

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

Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday, August 30th, 2023

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday, August 30th 2023 via Zoom at 6:35 p.m.

Open Session

Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Board Chairman Maurice Baynard

Board Members Present:

Maurice Baynard
Joseph Foster
Larry Bell
Jan Gillespie- Walton
Donna Holmes Lockett
Renee Whitby
C. Wade Mosely

Board Members Absent:

Shawn Blue
Charis Jackson

Others Present:

Gregory Shannon	CEO
Danielle Bryant	Executive Assistant to the CEO
David Rosario	Assistant Principal of School Operations
Michelle Thornton	CFO
Nakia Brown	Assistant Principal of Instruction
Deleah Archer	Assistant Principal of Specialized Services
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

There were no visitors present at this meeting

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 June 28th Board Meeting Minutes (Approval of minutes)

Dr. Baynard asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the June 28th Board minutes. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were no additions or corrections. Board member Larry made a motion seconded by Board member Joe to accept the minutes as presented, all were in favor, none were opposed and there was a unanimous motion to accept the minutes as presented. Dr. Baynard turned the meeting over to Greg for the CEO report

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

CEO Report, Greg Shannon Organizational Leadership

School Opening 2023 Update

Greg reported that they had an amazing opening of the 2023-2024 school year on Monday August 28th. He said that the opening was very orderly and efficient. They were able to transition nearly 640 children on role in 42 minutes. They were able to have their first in person circle outside on the schoolyard, which was amazing, and then transition everyone inside the building and move everyone into their new class. He gave kudos to the administrative team and kudos to the faculty and staff for an amazing job on school opening. Greg shared with members that they are prepared to build on their successes of last year.

Capital Projects Update

Greg gave kudos to Board member Wade who has been in lockstep with them as they have worked through their capital projects. His experience in that arena has been invaluable and he has been supporting them and providing them with guidance along with the work of David, Terrence and Matt. He said that they are slated for two capital projects within the next 90 days or so. Those capital projects are new windows and new siding and are tentatively scheduled for a November install. They are working through some scheduled changes and in addition to that they are scheduled for new HVAC in December. Greg said that they have a meeting scheduled tomorrow with ICS to discuss the install and to recommend that they condense the installation into one single window to create the least amount of disruption and safety hazards to the students and their instructional programs. He said the install would begin on Wednesday December 20th and conclude on Tuesday January 2

nd.

Student Enrollment Update

Greg reported that they opened the year with 636 children on role and by last account from David on day one 628 of the 636 children were present. He said that their enrollment is steady and climbing. They are very excited about the young people who have come in.

Expansion of Cultural Practices

Greg told members that they have had conversations with Board member Renee and Board member Joe while looking for opportunities to expand their curriculum and to expand the experiences of their young people. He announced that they have created a new course in the middle school for 7th and 8th graders entitled "Cultural Expressions" which is an extension of their Language Arts program. Students will focus on writing and reading around their African heritage and African culture. He informed members that they have a dynamic young brother who will be teaching the course and he is a member of the Beta Gamma chapter. He said that 7th and 8th grade children will get a double dose of the writing opportunity when they move over from ELA to Culture, so they believe that the course will benefit them two fold. Greg concluded his reports and opened the floor for any questions and comments.

Board member Renee asked if she could have a copy of the lesson plans for the Cultural Expressions class. Nakia made note of the request and assured her that a copy would be forthcoming.

Dr. Baynard asked if the plan for installation of the windows where they are creating a safe space for students not to be in harms way, would some of the students be at home receiving instruction.

Greg said yes that is correct. Their terminal day prior to winter break is Friday December 22nd and the prediction is to make Wednesday the 20th, Thursday the 21st and Friday the 22nd asynchronous instructional which then expands the window for the install to occur out to 14 days, realistically 12 if they exclude Christmas Day and New Year's Day. They will circle back with the contractors tomorrow to determine if the install can be done in that 12-day window. Board member Larry asked if they would be replacing all of the windows in the building or just certain windows. Greg said that they would be replacing all of the windows except one. Board member Larry said that it might be wise to install in tiers because he doesn't see any way that the install can be done in two weeks. Board member Wade said that tomorrow's meeting will be critical with the feedback that they receive from the contractors and their ability and possible other alternatives. At this point those are their best plans. Board member Wade asked how does the 628-enrollment compare to their previous startups.

