



ATMOSPHERE ACADEMY

Educating Your Bright Stars

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes December 17, 2018

Atmosphere Academy Charter School
5959 Broadway, 2nd Floor
Bronx, New York 10463

Board Members Attending:

Mr. Alan Dillon
Mr. Mervin Burton
Dr. Michael Lagas
Mr. James Spitzer
Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr.

Board Members Absent:

Dr. Evan Powderly

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Colin J. Greene
Mr. Christian Roman
Mr. Bryan Fryer
Mr. Peter Markey
Ms. Elizabeth Nash
Mrs. Kathrine Brennan

Agenda Item 1. Call to order

At approximately 5:11 PM the meeting was called to order by Dr. Lagas.

Agenda Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance

Dr. Lagas led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item 3. Board Reports

There were no board reports for this meeting.

Agenda Item 4. Comments from the Public

There were no public attendees or public comments.

Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda

The original agenda was adopted by the board.

Mr. J. Greene moved to adopt the agenda.
Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: M. Burton, J. Greene, M. Lagas,
Nays: none

Agenda Item 6.1 Marble Hill Partners

Mr. Oren Sendowski entered the meeting and addressed the board regarding some issues with the Marble Hill building. He explained the actions he was taking to resolve matter with the NYC Department of Buildings. The board questioned him about process and timing. He responded to all questions. Mr. Sendowski agreed to provide written description of his actions for the board to have available for its reference and use by Friday December 21, 2018.

Agenda Item 6.2. Finance Update

Mr. Fryer reported on the financial performance of the school. He reviewed preliminary versions of the Statement of Activity report and the Statement of Financial Position report. Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Fryer then discussed the long term financial model, which had been sent to the board for study prior to the meeting, and how it can be used along with the list of expense categories to track progress on full year budget. The board discussed accounts payable levels and aging, loan levels and paydown rates shown in the model. Mr. Burton expressed his need to use the forward looking long term model to track financial progress. He pointed out that the discussion of the Statement of activity discussion and balance sheet discussion did little to help the board oversee the financial trends. The long term model was the better tool. Dr. Lagas asked that the long term model be rerun with a lower level of expense targeted. Mr. Greene and Mr. Fryer committed to do that. Mr. C. Greene noted the plan to expand the number of students and its positive financial impact. There was discussion of the timing of when that plan would be approved, but no date could be assured at this time. The board expressed a need to track the long term model and expenses monthly. The expanded school financial model will be discussed at future meetings when approval is received.

Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Spitzer expressed the importance of setting aside a portion of the expected full-year bonus each pay period in a separate bank account to be sure cash is available without stress on the school's finances. This will be discussed further at the January meeting.

Agenda Item 6.3. Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the November 2018 meeting were sent to the board before the meeting. They were adopted without revision.

Mr. Dillon moved to adopt the minutes.
Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: M. Burton, A. Dillon, J. Greene, M. Lagas, J. Spitzer.
Nays: none

Agenda Item 6.4. Charter Revision

Mr. C. Greene presented copies of the recently submitted application to expand the middle school. The board discussed the application and the next steps in the process. Mr. C. Greene discussed the student recruitment process that is needed to support the growth plans for the school, both with the middle school expansion and the upcoming charter renewal application. This will require staff to go into the community and promote the school. Mr. Spitzer recommended the use of social media to increase school's recruitment opportunities in the community.

Mr. C. Greene explained the charter renewal process and timing. He noted that more detail and more elements will be required for this application than for the middle school expansion just requested.

Agenda Item 6.5. Math Program

Mrs. Brennan went through an extensive discussion of the history of the math program and the work underway to improve the effectiveness of this important program. Mr. C. Greene and Mrs. Brennan presented sample problems students work on and the problem areas that they are trying to overcome. They pointed out the different ways to solve problems that the students need to master and how this is more complex than other areas of study. They discussed the new math leader and the new teaching staff on board this year. Ms. Nash joined the discussion explaining that some of the students suffer from lack of organization, structure and just not doing the work.

The team also discussed certain trends for 8th graders where higher failure rates appear. They tend to not be realistic about the change about to happen as they move on to high school. They do improve through the year, but extra help is needed. Mr. Roman explained that as high school

acceptance notices are received the reality of coming change sinks in and that changes student behavior. Ms. Nash noted the need for differentiated help for these students.

Mr. C Greene discussed the move of special help to after school from Saturday programs which helped attendance. It also left a smaller group to assist on Saturdays which improved that program.

Mrs. Brennan discussed station teaching for the math program as another major technique available in smaller classes.

Agenda Item 6.6 Q1/Q2 School Update

Mr. C. Greene reviewed his recent fund raising efforts and his meeting with members of the Riverdale Jewish Center. They made a substantial contribution to the school and more may be possible. He showed a video from the event with an Atmosphere graduate speaking to the potential contributors. Four school leaders were present.

Mr. Roman discussed the recent trip to the Ethical Culture Fieldstone School. He showed a video of the student activities there, the Atmosphere speakers and the warm reception given to Atmosphere.

Mr. C. Greene reported on the changes in the staff, the reasons, the hiring tools used and overall how this was working. Mrs. Brennan and Ms. Nash added to the discussion with a discussion of the criteria for success in hiring.

The leaders discussed recent suspension issues that have arisen. Some were in the special education area. These interventions were needed to sustain the education environment required at Atmosphere.

Mr. Roman discussed the latest developments in the effort to put together a partnership with the Kinneret Day School for use of the Atmosphere gym at Independence Avenue. He reviewed the agreement's language with the school and received input and support from the board to proceed.

Mr. Spitzer moved to approve this agreement.
Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: M. Burton, A. Dillon, J. Greene, M. Lagas, J. Spitzer.
Nays: none

Agenda Items 6.7 and 6.9 were deferred to a later meeting

Agenda Item 6.8. MS/HS Planning

Mr. C. Greene started the discussion of future plans with a discussion of how to staff a larger organization. The meeting then evolved to a wide ranging discussion of what kind of expanded school do we want to have, what is the focus of such a school, what are the major goals of such a school. The board asked for input from staff about their views. The board also went around the room and each give their views of what they wanted. More input and more discussion needs to follow at future meetings.

Mrs. Brennan gave a brief update on the Costa Rica trip planning and fundraising work to support the trip.

Agenda Item 7. Consent Agenda

There were no consent agenda items.

Agenda Item 8. Executive Session

There was no executive session at this meeting.

Agenda Item 9. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Agenda Item 10. New Business

There was no new business.

Agenda Item 11. Adjournment

At 8:33PM the board voted to adjourn.

Mr. Dillon moved to adjourn.

Mr. Spitzer seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: M. Burton, J. Greene, Dillon, M. Lagas, J. Spitzer

Nays: none.