

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

Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday, March 29, 2023

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday March 29th 2023 via Zoom at 6:30p.m.

Open Session

Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.
by Board Secretary Joseph Foster

Board Members Present:

Joseph Foster
C. Wade Mosely
Jan Gillespie- Walton
Renee Whitby
Charis Jackson

Board Members Absent:

Larry Bell
Maurice Baynard
Donna Holmes Lockett

Others Present:

Gregory Shannon	CEO
Michelle Thornton	CFO
Deleah Archer	Assistant Principal of Specialized Services
Nakia Brown	Assistant Principal of Instruction
David Rosario	Assistant Principal of School Operations
Danielle Bryant	Executive Assistant to the CEO
Terrance Jenkins	Facilities Manager
Jenita Lunsford	Board Liaison

Libation (Board member Renee Whitby)

Libation was lead by cultural leader and Board member Renee Whitby.

Introduction of Visitors and Others Present

None

Roll Call

Board Secretary Joseph Foster 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 February 22nd Board Meeting Minutes (Approval of minutes)

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

Approval: 5 AYE: 5 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

CEO Report, Greg Shannon

Greg announced that there would be three items for a vote this evening. One would be on their new perspective Board member Dr. Shawn Blue; the second would be on Michelle's 990 financial report and third on the ICS proposal for capital improvements windows and siding.

New Prospective Board Member Dr. Shawn Blue

He said that he is happy to report that Dr. Shawn Blue works as a Clinical Psychologist at Thomas Jefferson University and brings with her a wealth of knowledge particularly in the areas of social and emotional development. He said that both he and Dr. Baynard have met with Dr. Blue and they believe that she would be an outstanding asset to the Board and to the organization.

ICS Capital Improvement Projects Windows and Siding

Greg indicated that they have a proposal from ICS for windows and siding, which is a part of their ESSER capital improvement projects. The project has been developed between Harambee and ICS by Terrance Fletcher, David Rosario, and Matt Melady. It has also been vetted through Board member Wade and Board member Larry from a facilities and financial standpoint along with Michelle from the leadership team. The proposal is for 989,000 dollars and has been vetted through the business office and other minority vendors to see if anyone would be interested in bidding on the project. Greg stated that they are currently at a place where they need to move forward so the proposal is here for the Board's consideration.

Leadership Retreat 2023

Greg reported that they are all set for the Summer Leadership Retreat. He thanked everyone that participated for their hard work and said that they have

done great work over the past two-three summers putting in some of the foundational pieces relative to the organization. He said that the focus of the retreats had been upon their mission, vision and core values and that last year's focus was upon being data driven and systems aligned. He told members that this year's retreat will focus squarely on instruction and will be lead by Nakia Brown. He stated that it is their intent to focus on those individuals in the organization, excluding the Board, but the individuals in the line staff and administration who touch the arm of the instructional wing of their organization. He announced that the retreat will be held on Wednesday July 26th, Thursday July 27th and Friday July 28th for three days. He said that one thing that is different this year is that the retreat will be held in Baltimore Maryland. He noted that what is key this year is bringing in instructional experts to work with them one on one. He announced that they have the Chief Academic Officer from the School District of Philadelphia and the Deputy Superintendent from the Cheltenham School District, both who have strong instructional acumen that will be facilitating the retreat.

Greg informed members that they have arranged for a block of rooms at the hotel for any Board member who wishes to participate in person. He said that communication has already been sent out to Board members, so for those who may want to participate in person, he asked that they let Danielle know within the next 24-48 hours so that she can prepare their accommodations at the hotel. For those who do not wish to participate in person there will be a virtual option for them as well.

Greg told members that he had one last thing to share and asked Danielle to share her screen with the group. Danielle shared video of the students from Harambee experiencing the tours on all of the college campuses that they visited. Deleah narrated the video and members heard from many of the students as they spoke about their experiences while touring. There were lovely pictures and many smiling faces of Harambee students at each of the HBCU campuses. Greg shared with members that the video can be seen on the Harambee website and urged members to visit the website to view it again. Greg gave Kudos to Big Picture Alliance for producing the film, to the students who participated and to Dr. Archer for chaperoning the students.

