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

Board Meeting Minutes
May 27th 2026
DRAFT

The meeting of the Board of Directors was held virtually via ZOOM on Wednesday May 27th 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
Jan Gillespie- Walton	Board Secretary

Board Members Absent:

Others Present:

Gregory Shannon	CEO
Daniel Bryant	Compliance 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 April 29th 2026 Board Meeting Minutes</u>
Board Chairman Maurice Baynard asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the April 29th 2026 Board Meeting Minutes. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were no corrections and/or additions. Board member Larry made a motion seconded by Board member Wade 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: 10 AYES:0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 0

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>
Greg reported that they had the honor of inducting six new members/students into the Ruby Bridges chapter of the National Junior Honor Society this evening. He said that each of those six young people, all of whom are in sixth grade, represent the very best and very brightest individuals at Harambee. More importantly, they are of the highest moral fiber and character of any individual that you can find on the campus. He said that each of them has a story to tell. He said that he tells folks all the time, and makes no apologies about it, that John Skief founded this place in support of the African-American black and brown community and they are unapologetic about their black excellence. He

said that he will tell anyone who will listen: don't tell me black children from the hood can't be excellent. Students at Harambe are a shining example of that every single day.

Charter Renewal

Greg reported that they just received word from the School District of Philadelphia Charter Schools Office that they have been recommended for a brand-new five-year charter renewal. He said that there is one minor adjustment that they would like to see in the renewal and it's actually one word that they would like to be added. He said the he, Danielle and Michelle were on the line with their attorneys over the course of the past week or so and their attorneys reviewed the document and drafted that one-word adjustment. The one-word adjustment was forwarded back to the School District of Philadelphia Charter Schools office just this morning. He said that they are demonstrating their greatness and just to give an example, in 2016 they received a five-year charter renewal with 16 conditions. In 2020, they received a five-year charter renewal with six conditions. This year, they received a new five-year charter renewal with just one condition. He said that is an example of our first core value of greatness. Greg said that they are so appreciative of the leadership and support that the board of directors provides for them and giving them the latitude and the freedom to do their very best for the children, their community and the African world.

School Re-organization

Greg reported that they are now in the school reorganization process. The classes for next year have been reorganized and David is supposed to have the schedule completed by the close of business today and they will review it tomorrow. Greg said that they are about halfway through their contract meetings with staff, offering staff contracts into the new academic year or not. He said that by next week the school will be completely reorganized for next year so that when they return in August, the focus will be on teacher and staff development, teacher learning, staff learning, rather than operationally reorganizing the school. He said that his goal every year is to ensure that before they break for the school year, next school year is completely reorganized and ready to go.

Leadership Retreat

Greg reported that the leadership retreat is scheduled for Monday, July 13th through Friday, July 17th. He informed members that they will be writing a new five-year strategic plan at the retreat. He said that he is delighted to report that Dr. Tamara Thomas, superintendent of the Upper Marion School District, will be shepherding the team through the writing of the new strategic plan. When they return from the retreat, they will be meeting with the board to vet the new strategic plan and to take the board's input on the new plan on the 21st of July. He said that shortly after, they will be meeting with the school leadership team to vet and share the strategic plan and to get their input as well. Their goal is upon opening for the new school year that the new strategic plan will be completed and it will be their roadmap which will guide their practice over the course of the next five years. Greg concluded his report and opened the floor to questions and comments.

Dr. Baynard congratulated Greg on Harambee's five-year renewal. He said in a world where most charters fight for viability, and no one is talking about charter excellence, he thinks that the road that they have come to since 2016 when they were all nail biting and sitting on the edge of their seats, that it is good to be on the other side and it is a total educational miracle. He gave kudos to Greg and the entire team.

Board member Wade asked when will the renewal be formalized?

Greg responded that they had that one-word amendment that they submitted to the school district so they are waiting to hear from them around the recommendation for that one small change. Once they agree upon that, they will have until June, 18th to sign the new charter agreement. He said that once its signed by the board president and secretary it will be submitted back to the charter school office and at the next board meeting, it will be voted on and then it should be any time post June 18th.

Board member Wade indicated that congratulations were in order on meeting this milestone. He said that they can actually exhale for a moment.

