

# HARAMBEE INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

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## Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday, February 28th, 2024 at 6:35 p.m.

### **Open Session**

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

Board Chairman Maurice Baynard called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

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

Maurice Baynard  
Larry Bell  
Jan Gillespie- Walton  
Donna Holmes Lockett  
Renee Whitby  
C. Wade Mosely  
Shawn Blue  
Charis Jackson

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

#### **Others Present:**

Gregory Shannon	CEO
Danielle Bryant	Executive Assistant to the CEO
David Rosario	Assistant Principal of School Operations
Nakia Brown	Assistant Principal of Instruction
Michelle Thornton	CFO
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 and approval of the January 31<sup>st</sup> Board Meeting Minutes**

Dr. Baynard asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the January 31<sup>st</sup> Board Meeting Minutes. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were two corrections noted and changed by the Board Liaison. Board member Wade made a motion seconded by Board member Renee 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.

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

Dr. Baynard turned the meeting over to Greg for the CEO report. Greg began by giving a tribute to Board member Joseph Foster. He told members that Harambee has posted tributes on all of their social media outlets and their website. He said that they spoke to the students in circle emphasizing that Board member Joe was a great man. He said that the school plans on having a tribute to honor him. They will solicit feedback from the Board and once plans are solidified they will share them with the Board.

## **CEO Report, Greg Shannon**

Greg began with reciting the Mission, Vision and Core Values of the organization.

Harambee Institute exists to offer our community an education with a focus on the origins, current status, and future of the African world.

Our mission is to educate students to succeed as global citizens with a clear awareness of “who I am, where I am from, where I am going, and how I get there.”

Our vision is a collective and informed African American community utilizing science and technology as a means of promoting education for self-reliance, locally and globally.

Our core values are:

Greatness: Pursuit of excellence in all we do

Accountability: Owning what we do and who we are

Innovation: Open to new ideas with a growth mindset

Integrity: Honesty, transparency, and unity in all we do

## **School District of Philadelphia’s Charter Renewal Status**

Greg told members that they are in year 3 of 5 of their Charter Renewal term. He told members that one of the exercises that the executive team plans to

undertake will be a snap shot of where they stand in terms of the ACE review and the Charter Renewal rubric. They have reached out to the Charter School office for their support through the process, but before they go into their evaluative year they would like to have a snapshot of where they currently stand and what their current score is. They will be updating the Board on where they stand relative to the rubric.

### **Budget, Allocation, and Staffing 2024-2025**

Greg reported that he and Michelle are scheduled to meet next week with their executive leaders around their departmental budgets. Those budgets will lead to allocations for hiring and staffing.

### **Leadership Retreat 2024-2025**

Greg reported that they are now in the planning process for their Leadership Retreat for the 2024-2025 school year. He has asked the Executive Leaders to review the organizational performance data and to meet to come up with a theme for the retreat. He said they will continue to focus on Instruction, but will focus on instructional support with an emphasis on the MTSS program. They are working diligently on the planning and have landed on tentative dates for the retreat. The dates are Wednesday July 17<sup>th</sup> - Saturday July 20<sup>th</sup>. He said that they would continue to update the Board of Directors as more details become available. Greg concluded his report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Donna asked if they are getting a Charter School rubric or if they already have one to review. Greg stated that they already have the rubric from their ACE report and the ACE preview that shows how they have performed throughout the year and how they are scored.

Board member Wade asked if the site visit that was scheduled for last month occurred. Greg said that it did not occur because the person scheduled for the visit from the Charter School Office became ill. They are planning to reschedule the visit with a tentative date of March 10<sup>th</sup>. Greg turned the meeting over to Nakia for her report on Instruction.

### **Instruction, Nakia Brown**

#### **Student Success Plans February 26-March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Nakia reported that they are currently in the process of their Student Success Plan meetings. This gives them the opportunity to address any student at the mid point of the year that the data shows with a D or an F in any major subject. They have identified those students and are holding academic meetings with the parents and the entire academic team for that grade level. They develop a plan for the student's success, which includes action items for the student, parent and teacher. The plan is implemented at the end of the second marking period through the third marking period and the beginning of the fourth marking period. The window for the plan begins February 26 through March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Harambee's Science Fair**

Nakia reported that they are very excited for the upcoming Science Fair. They have a March 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for those students that plan to participate in the George Washington Carver Science Fair. The students that are planning to register for the fair are currently experimenting, preparing and testing their projects.

### **Black History Door Decorating Contest**

Nakia reported that they had a very successful Black History Door Decorating Contest. Grades K through 8 have to construct a display of African Americans that made contributions to the country, society and the world. Nakia said that she would share some pictures of the decorated doors because they had wonderful exhibits. They also had a number of community partners and staff from Harambee to serve as judges. The students, teachers and staff receive prizes for 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

### **Assessment**

Nakia reported that they would be sitting for Benchmark III on March 11 through March 15<sup>th</sup>. Their goal is to have 26% of their students proficient in Mathematics and 48% proficient in ELA. Their goals have been met in all of the prior two benchmarks so they are hoping to do the same.