Fundraising and Development

Greg reported that they are embarking on their signature fundraising event, which will be held on Wednesday May 17

th at the Pyramid club from 5:30-8:30 p.m. The focus will be on post secondary education with a panel of University Presidents that will present at the event that evening. They are requesting that each member of the Board and the executive leadership team Give or Get 2,500 dollars. He said that every dollar that they raise will go towards next year's Get On the Bus HBCU tour. He explained that this year's tour was 4 days and 3 nights, but their intention for next year is to take the trip a little further and stay for 5 days and 4 nights. Greg told members that in addition to the colleges that they visited this year they would like to include North Carolina A&T and then finish at Clark Atlanta, Spellman and Morehouse. He said that this year's tour cost approximately \$30,000 dollars with 27 students and 5 adults. He said that he and Michelle are estimating around \$50,000 for next year's tour, which is the reason that they are asking for contributions of \$2,500 dollars from each member of the Board and the executive leadership team. Greg gave Kudos to Board member Jan for her contribution of \$2,500 dollars and Kudos to Rosario and Terrance for reaching out to the graduate chapter of their fraternity Omega Psi Phi who has already donated \$2,500 dollars to the fundraising event. Greg concluded his report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Wade asked if the video that was shown of the students was from 2022, and if the fundraiser that they are doing now for is 2024. Greg responded that the video that was shown was from the 2022-2023 school year (this school year). He said that they just went on the tour in October of 2022. He explained that the fundraiser that they are currently planning is for the 2023-2024 (next school year). The actual tour will take place in October (fall) of 2023. Greg concluded his report and turned the floor to Nakia Brown for her report on Instruction.

Curriculum and Instruction, Nakia Brown

Curriculum

Nakia reported that they are currently drafting their plan for the spring curriculum updates. They are updating their math-pacing guide so that it is better aligned with their new IREADY math program. She said that last year they used IREADY and created a pacing guide that was a companion to the IREADY program and administration allowed them to include an additional intervention, which was IREADY classroom. This spring they will update the pacing guide so that it matches the new interventions that they have and will already be imbedded into the system.

Social Studies Pacing

Nakia reported that they are also creating a pacing guide for their social studies program grades K through 8. She said that they have Social Studies Alive this school year and their social studies middle school teacher is interested in helping to develop a pacing guide for social studies. This is a program and process that they have started and will continue it in the spring of this year.

Instruction

Nakia reported that they are currently in the unannounced formal observation phase and all teachers have received announced and unannounced informal observations. They are currently doing unannounced formal observations and the window is March 14th through May 14th. Beginning on April 24th through May 12th they will be conducting PSSA's. She said that one of the things that is driving their instructional program is their focus on small group instruction and their continued study of data and using data to inform instruction. She told members that as they prepare for moving into the fourth marking period along with their statewide testing, they have small group instruction which is led by their para professionals, their intervention para professionals, their instructional coaches including Nakia. She also mentioned that she has a small reading group that she meets with every morning at 9:00 am.

Assessments

Nakia reported that they are currently in test mode as they prepare for PSSA and their benchmark testing. They are in their benchmark window with today being the 3rd day for their math assessment. They have taken 2 days of ELA and they are very happy with the results that they have received so far. She said that she and Greg will do a review over spring break to try and get a good prediction on how their students might do on the PSSA. She reported that they had their first PSSA training for staff on March 24th and a PSSA parent training that took place on March 22nd. Their benchmark 3 started on March 23rd and they will culminate the PSSA training on April 21st with their final push before the test. Nakia said that PSSA materials arrive on April 10th and after that date they will shut down to prepare operationally and instructionally for the students to sit for the PSSA Assessment. Nakia concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Renee shared with members that she visited Harambee for the Sherehe program and she really enjoyed it. She said that she went to the classrooms to let them know how proud she was of their presentation. She also conducted an observation of a cultural awareness class for Zulu and wants to return to do an observation of the middle schools cultural awareness classes that are held in the afternoon. She realizes that PSSA testing will be taking place and will not interfere with that time, but will be talking to Nakia about a good time to visit again after PSSA testing.