Dr. Baynard mentioned that they don't do a lot horn honking which has benefited them. He said that if he's not mistaken, they are best in class with regard to this charter renewal class and their ACE outcomes. He asked if there is a way that some of that information in a humble way, can make its way to the website and to their social media platforms because they should be proud that Harambee's students are doing very well, especially when compared to their fellow schools and in the district.

Greg responded that it absolutely will make its way to their website and to their social media outlets. He said that sometimes you get so mired down with keeping your head down and just doing the work that you neglect to tell the story along the way. He said that one of the things that will be a big component of their strategic plan is how do they do a better job of telling their story and marketing their brand along the way. He said that it will be an entire section of their strategic plan. They have partnered with some top-notch marketing professionals to use their leverage around Harambees website and social media platforms to do a better job of telling their story.

Greg stated that there was one other thing that he neglected to share. He said that they take very few field trips intentionally pre-PSSA because their focus is on instruction and they don't want to lose an instructional moment of any day. He said, post-PSSA there are a flurry of activities and trips. On Friday the eighth-grade class will be attending their eighth-grade dinner dance on the Spirit of Philadelphia. He said that members of the leadership team and staff have sponsored different students with their attire for the event. In addition to that he and Shawn will be sponsoring 30 haircuts for the young men who are going on the trip on Friday. Greg's barber and Shawn's barber will be there tomorrow to cut 30 young men's hair and get them sharp and ready for the Spirit of Philadelphia eighth-grade dinner dance.

Board member Renee stated that she would like to comment dealing with the history of Harambee. She commented that they need to create a recording or writing like a book because Harambee is one of the oldest charters in the state. She said that they need to work on a way of recording the history since they are doing such a phenomenal job with the school. She stated that there needs to be a written source of the whole history from start to finish. She encouraged them to think of a way they could put it in hardcover history so that children, former students and future generations can pass the information on.

Dr. Baynard commented on Board member Renee's statement and said that they are 29 years as a charter and should probably get the leadership team and the board together and get really serious about what the 30-year charter anniversary is going to be. He said that Board member Renee's suggestion as a keystone of that could be a really great publication that tells the story both in pictures and words about the history of the institution over the course of those 50 years and their charter history.

Greg stated that they have the perfect person, certainly along with Mama Renee, to chronicle that. That is Baba Kabir, who has written and documented a Harambee book and has written the curriculum that they utilize in teaching the African-centered curriculum at Harambee. He may be the appropriate person with Mama Renee's guidance to chronicle that 54-year existence. Board member Renee said that Kabir has brought her everything he's written; they have talked and she has read his curriculum ideas and he is on the right track. She said that she really loves what he has done dealing with cultural awareness. Greg turned to the meeting to Nakia's report on Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment which he provided on her behalf.

<u>Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Nakia Brown</u>
Curriculum
School Close Out Inventory
Greg reported that they are in the closeout period of the year and are in the process of inventorying all of their curriculum materials and supplies. He said that they are also in the process of vetting a new ELA curriculum. Nakia and the academic team are reviewing different curricula in order to make a decision and move them to a new ELA curriculum.

Materials Ordering for 2026-27 School Year
Greg reported that materials for next year 2026-2027 are in the process of being ordered across the organization. He said that prior to closing this year, all of those curriculum materials will have been ordered so that they have a 12-week window over the summer for them to be shipped. And once the materials arrive in the building they will be inventoried, counted and redistributed into classrooms when they open in August.

Appraisal Meetings
Greg reported that Nakia and all of the executive leaders are in the process of doing their end-of-year appraisals with all of the staff in instruction or otherwise. He said that

the process is just about complete and will be completed by the time they end the school year.

Assessment
PSSA Close Out
Greg reported that the PSSA closeout was much more efficient this year given that the PSSA was digital and not hard copy pen and paper. Greg concluded the report on behalf of Nakia and opened the floor to questions and comments. Greg turned the floor to David for his report on Operations.

<u>Operations, David Rosario</u>
End of Year closeout
David reported that he is putting the finishing touches on the schedule for 2027. He said that the school rostering process has been vetted through the school and along with it is their teacher classroom closeout process. The materials and classrooms are set so that they can start the summer with items that they have to do with classroom cleaning and reorganizing.

David reported that their technology collection for student Chromebooks and staff MacBooks will be begin after this Friday. He said that it doesn't mean that the teaching is going to stop entirely, but the lessons will shift after they start to collect the chrome books. They will meet with Greg tomorrow or Friday to look at getting room assignments for next year. Typically, the building shifts if they have a three-class cohort grouping so they might have to move some teacher room assignments around.