### **PSSA Training - PSTAT**

Nakia stated that they are gearing up for the PSSA's and they have had their first PSSA training that was on line, where all members of faculty and staff participated. The next opportunity for them to train will be at their parent meeting on March 13<sup>th</sup>. Nakia concluded her report and opened the floor for questions.

Dr. Baynard asked what did we learn from last year PSSA's to make it even better this year. Nakia responded that they make it better by doubling down on what they have already done and by continuing their efforts with individualized learning. She said that they also improve by sitting with each teacher and having a data conversation and identifying those students that need to reach proficiency. They have a plan for both sets of students whether they are below or advanced. They have also established small group instruction along with working with the parents.

Board member Renee asked for the dates of the Science Fair. Nakia said that because it is three fold there are a number of different dates. She said that presently, the students are working on their individual projects. The final Science Fair has been tentatively scheduled for the end of March. She said that as soon as they finalize all of the dates she would be sure to send it out to everyone.

Board member Jan asked if there is dialogue between the previous teacher from last school year to the current teacher this school year and is that a part of the plan. Nakia responded that the teachers have professional development

together and also have the opportunity in their cluster meetings to discuss certain students. She also encourages teachers to observe other teachers classrooms. Greg turned the meeting over to David for his report on Operations.

**Operations, David Rosario**  
**2024-2025 School Calendar**

David informed members that the academic School Calendar is presented for review and approval from the Board so that they can move forward with their academic planning for the year. He asked members if there were any questions regarding the calendar before he moved on to the next section of his report. Board member Renee asked if there is a separate calendar for cultural events. Greg responded and indicated that they publish two calendars, one that is the official calendar that is submitted to the School District of Philadelphia and one that is a supplemental calendar that includes all of their cultural celebrations. He explained that the calendar that they are discussing this evening is the official calendar and that the supplemental calendar will come out subsequent to the official school calendar.

Dr. Baynard asked if the supplemental calendar comes out subsequent to the official calendar, when could the Board expect to see the cultural calendar. Greg responded that they could expect to have it by next months meeting.

Dr. Baynard asked David to elaborate on Wellness Day and the intentions surrounding it. David responded that it is a supportive venue for staff that includes interactive wellness with other African centered schools and different types of in-services to support staff around spiritual connectivity, fitness and wellness.

**ICS Capital Improvement Projects (ERSA)**

David said that they are nearing the end of the project. He said that they have a couple of change orders that have already been approved, but they are still waiting for parts. He said that ICS still has a couple of punch list items left, but they need the temperature outside to be above 55 degrees in order to have proper data to balance out the cooling in the school. David indicated that they plan to be done well before PSSA's and they will continue to have scheduled meetings with all of the parties involved to be sure that they are moving things along. David concluded his report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Wade suggested that the project be called the ERSA project instead of the ICS project. He also asked what kind of feedback they are receiving from the staff. David said that it appears that the system is working and there seems to be a balanced effect right now. Everything is working, as it should be.

Board member Wade also inquired about how the plan is working with getting parents engaged in the reduction in absenteeism. David responded that they

have been very strong and they are tracking well in relation to District Schools that they are going to be measured against along with other Charter Schools that they will be measured against. He said that they are exceeding their marks for truancy of students that are 90% or below.

Dr. Baynard asked David to give the percentage of students at Harambee with serious truancy and to tell them if that number is getting better or worse. David said that they are at 44%, which is in the center of the schools that they are measured against. Dr. Baynard asked if he thinks that their plan is working. David said that comparatively they are at least 3-5 points better than they were last year at this time.

Board member Wade asked how they are doing with regard to COVID and is it still impacting their attendance. David said that this year they have not had any mass or alarming numbers of COVID, they have only had a few cases so far. David turned the meeting back to Greg for the report on Specialized Services. Greg announced that he would be presenting Specialized Services on behalf of Dr. Archer.

### **Specialized Services, Deleah Archer**

#### **BSE Audit–Wrap-Up March 2024**

Greg reported that the audit from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education was completed this week with flying colors and with no findings. He said that Dr. Archer and her team did very well and the wrap up for the actual report is scheduled for March 2024. The auditors have been on the ground twice in the past 60 days.

#### **SBAP- New System Maxcapture ESY 2024**

Greg reported that their new school-based program to recapture money is working. Greg said that they received communication from the State, with respect to information that needs to be submitted but the process is moving along.

They have also received information with respect to Harambee's Extended School Year Summer Program. The information for Specialized Services Students has come out and will be moved on to parents offering them the Extended School Year Program. The program will occur concurrently with the existing summer program.

#### **K.T Compensatory Education Agreement**

Greg stated that the proposal in the board's packet is a Compensatory Education Agreement prepared for student KT and will be brought forward for the Boards review and a vote this evening.

