



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes January 23, 2019

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. Ben Pah
Mr. Bryan Fryer
Mr. Peter Markey

Agenda Item 1. Call to order

At approximately 5:06 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 Governance or Accountability Committee meetings this month.

Mr. J. Greene reported on the Finance Committee call on January 11, 2019. The committee discussed the long term financial model, trends in accounts payable and debt. Also the financial outlook, with and without expansion of the school.

Mr. C. Greene reviewed membership of the Governance, Accountability and Finance Committees.

The Governance Committee members are Mr. Dillon, Mr. Spitzer and Mr. J. Greene.
The Accountability Committee members are Mr. Burton, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Spitzer and Dr. Lagas.
The Finance Committee members are Dr. Lagas, Mr. Burton and Mr. J. Greene

Agenda Item 4. Comments from the Public

There were no public attendees or public comments.

Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda

There were no revisions to the agenda.

Agenda Item 6.1. Program Leader Update

Mr. Ben Pah reviewed the Stars rewards program with the board. This program rewards students for improved performance in Math and English with sweatshirts and other wearables. This program has a very positive effect on motivation. Mr. Pah explained what students have to do to receive the reward and how it can be worn in the school. Mr. C. Greene explained the limitation of the reward system, and the performance levels, and improvements needed to receive a reward. The board discussed the success of the program.

Mr. Pah and Mr. C. Greene discussed the success of the equestrian and sailing programs in accomplishing similar motivational goals. They went on to show a video of these programs.

The next 8th grade graduation has been scheduled for June 28 at Columbia University.

The school management and the board then discussed fund raising efforts, the value of Atmosphere branded clothing in fund raising and the need to jump start the Atmosphere Foundation's support of the scholarship program. The need for accurate record keeping was noted by the board to enable the Foundation to take over this responsibility and commitment.

Later in the meeting Mr. C. Greene reviewed the Scholarship program design including the number of hours Atmosphere graduates have to give to Atmosphere while in high school to earn a partial scholarship under the program.

Mr. Pah then noted ways the leadership team is working to control cost of all programs including multi vendor bids for work and tougher negotiations with vendors.

Agenda Item 6.2. Finance Update

Mr. Fryer reported on the financial performance of the school. He reviewed the balance sheet, the board dashboard of financial information and the long term model. Topics covered included financial goals, recent developments, debt and accounts payable levels and paydown rates, and requested additions to the dashboard. Mr. J. Greene assisted in discussing the long term model and expense accrual dynamics.

The need for a loan to Atmosphere for February was discussed. The loan amount and quick payback plan was reviewed.

Mr. C. Greene discussed progress on the expansion plans of the school and noted that there would be a public hearing on February 4 at 5PM at 5959 Broadway to get public input on the matter.

Agenda Item 6.3. Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the December 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. Principal Update

Mr. C. Greene presented to the board an explanation of how consistent testing is done across all three grades and how progress in academic performance can be demonstrated. He pointed out how more time spent in the Atmosphere culture leads to better academic performance. The board asked about expanding the school to lower grades to get students into the culture sooner but again concluded that starting as a middle is the accepted strategy.

Mr. C. Greene went on to discuss Atmosphere student test results and how they would be compared to benchmarks such as the district scores. He also noted the high poverty level of the student body, now running at 90%. The benchmark used by the authorizer is one year old showing a lower percentage. Mr. Greene pointed how this impacts how Atmosphere's scores are evaluated with benchmark data using the calculated poverty mix.

He then discussed the achievement program for English, covering development of complex writing and analysis skills, introduction to abstract ideas and proper use of quotes. He also discussed the hours per week and the Saturday schedule for this program. Advance preparation of tutors to enable proper leadership of this program was also explained.

Mr. Greene also reviewed signage discussions with the landlord at 5959 Broadway and the new advertising brochure to be used for fall student recruiting.

Agenda Item 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7. Charter Renewal Update, Charter Revision Update, HS Charter Revision Update

Mr, Greene explained the development of the application for a charter revision to enable a high school to be offered to the community. The work involves the leadership team contributing various sections of the application. Substantial drafting has to be done in February including a budget for a high school operation.

He also discussed leadership staffing for a high school operation, including titles, responsibilities and additional leaders needed.

Agenda Item 6.8. Facilities Update

This topic was deferred to another meeting.

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

The board discussed and decided on a process to do a formal evaluation of the Principal's performance. The process to be lead by Dr. Lagas. Mr. J. Greene was asked to have legal counsel provide certain guidance to the board in this regard.

Agenda Item 11. Adjournment

At 8:19 PM the board voted to adjourn.

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Mr. Burton moved to adjourn.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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