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

Board Meeting Minutes
April 29th 2026
DRAFT

The meeting of the Board of Directors was held virtually via ZOOM on Wednesday April 29th 2026 at 6:32 P.M.

Open Session
Board Members Present:

Maurice Baynard	Board Chairman
Shawn Blue	Board member
Donna Holmes Lockett	Board member
Renee Whitby	Board member & Cultural Leader
C. Wade Mosely	Board member
Brittany Wright	Parent Board member
Larry Bell	Board Treasurer
Charis Jackson	Board member
Valerie Richardson	Board member

Board Members Absent:

Jan Gillespie- Walton	Board Secretary

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 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.

<u>Introduction of Visitors and Others Present</u>
None

<u>Review and approval of the March 25th 2026 Board Meeting Minutes</u>
Board Chairman Maurice Baynard asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the March 25th 2026 Board Meeting Minutes. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were no corrections and/or additions. Board member Charis 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: 9 AYES:0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 1

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

<u>CEO Report, Greg Shannon</u>
Harambee Way Video
Greg began with a showing of the new Harambee Way video. The narrators introduced the students and gave an overview of the school and its philosophy. Greg is a speaker in the video and gave an over view indicating that The Harambee Institute of Science and Technology charter school is a kindergarten through eighth grade organization with approximately 600 students. He said that their focus is science and technology, and that they are an African centered school focusing on their heritage and culture. In addition to offering STEM programs, Harambe after school program exposes the students to a variety of different programs that make them well rounded. He said that they have

filmmaking, African drumming, gardening, fashion programs and drum line. In essence the Harambee way is an opportunity to engage with children to ensure that they get a world class education, grounded and centered in themselves, and it tells them to dream about who they can become in the future. He informed members that the short film was produced by their partners at Big Picture Alliance, along with the support of the children.

Greg stated that they are in the process of moving forward with the school year. He said that they are in the process of finalizing the budget and Michelle will have further information about it. Greg indicated that as they move forward, they are in the process of moving into the closure of the school year. He said that typically their standard operating practice at Harambee is to reorganize the organization prior to the closing of the school year and that process will begin in the next two weeks.

Leadership Retreat
Greg reported that they are prepared for their leadership retreat which is scheduled for Monday July 13th through Friday July 17th. On July 21st they will be meeting with the board at the pyramid club from 9 to 11 to review the tenets of the retreat. The focus and purpose for the retreat this year will be to write a new five-year strategic plan which will take them through the next charter term.

Charter Renewal
Greg reported that all of their information is in and if the school district is following their typical timeline, they will be hearing something with respect to the renewal in mid to late May. He said that he is excited about the future and what the future may bring, with respect to the next five years in the new charter term, and he is certainly excited about writing a new strategic plan which will chart the course of their actions over the course of the next five years. Their strategic plan will encompass information and a section from the CEO, from the chief of academics, chief of operations, the chief of specialized services and certainly from their chief financial officer. There will be a section for the board for governance that will chart their course for the next five years. Greg concluded and opened the floor to comments and questions.

Board member Renee commented on the Harambee way video. She said that she loved it that it was excellent and a good recruiting tool to attract more families. She gave kudos to Greg.

<u>Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment, Nakia Brown</u>
Curriculum
Nakia reported that they are preparing for the Spring Curriculum Project. She said that each year they take the opportunity to look at their pacing guides for a specific grade. They looked at their curriculum and this year they will be putting a keen eye on reading. One of the reasons is that the data says that they have made great gains in math and some gains in reading, but as she looks at the trends in the data, it shows that there are some key components of their old reading program that they are not making it, therefore they are looking very specifically at their pacing and reading. She has a team of teachers that are going to look at their pacing guide for their reading program, as well as

the opportunity for them to purchase a new reading series as their reading series is outdated and is not being published anymore. She said that they are looking at new reading programs and this will be the year with Bible sharing and support that they will be able to get a reading program that is more aligned to what the students need. Nakia said that this will speak to some of the deficits that they have in their data and will help to change the trajectory of their reading program in general.

Materials Ordering 2026-27 School Year
Nakia reported that they are placing orders and doing inventory for the books that will be needed for the following school year.

Instruction
Unannounced Formal Observations
Nakia reported that she is doing her last round of unannounced observations for all teachers and paraprofessionals. She said that it has been very telling with some of the trends and helping her to create the action plans for what is next. She said that she sees really great things happening in their classrooms.

PSSA Preparation 2026-27 School Year
Nakia reported that they kicked off testing with a huge PSSA pep rally. The teachers and staff came together to celebrate academics. The teachers came dressed in college gear representing their universities and organizations. The students had a great time and felt very proud about sitting for the assessment.

