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

Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday September 25th 2025

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Thursday, September 25th 2025 at 6:31 p.m.

Open Session
Board Members Present:
Jan Gillespie- Walton
Larry Bell
Renee Whitby
Donna Holmes Lockett
Charis Jackson
C. Wade Mosely

Board Members Absent:
Heloise Jettison
Shawn Blue
Maurice Baynard

Others Present:

Gregory Shannon	CEO
Daniel 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

Meeting Called to Order
Board Member Wade called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Libation
Libation was led by Renee Whitby- Board member and cultural leader

Introduction of Visitors and Others Present
None

Roll Call
Board member Wade 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 August 27th 2025 Board Meeting Minutes
Board member Wade asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the Board Meeting Minutes from the August 27th 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 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: 6 AYES:0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 3

Board member Wade 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
Charter Renewal Update
Greg reported that they are embarking on a very exciting time with the Charter Renewal process. He provided an update on the things that they have done to date in preparation. They have been monitoring their renewal data over the course of eighteen months and have concluded that process.

Pre-Renewal Site Visit
Greg reported that they selected a date for the renewal site visit which will take place on October 28th 2025 in which the School District of Philadelphia will visit Harambee. They will visit the classrooms to look at programs, protocols and practices along with seeing the students in action. So far, they have forwarded file samples which include

enrollment files, human resource files that include background checks and clearances for their review. There was a sample of 20 files in each category including enrollment files. In addition, the renewal site visit application has been completed and submitted to the School District of Philadelphia requesting a new five-year renewal. Greg reported that it is also their intent for the organization to request an additional 300 seats in their amendment application and a change of location or an additional location in the next charter term.

Charter Renewal BOD Visit
Greg reported that the Charter School Office also wants to meet with members of the Board. Greg said that they have been in touch with Dr. Baynard and Board member Jan to discuss which members plan to participate in that process.

Epicenter Uploads
Greg reported all of their epicenter uploads and information have been submitted accurately and on time.

Comprehensive Plan Update
Greg reported that The PA department of Education has also charged them with submitting a comprehensive plan and the plan is nearly complete and due on September 30th which will be on time and on target to upload and submit to the PA Department of Education.

AACSC Awards Ceremony
Greg gave thanks to Board members Jan, Wade, Larry and Dr. Baynard for their participation in the African American Charter School Coalition annual fundraiser last evening. He said it was an amazing evening coming together with other black founded and black led charter organizations for an evening of celebration. Greg concluded his report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Larry asks if there is any financial analysis required for the 300 additional seats that are being requested.

Greg responded that with the request for additional seats there is an application process which includes engagement with their current Harambee community and families. He said that there is no financial requirement but if they are requesting a change of location or an additional location, then yes there will be financial analysis and obligations that will have to be reported to School District at the time of purchase or relocation.

Greg said that the School District would be looking for them to move in that direction during the course of the charter term. He said as part of the application process the parents would have to agree to a change of location or another location along with engaging the community stakeholders in the community that they intend to move to and those community stakeholders would have to agree that they want Harambee in their community.

Board member Donna asked if they have to give the ability to fill 300 seats and what is the guarantee that they can fill all of those seats.

Greg responded that it would come from their engagement with the community that they want to go into. They would pole their data relative to the desire for Harambee to be there and then be able to demonstrate to the school district that they have a market for those additional seats.

Board member Wade asked that assuming they approve Harambee for that number of seats and they do not get used, will it be held against the organization. Greg stated that it is not necessarily held against them as long as they are working towards the goal. Michele stated that based on her experience, if it is approved and you are not producing to that level, then they could pull it back or not approve for the full amount.

Board member Wade asked if the site visit will be an intense visit or just a walk through.

Greg responded that it is a full and intense visit and they are looking for their mission and vision elements. They are looking to evaluate them to determine their ability to effectively teach science and technology.

<u>Curriculum and Instruction, Nakia Brown</u>
Curriculum
Harambee Reading List
Nakia reported that they have already completed their baseline assessment and are in the process of analyzing the data and making decisions that will inform their instruction. One of the trends that she has been seeing is the student's ability to read and respond to complex texts and non-fiction texts. She said that Harambee has a robust book list and she asked Danielle to share her screen so that she could share the book list with members.

Nakia told members that the students are reading some of the classic literature that is grade appropriate. She reported that they are in the process of ordering and facilitating of reading in grades 3-5 where the students read a novel each marking period along with their regular curriculum. In grades six through eight the students read one book per month. Nakia said that the eighth-grade students are reading Copper Sun by Sharon Draper and they are planning a city-wide book talk with Sharon Draper and inviting her in with hopes to partner with the main branch library and their community library. She said that the students are writing letters to Sharon asking her great questions and answering questions with her in podcast style. Nakia said that the students are really excited about the project and trying to connect it back to the community and add a service component to it as well. She offered to send a copy of the book list to members and also invited members to come in especially when the students are reading one of their favorite novels. She told members to feel free to find out when one of their favorite novels is being discussed and to come in for the discussion.

Instruction
Quick visit Observations
Nakia reported that Quick visit Observations have already been completed 9-5-2025 through 9-9-2025 and they are now moving into unannounced observations and teachers are currently preparing for that. They are starting to create small groups working through their MTSS process to ensure that they are doing everything they can to prepare the students to have the best quality education that they deserve.

