



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes April 29, 2021

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

Board Members Attending

Dr. Michael Lagas
Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr.
Mr. Mervin Burton (left after item 6.8)
Mr. Alan Dillon (left during Executive Session)

Board Members Absent:

Mr. Jim Spitzer

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Colin J. Greene
Mr. Bryan Fryer (left after item 6.1)
Mr. Peter Markey (left after item 6.1)
Mr. Benjamin Pah
Mr. Christian Roman
Mrs. Elizabeth Kelly
Mrs. Katherine Brennan
Mr. Gabriel Rosenblum
Two 8th grade scholars and their parents
No other 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

The Governance Committee met this month to discuss an article in The Washington Post that could include information about Atmosphere Academy's academic program.

The Accountability Committee met this month to discuss the status of Atmosphere's High School application and the SUNY Board hearing taking place on May 4th. The committee also discussed hiring, the New York State exam, Q3 grades, and the article in The Washington Post.

The Finance Committee topics were reviewed during subsequent agenda items, so no report was given.

Agenda Item 4. Comments From the Public

There were no comments at this time.

Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda

There were no changes to the Agenda.

Agenda Item 6.1. Finance Update

Mr. Fryer presented the financials for the month ending 3/31/2021. Atmosphere's cash balance is far exceeding what it was at the same time last year. Mr. Fryer spoke about economies of scale and how it has contributed to the increased cash balance. From last month, most of Atmosphere's spending has been steady. Mr. Fryer also discussed Atmosphere's per pupil funding and what to expect over the next few payment periods.

Mr. Fryer went on to present Atmosphere's forecasted cash balance, and how upcoming bonuses and rent payments for newly constructed spaces impacted the cash forecast. At the end of each month, Atmosphere is still predicted to have a strong cash balance. The Board discussed a slight delay in the per pupil funding and how that may impact future spending.

The Board members who will attend the SUNY Board meeting on May 4th will meet this week to discuss what materials to present at the meeting.

Agenda Item 6.2. Board Minutes

Mr. Rosenblum presented the March 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 board meeting minutes for March 2021.

Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

Motion adopted. March minutes approved.

Agenda Item 6.3. Guests (presented after agenda item 6.5)

Mr. Roman introduced the guests that would be joining the meeting today.

The first guest is an 8th grade scholar who was accepted to Deerfield Academy for high school, which is preparatory high school in Massachusetts. The scholar spoke about his preparation for high school, considering Deerfield is a boarding school. The scholar noted that he has not spent time away from home before, so it will be something new and different. The scholar spoke about he was able to visit the school recently. The scholar's parents spoke about their excitement, and the resilience that the scholar has shown throughout the pandemic. The scholar also noted that he did not enroll in Atmosphere until 8th grade, and the positive impact that Atmosphere had on his academics over the course of one year.

The second guest is also an 8th grade scholar who was recently accepted to high school. The scholar's mother spoke about the "Names Not Numbers" program, where Atmosphere scholars are connected with students from other schools to discuss different topics and socialize. The scholar's mother noted that in 6th grade, he struggled academically and emotionally. She mentioned that Atmosphere was able to change their lives by focusing on detail, being in constant communication, and working directly with students and families. She also gave high praise to different staff members that have worked directly with the scholar and have been able uplift him. The Board asked what we could add to the program to make it better. The scholar's mother spoke about the STARS program, and mentioned that students who may not be performing as well academically should still be acknowledged.

Agenda Item 6.4. Academics Update (presented before agenda item 6.3)

Mrs. Brennan presented on Q3 academics. Mrs. Brennan noted that grades in 6th grade have been improving from quarter to quarter. Compared to last year, Atmosphere scholars still have less As and Bs, however, scholars also have less Fs compares to last quarter. Fs have also dropped from mid-quarter to the end of the quarter.

Mrs. Brennan noted the positive impact that being in-person has had on students.

7th grade scholars have received less Fs in Q3 this year compared to last year. Mr. C. Greene spoke about the end of quarter process, and how he will be changing the process to make it more efficient and effective. Each team, such as culture, operations, and teachers, all have a hand in the end of quarter process. Atmosphere staff will memorialize this process for the future to ensure that it is streamlined.

8th grade scholars have improved over the course of the year as well. The Board asked about how students are progressing from year to year. Mrs. Brennan noted that some current 8th grade scholars that were very successful academically in previous years have regressed slightly. That being said, Mrs. Brennan has worked with Mr. Roman and Mr. Pah to get these scholars back on track academically.