They began the assessment on the week of April 21st. They were able to complete their assessments on the first day as planned and were able move forward which allowed them to finish ELA and math. Nakia said that they just have a few makeups and that is because of absenteeism. She said that they have four or five across the board that are still left and then they begin science tomorrow. Nakia said that they were impressed with the students ability to maneuver through the new platform of the test. There were some challenges, because it's a new platform but overall, their testing window by all accounts, from the teachers went very smoothly. Nakia concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Larry asked what is the normal life cycle of a curriculum, and how old is Harambees?

Nakia responded that she came to Harambe in 2017 and the curriculum was already in place when she arrived. She said that the life cycle depends on what the publishing company is doing to keep it updated. She indicated that when she arrived in 2017 the program was HMH Journey’s which they have been using ever since. They have added new things to supplement it, but a whole new curriculum is not something that they have. She said that sometimes the publishers update the program and add new features.

Board member Larry stated that it might be worthwhile to start building funding for it into the budget to replace every couple of years, like you might do with fixed assets because this is what we do, educate kids so that’s really what they should be investing in every year.

Greg responded to the statement and indicated that he made the decision to keep the current curriculum. He said that they changed the math curriculum two to three years ago, but he decided to keep the curriculum and not change in the middle of the charter term. Greg explained that when starting a new curriculum series, there's typically a year or two learning curve before teachers become proficient in the utilization of the that new curriculum. It was important to him that they stay with what they had until they ended the charter term in order to continue the trajectory of growth in their scores over the course of the five-year term. Now that they are at the end of the five-year term, strategically it's time to change the curriculum, as the clock will start again in July.

Board member Renee commented that she would like to present a historical prospective about reading materials that were purchased during her tenure. She said that at the time that she was lead teacher of the school, they were training staff with reading specialists who would push certain publishing companies that had reading books that fit with how the teachers were being trained to teach reading. She said that they were always purchasing things on the strength of the grade groups at that time. She said that she made decisions on reading materials back then, looking for series that would help to strengthen the areas in reading that she was seeing a need for in certain grades. She said that they did not take a blanket approach of one series from K-8 because at that time, they were looking for strengths in reading programs and bringing in reading specialists to train teachers to teach the reading materials that were purchased for them.

Board member Charis asked if they are still using I READY math. Nakia responded yes, they use I Ready math and they also have I READY intervention to provide supplemental resources and they use vocbulary.com because the data says that vocabulary is one of their lowest areas and Journeys does not have a strong vocabulary program. She said that they look at the pieces that are missing and look for what they can pull in to supplement those pieces. She said that they use a team of teachers to analyze and choose the programs. Nakia concluded and Greg turned the meeting to David for his report on Operations.

Operations, David Rosario

Attendance Report

David reported that their overall attendance schoolwide is 92.6% representing 564 students. He highlighted elements that they use to maintain high attendance. He indicated that they have a robust robo calling system that is used daily. The system sends daily calls at 10:45 am to ensure consistent attendance tracking. He said that the system is used for both attendance and tardiness. They complete a 2-week cycle of attendance pulls to determine which students might be beyond a 1–2-day level. They also use their counselors to make contact with parents to see if there are any other barriers for groups of students that are on the list.

Board member Larry asked if the 92% includes excused absences as well. David responded that an absence pertains to a student and seat time. He said that they look at a student not being in the building.

Dr. Baynard asked about the 92.6% and asked over what window does it cover?

David said the they use the window from August at the beginning of the school year to date. He said that all of their grade levels are over 90%.

Real Estate Update
David gave a brief overview of where they are in the process of the property acquisition. He said that they are meeting and working concurrently with all of their potential partners so that they have everyone in place when it is time for the acquisition. He said that they hey have been working with zoning, architects and engineers for the project so that they are prepared and ready when they get to the point of due diligence. David concluded his report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Wade asked if there is a timeline to exhaust due diligence within their letter of intent?

David responded yes that they have proposed 6 months with the ability to have 2 extensions for a total of 210 days. Greg turned the floor to Deleah for her report on Specialized Services.

Specialized Services, Dr. Deleah Archer
PASA 4/13/26-4/20/26 All assessments completed
Deleah reported that they are currently in the process of state testing. She indicated that they conduct both types of standardized assessments from the state. They conduct the PASA for students with complex disabilities which started 2 weeks ahead of the PSSA. They were able to complete all of the PASA assessments before they began the PSSA window. Deleah said that they are currently in the process of PSSA testing.

Career Pathways–May 22, 2026
Deleah reported that they will host their annual Career Pathways event on Friday May 22, 2026. She indicated that it will be a half day event. She said that they are looking for volunteers and if anyone knows of someone that would like to share a unique career, please ask them to contact her for participation in the event. The event is an opportunity for students to learn about possible careers in different fields. The students will have their annual career parade along with lots of different activities around career pathways. They will conclude with lunch and then be off for the rest of the day. Deleah reminded members that they are always looking for donations for breakfast and lunch. Deleah concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Wade asked how many students does she have with IEP’s?