Greg said that he didn't have the number directly in front of him but he could certainly get that number. He asked to give him 24 hours so that they could go back into infinite campus and their student information system to see where they landed last year. Greg turned the meeting over to Nakia for her report on Instruction.

Instruction, Nakia Brown

Nakia reported that school opening went really smoothly and what helped was their updated lesson planning workshops that were held over a two-week period. They also took the opportunity to get their entire curriculum distributed well before the first day of school. She said that this evening she would present a proposed update to their school wide grading policy and in the area of assessment they will begin their writing assessments in grades three through eight. She reported that all of their testing grades would be completing a baseline writing assessment for the upcoming school year. She said that this would be all that she had for instruction and would speak to members later about their proposed changes to the updated grading policy. Nakia concluded her report and Greg opened the floor for any questions or comments on the Instructional Program.

Board member Wade if there was any update on the testing. Nakia replied that per the state the information would be released on September 18th. She said that the student reports are what they are called and they will be distributed or released to them on September 18th.

Dr. Baynard said that many teachers find their classrooms sort of under resourced and that there's a lot of reaching out to parents and asking them to provide some of the basic things, how does Harambee fair with regard to teachers having what they need for their classrooms to run efficiently and cleanly. Nakia replied that simple things like tissue and hand sanitizer, those types of things they have in the building and their parents send it in as well so their supply is well stocked. She said that they are fortunate in that way and they say Asante to everybody who makes that happen. Michelle also indicated that there's a stipend under their title I program that provides funds for those types of supplies. Greg turned the meeting over to David for his report on Operations.

Operations, David Rosario

David indicated that he would address truancy later but wanted to begin with their summer refresh projects.

Summer Refresh Projects

David reported that they had a robust summer refresh inside of the building this year headlining that was the company that they had to come in and give them brand new bathroom stalls across the spectrum of the school. He said that they look absolutely beautiful and they came in on time and on budget so he

commended Greg on his leadership and signing off so that they could get it done. He said that they also had a trip hazard in front of the school and they were able to get that concrete repair done as well.

Food Service

David also reported that they received a grant that allowed them to purchase large freezer. They now have a brand new state-of-the-art freezer to help with food services.

Professional Development

David reported that he was charged with putting together a comprehensive professional development plan on addressing and eliminating their truancy. He said that it was very comprehensive and intervention focused. They have instituted their robo calls and the parent portal will be up and running and fully operational.

They also have a new partner called “project go” which is a project rooted in the DA's office. The DA's office has created an offshoot inside of their office which is more of a nonprofit based arm as an intervention to support schools with students who may get a little outside of the norm with absenteeism. David reported that they have a memorandum of understanding with them that they will be a support to Harambee as a liaison to help get some parents and students on board should they get to that point. They also have an administrative intervention in place should they reach a certain number. In addition, David said that they have a marketing plan that will be on their school Dojo and they have encouraged classroom teachers and everyone that this is what they are pushing. The headliner is attendance, getting to school on time and coming to school every day is the messaging for this year and he said that they have been consistent with this message from day one. David concluded his report and opened the floor for any questions regarding truancy.

Board member Wade commented that he is glad to hear that parents are engaged in their truancy efforts. He said that this is one thing that he believes that they need 100% parental participation. He said that this was one of the things that they were dinged on in the ACE report and they suffered some other punitive action because of absenteeism. He said that this was one of the things that was very difficult to hold them accountable for, so he is glad that there's some effort towards getting their stakeholders engaged to help make this a positive for the school year.

Dr. Baynard commented that it seems that from all of the Charter Schools it seems that enrolling in an African centered school like Harambee is an opportunity that you don't just go through the work of getting your kids into Harambee and then fail to require that they show up. Maybe there is a pro community way that they can message to the parents that this is literally a part of

being a part of this community.

