

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

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## **Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday, April 26, 2023**

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday April 26, 2023 via Zoom at 6:30p.m.

### **Open Session**

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m.  
by Board Chairman Maurice Baynard

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

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

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

Donna Holmes Lockett  
Shawn Blue

#### **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
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 Chairman 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 March 29<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting Minutes (Approval of minutes)**

Board member Maurice made a motion to move the approval of the March Meeting minutes to the next meeting. Board member Renee seconded the motion. All were in favor, none were opposed and there was a unanimous motion to move the approval of the March minutes to the next meeting.

Approval: 7            AYE: 0            Nays: 0            Abstentions: 0            Absent: 2

### **CEO Report, Greg Shannon**

Greg gave Kudos to Nakia and the Academic Team in preparation for the states PSSA Assessments. He told members that he would be presenting all that has occurred over the past 30 days. He said that two weeks ago the students sat for bench march number three and Nakia has worked diligently to prepare a data presentation with respect to student outcomes and student performance on benchmark number three. He added that Michelle Thornton, CFO would share some of their financial points that have occurred over the past 30 days as well. Greg moved to the ICS Capital Improvement Projects.

### **ICS Capital Improvement Projects Windows and Siding**

Greg reported that windows and siding is the next piece of the project that will be occurring and that they did receive the contract and it has been reviewed thanks to Board member Wade and his expertise around facilities management. He stated that Board member Wade had an opportunity to review the information and included his great insight. He said that the document is also in the hands of their attorney's and they are expecting feedback from their attorneys tomorrow.

### **Leadership Retreat 2023**

Greg reported that the Leadership retreat has been finalized. He thanked Danielle who has been their point person in establishing their contacts for the retreat. He told members that they will be going to Baltimore Maryland from Wednesday July 26<sup>th</sup>, Thursday July 27<sup>th</sup> and Friday July 28<sup>th</sup> for three days. They will follow their normal format, however it will be a bit different this year in that it will focus squarely and solely on instruction. He said that they have partnered with a dynamic instructional leader Dr. Tamara Thomas Smith the Deputy Superintendent from the Cheltenham School District who will be the facilitator for the retreat. In an attempt to ensure that Nakia and the academic team receive development they thought that it would be best to bring in an expert to facilitate their retreat.

The retreat will encompass on the ground a total of 15 people. He said that they announced approximately 3 weeks ago if members wanted over night

accommodations and wanted to participate in person to let Danielle know. He said that the only member that asked for in person accommodations was Board member Joseph. He told members that they will have a virtual option for any of the Board members who choose to participate virtually.

### **Fundraising and Development**

Greg reported that they have been promoting their signature fundraising event for several months now and it is scheduled for Wednesday evening May 17<sup>th</sup> at the Pyramid Club from 5:30-8 p.m. They will hold a panel discussion with University President's who have agreed to sit on the panel to speak about their journey from middle school to becoming a University President. They will discuss the strong impact that a post secondary education has had on their lives. Greg said that every dollar raised for their 5/50 campaign will go towards funding their HBCU trip, which will occur in the fall of 2023. He said that their goal for this year is a total of 50,000 dollars. He reiterated that their ask is for a minimum contribution of \$2,500.00 from every Board member and Senior Leader in the give or get category.

Greg thanked those who have already given and gave Kudos to Board member Jan for her networking. He mentioned that he forwarded everyone a copy of a template that Board member Jan utilized to cascade to her network to solicit support for the fundraiser. He said that nearly every day since Board member Jan put it out checks have been arriving at Harambee in support of their fundraiser.

Greg also gave Kudos to Nakia for her ingenious idea to raise funds through a popcorn sale. He asked her to give an update on the funds that they have raised so far. Nakia reported that they are currently at \$7,056.00. She said that they sold a total of \$14,112.00 in 3 days and their profit stands at \$7,056.00 dollars with 2 days remaining, as they will close on Friday. Greg indicated that many students have come to him particularly 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who are excited about the opportunity and want to go on the trip next year.

