



# Atmosphere academy

## Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes June 24, 2020

Zoom Conference Call  
Atmosphere Academy Charter School  
5959 Broadway  
New York, New York 10463

### **Board Members Attending:**

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

### **Board Members Absent:**

### **Others in Attendance:**

Mr. Colin J. Greene  
Mr. Peter Markey  
Ms. Elizabeth Nash  
Mrs. Katherine Brennan  
Ms. Camila Gonzalez  
Mr. Bryan Fryer  
Mr. Christian Roman  
Ms. Lean Litvak  
No public in attendance

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

At approximately 5:05PM Mr. James Spitzer opened the conference call and called the Board meeting to order.

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

No Pledge of Allegiance was performed.

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

Mr. J. Greene reported on the Governance Committee call of June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Mr. C. Greene reported on the June 15<sup>th</sup> Accountability Committee call. The topics included principal evaluation, reopening report, social justice programs, hiring and staffing, SUNY accountability, mid-year evaluation and staff return rates for the new year.

Mr. J. Greene reported on the Finance Committee call of June 19<sup>th</sup>. Topics discussed there were covered at this board meeting. Mr. C. Greene asked Mr. Fryer to write the Finance Committee minutes. Mr. J. Greene explained how non Finance Committee members can listen in to the Finance Committee call if they desire to do so.

#### **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**

The board had no objections or additions.

#### **Agenda item 6.1. Blue Engine Partnership**

Ms. Nash and Mrs. Brennan explained the value of this program to support mathematics and student learning departments. They introduced Blue Engine (BE) staff members Ray Canada and Aisha Chappell. Ms. Chappell presented to the staff and Board. She explained why Blue Engine exists. The goal is to make teachers high functioning. Key areas of proactive work range from work with individual teachers, to differentiated planning, to response to data, to team effectiveness.

Mr. Canada reviewed the last year's work with Atmosphere. His charts showed the rubric used to assist Atmosphere in the classroom. He then showed how they dissected a lesson and make improvements by data review, gap identification and then gap filing changes.

He went on to discuss student practice and small group differentiated instruction.

The BE team then went on to explain how it would take their work to a broader scale across more of Atmosphere's instruction using a year by year chart.

Mr. C. Greene noted how BE added real value to Atmosphere's work and increased professionalization of the staff. They also added to the use of data. He asserted that there is much to be gained by working with BE.

Board members asked about the application to remote learning, support for better scholars, what resources were needed to expand the work, and how long BE will be needed.

Mrs. Brennan spoke to the positive growth of teacher performance.

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Ms. Nash spoke to the impact of BE on planning and operations. She noted the growth of teacher performance for those involved with BE. Also the improved student outcomes.

The Board discussed the cost of BE which was \$24,000 last year and that would rise to \$47,000 for the next year.

### **Agenda Item 6.2. Board Meeting Minutes**

Mr. J. Greene presented the draft May Board Meeting Minutes for approval by the Board. These were sent to the Board in advance for their review.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the meeting minutes for May  
Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. Burton, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Greene, Dr. Lagas, Mr. Spitzer

Vote no: None

Motion adopted.

### **Agenda Item 6.3. Finance Update**

Mr. Fryer reviewed the financial reports for the month of May and year to date. He focused first on the Scorecard. He presented results year to date compared to prior year and noted that he expected a surplus of just under \$261,000 at end of the academic year. He also discussed the Statement of Activities with focus on spending for rent and compensation and Covid-19 costs.

He then reviewed the cash balance and cash flow outlook through year end 2020. The expectation is for excess cash at year end. No bridge loan is expected to be needed at year end. The long term cash flow outlook sent to the board was reviewed covering loan repayments and bonus payments.

The Board discussed the US government Covid-19 financial support programs and whether any of them could help Atmosphere. The Board asked that this be researched.

April cash outflow is much lower than last year. Financial performance is much better than last year on an operating basis.

### **Agenda Item 6.4. 2020-2021 Budget Approval**

Mr. C. Greene and Mr. Fryer presented the school budget for the new year. It relied on the latest per pupil payment rate that the school is aware of. It would result in a substantial surplus for the year if student numbers are as planned. The Board was also advised that Mr. C. Greene and Mr. Fryer had reviewed three other budgets with lower revenue estimates based on lower enrollment or lower per pupil payment rates. Sensitivity tests were explained so the Board knew how much loss of revenue had

what impact on surplus.