David replied and indicated that they have incorporated this into their back to school night and are taking a specific look into it to partner with their parents. He said that they have engaged parents in many ways; like in the morning they have adjusted their deployment plans upon arrival and dismissal to have more of the staff to build some of those relational bridges with the parents as they come to drop off and pick up students. He said that they have a robust effort going forward that is in alignment with their core values of greatness. They are not going to accept it any other way. He said that they have a strong PBIS program that is incentive based for their perfect attendance students and scholars. They remain very comprehensive in their approach.

Board member Renee asked if there are parent meetings that will take place this year. David said yes he would be meeting with staff member Tara to make sure that that message is on all of their layers throughout the school.

Board member Renee asked if the meetings will be organized parent meetings or if they will only meet when there is a need to pull parents together. Greg answered the question and said that the meetings will be organized monthly title I parent meetings along with their kickoff for back to school night. He said that those meetings would be routine through out the 2023-2024 school year.

Board member Wade asked if Charis is still on the Board. Dr. Baynard said yes she is still on the Board but was unable to make the meeting tonight. Board member Wade told members that they might want to look at filling the parents side of the board to have some direct input and parents who show an interest and more involvement with the internal workings of the school. It would be good to have that voice as someone who has their finger on the pulse of the school and what's happening from a parental side. Dr. Baynard agreed and said that is one of the things that is an absolute goal for this year.

Greg turned the meeting over to Deleah for her report on Specialized Services.

Specialized Services, Deleah Archer

Compliance, BSE Audit Training Completed

Deleah reported that they completed their training for the Bureau of Special Education audit. They completed the required training for the audit over their summer institute. She said that they had to do confidential training, confidentiality training, surrogate parent training, differentiation instruction training and working with students with autism training. All of those were conducted over this summer's institute over the two-week period that began on August 14th through August 21st.

Get On The Bus Tour 2023–Goes South

Deleah reported that they will have their HBCU tour and this is the southern edition. She indicated that she has had meetings with Board member Jan and they spoke about two things that happened last year. She said that they did not attend Cheney and she wanted to be sure that everyone knew that they approached Cheney and Lincoln as their first two stops. Cheyney would not give them permission to attend because they are a middle school, so that is the reason that they did not attend, otherwise it was on their docket to go to Cheney and Lincoln on the first day.

Deleah told members that this year they are going south and the trip is scheduled for Monday October 23rd through Sunday October 29th. This is the vision of their illustrious Greg Shannon and they are making it bigger and better. She said that they have been listening to the parents and listening to their students and want to embrace their culture and expand their horizons. They will depart from Philadelphia to Atlanta GA and once they arrive in Atlanta; they will charter a bus and travel through Georgia, Florida and Louisiana. The institutions that they intend to visit while in the south will be Spelman, Morehouse, Clark Atlanta, Florida A&M, Bethune, Dillard and Xavier. She said that a few of the colleges have already confirmed. Spelman and Dillard have confirmed and they are now waiting for the other colleges to confirm. They are in the process of planning how long they will be in each state and the culmination of the trip will end on Saturday October 28th, where they will attend the homecoming game at Morehouse and return home on Sunday. Deleah concluded her HBCU presentation and opened the floor for questions. Board member Larry asked how many students are they considering for the tour. Deleah replied that there are 22 students.

Board member Jan asked what would be the overall cost of the trip. Deleah replied that she does not have finite numbers just yet, but they have estimated that it is about \$40,000.

She also said that students will participate in a fundraising project to raise money. They will host a double good popcorn fundraiser. She said that it was a really great opportunity for students and they raised a lot of money last year so every student that is selected to go on this year's tour is required to sell double good popcorn to raise money. They are asking students to sell at least \$1,000 of popcorn, which will give them about \$500 from that fundraising to go towards the trip. There are already five students who sold popcorn last year and those five students will be going on the trip this year.

