

# Harambee Institute of Science and Technology Charter School

## Board of Trustees Public Meeting Minutes

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### Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday October 29<sup>th</sup> 2025

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday October 29<sup>th</sup> 2025 at 6:33 P.M. The meeting was held via zoom.

#### **Open Session**

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

Maurice Baynard President  
Jan Gillespie- Walton  
Larry Bell  
Donna Holmes Lockett  
Charis Jackson  
C. Wade Mosely

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

Shawn Blue  
Renee Whitby

##### **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 Chair called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

##### **Libation**

Libation was led by Nakia Brown Chief Academic Office

##### **Roll Call**

Board Chairman 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.

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

Eric Soble, Sr. Project Manager and Rebecca Dunn, Deputy Chief from the Charter School Office introduced themselves and joined the Board meeting.

### **Review and approval of the September 25<sup>th</sup> 2025 Board Meeting Minutes**

Board Chairman Maurice Baynard asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the Board Meeting Minutes from the September 25<sup>th</sup> meeting. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There was one correction noted by Board member Larry Bell and it was changed for the record. 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 Chairman Maurice Baynard 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 Harambee had their site visit from the Charter School Office on yesterday October 28<sup>th</sup> 2025. Eric Soble, Sr. Project Manager and two other staff members from the Charter School Office conducted observations in the classrooms reviewing Harambees mission elements. The observations centered around Stem, Culture and a Community focus. They interviewed teachers, parents and the students. They viewed and participated in the morning circle which gave them the opportunity to witness affirmations. Greg was proud to announce that the site visit went very well and they received a perfect score. In addition, the Charter School Office interviewed the Board of Directors and Dr. Baynard, Dr. Blue and Board member Jan were able to share salient points around their mission elements. He said that they are very proud of all of the work that the students, parents, faculty and staff along with the administrative staff and the Board have done.

## **Document Review**

Greg reported that there was a document review process in which their documents were reviewed in Human Resources, Business and Finance and Special Education. In addition, as part of the application process they have submitted an amendment to the application requesting an additional location. The information has been submitted and they are waiting for review of the amendment. Greg reiterated his appreciation for the partnership with the School District of Philadelphia and the Charter School Office through the five-year charter term that they have had. He said that it has been a true exercise in real partnership and what is best and just for Philadelphia children. Greg concluded his report and opened the floor to questions. Greg turned the Meeting over to Nakia Brown for her report on Instruction.

## **Curriculum and Instruction, Nakia Brown**

### **Curriculum**

Nakia reported that they are continuing to receive new orders and supplies as they renew their science curriculum each year. They have received new lab kits for all grades and the students are really excited to continue their work with science and science labs. She reported that they have repurposed their 3-D printers and now have 3-D operated printers in the middle and elementary school. She stated that the 6<sup>th</sup> grade science students are exploring ways to improve their environment specifically around pollution for which they are building prototypes to help improve their environment.

### **“Rent a Chickens” project**

Nakia reported that they are continuing something that they do every year and are doing again this year. It is called “Rent a Chickens” project which gives the students the opportunity to see the lifecycle through live chickens. The chickens come in an incubator and the students are able to witness the entire process.

### **Instruction**

#### **MTSS- Intervention Roll Out**

Nakia reported that they have collected their first set of baseline data and they are utilizing it to create their small groups response to intervention through their MTSS process targeting students needs. Instructional coaches are providing professional development on small group instruction and rolling it out as an invention with the students. They are looking at the data and action planning in response to the data and rolling out interventions.

### **Harambee Food Pantry**

Nakia reported that they continue to work on their food pantry and next month they will have a full detailed presentation on some of the families that they were able to help, especially given the current climate in our country right now. Nakia concluded her report and opened the floor to questions. Greg turned the meeting over to David Rosario for his report on Operations.

## **Operations, David Rosario**

## **Attendance**

David reported that attendance is the current focus going into November and they have worked intensely on growing their attendance over the past few years. He said that they are currently just below 95% and they are at 94.71 to be exact. He said that year over year they have climbed showing strong consistency across all grade levels.

## **Instructional Emphasis**

David reported that as the grading window opens, daily student presence remains critical for academic progress and readiness. He said that they are going to start by attacking their tardy list along with some of their technology. He said that one of the things that they have implemented this year is a scan gun which gets a more efficient and faster number to determine which students are tardy and allows them to implement interventions.

