

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

---

## Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday March 26<sup>th</sup> 2025

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:32 p.m.

### **Open Session**

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

Board member Jan Gillespie- Walton called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

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

Jan Gillespie-Walton  
Renee Whitby  
C. Wade Mosely  
Shawn Blue  
Larry Bell

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

Maurice Baynard  
Donna Holmes Lockett  
Charis Jackson  
Heloise Jettison

#### **Others Present:**

Gregory Shannon	CEO
Danielle Bryant	Compliance Officer
Nakia Brown	Chief Academic Officer
David Rosario	Chief of Operations and Administration
Deleah Archer	Chief of Student Support & Innovation
Michelle Thornton	CFO
Jenita Lunsford	Board Liaison

#### **Libation** (Board member Renee Whitby)

Libation was lead by Board member and cultural leader Renee Whitby

#### **Called to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

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

None

## **Roll Call**

Board member Jan Gillespie-Walton 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 February 26<sup>th</sup> 2025 Board Meeting Minutes**

Board member Jan asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the Board Meeting Minutes from the February 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. She opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were no corrections or additions. 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:** 5      AYE: 0      Nays: 0      Abstentions: 0      Absent: 4

Board member Jan turned the meeting over to Greg for the CEO report. 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

## **CEO Report, Greg Shannon**

Greg reported that the Harambee Heat Boys basket ball team won the city-wide Middle School basket ball championship for the second consecutive year. He also highlighted the achievements of former athletes gaining recognition in their respective sports. One of Harambee's former students leads the Imhotep state championship basketball team. Another former Harambee athlete is rated the number one football player in the entire commonwealth of PA. Greg concluded

and announced that Michelle would present her report first this evening due to another obligation.

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

#### **990 Preparation**

Michelle reported that she wanted to share an update on where they are with filing the 990 form. She said that they received a draft of the 990 form from the Audit firm and she shared with the Finance Committee. They will be reviewing the draft and sharing it with the Board in anticipation of presenting it at the next Board meeting for a vote.

#### **Budget Process**

Michelle reported that they are in the process of preparing their 2025-2026 budget. They have already met with the executive leaders and they are putting together the financials for the budget.

#### **Overview of possible changes from the White House**

She indicated that because of all of the changes coming from the White House the Finance Committee thought that it would be good to share some of the financial impacts that could possibly affect non-profit organizations and the impact that it may have on Harambee. She shared the Schedule of Federal Awards and the cash flow that it represents throughout the year. She reviewed each grant and explained them in detail also distinguishing which funds are Federal, State and the allocation of funds from the Dept. of Agriculture for Food Services. Michelle said that they have not heard what the per pupil rate will be and they are hoping for news from the state about the rates within the next 30 days.

#### **Health Insurance Coverage**

Michelle reported that there is an ongoing contract impasse between Cigna and Jefferson Healthcare Network, which affects staff members relying on Cigna for health insurance. Some staff could pay out of network potentially leading to higher out-of-network costs. She said the other option is to seek other doctors in other facilities, but this could be inconvenient for staff. She said that they are currently working with their health insurance broker to come up with options that would support staff. Michelle concluded and opened the floor for questions.

Board member Wade highlighted the fact that federal funding makes up about 18 to 20% of the organization's 10 million dollar budget and that any changes in federal policy could significantly affect their financial situation. He said that he just wants the Board to be aware that there could be a nearly 20% impact to their fiscal status. Greg responded that in his research the impact is running about 18-22% across the country. Michelle turned the meeting back to Greg and he asked Danielle to share her screen.

#### **Mid-Year Appraisals**

Greg reported that they are concluding mid-year appraisals and all executive leaders are meeting with their individual staff to review work performance through the mid-year. He said that it is their intention to be fully completed by the end of this week.

### **Organizational Planning and Development 2025-2026**

Greg reported that he anticipates that in the next 30 days they will receive an invitation to the School District of Philadelphia inviting them to a meeting to begin the Charter Renewal Process. He said included in the Board packets is a contract for Lauren Iannuccilli, Education Consultant to lead Harambee through a smooth and successful renewal. He said that this would include development of a high-quality renewal application. Also, the amendment application and facilitation of a purposeful leadership retreat, identification of meaningful mission elements, and preparation for the renewal document review. He said that this is his recommendation because of her expertise in the Charter Renewal Process, which will begin April and run through the 2025-2026 school year. He also said that everyone should have received her resume in their inbox which provides her depth of experience relative to Charter Renewal.

### **ICS Closeout**

Greg reported that they are in the process of their ICS closeout and they are currently working through that process.

### **Fundraising and Development**

Greg said that they are continuing to raise funds for the National Junior Honor Society and the HBCU trip. He also announced that they have a new Ruby Bridges class with 16 new middle school students who will be inducted tomorrow evening at 6:30 p.m. He invited everyone to come out and participate in the ceremony. He said that they also continue to raise funds for the HBCU trip which will take place in the fall of 2025. They anxiously await and anticipate the support of everyone. Greg concluded his report and turned the meeting over to Nakia for report on Instruction.

### **Instruction, Nakia Brown**

Nakia Brown outlined the professional development efforts at Harambee CS, including a recent training on classroom management led by Bob Felton for paraprofessionals and specialist teachers. She also mentioned a presentation from curriculum partners on data-driven instruction, which received positive feedback from teachers. Additionally, Nakia provided an update on PSSA training for staff and parents, emphasizing the importance of analyzing benchmark data to identify areas needing support.

Nakia reported that over the past 30 days their focus has been around preparing for the PSSA, monitoring student assessment, creating action plans to change course and preparing for the upcoming assessments.