The board then moved to approve the budget based on known per pupil payment rates.

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

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

Motion adopted.

### **Agenda Item 6.5. Read 180 Proposal**

Ms. Nash reviewed the value of the Read 180 product/system for the Board. This provided the basis for the Read 180 budget item for the new year.

### **Agenda Item 6.6. Contract Approvals**

Mr. C. Greene and leadership team members reviewed a number of contracts needed in the new school year. Each contract was explained in terms of purpose and cost. The Board then moved to approve the expenditure for the school.

The contracts reviewed and approved by the Board by motion and vote. Read 180 and Amplify were contingent on final per pupil funding being confirmed. Staples, Breffini and Insurance items were not contingent and funding was unconditionally approved.

Read 180	\$ 22,670
Amplify	\$ 56,878
Staple	\$ 21,999
Breffini HVAC	\$ 25,500

Insurance

1. General Liability Package Quote – Renewal - \$36,444.
2. Umbrella Quote – Renewal - \$13,400
3. Student Accident Quote – Renewal - \$1,750
4. Catastrophe Accident Quote – Renewal - \$300.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve these contracts as described.  
Mr. Spitzer seconded the motion.

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

### **Agenda Item 6.7. Board Evaluation**

Mr. C. Greene proposed that the Board use the same evaluation format used in the prior year, He sent the format and last year's evaluation to the Board for their review. After discussion the board agreed and approved the use of the proposed format.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the use of the proposed format for Board evaluation.  
Mr. Dillon seconded that motion.

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

Motion adopted.

### **Agenda Item 6.8. Board Membership**

Mr. C. Greene reviewed current Board membership, discussed changes in assignments and reviewed term lengths and end dates.

Mr. Burton was asked if he would self-nominate for another term on the Board and he agreed. A motion was made to vote him onto the Board for another term.

Mr. Dillion moved to vote Mr. Burton onto the Board for another term.  
Mr. J. Greene seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted.

Other changes discussed is having Dr. Lagas move to the Secretary of the Board from Chairman, Mr. J. Greene vacate the Secretary position and also become a reviewer for Board minute preparation which will move to an Atmosphere staff assignment.

### **Agenda Item 6.9. Reopening Update**

.Ms. Nash assisted, by Mr. C. Greene, explained the reopening plan for the school under Covid-19 restrictions. The plan is to do a blended operation where only part of the student body is in the buildings at any one time. She showed room layouts and occupancy plans. Adequate spacing and masks will be required. Busing plans remain open until the city gives more information. Leased space building square footage is adequate for this plan.

Mr. C. Greene elaborated further on the growth of student and teacher population and the stresses that puts on the school.

Mrs. Brennan discussed the difficulty of keeping students engaged with a remote learning model. She

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explained the orientation plan for the fall and how that will be intensive and interactive to start everyone out highly focused. There will be 8 sessions and students have to “graduate” from the Launch Academy.

**Agenda Items 6.10, Social Justice Initiative and 6.11. Remote Instruction Update were deferred until the next meeting.**

**Agenda Item 6.12 Accountability Measures Update**

Mr. C. Greene and Ms. Litvak explained the work underway to predict how the school’s students are performing relative to NY State standard levels. The school runs a “midline” test process that endeavors to predict how students perform. The school believes it is a good predictor and has sent the results to SUNY.

**Agenda Item 6.13. Graduation**

Mr. C. Greene and Ms. Nash described the drive through graduation process and showed pictures of the event held at the Riverdale facility. He discussed the challenge to make it valuable to the students. A photo process was also implemented so each student has a record of the event. 120 students attended, which is the vast majority of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class.

**Agenda Item 7. Consent Agenda**

There were no consent agenda items.

**Agenda Item 8. Executive Session**

At 8:24 PM a motion was made to enter Executive session to discuss the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition, sale or exchange of securities, where publicity would substantially affect the value.

Mr. J. Greene moved to enter Executive Session.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. Burton, Mr. Dillon, Mr. J. Greene, Dr. Lagas, Mr. Spitzer

Vote no: None

Motion adopted.

At 8:42 PM a motion was made to exit Executive Session.

Mr. J. Greene moved to adopt the motion.

Mr. Spitzer seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted

**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 8:44 PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. J. Greene moved to adjourn.  
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Meeting adjourned.