



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes March 25, 2020

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
Ms. Lean Litvak
Mr. Daryl Jenkins
Mr. Bryan Fryer
Mr. Peter Markey
No public in attendance

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

At approximately 5:04PM 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

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The Accountability Committee is upcoming on April 17 so no report was given on this committee.

Dr. Lagas and Mr. J. Greene discussed the Finance Committee discussion and reports discussed.

No Governance Committee meeting was held this month so no report was given.

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 February minutes as written and previously sent to the board.

Mr. Burton moved to adopt the minutes.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Abstain: Mr. Spitzer (not present at February meeting)

Vote no: None

Motion Adopted.

Agenda Item 6.2. Finance Update

Mr. Fryer reviewed the financial reports for the month of February and year to date. Included were the Financial Scorecard, Statement of Financial Position, and Statement of Activities. He focused on the projected full year surplus and certain areas of over budget, such as travel. He expected lower costs later in the school year which would add to the projected surplus.

The Board asked about the previous erroneous payments from the city that are being repaid this year. Mr. Fryer noted that a large part had been repaid so far this year.

Mr. Spitzer asked for a reconciliation from the Activity Report to cash so the Board can better understand the cash flow of the school.

Mr. C. Greene then explained the impact of Covid-19 actions and the lower costs in certain areas of school activity, such as no need for security, no travel and lower HVAC usage. He also discussed events that had been cancelled and vendors that are not needed in this environment.

The Board then discussed the school's cash flow and the need to manage cash to avoid the need for a short term loan. Mr. C. Greene and Mr. Fryer were asked to fully develop and execute such a plan.

Ms. Nash noted that billing for special education service provided by Atmosphere was working and revenues have been strong. There was a discussion of attendance at charter schools now that all were operating on line.

Mr. C. Greene commented on NYC budget issues and noted that revenue seemed to be assured through the end of the year but that next year was uncertain.

Agenda Item 6.3. Comptroller Job Update

The Board discussed the draft of the job description. There was concern that there was redundancy in some of the language and that simplification could be useful. The Board asked that the position state that CPA or similar certification be preferred with any candidate. Mr. C. Greene agreed to review it and make necessary changes.

It was agreed that all members of the Finance Committee will interview any final candidates.

Agenda Item 6.4. High School Admissions Update

Mr. Daryl Jenkins reviewed a presentation describing which high schools Atmosphere graduates attended and the quality of those schools.

His review was in detail and went line by line though the multi chart presentation of the schools and how many students got into each.

Mr. Jenkins also described how Atmosphere looks for leverage to get more opportunities for its students, such as the private school fair. By participating in events like this Atmosphere is able to increase private school's knowledge of Atmosphere, what it is accomplishing and the ambitions of its graduates.

The Board focused on how Atmosphere can get more students into top private schools. Mr. Spitzer complimented Atmosphere's success so far, and noted that the school needed to support these students in their new environments, if we can. Mr. C. Greene stated there is no spending on alumni support at this point. Mr. Spitzer discussed the culture of private schools and how he supported efforts to help more students get these opportunities. Mr. Roman added comments on the culture change the students faced at these schools.

Mr. Jenkins continued with discussion of the public high school application process. He went through the top DOE schools and who got into each one.

There was further discussion of how the middle 50% of the graduating student body did in terms of high school opportunities. This is where the biggest opportunity is to make difference.

Also discussed were parochial school processes, NYC department of education processes and criteria, independent school interviews and tests, and charter school lottery processes.

Some of the difficulties families have in utilizing these opportunities also came up. Long travel time, cost, some don't value the better schools as much as we think they should, and the added stress of harder schools, all weigh on the decision.

Mr. Jenkins informed the Board of the communications to the students of the requirements of each school so they can prepare for their opportunities as they go through their school years at Atmosphere.

Mr. Jenkins noted that 2 Atmosphere students got into very exclusive NYC public schools. It was noted for all of NYC only 7 Black and Hispanic students got into Stuyvesant High School and 12 into Bronx Science.

The Atmosphere staff committed to more discussion at future meetings on the quality of high schools for the large proportion of Atmosphere graduates.

Agenda Item 6.5. Carnovirus Update

Mr. C. Greene discussed the school's actions to address this health threat. He noted that one custodial staff member had the disease. He discussed testing of certain students and other programs to work through the risk. There was discussion of the need for future testing if the school were to re-open.

Mr. C. Greene also discussed his budget plans for next year and following years, if NYS and NYC require lower spending.

Agenda Item 6.6. Contingency

Mrs. Brennan reviewed the plans and procedures in place to work through the virus shut down.

Topics covered in her review were:

- Staff and teacher protocols
- Methods for teaching remotely
- Technology needs
- Faculty learning protocols
- Facility cleaning protocols and actions
- Visitor prohibitions

Agenda Item 6.7. Remote Instruction Update

Mrs. Brennan reviewed the remote instruction plans with the Board. Topics covered included:

- How remote instruction differed from remote learning.

- How there would be sufficient inter action with the students
- How student submissions would be monitored
- How students interact and get reviewed
- How attendance is monitored

Mr. Pah noted that on line attendance had been high, running at 99%. He also noted how there would be follow up for those not participating, tech support where needed, and outreach to families where needed.

The Board was impressed with these actions and asked that a summary be sent to SUNY for their information.

Agenda Item 6.75. Sprint Performance Update

Ms. Litvak gave a very positive report on sprint (short test) results.

For example: Current 8th grade outperformed prior 8th grades, and the same for the 7th grade. The Board complimented the staff on the high performance. There was also discussion of how SUNY would react to the performance data we have. There was concern over whether there would be full state standardized tests this year.

Agenda Item 6.8. Hiring Update

Mr. C. Greene gave an overview of the actions and hiring plans for the school's expansion in August. Then Mr. Roman, Mr. Pah, Mrs. Brennan and Ms. Nash discussed the hiring details.

Topics discussed were the use of Indeed, which has not been as productive as first thought. The Zoom interviews were described and the final decision process discussed.

Agenda Item 6.9. Enrollment Update

Mr. C. Greene discussed the applications received, There has been strong application volume so far.
Example: 452 6th grade applications to fill 250 positions.
Overall Atmosphere expects to close in on 1000 applications.

The Atmosphere lottery will take place on April 2, remotely, and then Atmosphere will need to follow up promptly to confirm attendance.

Agenda Item 7.0. New Jersey Charter School Association Idea

The Board discussed the inquiry from New Jersey Charter School Association regarding our interest in setting up a school there. The Board expressed support for having further dialogue on this, provided there was no commitment made.

Agenda Item 7.1. Consent Agenda

There were no consent agenda items.

Agenda Item 8. Executive Session

The Board moved to enter Executive Session to discuss student(s) information that is protected by the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and the regulations promulgated pursuant to FERPA by the U.S. Department of Education.

Mr. J. Greene moved to enter Executive Session.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Motion carried.

After discussion the Board moved to return to regular Board session.

Mr. J. Greene moved to exit Executive Session.
Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

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

Motion carried.

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 8:40PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

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

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

Meeting adjourned.