He said that this would conclude his updates for this evening and he would turn the focus to Nakia and the instructional team as Nakia presents the benchmark number 3 data and gives the cross walk of what the data looks like over the course of the school year. He opened the floor for questions before the presentation.

Board member Larry said that he needs to understand and asked what the role of the Roz group is currently. Greg responded that the Roz group has coordinated their fundraising event and has connected them with their signature donors. During last years event Einstein and Jefferson was their signature donor and they made a significant contribution in the amount of \$7,500 -10,000 dollars. She is the person that also connected them with the Friends of Harambee group who has made significant contributions to the organization throughout the course

of the year either in cash or in kind. He said that The Roz group has done significant work, especially in the STEM community in particular. Board member Larry responded that his financial hat would like to see proof of that. He asked if they still need to raise \$50,000 in addition. Greg said as a collective they need to raise \$50,000 to fund the HBCU trip. He said that last year's trip was in the ballpark of \$30,000 dollars and this year they would like to go further to include A&T, Spellman and Morehouse, but do not want to use operating dollars. Greg said that he feels as a collective they all have a fiduciary responsibility to the students of Harambee. Board member Larry suggested that they have this discussion at the next finance committee meeting. Board member Wade asked if Greg could bring forth how The Roz group is value added, the actual amounts raised and what the actual contract value is to the next finance committee meeting so that they can at least assess whether its paying for itself or the if the contract is self sustaining. Greg responded that he would absolutely report out at the next finance committee meeting. With regard to middle school students wanting to participate in the trip next year, Board member Larry suggested placing students leaders on the Board committee so that they can obtain input from the students. Greg responded that it would be amazing and they have a student leadership group called the "Black Shirts" which could very seamlessly be transitioned on to the Board. Dr. Baynard noted that as long as it is within the existing context of the By-Laws and/or they amend the By-Laws to include students. He said that it is a great idea, but they just need to check the By-Laws to be sure that they are aligned. And going forward they would need to find out what is the mechanism by which they choose students in the future.

Greg indicated that he had one last comment before moving on to Nakia's benchmark number 3 data presentation. He stated that he is not opposed to reviewing the contract for the Roz Group, but should they decide not to utilize the Roz Group to pull the fundraising together, he would make a very strong recommendation to the Board to establish a fundraising committee comprised of Board members to do that work.

Board member Wade responded that they just need to know what is going on and what the projected outcomes are. They need to know whom the outreach is going to and what success they have had with getting those contracts on board for both the short and long-term basis and the projected cost associated with the success. He said the more information they have, the more comfortable they can feel with the process. Board member Joe stated that he thought that those were excellent suggestions. Dr. Baynard stated that the recommendation is that they should proceed with a presentation to the finance committee and if necessary the finance committee can bring it back to the Board if there are any concerns. He said that the committee should first provide Greg with what specifics they would like to know before the next meeting so that Greg can make his presentation as thorough as possible. Greg turned the meeting to Nakia for her presentation.

**Curriculum and Instruction, Nakia Brown**

Nakia reported that she would like to engage members in highlights from the 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration of their benchmark, as well as, what their students have been doing over time using their benchmark assessment. She shared her screen and began with a Benchmark #3 Data Presentation. The presentation consisted of a School wide Benchmark Review and compared data from Benchmark 1-3. She informed members that what they were seeing is data from 3 different bands, (benchmark 1-3) over three different sections (Proficient, Basic & Below Basic). This shows how they are performing as a school and as a testing cluster. She advised members that the statewide assessment only includes participation from students in grades 3-8 in the benchmark assessment. She said that she would share how their students are doing in ELA and Math in grades 3-8 which are the two areas being assessed.

Nakia said that the students took their first benchmark assessment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of September right after coming back from their summer vacation. She said that this was the first truly solid year after coming out of the pandemic and identifying some of the students that did have learning loss because of the pandemic. When they took the assessment in September they were 18% proficient, 41% scored basic and 41% also scored below basic in ELA.