Board member Renee asked if the social studies curriculum is history and what the focus is. Nakia replied that it depends on the grade and in K-5 they are still doing social studies Alive so the theme is aligned with state standards. In middle school they are having history. In grade 6th they have Civics and in grade 7th and 8th they have Civics and American History. She said that it is all aligned with the social studies standards.

Board member Wade commented that he is happy to see Board member Renee

smiling. He acknowledged that it is important to understand her cultural understanding of the benchmark and baseline of what Harambee should be presenting, so he is happy to see her happy. Board member Renee said that she plans to conduct more visits and looks forward to staying in touch physically with the school as much as possible. Greg thanked Board member Renee and turned the meeting to David Rosario for his report on School Operations.

Operations, David Rosario

Facilities Capital Improvement Project Update

David reported that they have started to get their scheduling together for the capital improvement projects with the bathroom stalls. They have identified three areas where they won't have student traffic so that they can fit the project in. David said that the bathroom stall project will take place in the latter part of the summer window after they finish ESY and the HASA summer program. He said that they are in contact with the team that was awarded the project to be sure that the schedule is within that window.

Food Services

David reported that the Philadelphia Health Department Food Division visited them on Monday 3/20/23. He provided a tour of their food services facility and was happy to report that there were no capital findings. He said that they rendered their report on the same day and there were a couple of very minor things that Terrance was able to handle before the close of business on the same day.

Student Attendance Incentives

David reported that they have placed annual incentives for their student attendance and they had a winner. Simone's 3rd grade class won for ten days of perfect attendance. He said that it was competitive throughout the school to elicit a response in their students to come to school. He reported that it was a close race and they had remarkable buy in from all of the students. David concluded his report and opened the floor for questions. Greg turned the meeting over to Dr. Archer to give her report on Specialized Services.

Specialized Services, Deleah Archer

PASSA (Pennsylvania Alternative State Assessment)

Deleah reported that this will be the first year that their students at Harambee take the PASSA test, which is for students with complex needs. The testing window is April 17th through May 5th. There are 3 students in their building that will participate in the testing.

Student Data

Deleah reported that by the end of April they would have 73 students with IEPs. She told members that after a meeting with Greg this morning there was an amendment to the above number that showed that they will currently have 77

students with IEP's and 2 pending which will be a total of 79 students by the end of April. She said that they have 7- 504 students and 3 gifted, but they are still combing through the gifted test to find out if there are any additional students that may be gifted. Deleah reported that this month their 2nd grade had a counseling lesson about appropriate and inappropriate touch, which was followed by a parent training on the following day.

Career Pathways

Deleah reported that they are gearing up for their Career Pathways event, which will take place on May 26th, 2023. It is a school wide event and it will be a ½ day for the students. Deleah told members that an invitation was sent to the Board and they are asking individuals to participate and share their careers whether in person, virtually, through live Zoom or a pre-recorded message. She said this is an opportunity for students to learn about careers that require a degree, that require certification and careers that do not require a degree or certification.

Little Library Project

Deleah reported that they are on the mark to have their community dedication ceremony in the first week of May. They have a total of five libraries, four that will be installed in the building in various sections that will have grade appropriate books. They also have one that will be dedicated to the community and will be installed outside. She said that the information will go out to everyone shortly and they will have a press release so that individuals can come and participate in the community dedication. Deleah concluded her report and opened the floor for questions.

Board member Renee asked Deleah what the turn out was like when she had the parent meeting. Deleah replied that they had approximately 8 individuals turnout for 2nd grade because the lesson was just for 2nd graders. She said that they did send the letter out ahead of time and they placed it on the class DOJO so they hope to have more training next year and more turn out.

Board member Wade asked how many Special Education students are in the Special Education portal as far as the School District is concerned. How many students officially have IEP's. Greg responded and said that their Special Education population is running about 12% of their total student population. He said that the percentages of students receiving specialized services have increased across the board, post COVID across the entire commonwealth as students have suffered from learning loss. Harambee has seen a rise of about 2% over the course of about 18-24 months. It can be attributed mostly to learning loss due to COVID and this can be seen both across the city of Philadelphia and across the commonwealth.