### **Black History door decorating contest**

Nakia reported that they held their annual Black History door decorating contest sponsored by the Office of Curriculum and Instruction. They partnered with their community partners who served as judges. The students and teachers all participated and performed in the festivities.

#### **Peco National Theatre (STEM)**

Nakia reported that they celebrated 275 students who made honor roll. As part of the celebration, they had a performance by Peco's National Theatre. They partnered with PECO who brought a full production celebrating their STEM practices.

#### **Professional Development: Classroom Management**

Nakia reported that as they prepare for some their initiatives, they look for specific trends to use for their professional development plan. She said that while they do have a professional development plan already in place, they use information from their walkthrough process to support their professional development plan. They are focusing on para professionals which recently included a training on classroom management led by Bob Felton for paraprofessionals and specialist teachers.

Nakia also mentioned a presentation from their IREADY curriculum partners focused on data-driven instruction and classroom management training for staff. She said that the training received positive feedback from teachers.

#### **Assessment**

##### **PSSA Training for parents**

Nakia provided an update on PSSA training for staff and parents and reported that this Friday they will be training staff emphasizing the importance of analyzing benchmark data to identify areas needing support. Nakia concluded her report on Instruction and opened the floor for questions. Board member Jan thanked Nakia for her hard work and enthusiasm. Greg turned the meeting over to David for his report on Operations.

#### **Operations, David Rosario**

##### **Summer Refresh Planning**

David reported that they are planning their summer refresh projects that usually include cleaning and waxing the building. He said that he and the facilities staff will meet with Greg to develop a plan on enhancing Harambee throughout the summer as they move all of the classrooms.

#### **Technology**

David spoke of the need to improve technology and indicated that Harambee will have a new and increased technology experience next year, especially in cybersecurity and equipment. He indicated that the fire alarm system has reached its maturity and is due for replacement.

#### **Food Service Contract Finalized**

David reported that they have a new finalized food service contract that has been signed with the same provider. They have partnered with them to increase the nutritional value, serving sizes and meal quality for the program. David concluded his report and opened the floor for questions. Greg commented on the importance of the food service program at Harambee. He said that he didn't want to lose sight of their food service partnership and its importance. He emphasized the impact that it has on students, pointing out that many students depend on it for their only meal.

He said that Harambee is a universal feed school which means that every student receives free breakfast and lunch. They have been noticing that many of the students have become food insufficient and the two meals that they receive at Harambee for many of them are the only meals that they receive daily. He spoke about an incident that he had recently witnessed with a student who asked for their meal to be packaged to take home for Ramadan, illustrating the food insecurity among some families.

Board member Wade added that the potential changes in D.C. could severely impact the food service program. Board member Jan suggested that the Board could set up a food pantry if it would help. Greg stated that it would be amazing if they could set up a food pantry and take donations.

#### **Specialized Services, Greg for Dr. Archer**

Greg informed members that he would provide the Specialized Services report on behalf of Dr. Archer.

#### **McKinney Vento Audit due 25-26 SY**

Greg reported that the Specialized Services department is preparing for their audit in May through July 2025.

#### **Extended School Year**

Greg reported that the Extended School Year program is set for this summer and will begin on June 23<sup>rd</sup> and run through July 17<sup>th</sup>. They are in the process of facilitating the ESY NOREPs change of placements for those students to participate in ESY.

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

Greg reported that 20 students qualified for the National Junior Honor Society and 16 of the 20 have made it through the screening process. He also reported that the Ruby Bridges Induction Ceremony will be take place tomorrow Thursday, March 27, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

#### **PASA Testing State Testing Window**

Greg reported that the PASA assessment testing window for Special Education will begin on March 10<sup>th</sup> 2025 and will conclude May 2, 2025. Harambees testing

window for students with IEP and disability exceptionality is slated to begin on April 1<sup>st</sup> and run through May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025.

### **Career Pathways**

Greg reported that the Career Pathways event is scheduled for May 30, 2025. He said that anyone who is interested in participating can do so on site, via ZOOM or by a prerecorded video. He encouraged participation from all career paths. Greg concluded the report for Specialized Services and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Renee commented that she wanted to give praise and recognition to the leaders at Harambee. She said that she is very proud to see the progress and the exposure that the students are receiving. She also asked how long do the decorated doors remain. Nakia responded that the doors will remain decorated throughout the month of February. Board member Renee also said that they need to create a community connection pantry and she would love to participate and donate food.

Board member Larry commented that periodically as a Board member they receive emails from employees and parents with complaints, but are never told how those complaints are resolved. He said that he would hope that everyone would do a better job of keeping the Board informed on the resolution of issues.

Greg responded that the Board has an HR committee and they are in constant communication with the HR committee relative to anything that the Board would receive from a staff member. Board member Jan mentioned that she is on the HR committee and there was to be a meeting scheduled with the person in question. She said that the person decided to reschedule the meeting so there has been nothing to report back to the Board. Once they receive a new date and there is something to report they will.

### **Old Business**

None

### **New Business**

None

### **Public Concerns**

None

### **Action Items:**

**Vote:** To accept the Consulting Proposal for Lauren Iannucci, Education Consultant HISTCS Charter Renewal Support

**Motion:** Board member Larry made a motion to approve the Proposal for Lauren Iannucci, Education Consultant for Charter Renewal Support, seconded by Board

member Wade. All were in favor; none were opposed and it was passed unanimously.

**Approval:** 5      AYE: 0      Nays: 0      Abstentions: 0      Absent: 4

**Motion to Adjourn:** Board member Wade made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Board member Renee. All were in favor; none were opposed and it was passed unanimously.

**Approval:** 5      AYE: 0      Nays: 0      Abstentions: 0      Absent: 4

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup> 2025**