Nakia noted that they have a 12 week bench mark cycle and as you can see from the data shown in the chart after 12 weeks of teaching and learning in benchmark 2 they were able to increase their proficiency level form 18% to 32%. She pointed out that in benchmark 3 they increased their proficiency level from 32% to 47%. She asked members to notice that their below basic category is continuing to decrease and their students are growing in the band of proficiency and advanced.

Nakia continued to the next slide and provided scores from their School wide Math data. She reviewed all three benchmark assessments from 1-3 and pointed out some of the similar challenges that they faced with the ELA scores. She said that students were just returning from summer break, virtual learning, isolation and learning loss due to the pandemic. She noted that when they tested in September in benchmark 1 the students were at 6% proficiency and 12 weeks later in benchmark 2 grew to 16% proficient. In their band of below basic they were able to decrease that number from 48% to 34%. They took benchmark 3 in March and they were able to increase their proficiency band from 16% to 36% of their students in Math.

Nakia discussed and summarized the data on all of the slides and pointed out their increased growth and proficiency. She selected specific classrooms and highlighted their data to show growth from benchmark 1-3. She acknowledged that they went into the PSSA's with a higher percentage of their students on grade level. She said that there is a correlation between students being on grade level and being able to score proficient on the PSSA. She finalized her report with a summary of the Benchmark data shown below.

Benchmark ELA growth from Benchmark 1-3 at 29%  
**School wide ELA Growth BM1- BM3- 29%**

Benchmark Math growth from benchmark 1-3 at 30%  
**School wide Math Growth BM1- BM3- 30%**

Testing growth in grades 3-8 for ELA from benchmark 1-3 at 21%  
**Testing Grades 3-8 Growth ELA- BM1- BM3- 21%**

Testing growth in grades 3-8 from benchmark 1-3 at 24%.  
**Testing Grades 3-8 Math Growth -BM1- BM3-24%**

Nakia turned the meeting back to Greg and opened the floor for questions. Dr. Baynard congratulated Nakia on school wide trends that look really positive. He asked if she could provide him with a spreadsheet of what each grade did per benchmark in ELA and Math. She said that she and Greg review that information at the end of each benchmark and would provide that for him.

Board member Larry gave kudos to Nakia on her presentation and said that this is the kind of data that they want to see. He asked how rigorous the benchmark testing is compared to the PSSA's. She said that the benchmark testing that they use is pretty rigorous and uses the same standard as the PSSA. She said that the scope and sequence is matched to the curriculum. Board member Larry also asked about any negative highlights that were not shown and what typically happens to correct it. Nakia responded that they did not have a class that declined; they may have had one class that was a few points (3 points) from reaching the goal but they honestly did not have any class that declined.

Board member Wade congratulated Nakia on doing such a successful job and asked what constitutes the three categories of proficient, basic and below basic. Nakia said that it is a raw score, a minimum score that each student must reach in order to be in each of the bands and it also depends on the grade level of the student. Nakia turned the meeting back to Greg and he thanked her and the academic team for their hard work. Board member Wade indicated that he had one more question. He said that he remembered the goal of a 4% improvement and asked if they were over the mark. He said that it looks like they far surpassed the 4% and asked if he was interpreting it correctly. Nakia responded that he was correct.

Board member Jan gave kudos on the advancements that are being made and asked if they could go even further by using brain-based connections. She asked if they have thought about training the teachers for brain-based quadrants of teaching that would help to reach as many of the students as possible. Nakia responded that it would be great if they could start that work at the upcoming retreat. She said that she and Greg would talk more about it as they are focusing

on instruction. She said that they could do a train the trainer model where she and her colleagues receive training at the retreat and then roll that training out at their summer institute. She said that they would add that to their conversations with Dr. Smith and if Board member Jan knows anyone that does that kind of work to share that information so that they can reach out. Greg turned the meeting over to Michelle for her report on Business and Finance.\_

### **Business, Finance and HR Michelle Thornton**

Michelle reported that she would have 3 highlights to share with the Board this evening regarding what they have been working on in the Business department over the past month.