Deleah responded that this year they have an influx of students and a number of them are in process, so they will end the school year with over 100 students with IEP’s. She said that last year they ended with approximately 92, but this year the number is closer to 120 students including gifted students that require special needs support. Greg turned the meeting to Michelle for her report on Business Finance and HR.

Business Finance and HR, Michelle Thornton

Michelle reported that she would be sharing the 2026-2027 budget presentation. She also stated that she would be reporting on the 990-tax return for the June 2024-2025 school year. She said that they did an extension until May 15th and they have now finalized it and presented it to the finance committee in their last meeting. She indicated that there are still a few changes and updates based on their review and once it is done, they will share it with the Board and present it for filing.

Michelle shared her screen and indicated that she is presenting the 2026-2027 Operating Budget. She said that it would be an overview of the contents of the budget and would cover some of the identified focus areas.

Instruction

Michelle reported that one of the significant areas in the upcoming budget is their investment in the curriculum in which they are looking to purchasing a new ELA curriculum package.

She said that classroom support is another area of focus and they want to continue to fund the current model with para professionals and coaches in the classroom supporting their instructional programs. She said that they want to continue with same model.

Another area of focus is their staff development program. She said that they offer tuition reimbursement for their staff and they support uncertified teachers in getting their certification. Over the past 5 five years they have developed and invested in bringing in more experienced and credentialed para professionals. Most of their para professionals have at least a Bachelor’s degree and some have Masters degrees. She said that they offer resources for those who want to become teachers and they want to continue that investment so they have increased those dollars in staff development.

Specialized Services/Special Education

Michelle said that there has been an increase in the number of Special Education students entering Harambee. As a result, the total population of Special Ed students is higher. This increases the need for a full time Occupational therapist. Michelle said that in the past the model has been a contracted service position, but because of the increase in needs in that area the position will require a full-time employee.

Operations

Michelle said that there is always a focus on facilities and investing dollars in the work and maintenance around the building that they are currently in as well as investing dollars in their systems around the building. She said that there has been an increase in dollars for their food services program and for maintaining g technology for both students and staff.

Business, Finance and HR

Michelle reported that there has a been a continued investment in their compensation package which is very significant along with the expenses that are connected to salaries. She said that their overall financial goals are very important and they want to stay true to their financial covenants for bonds which includes days cash on hand and making sure that they have their 1:1 income at the end of the year.

Key Assumptions

Michelle reported that they are still waiting on an official announcement of what their per pupil rate change will be. She said that they have received some preliminary information that it may be between a 2 %-5% increase. To remain conservative, they have only built into this budget a 2% increase to their per pupil rate. She said that there is a small increase in their PSERS employer contribution and a 3% increase in COLA built into the salary and a 5% contingency. Michelle said that they are very conservative about how they maintain the budget to ensure that any unexpected situations that may happen throughout the year they have a contingency.

Michelle said that this budget is different from previous budgets because of where they are starting with their enrollment numbers. In previous years they have targeted 620 - 630 maximum enrollment, but they haven't been true to maintaining those numbers. In this budget they wanted to be sure that they are building it as close to reality as possible so they decreased it because they were not maintaining 620 to 630 students. This budget is built on a total of 600 students which is more realistic to how they have been operating. They have also built an additional portion of the revenue into the budget for families outside of Philadelphia.

Michelle continued a review of the slides in her presentation and highlighted state, local and federal revenue. She also pointed to per pupil rates over time and what their proposed increases will be. She said that she will share the presentation with members so that they can review all of the projections for 2026/ 2027 and the summary of expenses by department and next steps going forward.

Michelle told members that she is presenting the budget tonight and will send out a copy of the actual budget with all of the details and she can share the presentation with members as well. She said that the Board will have it for 30 days and it is expected to have a vote at the next meeting in May. Michelle concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Dr. Baynard reiterated that Michelle would be sending out the budget to all members and encouraged them to review it and be ready to vote on it at the next meeting. He advised members to reach out to Michelle and Greg with any questions before the next meeting.

Old Business
Dr. Baynard reminded members that it is time to nominate new officers for the Board. He said that he would send out an email with who currently occupies those roles so that everyone can see who they are. Dr. Baynard asked Board member Larry to receive the emails with nominations so that by May they can have a slate of nominations. He told members that they can self-nominate or they can nominate someone else. He said that he would like to have a vote between May and June so that going into next year everyone knows who the Board officers will be. He said that he would get the email out next week for review.

Board member Wade commented that Dr. Baynard had sent out an email requesting dates availability for the Board retreat. Dr. Baynard and Greg indicated that the date that was settled on would be Monday July 13th through Friday July 17th for Executive leaders and the following week on July 21st 9-11 a.m. at the Pyramid club.

New Business
None

Public Concerns
None

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: 9 AYES:0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 1

Next Meeting: Wednesday May 27th 2026