with on the technical side of her business and have them share what it is like working behind the scenes with some of the technical aspects of her business.

Dr. Baynard asked Greg to speak to ways in which they can meet this opportunity. Greg thanked Board member Monique and indicated that Harambee has a group of Middle School students who have a desire not just for STEM but also interested in the medical field. He stated that this would be a great opportunity for those students to partner with other young students in the field of medicine.

Before the meeting adjourned, Greg announced that Ericka Washington, the current Assistant Principal of School Operations will be expanding her career with the School District of Philadelphia. Board members and others present congratulated her and thanked her for her service to Harambee.

**Motion:** Board member Joseph made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Board member Wade. All were in favor, none were opposed.

Approval: 7    AYE: 7    Nays: 0    Abstentions: 0    Absent: 3

**Next Public Meeting:**

The next public Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 29, 2022

Submitted by Jenita Lunsford, Board Liaison