Dr. Baynard said that he had a comment that might not be actionable this year. He said that the trip itself is a super great idea and that there's a broad desire to go on these types of tours as it directly affects students ability to project themselves into the future and see themselves as college students. He said that he thinks that there will be broad support and so the question is, have we considered

expanding the invitation to not just include our own Harambee students but other kids who might benefit from that kind of experience. Greg answered the question and indicated that the answer would be unequivocally no. He said that based on the behavior of young people today, they are selective about the young people from Harambee that they take. They want to ensure that they give their young children a great experience in a manner that only brings pride and greatness to the institution and organization. They certainly wouldn't want to engage with anyone that would not subscribe to or embrace their first core value of greatness.

Dr. Baynard responded that he could make a really strong argument as to how Harambee was formed with the idea of reaching out to its community and affecting it in a strong way based on those values and not necessarily just those who have the privilege of being a part of their school. He said that he would leave it there for now. Deleah asked if there were any further questions before she moved on with her report.

K-12 School Fair: October 13-14

Deleah reported that the School District of Philadelphia has expanded their fair to include grades K through eight in the spring. Harambee was asked if they wanted to participate and then received the list of individual schools that will be participating. It will be held at the Convention Center on October 13th and 14th. Deleah said that it would be a full day of activities for them to publicize and engage families to learn more about Harambee, and for their students to learn more about the high schools as they prepare to get ready to submit their high school applications.

National Jr. Honor Society 23-24

Deleah reported that they are reviving the National Jr. Honor Society. She said that Nakia and Goldie had done a fantastic job with it in the past and then COVID happened so it kind of fell to the side, but now they are ready to provide it again.

8th Grade–Parent Meeting

Deleah reported that they plan to have a parent meeting on their back to school night for eighth grade parents. She said that there is a lot of information that they need to send and make sure that the families know about, so they will have a meeting with parents on back to school night, which is on September 14th. The parents will be asked to come in earlier on back to school night so that they can participate and have an opportunity to discuss the activities, dues, opportunities and high school applications. These are all of the things that 8th grade parents need to know because it will be a heavy year for many parents as their children get ready to transition to the next phase which will be high school. They will have that meeting on September 14th, an hour before the back to school night event takes place.

Budget and Finance, Michelle Thornton

Michelle reminded members that there was a previous presentation by Piper|Sandler. She said that Jay Hromanca and his team did a presentation and subsequent to the presentation the Finance Committee met with their current banker PNC. She said that they want to move forward at a minimum with the school going through the bond rating procedures. PNC and Piper|Sandler recommended that they go through that process to make themselves more attractive for refinancing. She said that they are in a stronger position financially and their financial statements look stronger, which gives them a better chance of having a good rating out of the process. She said that they will be providing additional information about their process, but that is one of the things that they know they want to move forward with.

Human Resources

Michelle reported that they have a vacancy for a Special Education teacher and if anyone has any recommendations and/or candidates that might be of interest please forward them, as they are struggling a little with filling that position.

Michelle said that the other announcement is that they have appointed Jocelyn Johnson as their Director of the After School Program. She added that those of you, who know Jocelyn, know that she has been with Harambee for the past two years and has served as a special education teacher, and this year she is their special education coach and coordinator. Michelle said that Jocelyn is very organized, professional and has a background in mass communications. She also has a good rapport across the organization. They feel that she is an outstanding candidate to transition and take them forward with the After School Program.

Michelle told members that they are very busy closing the records from last year. She said that there is a lot of reporting that has to be done and probably the most that she has seen in years. She said that they have reporting from the federal level, charter school office and state level. Each department across the board is really juggling and making sure that they meet their deadlines and making sure that they get through this reporting season.

Michelle said that they are also in their audit season as well, so they are closing the records and uploading to the Jane Miller portal. Next week they start some of their fieldwork and the expectation is that they are targeting November for their final audit presentation. Michelle concluded her report and opened the floor for any questions. With no questions from the Board, Michelle turned the meeting back to Greg.

Greg thanked the Board and said that this evening they have a couple of items for the Boards consideration and vote. One is their Student Grading Policy in which Nakia would walk through a short presentation to give the Board background and context.

Secondly, for consideration is a policy change driven through the School District of Philadelphia by way of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania around student expression. He said that David would provide a brief presentation to provide context and for the Boards consideration for a vote. He turned the meeting over to Nakia for a presentation on their student grading policy.