Attendance
David reported that the attendance is an improvement at 92.5% towards the end of the year. He said that it is an improvement, of course, over their year-over-year iteration, and they have been able to maintain that number, but certainly, 95% and above is their goal each year. He said as they look around the landscape and as they have discussed in the charter world, they are not doing so bad comparatively in their cohort and generally overall. He said that they stay strong in that area by continued messaging reminders, parent partnerships, technology reach outs and teacher reach outs.

Summer Refresh
David reported that they usually have the close of school from June 12th to August 10th which is their summer refresh window and, in that window, they usually are without students, so they are able to deep dive from a facility standpoint into the projects that they want to get done. He said in years past, they have had capital improvement projects going on, but they don't have any capital improvement projects this summer. They do have an ADA concrete ramp repair that they want to get done as well as some concrete crumbling and brick pointing. The rest is just the general cleaning schedule that they follow during every summer.

David reported that there is one other thing under operational compliance that they have to do. He said each year they have a safety review coming from Act 1309-B of the public-school code and they have to read some of the things into the record for the board so that they remain in compliance for school safety and state code.

David stated that he would read a few sentences and take any questions based on the statements. He said that there would also be a follow-up survey that he will complete.

David stated for the Bord that they have reviewed their current safety and security practices, including their protocols, their drills, visitor protocols, student reporting systems, and staff coordination.

Next is their security personnel review. They have reviewed their school safety personnel and the reporting requirements and they have protected confidentiality. He said that they don't want to disclose any more detail about any deployment and operational details so he kept it very general in that regard.

Next is training and preparedness. They stay prepared with their drill schedules and during their professional development, they take time in his office with staff and they review things highlighted over the last year. David informed the Board that he will complete and submit the annual Act 1309-B school safety follow-up survey after the summer walkthrough.

David reported that ICE has been a presence in inner cities so they have a school movement with regard to their readiness plan. He indicated that their signage and awareness is still where it needs to be and they talk about improvements. One of the improvements is to annually review their operational and readiness plan and it is something that he reviews with staff each summer. David said that he will complete and submit the annual Act 1309-B school safety follow-up survey after the summer walkthrough. David concluded his report and opened the floor to questions.

Board member Wade commented that he is just ensuring that for those contracts that they use for the summer refresh and other projects, that they follow the policies with regards to procurement. David responded absolutely and said as he mentioned, this particular summer they don't have anything that rises to that level. He said that they have something that came close which would be the ADA ramping, but nothing has crossed the threshold where they need to use the procurement process.

Dr. Baynard commented that he wanted to give David his laurels for attendance. He said that a close reading of the ACE indicated that the points that they received for attendance in 2021 and 2022 was zero out of five. In 2022, 2023, it was zero out of five. When David came aboard in 2023, 2024, they received 1.25 out of 5. Last year they received a 2.5 out of 5. He said, if that keeps up, everyone will be in a building every day in two more years. He commended David on pushing those numbers in the right direction. Greg turned the floor to Dr. Archer for her report on Specialized Services.

<u>Specialized Services, Dr. Archer</u>

Successful Career Pathways Event

Dr. Archer reported that her report would be brief and the first thing that she wanted to share with everyone is that they did have a fantastic fifth annual career pathways event that took place this past Friday. She said that in the chat is a link provided so that everyone can see all of the lovely photos from the activities that occurred on their half-day session. She said that they had a live WURD broadcast that occurred during the event with lots of participants. Dr. Archer reported that they had their career parade where students in K-4 walked the hallways dressed as their future careers. She said that it was a fantastic day and the kids really enjoyed themselves with the live fire truck, ambulance and police car. She said that for the older students in grades five through eight it was a really great activity. The presenters that attended were really excited to see how enthralled everyone in the entire school was and so it was a great day.

Deleah said anyone that shared anything or came to the event or even if they couldn't come, but said maybe next year they still appreciate everyone. She thanked everyone for helping them have a great career pathways event and said that they will be doing this again next year in May.

Deleah remarked that all of this is in alignment with Future Ready. She said that this is what they have to do to make sure that their students are exposed to careers and that is the reason that their event is titled “If You Can See It, You Can Be It.” She said that one of the things that they know is if they can get their students to understand why education is so important and why they need to persist and push through to at least graduate high school at minimum, they can look forward to different types of careers.