Nakia concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Larry inquired as to whether the students get hardcopies of the books that they are reading. Nakia responded that each student receives a hardcopy of the books.

<u>Operations, David Rosario</u>
First 20 School Days
David shared his screen with members and reported out on the first 20 days of school and the implementation of various processes school wide.

Chrome Book Distribution
David reported that they purchased Chromebook cards that went into each classroom individually for students. He noted that they have a dedicated Wi-Fi line for students that has been separated from staff especially since PSSA will be done on computers this year.

Fire drill
David reported that they conducted their first full active fire drill within the first 10 days to remain in compliance with the state.

Transportation
David reported that all of their transportation is underway and the buses are up and running. All of the students that take Septa have been issued their trans passes.

Food Services
David reported that they had a food service meeting to ensure that services are on track. The menus have been publicized so that students and parents know ahead time what is on the menu.

Compliance & Reporting
David reported that they just submitted a data-based report that is part of compliance. He said that every school has a 10 day drop where parents are shopping around for the schools that they want their children to attend. Some students that are enrolled will not attend as they make different choices over the summer. David noted that it is their job to go into the system after the 10th school day to determine which students have not attended and by law, they have a 10-day consecutive drop. He said that the drop has

been done so that wherever the student is their school can record them and so they don't appear on Harambees rolls which would skew their numbers.

Charter Renewal
David reported that they submitted 20 enrollment files on time and now they just have to wait for the feedback and further instructions.

David concluded his report and opened the floor for questions.

Board member Wade asked if they have a program for students that may not have wifi in their homes.

David responded that they do not have a partnership with anyone at this time, but they work with students on a case-by-case basis. He said that they have enough Chromebooks that they can offer but they would work with the student's situation on a case-by-case basis. Greg informed members that those programs for Wi-Fi assistance were facilitated through a partnership with the City of Philadelphia, but they ended in the 2022-2023 school year.

Specialized Services, Deleah Archer
Dr. Archer reported that her report would be very brief this evening and she began with the Mckinney Vento Audit.

Mckinney Vento Audit
Dr. Archer reported that they are preparing for a Mckinney Vento Audit that happens every few years. They had an audit 3 years ago and are now back in the audit process. She said that the way that they prepare for the audit is to have their social worker and Behavioral Specialist attend the Mckinney Vento 2025 Paving the Way for Educational Success conference. The conference will be held October 15th through October 16th in Pittsburgh Pa. She said that all of the arrangements have been made and he is ready to participate. Dr. Archer noted that one of the requirements for the audit is to have members participate in every conference annually. She said that during Summer Institute this year they put together their electronic Mc Kinney Vento folder and uploaded all of the required documents that the auditor will be looking for. She said that they intend to get the 100% stamp of approval as they did 3 years ago. This led Harambee to be asked to utilize their documents and their process as an example for the School District. She said that they intend to repeat the same excellence again.

Child Find Report
Dr. Archer reported that they are preparing for their Child Find report which is due to the state on December 1st. It is a snapshot of all of the students that qualify under the 13 IDEA categories.

Professional Development New York Life
Dr. Archer reported that tomorrow is their Professional Development Day and they are working with New York Life Insurance company. They will be coming to Harambee to

provide a grief sensitivity training. She said that once they complete the hour-long training along with questions and answers after the training, they will receive a $500.00 grant. She noted that they will utilize the grant to support students with uniforms as they have seen an increase in students that need the support. She also noted that this will provide a host of other resources, as they currently have many students that have encountered trauma, death and violence and are experiencing grief.

Dr. Archer concluded her repot and opened the floor to questions.

Business, Finance & HR, Michelle Thornton

Michelle reported that they are well underway with their annual audit. One of the support persons came in today to help pull together information for the annual audit so that they will remain on time and on target. They expect that there will be a presentation of the financials in November with hopes of a vote during the December meeting. She said that their office is well into the renewal process as well with gathering data and meeting internal and external expectations.

Federal Funding

Michelle reported that there is a hold on some of the Federal Funding that is coming through the state because of the state impasse that is happening right now. She said that some of the title I funds that they would have typically received in September, those dollars have been delayed and they have not heard any information on when they will be released. She said that the amount that is on hold is approximately $200,000-250,000.

Michelle noted that she would like to get the finance team rescheduled for a Finance Committee meeting within the next couple of weeks because there are some concerns with their banking relationships and she would like to propose some changes.

Human Resources

Michelle reported that they are fully staffed, but the two new staff that started in August did resign. They are also looking for a temporary Special Education teacher to cover for a teacher who is on a temporary leave of absence. They have been interviewing over the past week for that position which will begin immediately and will last for a couple of months.

Michelle also reported that they are finalizing records for their new hires and making sure that the onboarding documents are in place. They are also still interviewing and recruiting as their recruitment process is ongoing. They do have a few candidates that they have interviewed who are currently in the pipeline.   Michelle concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Wade asked if there have been any updates on Federal funding other than what was been previously mentioned. Michelle responded that there was a notice that came from the state that advised them to stay tuned for facts from them and to be prepared should there be changes to their After School program.

Old Business
None

New Business
None

Public Concerns
None

Action Items
None

Motion to Adjourn: Board member Larry made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Board member Charis. 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 October 29th 2025