



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes September 30, 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

Board Members Absent:

Mr. James Spitzer

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
Mr. Ben Pah
No public in attendance

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

At approximately 5:03PM Dr. Lagas 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 September 28, 2020. Topics discussed were board size, diversity, background (need for more education representation), alumni participation, and community involvement. Also discussed was use of an advisory board as a first step to full board participation, and the need to move the Board self-evaluation along to completion

Mr. C. Greene reported on the Accountability Committee call for August. He reported that that committee discussed the school opening process and Covid-19 preparations.

Mr. Fryer reported on the Finance Committee call of September 25, 2020. The detail of that meeting was presented in the Finance Update discussed below.

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. Board Meeting Minutes

Mr. J. Greene presented the draft August 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 July 2020.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

Motion adopted.

Agenda Item 6.2. Finance Update

Mr. Fryer gave the Board an update on the annual audit process and status. This had been reviewed with the Finance Committee previously. He reported on his discussion with the auditors and the favorable audit report results. A few improvements were noted for operations, such as debit card processes, but nothing material. He then discussed the year end financial results for the preceding year as they appear in the audit report.

He then discussed the current student population levels and the impact on the current year. At the time

of the meeting the school had enrolled over 590 students and was targeting 618. He then reviewed the cash implications of various enrollment levels. He noted that cash is higher at the beginning of the year and is lower later as reimbursements match to actual student enrollment. But cash stays strong throughout the year, except for the period just after annual staff bonus payments. Mr. C. Greene commented further on the per pupil reimbursement rate and the strength of cash if Atmosphere can reach and enrollment close to 620 students this year.

Mr. C. Greene noted the stress on the State due to Covid-19 and the risk to the school's budget if State and City reimbursement cuts are made.

Agenda Item 6.3. Audit Report Approval.

After completion of discussion of the audit report the Board moved to approved the report.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approved the audit report.
Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

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

The motion was adopted and the audit report approved.

Mr. C. Greene commended Ms. Gonzalez, Ms. Nash, Mr. Fryer and MMJ in general for the audit process just completed. Ms. Gonzalez commented on how well the virtual process for information flow had worked.

Mr. C. Greene was approved to sign the representation letter supporting the audit process.

Agenda Item 6.4. Enrollment Update

Ms. Gonzalez reviewed the current status of student recruitment. She noted that there was rotation at this point with the number of new enrollments matching the number of students leaving so student enrollment levels are at a standstill.

Ms. Nash noted that there had been some transfers to other schools but overall the team is doing well holding onto students.

Agenda Item 6.4. Reopening Update

Mr. C. Greene reviewed the education options offered to parents and students given the Covid-19 constraints and safety requirements. He noted the problems the DOE had with their HVAC systems in older buildings. He again discussed the improvements Atmosphere has made in their buildings. Atmosphere is much better positioned than the NYC DOE in terms of the HVAC systems.

In the blended educational option offered by Atmosphere Mr. C. Greene reported that there will be small classes of approximately 15 students.

Ms. Gonzalez noted that students are making decisions for the parents regarding education options so the school has had to adapt it as a communication model.

Mr. C. Greene explained the value of benefits provided to students such as trips and other motivational awards. He reviewed how these award systems will work in a blended model.

A question was asked about attendance. While attendance has started out low, it is now at 90%. This trend is similar to normal years when the August attendance runs 80% and rises to 90% in the fall. Mr. Roman noted that the attendance process had been improved so that the daily process is completed faster.

Mr. C. Greene continued with a discussion of how the school handled one staff Covid-19 infection. He noted the lack of guidance and support from the DOE and State. He reviewed the contact tracing process which was not timely. Little instruction was given by the DOE other than to quarantine. The efforts did inform the school's planning going forward.

He then discussed how the Covid-19 testing process will be handled going forward. All tests will be at the offices of Urgent Way, the school's testing provider. Ms. Gonzalez reviewed how insurance will cover 2 tests per year for everyone. She then explained how the Federal government has purchased all rapid tests that are now being transferred to the State.

Mrs. Brennan reviewed how she was holding class observations. She noted that teachers are generally meeting the expectations of the school leadership.

Agenda Item 6.6. Social Justice Update

Mr. Roman reviewed his observations and analysis of student behaviors and how the school is dealing with issues given the Covid-19 concerns. He noted the special attention being paid to student nervousness and other unusual problems.

He then described the social justice program. This was designed to show students how to get power by having the students create a social justice campaign. The students then presented their campaign at a group meeting. The idea was for students to learn how to express themselves. The social workers at the school are taking on more leadership responsibility in this area.

Mr. C. Greene and Mr. Roman then discussed future possible programs on social justice education.

Agenda Item 6.7. Facility Expansion Update

Ms. Gonzalez reported that the Marble Hill facility was coming along well and would be ready on the late October timeframe.

Mr. C. Greene showed pictures of the new space. There will be big improvements in classrooms and hallways. Mr. J. Greene stated that the TCO for the space would probably be late October or November.

Mr. C. Greene reported that the school is growing student enrollment by 50%. To meet the increased size, the hiring process has improved, but the remote learning model has made teacher monitoring more difficult.

Agenda Item 6.8. School Quality Update

Mr. C. Greene explained the survey process used to get feedback on school performance and image with the parents, teachers and students. 70% of parents and teachers took the survey. And 97% of teachers were involved. This is a very strong response. Mr. C. Greene then reviewed many responses by students and parents. Ms. Gonzalez reviewed the process used to get parent response to the survey. The report was sent to the Board.

Agenda Item 7. Consent Agenda

There were no consent agenda items.

Agenda Item 8. Executive Session

The board moved to enter Executive Session to discuss the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation.

Mr. Burton moved to enter Executive Session.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

After discussion the Board moved to exit Executive Session.

Mr. Dillion so moved.

Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

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 approximately 7:16PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Burton moved to adjourn.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

Meeting adjourned.