#### **National Junior Honor Society**

Greg reported that Harambee will be receiving a Chapter in the National Junior Honor Society. They have 13 students who applied that represent their best and brightest in grades 6,7, and 8<sup>th</sup>. He said that out of the 13 applications, 10 were accepted. They have scheduled the National Junior Honor Society Induction ceremony for March 2024. They will send out invitations to all Board members and would be delighted if everyone could attend.

### **Career Pathways Program June 2024**

Greg reported that their Career Pathways Program is scheduled for June 2024. He said that for the past two years Dr. Archer and their school counselors have been instrumental in conducting an amazing Career Pathways Program. He shared that Dr. Archer and her team are currently working diligently on that program. Greg concluded his report and opened the floor to questions. There were no questions and Greg turned the meeting to Michelle for her report on Finance.

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

Michelle reported she would only have a few points to share this evening.

#### **990 tax return**

Michelle reported that they have received a draft copy of their 990 tax return from the audit firm. She said that she shared it with the Finance Committee and they are going to take the time to review it and will most likely have a presentation at the next Board meeting. It is currently on extension until May, which will allow some time to review it and get it approved by the finance committee and then present it to the full Board next month.

#### **Statement of Financial Interest**

Michelle thanked Board members for responding to their request for updated information. She said that they are finalizing the forms and will be sending them out to members through docu-sign within the next week. She informed members that they are well ahead of the May deadline for the Charter School Office.

Michelle reported that they are on schedule for their budget-planning meeting. They will meet with executive leaders next week to finalize the preparation of the budgets and then move toward presenting them to the finance committee. After presenting it to the committee they will provide a Board presentation with hopes of having a vote on it in the May meeting.

#### **21<sup>st</sup> Century monitoring**

Michelle reported that they are scheduled for their 21<sup>st</sup> century monitoring meeting next week. The team has finalized uploading all of the information that was requested. They have two half days next week where there will be a representative on site meeting with the executive leaders, staff, students and parents. The representative will also be reviewing their activities.

### **Refunding Revenue Bonds**

Michelle indicated that she would like to keep the conversation on the table regarding refunding their revenue bonds. She said that she expects that their finance team will continue to have that conversation with the hopes of a planning conversation with the full Board about their desire to move forward with the refunding. This would lower their interest rate and provide the possibility of adding additional projects into a bundle. She said that they would like to have some direction over the next few months.

Michelle addressed a previous question that Dr. Baynard asked in an earlier meeting with regard to how they could work better with their processes, purchasing request and streamlining those processes. She said that they have been researching an affordable electronic approval system. The business office has been working on this and she expects to have this implemented over the next couple of months.

### **ESSER Funds**

Michelle reported that they are in their final phases of spending with the ESSER funds. They will exhaust in September of 2025 and what they have left is the funding related to their construction project. They will be closing out those funding's and that report. She said that there are also a number of audits that they are in the process of completing and working on as the requests come in. The budget process will entail the adjustments that they need to prepare for with those funds exhausting. Michelle completed her report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Wade asked if ICS is assisting with the compliance component of the Capital Improvement Funds. Michelle responded that she has not seen the necessity of them being involved but, she and Jen have been meeting every couple of weeks to make sure that Michelle is familiar with the adjustments on the budget summary. Board member Wade also asked if the 990 was recently sent to him and Board member Larry. Michelle responded that it was sent to both Board members on the same day that they discussed it, just a couple of days ago.

Dr. Baynard suggested that with regard to the bond refinancing they should put together a well thought out plan that could be informed by outside advisors to incorporate additional projects. He said that this would allow them to understand what their options are. He also said that he would like to see it all laid out and how it would all work together. Michelle agreed that this is something that they should incorporate in the process since there are a number of projects that they have been discussing including in their current building which still needs some work. She said that they should make it comprehensive and she welcomes a team coming together for that process. Michelle turned the meeting back to Greg for final comments. He asked the Board to turn their attention to the items in their Board packets for consideration and a vote.



Dr. Baynard acknowledged that there were no visitors or public concerns.

Dr. Bayard announced that the Board would take this time to give their reflections on our brother and Board member Joseph T. Foster Jr.

Board members shared their individual memories and expressions of gratitude and love for Joe Foster. They spoke of how blessed they were to have known him and how many individuals he mentored and encouraged over the many years that he served as an educator. They spoke highly of his service and commitment to education and the impact that he had on all of their lives and how he enriched the lives of so many in the community. Board members all agreed that Joseph Foster would truly be missed by all that crossed his path. Dr. Baynard turned attention to the votes on the agenda and recommended that both policies be passed as they have been presented unless there were questions about either of them. Greg explained the Compensatory Education Agreement and pointed out that all of the information was included in the Board packets.

**Action Items vote:**

- 1) Vote on K.T (Compensatory Education Agreement)
- 2) Vote to approve the 2024-2025 School Calendar

**Motion:** Board member Wade made a motion that both items be approved as presented, all were in favor none were opposed. Passed Unanimously.

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

**Old Business:**

None

**New Business:**

None

**Public Concerns:**

There were no public concerns

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

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

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Submitted by Jenita Lunsford, Board Liaison

