

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

Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday May 28th 2025

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday, May 28th at 6:31p.m.

Open Session

Board Members Present:

Maurice Baynard
Jan Gillespie- Walton
Charis Jackson
C. Wade Mosely
Shawn Blue
Larry Bell

Board Members Absent:

Heloise Jettison
Renee Whitby
Donna Holmes Lockett

Others Present:

Gregory Shannon	CEO
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

Meeting Called to Order

Board Chairman Maurice Baynard called the meeting to order at 6:31p.m.

Libation

Libation was led by Nakia Brown, Chief Academic Officer

Introduction of Visitors and Others Present

Lauren Iannuccilli was introduced for the purpose of helping to support Harambee with Charter Renewal.

Roll Call

Board Chair Maurice Baynard asked 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 April 30th 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

Board Chair Maurice asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the Board Meeting Minutes from the April 30th meeting. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were no corrections and/or additions. Board member Wade made a motion seconded by Board member Larry 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: 6 AYES: 0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Board Chair Maurice 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

End of Year Organization

Greg reported that final appraisals are being submitted and by the close of business next week all executive leaders will have met with their staff and shared their input relative to their final appraisals. He said that they are also in the process of closing out and closing down the school and preparing for the upcoming school year. They have also begun the process of contract discussions and have been meeting with staff who will be offered contracts for the 2025-2026 school year along with those who will not be offered new contracts.

Summer Enrichment Program

Greg reported that they are currently working on a Summer Enrichment Program for rising 3rd and 7th graders.

Charter Renewal Update

Greg reported that they have officially begun the Charter Renewal process. He said that they are in the process with the next cohort in the upcoming school year beginning in July. They will begin the application and review process and are delighted to have Lauren Iannuccilli who has extensive experience working with Charter Schools and will be helping to lead Harambee in the process.

Greg introduced Lauren and she began her presentation with slides that provided Renewal Key Steps and Timelines with an indication that the process would run through next June. She said that most of the work would begin this summer into next fall. The fall visits will run through this November and December of the upcoming school year. In the spring they will give the school a draft renewal report and present the renewal to the school board for a vote in addition to any amendment request. She reviewed key steps with dates and timelines for summer fall and early winter.

Lauren talked about the role that the Board would play in the renewal process. She stated that there would be a Board of Trustees meeting observation in the fall. The Charter School Office will confirm the date in advance and will provide the Board with an observation template. The template includes space to capture what happens during the meeting like meeting length, quorum, agenda topics and discussion notes as well as public comment if any.

In addition, Lauren mentioned that there will be a Board Stakeholder Interview as part of the fall site visit. She said they have requested that three Board members attend and the interview will be focused on the conversational components provided to the CSO for each mission element, 3 in total. Lauren concluded and opened the floor for questions.

Board member Larry asked Lauren if she is the sole person working with them or does she have a team. Lauren responded that it is just her.

Dr. Baynard suggested creating a shared drive to place all of the documents for board members to become familiar with in order to enhance familiarity with the renewal process. He said having them all in one place along with the narrative that they are building for the leadership team around their core mission would be good to review so that they can work on the same language.

Greg confirmed that a shared drive already exists and will be made accessible to the Board.

Board member Wade raised questions regarding a board resolution related to the Charter Renewal and stressed the need to highlight the school's achievements. Greg

responded that it is a straight forward document simply expressing interest in renewing their Charter. He said that later on they will have the opportunity to share the specifics of their performance.

Board member Wade asked Lauren if Harambee is her sole client going through renewal right now. She responded yes, she usually takes on only one school per year and gives them her full attention.

Instruction, Nakia Brown **Curriculum**

Nakia reported that her report would be brief as much of their work surrounds closing the school and preparing for the new upcoming school year. She said that they are in the midst of completing 2025-2026 curriculum orders and are in conversations with their curriculum partners.

Teacher Surveys for Curriculum products

Nakia reported that they have done surveys with the teachers to get their input about some of the materials that are working since they are the ones that utilize the products.

They have developed a curriculum committee for the new course Financial Literacy and the Black Wall Street for 7th and 8th grade students. She said that they have two dynamic instructional coaches working on creating scope and sequence and a pacing guide for the course. They want to ensure that the course is real world related, so they will visit banks so that students know what it is to have teen bank accounts. They are also working on a trip to the Stock Exchange so that students understand how to be good stewards of their finances.

Instruction

Rising Scholars Summer Program

Nakia reported that they are developing a new summer program called the Rising Scholars Program for rising 3rd and 7th graders. It is an ELA and Math enrichment program that is project based. In order to prepare students to go into the testing grades they will have a master teacher that will cover foundations to prepare students to sit in classes with master teachers. The program is very small and is designed for approximately 30 students with 15 in each grade. It will run in the summer along with the ESY program Monday through Thursday for full days.

Assessment

Nakia reported that they have successfully completed the PSSA testing window for the 2024-2025 school year, with a 100% completion rate in science and a 99.1% completion rate in ELA and Math. Nakia completed her report and opened the floor to questions. Board member Larry asked if students opt out of the PSSA, does it affect their chances of going to a top high school. Nakia said that she thinks that it does because the first thing that schools look for are the test scores, but it is a parent choice.

Dr. Baynard asked Nakia what have they done strategically to turn the numbers around only to have two PSSA opt outs. Nakia explained that technically it is only 1 opt out because the two opt outs are siblings which counts as one family. She said that they have created a culture around the seriousness of academics and they have removed the myth and anxiety around testing.