Compensatory Education Settlement Agreement

Dr. Archer reported that her last piece is the two compensatory settlement agreements for J. Beattie, which is a no trust, which means those funds will stay with the school and N. Upshur, which will have a trust and the funds will be funded between 2026 and 2027. Those are the two items that are before the board for a vote. Dr. Archer concluded her report and opened the floor to questions and comments. Greg turned the meeting to Michelle for her report on Business Finance and HR.

<u>Business Finance and HR, Michelle Thornton</u>

Michelle reported that the only thing that she would be bringing to the table is the 2026-2027 budget that they presented at the last board meeting. She said that there were no questions that came up that required any changes to the budget. There were a few questions that came up yesterday at their finance committee meeting, but no changes to the actual budget, so the expectation today is that we would have a vote for it in order for it to have an effective date of July1, and for them to be able to meet their reporting requirements. Michelle concluded her report and turned the meeting back to Greg.

Dr. Baynard commented that he could not thank Michelle enough for getting the budget out to everyone in enough time for folks to sit with it and review it. He said that he trusts that everyone has now read it three times, and that the reason that you have not gotten any questions is that it was well presented. Greg stated that concludes our executive leadership presentation this evening, and we yield the floor back to you Dr. Baynard.

Dr. Baynard stated that we have at least three things that are voting items this evening and he would like to start with those items before we go into old business. He said let's start with the last first and open the floor for either discussion of or a recommendation for acceptance and approval of the 2026-2027 Operating budget.

<u>Old Business</u>
Vote: for Approval of the 2026 -2027 Operating Budget

Motion: Board member Larry made a motion, seconded by Board member Charis to approve the 2026 -2027 Operating Budget as presented to the Board last month. All were in favor; none were opposed and there was a unanimous motion to accept the 2026-2027 Operating budget.

Approval: 10 AYES:0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 0

<u>New Business</u>
Vote:
Pending Settlement J. Beatty No Trust
Pending Settlement N. Upshur Trust Required

Before the vote Board member Wade had a question and comment
Board member Wade said that we have quite a few folks that are in our special Ed categories and we have done pretty well with this over the last few years with regard to these cases. He said we need to look at them intently and find out or look at what we can do to assure that it doesn't occur again and not normalize them. He said, I know that it is happening and it is almost an industry, if you will, where we have attorneys who look at opportunities to exploit this type of thing. But my understanding of this is that they won't win unless there has been some shortcoming, so we need to tighten everything up. He said, I don't know if there's a need for more staff, but looking at the ACE report, they talk about certifications with regard to special ed and numbers, along with teacher-student ratios, but let's use this as an opportunity to assure that we try not to have this occur.

Dr. Baynard commented that Board member Wade brings up a good point and he said that he would like to turn the microphone over to two people. Dr. Archer, to give sort of a context about why it's occurring, because I don't know. If we don't work in special ed, we might not understand, and there might be multiple reasons why it's occurring, it might not just be as simple as, oh, we're not providing services or we're understaffed. And then, Gregory, to this larger issue of is there some strategic way that we can minimize these cases even though we're doing a good job, can we do a better and even better job?

Dr. Archer responded and said that at this particular point right now, we have 108 students that receive special education services. And when I first started at Harambee, we had about 70 students. Each year that number grows. And it's not just with Harambee, it's across the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, so what we're seeing is a rise in the number of students that are being identified. In addition, we are seeing a rise in individuals poaching families to try to catch you doing something wrong and the thing that we are working through is that we we're doing a fantastic job. Over the years, Harambee has increased the number of programs we've had, the level of programs we had and the number of staff that we've had. She said that when she first came, they had four teachers and now they have eight. We had two programs and now we have five, so we have a lot of different programs that we are running to support students, so it's not that we aren't doing the work. We are doing the work and everyone is doing the work fantastically well, but unfortunately, this is a litigious world and individuals will try their best and will go out and seek support when they feel they need to.

Dr. Baynard said that's a meteoric rise in the number of cases for any one small school like ours. And you see that everywhere. Are we just doing a better job of testing or is it that people are now more sensitive to needs? Or is there something really concerning about young people today that a fifth of them, if you look at our school, need special education support where it used to be a small fraction of folks.

