

# Harambee Institute of Science and Technology Charter School

## Board of Trustees Public Meeting Minutes

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### Board Meeting Minutes March 25th, 2026

The meeting of the Board of Directors was held virtually via ZOOM on Wednesday March 25<sup>th</sup> 2026 at 6:32 P.M.

#### **Open Session**

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

Maurice Baynard	Board Chairman
Jan Gillespie- Walton	Board Secretary
Renee Whitby	Board member & Cultural Leader
Charis Jackson	Board member
Donna Holmes Lockett	Board member

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

Larry Bell	Board Treasurer
Valerie Richardson	Board member
Shawn Blue	Board member
C. Wade Mosely	Board member

##### **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

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

Board Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

##### **Libation**

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

##### **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**

Brittany Wright – Prospective Parent Board member  
Tierra Arrington- Kindergarten teacher

### **Review and approval of the February 25<sup>th</sup> 2026 Board Meeting Minutes**

Board Chairman Maurice Baynard asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the February 25<sup>th</sup> 2026 Board Meeting Minutes. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were no corrections and/or additions. Board member Renee made a motion seconded by Board member Charis 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      AYES:0      Nays: 0      Abstentions: 0      Absent: 4

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**

#### **Property Acquisition**

Greg reported that they are fully engaged with their realtors and attorneys relative to the acquisition of the properties at 2821 and 2801 Island Avenue. To date they have a letter of intent (LOI) with the seller that has been forwarded to the School District as a part of their Charter renewal amended application. They are now moving toward a signed agreement of sale. Greg said that David will have much more information regarding the property acquisition going forward.

#### **Charter Renewal Update**

Greg reported that they are in the ACE portion of the renewal process and they received their Ace renewal report two weeks ago. He said that they had 3 deltas out of nearly 50 items of review and they contested all three. It looks as if they have won 2 of the three

contested items and are currently awaiting a decision from the School District relative to the renewal application.

### **2026-2027 Budget**

Greg reported that they have completed their departmental budget for the 2026-2027 school year.

### **2026 Leadership Retreat**

Greg reported that they are excited about their leadership retreat which will occur during the week of July 13<sup>th</sup> 2026. Dr. Tamara Thomas-Smith will be their facilitator for the retreat. Dr. Smith is the superintendent of the Upper Merion School District. She will help to facilitate the retreat as they write a new 5-year strategic plan for Harambee that will take them into the next charter term.

Greg reported that following the week of the retreat, he has made a recommendation to meet with the Board to ensure input from them as well a meeting with the leadership team at the school to receive their input. He said that they will also be reaching out to their parent constituency and community stakeholders to receive their input relative to their new strategic plan. Greg concluded his report and opened the floor to questions.

Dr. Baynard asked Greg to expound on the 2 contested items on the Ace report that were challenged and later accepted as passing. Greg stated that the first was their LIEP policy. They were told that they were missing 4 words. Dr. Archer asked them to scroll down to page 4 section 2 paragraph 2 where those 4 words could be found. The information was present and the reader concurred.

The second issue was in Business and Finance where Michelle pointed out that Harambee did in fact meet the metric and the standard. It was again an issue of inter-rater reliability. Those were the two issues marked as deltas that should be turned into compliance. They will receive official notice in a day or two that that have been turned into compliance.

## **Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment, Nakia Brown**

### **Curriculum**

#### **PSSA Online Tool Curriculum/ Lessons**

Nakia reported that most of what they are doing in curriculum centers around PSSA and PSSA preparation. She said that they are switching over to an online modality and online assessment. They are adding into their curriculum the PSSA online tools. They are ensuring that the students know the online mechanisms of how to utilize the test. The STEM teacher is specifically working on the online tool so that all students grades 3-8 understand how it functions and they know how to utilize the online platform.

### **Instruction**

#### **I READY Benchmark #3**

Nakia reported that the students just sat for benchmark 3. They have been doing some analysis of the data. They have conducted 1:1 data chats with the teachers, especially

teachers with grades 3-8. They have been doing action planning based upon the trends of the data.

### **Assessment**

Nakia reported that this is the time of year that they are mandated for trainings. She said that on Monday they conducted the School Assessment Coordinators training where she had to train those teachers that will serve as School Assessment Coordinators and they will in turn train the test administrators and test proctors. The training will take place on April 6<sup>th</sup> when they return from spring break. Nakia stated that at this time every one in their building has had the trainings that are due and mandated. She said that during this time they are heavily inundated with the mandates of the Department of Education as they prepare for PSSA. She said that when they return from spring break, they will have 2 weeks for ELA and 3 weeks for Math before they sit for the assessment. Nakia concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Dr. Baynard commented that he would love to see some longitudinal data of the benchmark assessments next month. Nakia agreed to provide the data.

Dr. Baynard also asked when do the students get back to normal learning in the time frame where they are so focused on PSSA preparation.

Nakia said that normal learning is still happening because they still have a very detailed pacing guide and scope & sequence. The pacing guide tells them what they should be teaching at this time and all students are still following scope & sequence. The students still receive all of their regular material along with PSSA item release. She said that everyone is still following the regular scope and sequence because that is one of the key indicators for students to do well. She indicated that some schools take out science and social studies during the testing period but Harambee does not. Nakia said that they continue to teach their regular instructional program 100% of the time and use additional support based on what the data shows. Greg turned the meeting to David for his report on Operations.