David reported that the front office and the climate team are helping to launch their Tardy Reduction Program and providing incentives to support punctuality and smooth morning arrivals. They are going to try to incentivize the program by rolling out a program called "beat the bell" morning countdowns to make it fun for students so that they will become more excited about getting to school on time. On the back end they will begin sending out notices to parents, weekly classroom leaderboards and will activate the robo calling system to alert parents when students are tardy. Following the alerts, they will continue monitoring punctuality data and share early outcomes. David stated that if more intervention is needed, they will tweak the process moving forward. David concluded his report and opened the floor to questions.

Dr. Baynard asked in what intervals do they monitor tardies, is it by percentage per day, per week or per month? What is the window that they look at?

David responded that they measure tardies every day. They receive a tardy report every day and get a hard number each day, which is a more instant measurement. They culminate that in the weekly meeting with the Dean of Students and his weekly meeting with the front office to give them a report on what he sees, what's trending and what they need to do from that point.

Dr. Baynard asked, has it been your observation that the tardies are going down? And the thing that he is most interested in is week over week are those tardies coming from the same students from the same household, or does it vary across the month?

David responded that when they were doing it less technologically it was harder to be able to answer that question. Now that they have technology at the forefront, they can isolate those students individually. He said that if it's a parent with multiple children then they can get really specific. He said that their overall attendance is the overall barometer; whereas once they were at 90- 91% they are currently at 95% so that lets them know that students are first and foremost coming to school first and they are coming to school on time.

David stated that one of the other key indicators is the first and second classes. Those classes are the ones that they are concerned that students don't miss; whether the student has math, science or whatever the class might be on their first or second period, they don't want them to miss that seat time, so they are measuring that as well.

Board member Wade asked whether the system automatically alerts them to chronic absentee students, or do they have to scrub the data in order to determine who is presenting the chronic behavior?

David responded that the data is already formulated in the Infinite Campus system and they ad hoc spaces where they can pull data in different ways in order to isolate problematic areas and then form interventions. Greg turned the meeting over to Dr. Archer for her report on Specialized Services.

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

#### **Preparing for McKinney Vento Audit (November 2025)**

Dr. Archer indicated that her report would be very brief as it is audit time for her department. She reported that they are currently preparing for their McKinney Vento audit which will occur on November 21<sup>st</sup>. She said that it is an audit which happens every few years.

#### **Preparing for Child Find report (December 1<sup>st</sup>)**

Dr. Archer reported that they are also preparing for their Child Find report which is due to the state on December 1<sup>st</sup>. She said that they are in high frequency right now with all of the early intervention re-evaluations and IEP meetings that must occur before the Thanksgiving break, so that they can turn their information in before December 1.

#### **HS Application due (October 23<sup>rd</sup>)**

Dr. Archer reported that their eighth-grade students are preparing to leave them and move on to secondary and high school. She said that the School District of Philadelphia's high school application process closed on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, but there are still applications that are available for charter schools, private schools and catholic schools. She reported that the bulk of students, those that live in Philadelphia, completed their school district applications by identifying their top schools that they qualify for and all of that concluded on the 23rd of October. Deleah concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Wade asked if the college tour was held this month?

Dr. Archer responded yes, it was held from Tuesday to Sunday and they returned late on Sunday night. She said that she would have more to report at the November meeting because they just returned on Sunday and did not have enough time to prepare for this month's meeting. Greg turned the meeting over to Michelle Thornton for her report on Business, Finance and HR.

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

## **Human Resources**

Michelle reported that HR is fully staffed and that they had one teacher that started in August and left the organization for medical reasons. She said that they now have 23 male staff members out of their 60 employees. She acknowledged that it has been a goal that they aimed for over the years of increasing male staff and they are very excited about this achievement. She also reported that their new HR representative started in September and is fully on board with the work that has to be done.

## **Finance Update**

Michelle reported that the school is still facing budget challenges due to federal and state economic issues. She said that they have been getting notices over the past couple of months with the possibility of an impact on schools and in particular Harambee. She indicated that they have been notified from the 21<sup>st</sup> century grant agency that the funds are on hold for an unknown time. She reported that there was a meeting with all of the 21st century grant participants all over the country inquiring whether they would be able to continue their programs or not. She indicated that most of the participants said that they would continue their programs or have already modified programs. She said that for Harambee they will continue the program through December and if funding has not been restored then they would make an assessment to determine how they would move forward in January. Michelle stated that they are currently funding the program through operating funds with hopes that the problem is settled within the next 30 days.