Greg responded that this is a very, very nuanced situation and we'd be delighted if anyone, Baba Wade, you, or anyone else would like to get a special ed one-on-one, 101 update so that we can make you intimately familiar with the nuances of how and why all of this occurred. He said that his recommendation would be that we table this conversation for a later date when they can come together face to face and share with Board member Wade the intimate nuances of specialized services.

Greg also mentioned that Dr. Richardson has an in-depth background in specialized services throughout her career as he read her CV. He asked Dr. Richardson, in coming on to the board, Dr. Richardson, we would love for you to be a part of that conversation as well. So, might I recommend that we table this conversation and have a specialized services 101 for anyone who would like to gain additional insight or information into the nuances of how and why we are in this position.

Dr. Baynard said that he appreciates the tabling recommendation because this it is a Board thing. He said, but needless to say, I do think we have a lot of expertise in the board. He said Board member Shawn Blue, I'm looking at you, for such a time as this and for such a conversation as this, it is why we have a Princeton certified psychologist on the board as well. It would be lovely if we could find some time where we could talk a little bit deeper about the entirety of specialized services, the world where we think the trends are going, and how we can best set ourselves up as an institution to serve them best. He said it feels like a wave is coming our way and we might not just be addressing it in the best of all possible ways, simply by taking it as it comes. And are there things that we can be thinking about strategically?

Board member Wade said to Greg, I accept your invitation, but using your term, I don't want to get granular with this and into the weeds, but my understanding is that we may be doing an outstanding job, but when these lawsuits come about, it seems to hail around documentation. Having the backup of 1000% in compliance, but the documentation needs to be there and that's my understanding. I don't really need to get deep into it, but that's just my takeaway from the limited understanding that I have of this is that it always hails around documentation and them going into the weeds, finding any potential missteps that they can unveil. He said that we just need to be super proactive knowing that this is out there and that there are folks looking for loopholes and lacks of documentation just to support their litigation. So that's my takeaway.

Board member Larry commented that for the purpose of the board minutes, Baba Wade did ask if we are doing anything to correct it? Greg stated, yes, we are.

Dr. Baynard said that there is still an outstanding recommendation on the table to make a motion with regard to pending settlements for J. Beatty and N. Upshur collectively or individually. Board member Wade said that he would make a motion collectively.

Vote:
Pending Settlement J. Beatty No Trust
Pending Settlement N. Upshur Trust Required

Motion: Board member Wade made a motion, seconded by Board member Larry to approve the two settlements as presented. All were in favor; none were opposed and there was a unanimous motion to accept the two settlement cases as presented.

Approval: 10 AYES:0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 0

Old Business (continued)
Dr. Baynard commented that the last issue of the evening is our nomination of board officers. He informed members that he would turn the meeting over to Board member Larry and let him guide this portion of the meeting. Board member Larry said that they did get nominations for positions and he thanked those members of the board that responded to their request. He stated that he would give the names for each position and who was nominated.

- For treasurer, myself, Larry Bell was nominated (accepted)
- For secretary, Jan Walton was nominated (accepted)
- For Vice President, there were two nominations, Wade Mosley and Jan Walton.
- For Vice President Wade Mosley (accepted)
- For President, Maurice Baynard.

Board member Larry said that he needs to see if there is acceptance of all of the nominations. Board member Jan said that she would yield her nomination for vice president since she was nominated for two positions and can only accept one.
She accepted the nomination for secretary.
Board member Wade accepted the nomination for vice president

Board member Larry accepted the nomination for treasurer.
Board Chairman Maurice Baynard accepted the nomination for President.

Vote: on the slate of officers for the next two-year term

Motion: Board member Charis made a motion seconded by Board member Renee to accept the slate of officers for the next two-year term. All were in favor; none were opposed and there was a unanimous motion to accept the new officers for the next two-year term.

Approval 10 AYES:0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 0

Board member Wade said that he had one last general question about the ACE and he asked, is there a reason why he didn't understand what they were saying about the science category and why it said NA.? Greg said it is NA because PDE changed the grade configuration in which the test is administered, and this is a baseline year.

<u>Public Concerns</u>
None

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

Approval: 10 AYES:0 Nays: 0 Abstentions: 0 Absent: 0

Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 24, 2026. Final Public meeting of the Academic Year