School Schedule

David reported that they are in the closeout phase and in preparation for school closing they are assessing the building needs.

Technology Inventory

David reported that they have begun collecting student equipment and performing updates for the end of the school year. He said that they will begin updating the laptops as needed and reconciling inventory. They will be assessing the building for wireless access points and implement as needed. David apologized for a short report and opened the floor to questions.

Dr. Baynard asked David if he has come up with a strategy to address the really tough cases of repeat offenders for attendance. David indicated that the school has made significant progress in addressing attendance issues, particularly with challenging cases. He said that both the data and documentation show that as well.

Board member Larry commented that he is an advocate for using local and diverse businesses for facility refreshes and suggested that there be a report of what percentage of spending was used on diverse and local businesses. David responded that they are very cognizant of that in their search for service providers. He also stated that he liked the suggestion of a report defining the percentage and will find that metric and get it to the Board. Michelle indicated that she would help with putting that information together.

Board member Wade commented that that they have a default partner with Verizon that they should open dialog with regarding some of their dead zone issues with WIFI.

Greg commented that it is important that they have an orderly closeout of the school year, ensuring that teachers are prepared for the next academic year with clear assignments and schedules. He noted that all schools across the commonwealth will be mandated to transition to a mandatory online PSSA assessment in spring of 2026. He said that it will require a robust Wi-Fi and updated student devices.

Dr. Baynard inquired about the one-to-one device ratio for students. Greg responded that schools may need to creatively manage device availability during testing.

Specialized Services, Deleah Archer

Career Pathways Event

Dr. Archer reported that they will have their annual K-8 Career Pathways Event this Friday. She encouraged everyone to follow their Instagram for event details.

Gifted Testing Complete

Dr. Archer reported that gifted testing has been completed for grades 3 to 6 with three students from Ms. Holiday's class scoring in the 93rd and 97th percentile, indicating potential eligibility for gifted services. She shared that she will have the final numbers in June.

HBCU Tour Application Completed: 40 applicants

Dr. Archer reported that they have approximately 40 applicants and those names have been submitted for final approval. She said that invitations will go out next week on June 1, 2025. A mandatory parent meeting is planned for June 5, 2025 to discuss requirements and fundraising for the upcoming trip that is scheduled for October 25th 2025. They will have a finalized schedule of colleges that they will visit this summer along with all of the details. Dr. Archer concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Business, Finance & HR, Michelle Thornton

Michelle reported that she would be sharing the 2025-2026 Operating Budget presentation. She said that she would share the Process, Overview, Assumptions and Budget details.

Michelle explained the various budget methods traditional, activities-based, and incremental budgeting methods. She indicated that their budget is comprised of the prior year budgets, fixed cost and inflationary measures. She said that there are other factors that are cost drivers such as student population, enrollment count and facilities cost. They begin in December discussing what to prepare for in the upcoming year and in January and February all executive leaders come together off site to discuss what the current needs are and begin to prepare the budget based on the conversations from those meetings. Michelle stated that they present the budget to the finance committee for review and they examine it closely and then present it to the Board to address any questions and prepare for a vote by the next meeting in June.

Michelle said that key areas of focus include classroom support, professional development and special education staffing. She said that in terms of operations another key focus is their systems and ensuring that they are ready for everything that centers around instruction. She said that Business and Finance really focuses on their compensation package that includes a proposed 3% increase in the cost of living. She said that the focus in Human Resources is around recruitment and retention. Michelle said that in terms of key assumptions that are included in their numbers, they have included a 1% decrease in the per pupil rate because they are still waiting on the state budget to know what the per pupil rate will be. She said that they are using a conservative number of 1% due to state funding uncertainties, but have heard rumors that the rate might be significantly higher. Michelle said that another key assumption is an 8% increase in their health insurance. They are seeing some increases in the self-insured plan so they may have to switch out of it in order to avoid significant increases. She also mentioned that enrollment numbers have a significant impact on the budget as

well. Michelle discussed expenditures and indicated that for the 2026-2026 budget there were no major changes in terms of functioning. The budget presents a 1% decrease in the area of staffing and their contingency funding. They have a balanced budget of 11million dollars that they are proposing for the fiscal year 2025-2026. Michelle concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Wade asked about the slide that showed projected rates over the years and asked if it indicated a 1% increase vs. decrease. The rate that he was speaking of was reflected for the 2024-2025 school year not for the 2025-2026 year.

Dr. Baynard asked Michelle if she was looking for a vote on the budget at this meeting or if they should wait until next meeting since all members may not have had enough time to review it. Michelle responded that she was looking a vote at this meeting but she was delayed in getting the budget out ahead of time for members to review.

Dr. Baynard asked for a decision from Board members and said if they feel comfortable, he would entertain a motion. After input from board members, the board opted to vote tonight.

Action Items

- Approval of 2025-2026 General Budget (presented previously)
- Board Resolution for Charter Renewal

Motion: Board member Larry made a motion to approve the 2025-2026 Budget as presented, seconded by Board member Jan. All were in favor; none were opposed and it was passed unanimously.

Approval: 6 AYES: 0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Motion: Board member Wade made a motion to approve the Board Resolution for Charter Renewal as presented, seconded by Board member Jan. All were in favor; none were opposed and it was passed unanimously.

Approval: 6 AYES: 0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

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

Approval: 6 AYES: 0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 25th 2025