Agenda Item 6.5. Student Learning Update (presented before agenda item 6.3)

Mrs. Kelly updated the Board on hiring for the Student Learning department, including new hires and promotions among current staff members.

At the completion of Q3, there were 40 students identified as high risk for retention. All students are currently in the intervention program. There is promising data that shows these students have been trending in the right direction and may no longer be retained.

Mrs. Kelly discussed the 8th grade intervention program, which includes more student choice and project-based learning to increase motivation among scholars. There has been significant improvement from Q2 to Q3 as a result of this intervention program.

The Board asked about how Atmosphere's data will compare to other schools in Atmosphere's district. Mrs. Kelly noted that Atmosphere will finish the year strong. Mr. C. Greene noted that the only metric that is compared with other schools are state test scores. Atmosphere is seeing an upward trend in student preparation.

Agenda Item 6.6. Culture Update

Mr. Roman presented data on high school acceptances. There are not yet hard numbers, as many acceptances will be given out next week. There are currently 47 scholars that have confirmed where they are going to high school. 122 scholars are still waiting on responses. 21 scholars will attend charter schools, 3 scholars will attend independent schools, and 12 scholars will attend parochial schools. 11 students are moving out of the city or out of the state.

Mr. Roman presented comparative data over the past few years (2018-2021). There are many more families moving out the city compared to previous years, due to the pandemic.

Agenda Item 6.7. Operations Update

Mr. Rosenblum presented on admissions. Atmosphere's numbers are currently very strong, and the school is likely to admit the maximum enrollment for next year. There are still about 100 newly accepted families that the school is waiting on responses from to accept their seats, but Atmosphere anticipates that many will not be enrolling. Mr. Rosenblum spoke about next steps for admissions, and the timeline moving forward.

Mr. Rosenblum also presented new spaces that were previously under construction, and newly branded

windows at the 7th grade building.

Mr. Rosenblum also spoke about the Operations Rounds that are being conducted next week, and shared a sample of the rubric that will be used to grade the operations teams.

Lastly, Mr. Rosenblum and Mr. Roman presented details on the following end of year events: Prom, Field Day, Graduation, and the End of Year Staff Outing.

Agenda Item 6.8. Programs Update

Mr. Pah presented a new micro-video that underscores the impact that Atmosphere has on scholars' lives. Mr. Pah and Mr. C. Greene then discussed international trips and how they will effect the budget.

Mr. Pah also spoke about different external partnerships with influential individuals that he is forming, including movie production companies, magazine publications, and philanthropists. There is a possibility for an Atmosphere movie in the future, as well as a magazine article.

Mr. Pah will ensure that Atmosphere is represented accurately and fairly in any and all publications. Mr. Pah went on to speak about the Polo program and how successful it has been thus far. Mr. C. Greene expanded on this topic and added that the word is spreading about Atmosphere Academy. He is working to capture Atmosphere's story to share with potential partners in the future.

Agenda Item 6.9. School Updates

Mr. C. Greene presented data around the STARS program. Atmosphere's total STARS students have increased from quarter to quarter. That being said, some students have moved down in STARS status in 6th grade. In all years, STAR status fluctuates. Scholars use this as a motivating factor to get back to a STARS status that they previously had. In 7th grade, there has been a significant percentage increase from quarter to quarter. The same has been observed in 8th grade.

Mr. C. Greene then discussed Atmosphere's high school, and some next steps associated with the process. He spoke about the application process, staffing, and student recruitment.

Mr. C. Greene discussed the English State Exam, which took place yesterday. For the most part, the test was executed at a very high level after a very challenging year. It foreshadowed what the school is expecting in future years, and the success that is ahead of Atmosphere. Atmosphere had many students come in to take the exam.

Agenda Item 7. Consent Agenda

There were no consent agenda items.

Agenda Item 8. Executive Session

At approximately 7:37PM, the board moved to enter Executive Session to discuss:

- a. the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition, sale, or exchange of securities, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value.
- b. 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.
- c. information relating to current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense that would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed.

Mr. J. Greene moved to enter Executive Session.

Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

After the discussion, at approximately 8:18 PM, the Board moved to exit executive session.

Dr. Lagas moved to exit Executive Session.

Mr. J. Greene seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: 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 8:19PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. J. Greene moved to adjourn.

Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

Meeting adjourned.

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