## **Food Service**

Michelle reported that they have also received communication regarding the food service program. She said that they have been given a week-by-week update and they were last informed that the food service program is funded through the end October, with no solid plans to adjust if funding is not restored. She stated that they will continue ongoing conversations about how they will adjust.

Michele reported that they were approved for a small grant last year from Mayor Parkers office. They were awarded \$2,500.00 for an environmental awareness and responsibility project, which involved purchasing trash cans for the community. They purchased 55-gallon trash cans which they will distribute to the neighbors over the next couple of weeks in conjunction with the community service project that the students are leading.

## **Audit**

Michelle reported that they are well underway with the annual financial audit. She asked that Board members be prepared like last year for any changes and to vote on it by December 31<sup>st</sup> which is the final date for the report. She also mentioned that they had their Finance Committee Meeting last Monday and the committee has been updated on all of the points that were discussed tonight as well. Michelle concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Larry asked Michelle to give the Finance Committee an idea as to whether any of the funding has come through at the next meeting.

He also asked if they have a line of credit setup with any of their banks that they can tap into if they need it.

Michelle responded that they have been talking to their bank and she will provide an update to the Board about her discussions with their PNC partners at the next meeting. She said that they have already determined that the 21<sup>st</sup> century program may not be able to go beyond January and if they do get beyond January, it may have to be a modified program. She said that she will delve deeper into it and provide some additional information at their next meeting.

Board member Wade asked if the funds do in fact stop, is there any indication that organizations will be retroactively reimbursed.

Michelle said yes, they will be retroactively reimbursed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century program. The partners at 21<sup>st</sup> century have asked them to continue monthly reporting and submission. She said that they have not shared this information with parents yet but they are in discussion about doing so as it becomes a reality.

Board member Wade suggested that they advise the parents so that parents can contact their representatives to let them know that they are being directly impacted.

Dr. Baynard asked, with the federal shutdown would they have to stop any of the services that they are currently providing including After School and Food Service.

Michelle responded that they would not have to stop anything just yet. She said that right now they are in a position to keep the train moving and there aren't any other impacts to staffing or to operations that would be affected. They are navigating around the impact and keeping a tighter management on cash flow to sustain them.

Board member Jan asked if they are still meeting all of their financial obligations. Michelle said yes, they are continuing to meet their obligations.

Board member Larry suggested that they should be completing applications to banks right now in case the funding is not granted. Board members Maurice Baynard and Larry Bell agreed that Harambee needs to get ahead of the problem and not wait because other schools have already applied to banks. Larry said that it should be more than a discussion right now, they should be completing applications. Dr. Baynard suggested putting together an emergency funding plan for those things that are most affected now just in case it is needed. He said that they wouldn't necessarily have to use it if the funding is restored, but if not, they haven't waited another 30 days. Michelle said that she would definitely look into doing that in the next few days. Greg turned the meeting back to Dr. Baynard.

### **Old Business**

None

### **New Business**

None

### **Public Concerns**

None

### **Action Items**

Dr. Baynard indicated that he would open the floor for any comments or concerns from the Board. Board member Larry commented that they should talk about a date for the next Board meeting because of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Dr. Baynard suggested that they schedule it for the Monday or Tuesday before Thanksgiving and asked the other Board members if they had a preference. The general consensus amongst members was to move the meeting to Monday November 24<sup>th</sup> 2025. Dr. Baynard asked for a vote and all members present were in favor, none were opposed and it was passed unanimously.

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

Dr. Baynard offered visitors Eric Soble, Sr. Project Manager and Rebecca Dunn, Deputy Chief from the Charter School Office an opportunity to ask any questions or to share any comments.

Eric Soble commented that he and his team visited Harambee on Tuesday and had an amazing experience. He said that the team found the students very passionate and many of the students commented that they could not imagine themselves anywhere other than Harambee. He said that the students speak from their hearts, the community is exemplary and everyone is engaged and excited about learning. Eric thanked the leadership team and said that it was such a pleasure engaging with everyone.

Dr. Baynard opened the floor for a motion to adjourn

**Motion to Adjourn:** Board member Wade made a motion to adjourn, 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

**Next Meeting: Monday November 24<sup>th</sup> 2025**