Michelle asked if she could also address the question that Board member Wade asked to explain it more specifically. She said that the question seemed more

specific to the reconciliation of the total number of Special Education students and Harambee's revenue. She noted that they have been working with the main office and Dr. Archer's office to reconcile and identify Special Education students. Michelle said that on her end they are making sure that they reconcile it with their revenue. She said that there might be some lag with the number if Dr. Archer is still finalizing the IEPs because they can only get paid if the IEP has been finalized and signed by all parties, so there could be a months delay or so after the IEP is finalized. She told members that they have been working collectively to make sure that the numbers are reconciled.

Board member Wade said that his question was specifically what number does the School District recognize at this moment. Michelle said that she thinks that the number on their financial report is 73, but she will double-check it. She said that she does report that number on their financial report on the summary. Deleah said that the number that she reported is in real time and up to date with students that were just evaluated, so that they know where they are in real time. She noted that there is a 30-day window between evaluation report and IEP. Board member Joe asked Board member Wade if his question had been answered. Board member Wade replied yes, that he thinks that the 73 number was what he was looking for. Greg asked if there were any further questions from the Specialized Services report. He turned the floor to Michelle for her report on Business and Finance.

Business, Finance and HR Michelle Thornton

Michelle introduced herself and indicated that she would like to give a brief presentation on the 990 tax return. She said that Board members received a copy of the 990 in their Board packets. She encouraged members to review it if they had not already done so. She told members that there are a few things that she wanted to present. She said that last year the auditor presented the tax return and typically the auditor completes the annual financial audit and from the financial statements they prepare the 990. She told members that she wanted to do the presentation this year because she feels that there is some additional information from a Board standpoint that she thought that members should know about the 990. She shared her screen with members and pointed out that there are 37 pages, but she would not be reviewing all 37 of them. She noted that she would be highlighting a couple of the areas and pointed out that it is a form for exempt organizations and as a school Harambee is exempt from income taxes so the form is an information return and it shows that this is the 2021 tax return covering the school year from 7-1-21 through 6-30-22. She said that this is the last year that was audited and this is the return for that period, which is due on May 15th.

Michelle indicated that they are hoping for approval of the tax return today or by the next Board meeting. She informed members that the return is open to public inspection and to anyone who wants to see it, which is another reason that it is important that Board members are fully aware of the items that are included in the

return. Michelle brought it to everyone's attention that the 990 return is in parts and pointed out that the first page is a summary. She scrolled through the pages and explained that the document identifies what type of summary activity is contained in it. She finalized by pointing out the signature block where her name appears as the Financial Officer for Harambee and J. Miller & Associates, LLC as the auditing firm for Harambee.

Michelle concluded her report and indicated that she thought it was important for Board members to understand the details of what is included in this public document. She opened the floor for questions and reiterated that they would be looking for a vote for the 990 to be filed. She turned the meeting back to Greg and he thanked everyone for their attention and humbly asked for a vote on the three items on the agenda.

- A vote on Dr. Shawn Blue's candidacy as a Board member
- A vote on the proposal for Capital Improvements Windows and Siding
- A vote on the 990 tax return

Old Business

None

New Business

Same as action items

Action Items

- A vote on Dr. Shawn Blue's candidacy as a Board member
- A vote on the proposal for Capital Improvements Windows and Siding
- A vote on the 990 tax return

Item 1) Vote to approve Trustee Nomination, Dr. Shawn Blue

Motion: Board member Joseph made a motion to approve the Trustee Nomination of Dr. Shawn Blue. All were in favor, none were opposed. Passed unanimously

Approval: AYE: 5 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Item 2) A vote to approve the 990 tax return

Motion: Board member Joseph made a motion to approve the 990-tax return seconded by Board member Renee. All were in favor, none were opposed. Passed unanimously.

Approval: AYE: 5 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Item 3) A vote on the proposal for Capital Improvements Windows and Siding

Motion: Board member Joseph made a motion to approve the proposal for Capital Improvements Windows and Siding seconded by Board member Wade and Renee. All were in favor, none were opposed. Passed unanimously.

Approval: AYE: 5 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Public Concerns

Board member Joe asked if there were any further questions or concerns from the Board. Hearing none, he entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Board Member Wade made a motion to adjourn the public session; all were in favor none were opposed. Passed unanimously.

Approval: AYE: 5 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Next Public Meeting: The next Public Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 26th 2023