



# Atmosphere academy

## Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes October 30, 2019

Atmosphere Academy Charter School  
5959 Broadway  
New York, New York 10463

### **Board Members Attending:**

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

### **Board Members Absent:**

### **Others in Attendance:**

Mr. Colin J. Greene  
Mrs. Katherine Brennan  
Mr. Christian Roman  
Ms. Elizabeth Nash  
Mr. Ben Pah  
No public in attendance

### **Agenda Item 1. Call to Order**

At approximately 5:10PM Dr. Lagas called the meeting to order.

### **Agenda Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance**

Dr. Lagas led the pledge of allegiance that was held at this meeting.

### **Agenda item 3. Board Reports**

Mr. J. Greene reported on the Accountability Committee meeting, the Governance Committee meeting, and the Finance Committee meetings of September and October.

#### **Agenda Item 4. Comments From the Public**

There were no public attendees and therefore no comments.

#### **Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda**

Mr. C. Greene reviewed the agenda for the meeting and the board had no objections or additions.

#### **Agenda item 6.1. Board and Principal Evaluation**

Dr. Lagas discussed the evaluation process for the principal of the school. Timing of information flows to the Board, such as the principal's self-evaluation and test scores, were discussed.

Mr. C. Greene discussed the Board's self-evaluation, and the positive reception the SUNY team gave the evaluation. Mr. Greene and the Board then discussed how to make the self-assessment a more efficient process for the future.

#### **Agenda Item 6.2. Facilities**

Mr. C. Greene reviewed recent communications with leaders of the Riverdale Jewish Center (RJC) about the lease amendment being negotiated. The Board then discussed the effort to resolve the dispute, the proposal that was given to RJC and the timing needed to get the DOE to approve the amendment. The Board supported the proposal made to RJC to settle the construction dispute.

He then covered progress of the construction at 22 Marble Hill Avenue. He discussed the stop work order and the resolution of that issue. He informed the Board that the owner has said the building will be closed up in 2 months and work can commence inside for the winter.

Mr. C. Greene then discussed the new real estate opportunity on Sedgwick Avenue to house a high school. The location was identified and distance from current facilities shown to the Board.

#### **Agenda Item 6.3. Apparel Update**

Mr. Pah and Mr. Greene reviewed the current spending for apparel used to reward student performance. Due to continuing improving student performance the cost estimate for the year has increased. The leadership and the Board discussed different levels of spending and concluded on 1.5% of budget as the current limit. This is subject to revision at any time after discussion with the Board.

Mr. Spitzer moved to increase the apparel spending cap to 1.5% of budget.  
Mr. Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

Vote aye: Mr. Burton, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Greene, Dr. Lagas. Mr. Spitzer  
Vote no: none.

**Agenda Item 6.4. Finance**

Mr. Fryer reviewed the financial reports for the prior period. He is projecting a surplus of \$117,000 for the full school year. He noted that enrollment at this point is a slightly low at 406. SPED students are also slightly low at 22 vs. 29 expected. The facility rental adjustment for over payment by DOE mostly last year is in the current numbers which lowers cash to the school this year.

Ms. Nash explained the student population and the mix of regular and SPED students.

Mr. Spitzer and Mr. Burton asked how Atmosphere could attract more SPED students and a discussion followed.

Mr. Spitzer asked for financial information to be sent to the Board before the Board meeting and the plan is to send the Finance Committee package to the Board before future meetings.

Mr. Fryer stated that he had reviewed the payment reconciliation from the DOE and the school is in agreement with that work.

**Agenda Item 6.5. Achievement Update**

Mr. C. Greene reviewed the latest sharp increase in student performance and score increases. The Board discussed possible reasons for this improvement.

**Agenda Item 6.6. Hiring**

Mr. C. Greene reviewed the hiring plans for the school. There have been very few changes so far. Four positions require filling. A mixture of resignations and those asked to leave has driven these openings. There was discussion of certain staff who have left and their performance issues. The Principal said the school is doing well on hiring. Ms. Nash noted that the school is getting good candidates. The leadership and the Board then discussed faculty motivation, backgrounds, the salary scale, and reasons for leaving current jobs to join Atmosphere.

**Agenda Item 6.7. SUNY Renewal/Expansion Update**

Mr. C. Greene informed the Board of recent requests for information from SUNY and discussed what that may mean. He showed materials that informed the Board on SUNY's thinking and possible direction regarding the requested expansion.

**Agenda Item 6.8. Intervention Update**

Mr. C. Greene then discussed the school's focus going forward to further improve score performance. The main area is multiple choice questions. Math and English problem interpretation (constructed responses) have been improving rapidly, so focus now has to change to multiple choice problems. There was discussion with the Board about how this can be improved.

Mr. Burton asked about testing to indicate how we are doing. Mr. C. Greene responded by discussing the school's process. Mr. C. Greene noted the high scores are very high and low score are very low. So we have a big spread in performance. Mr. C. Greene noted that the school will need to continue to use sprints (short tests) to prove program success.

Mr. C. Greene also noted that more of the school's programs are integrated so that each program helps others. Siloed teaching was a problem earlier.

Mr. C. Greene covered the data dashboard. Mrs. Brennan and Ms. Nash reviewed issues regarding parental attention. Mr. Greene discussed handling of students in crisis.

All discussed the scalability of the current student support programs.

#### **Agenda Item 6.9. 2018 - 2019 Bonus Update**

Mr. C. Greene and the leadership team discussed the bonus program payout timing and process to award bonus amounts. They noted that the jump in scores will drive higher bonus payouts for some faculty. All the leaders commented on how their staffs will be doing in the bonus process given the preliminary analysis.

#### **Agenda Item 6.10. IP Attorney**

Mr. C. Greene reviewed how he has enlisted the Lawyers Alliance to help find pro bono help from an IP attorney to guide Atmosphere on how to protect its Intellectual Property such as trade name and copyrightable materials.

#### **Agenda Item 6.11. Atmosphere Foundation and Atmosphere For All**

Mr. C. Greene then outlined ideas for new programs the school should consider for the future. These included after school programs and other programs that can be run by Atmosphere Academy or Atmosphere Foundation. There was rigorous discussion of ideas. Further discussion will continue at future meetings.

#### **Agenda Item 6.12. Board Meeting Minutes.**

The Board reviewed the minutes from the September 10 and September 18 Board Meetings. The board approved both minutes as drafted.

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Mr. Burton moved to approved the September 10, 2019 Board Minutes.  
Mr. Spitzer seconded the motion.

Vote aye: Mr. Burton, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Greene, Mr. Spitzer  
Vote no: none  
Abstained: Dr. Lagas

Mr. Spitzer moved to approve the September 18, 2019 Board Minutes.  
Mr. Dillon seconded the motions.

Vote aye: Mr. Burton, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Greene, Dr. Lagas, Mr. Spitzer  
Vote no: none

### **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**

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Burton moved to adjourn.  
Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. Burton, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Greene, Dr. Lagas, Mr. Spitzer  
Vote no: None.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 PM..