Nakia informed members that she would present their current grading policy and the proposed amendments to the policy for the 2023- 2024 school year and beyond. She said that the primary purpose of them establishing a greater policy is to clearly articulate accurately, consistently and fairly the learning process and achievement to students and parents. She said that this is the way they normalize what it really looks like across their organization and the attempt to ensure that they have equitable and fair processes for all students involved.

Nakia shared a power point with members and reviewed proposed amendments to the current policy. They compared current and proposed changes along with a rationale for the changes. She pointed to two major changes 1) an increase in academic accountability and 2) to strengthen alignment between attendance and academic Success (See attached power point). She said that other changes include the percentages in the weight components (see charts). Nakia concluded her presentation and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Renee asked if there were any students that were retained. Nakia said yes, they have a retention policy that requires that a student must pass Math & ELA and either Science or Social studies in order to qualify for promotion. Board member Renee asked if there are currently any students that are being retained. Nakia said yes they had five (5) students that were retained last year. She said that they have a student success plan so that any student in jeopardy of failing will know at the second marking period which is half way through the school year. They call in the parent and have a family meeting (success plan meeting mid January) then they create a plan to set goals and identify what the teachers will do and what the student is required to do. They hold them accountable and they place a time frame on it (May 28th) so that the students still have half the year to catch up.

Board member Wade asked Nakia to explain what specifically is class work and projects. She said that class work is the work that is done inside the class like direct instruction and guided lessons, the things that the students are doing in school with the teacher and all of the things that are done inside the class with the teacher and projects are a culmination. Board member Wade also asked about the 50 versus 60 and if the student does a makeup test and passes does the whole 50 versus 60 go away. Nakia said yes, if you make up the test you get the grade that you earned.

Greg turned the floor to David for his presentation on the Student Expression

Policy.

Greg gave an overview of the Charter School Office Mandate from the Commonwealth and the School District of Philadelphia. He shared with members that they have mandated that all Charter Schools follow the recommendation relative to the policy and relative to student identification.

David took the floor and indicated that his presentation would be a truncated version of the Board member packet. Privacy, Records, Communication, Restrooms & Uniforms were highlights of the policy. He provided members with a brief overview of the Goals, Responsibilities and Purpose of the policies that were included in the Board packets.

Goals:

Our goal is to create a safe and inclusive educational environment for all students, regardless of student identity and expression.

Purpose:

Our policy aims to provide equal opportunities for students, irrespective of their gender identity and expression, fostering a discrimination-free learning environment.

Responsibility:

To ensure an inclusive environment, our Board authorizes the CEO or designated staff to develop regulations that safeguard the rights and integration of Gender Expansive and Transgender students. The policy aims to maximize social integration, minimize stigmatization, and provide equal access to all programs while maintaining safety.

Board member Wade asked if Harambee has unisex bathrooms. David responded that under their summer refresh and installation of new bathroom stalls they do have unisex bathrooms that were created this year.

David turned the meeting back to Greg. Greg told members that those are the two items that are on the agenda for the Boards consideration and vote this evening and turned the meeting back to the Chairman, Dr. Baynard. Dr. Baynard asked Board members if there were any old or new business items that needed to be discussed.

Old Business

Board member Larry said that he saw something in the Board packets that

indicated homework at least 4 days per week and asked if that is realistic. Nakia responded yes that is one of their expectations. Board member Larry then asked what if we don't meet that expectation, does that open us up to someone saying we didn't do what we said. Nakia replied to keep in mind that their students have four different classes so in one or all of those classes they'll receive homework.

New Business

None

Public Concerns

None

Action Items: vote

1 Approval of Updated Grading Policy

2) Approval of Student Expressions Policy

Dr. Baynard turned attention to the votes on the agenda and recommended that both policies be passed as they have been presented without any exceptions and/ or changes. He opened the floor for a vote on both policies.

Motion: Board member Joseph made a motion to accept both policies as written, seconded by Board member Larry, all were favor none were opposed. Passed Unanimously.

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

Motion: The Board made a motion to adjourn the public session; 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, September 27th 2023.

