



# Atmosphere academy

## Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes April 29, 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. Ben Pah  
Ms. Elizabeth Nash  
Mrs. Katherine Brennan  
Ms. Camila Gonzalez  
Mr. Bryan Fryer  
Mr. Christian Roman  
No public in attendance

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

At approximately 5:08PM 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**

The Accountability Committee call was held on April 17, 2020. Mr. Burton, Dr.Lagas and Mr. Spitzer

Atmosphere Academy  
April 29, 2020

participated. Mr. C. Greene, Mrs. Brennan, and Ms. Nash reported on the discussion at this committee call.

The Finance Committee call was held on April 24, 2020. Mr. Greene, Dr. Lagas, and Mr. Burton participated. Mr. J. Greene reported on the discussion at this committee call.

The Governance Committee call was held on April 28, 2020. Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Spitzer participated. Mr. J. Greene reported on the discussion at this committee call.

#### **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**

The board reviewed and approved the March minutes as written and previously sent to the board.

Mr. Spitzer moved to adopt the minutes.  
Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted.

#### **Agenda Item 6.2. Finance Update**

Mr. Fryer reviewed the financial reports for the month of March and year to date. He focused first on the Statement of Activities. He presented results year to date compared to prior year and noted that he expected a surplus of \$201,000 at end of the academic year.

On cash flow, he noted that cash was slightly better than prior year with 9 month cash flow at \$293,658. He reviewed the expected May 2020 cash balance, but warned that certain Title grants were the key to a strong cash balance at the end of this payment cycle.

The IRS Form 990 was then discussed. Preliminary approval was requested subject to any later Board member concerns.

A motion was made to approve the 990.

Atmosphere Academy  
April 29, 2020

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the IRS Form 990.  
Mr. Spitzer seconded the motion.

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

The 990 was approved.

Mr. C. Greene then explained the budget analysis underway for the next fiscal year. He explained that he is modeling many different scenarios given the uncertainty.

### **Agenda Item 6.3. Erik Joerss NYCCSC Discussion**

Mr. Joerss opened with a discussion of his role at the charter center.

He next explained the state of politics and political power in New York State. He explained the views of the Governor, the Assembly and the Senate. He noted changes that have occurred, especially in the Senate.

He explained the attitude toward big charter school chains and how independent schools are gaining influence.

Regarding the Governor, he noted his support for charter schools. Mr. Joerss also discussed the financial stress that NYS and Governor are under, given the Covid-19 impacts. Everyone is saying do not cut us. Charter school per pupil has been set, but if public schools are cut then charters will be cut also, was Mr Joerss view. The key question is whether a federal stimulus package is passed helping the states.

On the issue of recycled charters, this is not expected to happen.

On the question of whether "zoom" meetings can be a permanent option, he did not have an answer.

The Board asked when we would have a better view of the budget for next year. Mr. Joerss said by April 30 we would get the first information on that point. Absent federal help we could expect approximately 20% cut in support.

The Board asked school management to prepare various budget scenarios, which are already underway.

Mr. Joerss closed by noting the clear political lines involved. All states in need, except Louisiana, are blue (Democratic states) and the Senate is in Republican hands. This leaves the outcome uncertain.

### **Agenda Item 6.4. Spain Partnership**

Mr. C. Greene explained conversations he is having with the ESIC University and Sorolla Schools in Spain. He explained that given the current global health issues, this is a future opportunity. Many questions

have been asked of Atmosphere by our potential partners. The dialogue on how Atmosphere operates is ongoing with the Atmosphere Principal. The potential is for a sister school in Spain in 2021-2022 or later. Also possible are professional development conferences and other joint activities. Other ideas include exchange of students and staff. To date no financial commitments have been made.

#### **Agenda Item 6.5. Admission/Enrollment Update**

Ms. Gonzalez reviewed total applications to date. Six Hundred and ninety three (693) have been received. For the sixth grade 484, for the seventh 134, and 8<sup>th</sup> 75. This fits the expansion plans the school has in place for next year. The school will be able to fill all open seats. Processes to assure attendance are now underway. Given the current closed school situation, a virtual open house is planned for the new applicants. Ms. Gonzalez noted that the school's reputation in District 10 is still positively growing which helps filling all open positions.

In response to a Board member question, Mr. C. Greene reviewed the two step process (over 2 school years) to get to the 720 student population authorized.

#### **Agenda Item 6.6. Recognition School Status**

Mr. C. Greene reviewed the NYSED list of top schools in New York State. He noted that Atmosphere was high on that list and explained the value of that success. The total list of top schools is 582 in number, and of those 30 are charter schools. Atmosphere is one of those 30. He noted that he will get the word out on this achievement.

#### **Agenda Item 6.7. Coronavirus Response Update**

Ms. Nash and Mrs. Brennan reviewed the actions taken to address the new environment. They reviewed the processes applied and the accomplishments achieved. They noted that labs and advisory programs have now been added.

A Board member question asked about the breadth of teacher participation. Ms. Nash explained that all teachers have been active and fully supportive of the new online processes. Collaboration has been strong, everyone has been checking it as they are supposed to and all have been focused on the online work.

The leadership team is tracking the level of difficulty in running the online program and assessing morale. Morale is running high at this point.

The team noted that a survey was taken of students and 395, a very high percentage of those enrolled, participated. 90% are able to keep up with the online work. Only a few need extra help.

#### **Agenda Item 6.8. Facility Update**

Atmosphere Academy  
April 29, 2020

Mr. C. Greene reported that progress at the Marble Hill construction site has ceased. Apparently the landlord has applied for special permission to proceed with construction while the city and state are in shut-down. Mr. Spitzer noted that the Department of Buildings has issued permits to build charter schools despite the shut-down.

Ms. Gonzalez explained the oversight of the facilities that are not being used. Members of the operations team go into the building and performs a clean up periodically.

Regarding the leasing of the first floor at 5959 Broadway, no word has been received from the Stag group. The school will engage when the shut-down ends.

Regarding the conversion of the coat room at 3700 Independence Avenue, the floor is going in now and this project is almost done.

### **Agenda Item 7. Consent Agenda**

There were no consent agenda items.

### **Agenda Item 8. Executive Session**

There was no Executive Session.

### **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. J. Greene moved to adjourn.

Mr. Spitzer seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

Meeting adjourned at 7:02 PM.