### **Operations, David Rosario** **Building Acquisition Update**

David reported that they have a signed letter of intent which means that they have agreed upon a baseline understanding with the seller. He said that while the broker is preparing a potential agreement of sale, they are in a due diligence period which is non-committal to determine further viability and if it makes sense to move forward. He said that the areas that they are looking at in terms of viability are zoning and flood zone sustainability. David explained that they have engaged with a zoning attorney to see what the time frame would be and if there are any other hurdles to consider. They have also had an initial conversation with an architect and plan to have further discussions with a civil engineer to determine viability as a school due to the flood zone. David said that the due diligence period gives them the opportunity to have a thorough examination of what they are getting into and still have the potential for cancellation. David

concluded his report and opened the floor to questions. He mentioned that at the end of February they had 93.79 average daily attendance based on 564 in census.

Dr. Baynard asked David if prior to the next meeting in April, he could provide the Board with a distilled executive summary about the entire process of the building acquisition and all of the steps entailed in the process so that he can share the overall picture with the Board. He asked that it be provided 2 weeks prior to the next meeting so that members have time to review it in advance. David agreed to provide a report to be shared with the Board. Greg turned the meeting over to Michelle for her report on Business, Finance and HR.

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

Michelle reported that their budget process for 2026-2027 has begun and they have started to update it with as much information as they have right now. She said that they met with their executive leaders and began updating the budget with as much information that they have at this time. They also met with the finance committee yesterday with updates on where they are and finalized it with a balanced budget. She indicated that there is one area that she would like to review further with Dr. Archer since she did not have an opportunity to participate in the budget process and Michelle wants to be sure that Special Ed is thoroughly included.

Michelle said that they do not have the per pupil rate at this time and if they do not have it by the next meeting, she will have a couple of different scenarios to present to the Board. She said that so far, the budget process is going smoothly and on schedule. She said that they received the 990 from the auditors and will have a presentation of it for the next meeting and anticipate being able to file it on time in May.

### **Building Acquisition**

Michelle reported that they have a standing meeting with PNC Capitol Markets Division. They have to secure bond council as part of the process and have issued a request for qualifications and have made a tentative decision on a bond council group to work with them. Michelle said that they will provide more information about the selection at the next Board meeting.

### **Human Resources**

Michelle reported that they submitted an intent to return to staff and received 100% participation. She said that this allows them to anticipate possible vacancies that they will have. Michelle shared with members that they participated in a job fair at LaSalle University and made a few connections that they hope to partner with in the future. She said that they also made a connection at the same job fair with a company that does robotics programs throughout the School District of Philadelphia. She said that a team from that company came out and did a presentation at Harambee for the After School program which may work as a partner for STEM programming at Harambee.

Michelle told members that they can see in the report that was included in the Board packages the number of exits over the past 3 days. She reported that they did not have

any new hires over the past 30 days, but they did have 2 exits in the past 45 days. One was the Occupational Therapist and the other was a Special Education teacher. She said that as of today they have secured an OT person with a number of interviews for the Special Education position.

Michelle noted that they hosted a Mental Health and Wellness Fair at their last professional development gathering and it was everything that they planned. She said that the staff had a very engaging experience and it was a wonderful time overall. She mentioned that they had over 13 partners that participated and a number of sponsors that helped to sponsor the event. She said that it was a time to be renewed, refreshed and reintroduced to the idea of mental health, wellness and care for one's self. Michelle concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Dr. Baynard commented that the Health and Wellness Fair was a great idea. He said that although his connections with men in the mental health space did not work out in time, he has had conversations with organizations that specifically organize mental health resources for black male professionals and he will connect her with them. He said that June is men's health month and they will have a special men's mental health summit on June 2<sup>nd</sup> at community college. He said that it would be great to have black male educators from Harambee to attend.

Dr. Baynard also asked, does the facilities master plan change the landscape of possible places that they might expand to and once the facilities master plan goes into effect will it affect the per pupil reimbursement?

Michelle responded that they should not be impacted but there is a possibility that there could be some impact or change in the formular from the district.

### **Old Business**

None

### **New Business**

Dr. Baynard noted that Brittany Wright is a parent at Harambee and has been recommended as the newest Parent Board member to the Harambee Board. Brittany introduced herself and indicated that she has 2 kids at Harambee, a daughter who started in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and a son that started in kindergarten. She said that the care that her children receive from Harambee is superb. She said that her son has an IEP and the services that he receives has exceeded her expectations. Both of her children are excited to go to school every day and she could not ask for more as a parent.

Dr. Baynard noted that he and Board member Jan met with Brittany yesterday to review the commitment and now they will distribute paperwork and documents for signing. The Board will take a vote at next month's Board meeting. Dr. Baynard noted that before the pandemic the meetings started at 6:00 p.m. instead of 6:30. He said that if Board members wanted to begin earlier, they could return to 6:00 instead of 6:30. He asked Board members to think about it and a vote can be taken later. He also mentioned that a

date for the Board retreat needs to be decided and he will send out a survey for Board members availability. He said that it is also the time to vote on new or continued board leadership. In April they will talk about nominations and in May there will be an opportunity to discuss those nominations and members can agree to accept nominations or not and then in June a vote will be taken.

**Public Concerns**

None

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

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

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> 2026