#### **1) Greater Philadelphia Teacher Job Fair**

Michelle reported that they participated in the Greater Philadelphia Teacher Job Fair last month. She said that this is the first time that they have participated in a job fair other than the ones that they have hosted at Harambee in 2017/2018. She said that they had certain goals that they wanted to meet and were able to meet their goals. The first was to leave with at least one candidate and they actually had a couple of candidates. They want to develop relationships with feeder universities and some of their HBCU 's where they go to them and present themselves. She told members that this is their hiring season and they have been interviewing weekly and now have a couple of candidates in the pipeline that they are excited about.

#### **2) Title I audit**

Michelle reported that they are currently in the midst of their Title I audit for their federal programs. They are in a cohort where they are monitored every five years and she is working with Nakia Brown and Ty. She said that they are doing it differently this year where they are able to upload the documents as opposed to being assigned to an individual that would come to the facility and review the records. They are all working together, meeting weekly and meeting with a group of parents to help them with their parent handbooks. They have a due date of May 12<sup>th</sup> to upload their information.

#### **3) 2023-2024 Budget**

Michelle reported that they are in the process of finalizing their 2023-2024 Budget. She told members that she had to reschedule the finance committee meeting for this week to next week and they will be presenting their budget to the Finance Committee next week with their proposed budget. She shared with members that they have not received any information from the state or the district regarding their per pupil rate for next year. They are hoping to have that information within the next 30 days or so. Michelle concluded her report and asked if there were any questions.

Board member Larry asked if there are any specific people that she is looking for or should they refer anyone who is looking to teach at Harambee and what would be the best way to refer. Michelle responded that they are interested in any candidate that is looking, so be sure to share her email or the business office email. She also said to have the candidate mention the Board members name that is referring them so that she knows that it is coming from a Board member recommendation.

Board member Larry asked her opinion on a candidate that may have just graduated from college with an education degree. Michelle said that for teaching positions they are focusing on certified teachers, but it also depends upon where they are in the certification process. They would like the candidate to at least be on the path towards certification. She said that Harambee has a certification plan in place so anyone who is not certified would have to become a part of the certification plan and would work with Nakia and her team through that process. She said that they would still look at them.

Michelle turned the meeting back to Greg for any comments. Having none, Greg said that this would conclude their presentations for the evening and he turned the floor back to Dr. Baynard.

### **Old Business**

None

Dr. Baynard acknowledged that there is no old business for this evening and opened the floor to Board members for anything that is top of mind that they would like to share or ask.

Board member Wade said that he had one question and mentioned that there was supposed to be an Advisory Board that consisted of “heavy hitters” to assist them in their fundraising efforts. He asked if there is any update on the status of that group. Dr. Baynard said that he is speaking of Friends of Harambee and asked Greg to give an update.

Greg responded yes, they have developed a Friends of Harambee Advisory Committee. He said that he and The Roz Group meet with that committee periodically and it encompasses the Sr. Vice President of the Franklin Institute, the Sr. Vice President of the Delaware River Port Authority, the Executive Director of Natural Lands, the Stroud Water Research Center and former Board member Stephon Fitzpatrick. He said that there are a number of “heavy hitters” in the STEM field who participate on the Advisory Board. Greg asked if there were any further questions before turning the meeting back over to Dr. Baynard.

Deleah reminded Board members that if they have any candidates to present at their Career Fair in May, to please contact her or the counselors with those



individuals names. She said that they are looking for individuals that have interesting jobs to participate on May 26<sup>th</sup>. She turned the meeting back to Dr. Baynard and he told members, if there were no further questions or comments, he would entertain a motion to adjourn.

**New Business**

None

**Action Items**

None

**Public Concerns**

None

**Motion:** Board Member Wade made a motion to adjourn the public session, seconded by Board member Joseph; all were in favor none were opposed.

Approval: 7            AYE: 0            Nays: 0            Abstentions: 0            Absent: 2

**Next Public Meeting:** The next Public Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 31, 2023