



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes December 16, 2020

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

Board Members Attending:

Dr. Michael Lagas (joined during Agenda Item 6.1)
Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr.
Mr. Mervin Burton
Mr. James Spitzer
Mr. Alan Dillon (by phone)

Board Members Absent:

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Colin J. Greene
Mr. Peter Markey
Mr. Christian Roman
Mr. Ben Pah
Mr. Gabe Rosenblum
Mrs. Katherine Brennan
No other public in attendance

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

At approximately 5:09PM Mr. 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

Accountability Committee and Finance Committee topics were discussed during this meeting so no committee reports were given.

Agenda Item 4. Comments From the Public

There were no comments.

Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda

The board had no objections or additions.

Agenda Item 6.1. Finance Update

Mr. Markey updated the board on financial performance of the school. He began with a review of the activities report. He noted that the results were tracking well against budget at this point in the fiscal year.

Mr. C. Greene discussed the strong financial position of the school and that the upcoming partial debt repayment would occur on time. He also discussed the cash position of the school and the recent employee bonus payout. Cash was expected to be sufficient into January 2021 and beyond.

Mr. Markey then discussed the financial dashboard. He reviewed accounts payable levels, enrollment levels, and billing to Yonkers for students enrolled from that district. Mr. Rosenblum discussed contacts with Mount Vernon on billings to them.

Dr. Lagas joined the meeting at this point.

Mr. Markey then discussed the work with the DOE to get reimbursement for real estate taxes paid to landlords.

The Board and management discussed the risk to the per pupil payment amount due to the financial pressure on New York State and New York City. The implications on rent reimbursement and overall financial exposures were also discussed.

Mr. C. Greene explained changes in how goods and services orders and purchases would be handled going forward. Debit cards will be eliminated and credit cards for officers will be adopted. He presented charts showing how expenses are approved at different levels in the business. A draft financial policy document was shown to the Board.

Agenda Item 6.2. Board Minutes (action taken before Item 6.1)

Mr. J. Greene presented the draft November 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 November 2020.
Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted. November minutes approved.

A discussion followed of how minutes will be prepared in the future.

Agenda Item 6.3. Facilities Update

Mr. C. Greene presented the status of various real estate projects underway at this time. He discussed the construction on the new first floor space at 5959 Broadway. He explained some of the expense issue such as the HVAC proposal Atmosphere had proposed. That proposal appears to be too expensive, so alternatives are being worked out with the landlord. Other allowances in the contract are being tracked.

The construction at the Marble Hill facility continues to progress. At this point all allowance money for Atmosphere vendors has been used. Occupancy looks like it will be delayed into first quarter 2021. Delays have been caused by Covid-19 issues, complexity and other issues.

Agenda Item 6.4. Q2 Update

Mrs. Brennan reported on performance of instruction and teaching in the second quarter. She reviewed performance by grade and noted that grade performance improved over the quarter. Some of the problems Atmosphere is seeing from the disruption of Covid-19, she explained, is happening across the country. She went on to explain actions the school is making to make further improvements. These included, extra help for students, coaching of teachers, creating protocols and teaching manuals, better teacher evaluations, data meetings, and professional development for teachers on student engagement and best practices.

Staffing levels were updated next. Recent hiring included 3 in math, 1 in SPED, and 1 in physical education and health. Open staff positions were reviewed next. A math instructional leader and a intervention teacher are being sought.

Mr. Roman reported on the culture of the school. He made a presentation to the Board covering:
Core value award data as of December 10, 2020.
Demerit data.
Top merits given and demerit actions taken.

He then did a review by grade focusing on items to improve behavior.

Next was a review of suspension data. There have been very few events to report. Those events were reviewed along with the causes involved.

Intervention actions were reviewed next. Intervention action were increased 3 fold in quarter 2 over quarter 1. Focus has been on attendance given the remote learning model underway now. Communications to families has also been a focus by management. With these actions attendance has been running over 90% in all grades. Yet there are a few chronic problems the school is dealing with. But the bulk of the students are doing well.

The leadership team next discussed the extracurricular activities the school continues to work hard to progress. These included sports, clubs, enrichment, the SAR partnership and other activities. The SAR Academy partnership continues to add great value to the school with tutoring and culture exchange.

Regarding Covid-19 management the school is now 40% in person and the rest in remote learning.

Mr. Pah next reviewed the fund raising activities. He went over the donation model and the relationship with Custom Ink. He reported on all legal reviews and approvals obtained.

Mr. C. Greene next reviewed a data dashboard of student performance.

He next reviewed ideas for student enrichment including NASA space camp and flight training. His team will review cost and opportunities available.

Agenda Item 6.5. COO Welcome

Mr. Gabe Rosenblum, the school's new COO, was introduced to the Board. He shared his thoughts about his responsibilities, his first experiences, his early ideas for improvements in operations and the opportunity.

Agenda Item 6.6. Enrollment Update

Mr. C. Greene and Mr. Rosenblum reported on the enrollment levels and efforts.

At this point in time applications are behind last year. The common application is the most underperforming at this time. The goal for Atmosphere is to drive more applicants to the school's application. Applications are at 130 so far. The school expects over 1000 applications for the coming year. There are significant opportunities to work with public schools to bring in applicants and those efforts will begin soon. The drive is on to have 750 applications in house by April.

The Board asked about how to get the school back to a 5 day a week in person learning model. Mr. C. Greene responded with a discussion of his checklist of how to get there. These included tracking the percentage of each grade that is operating in person and reviewing family distractions that impact

student learning.

The Board also asked about press efforts and contacts. Mr. Pah responded to those questions.

Mr. Rosenblum then reported on his teams efforts to increase applications. These included charter school fair participations, visits to public schools, discussions with leader in those schools that are advising students on middle schools, planned meetings with other schools, outreach efforts to churches, and efforts to grow partnerships with schools feeding middle schools.

Mr. Pah noted the recent Atmosphere open house for students and parents.

Dr. Lagas asked for a regular report to the Board on application progress.

Agenda Item 6.7. Program Update

The was discussed in Item 6.4 above.

Agenda Item 6.8. High School Update

Mr. C. Greene reported on his team's effort to add a high school to the school's charter. He reported on discussion with SUNY, which were very positive in this regard. He is exploring what needs to be refined and evolved from the school's recent submissions to SUNY. He expects to apply in the new calendar year.

The Board asked for an update on the goal of a high school. Mr. C. Greene reviewed the academic strategy and goal of the expansion plan.

Agenda Item 6.9. Student Recommendation

Mr. Roman discussed preparing a letter of recommendation for an outstanding student that is applying to a distinguished high school. The draft will be circulated to the Board for review and comment before sending.

Agenda Item 6.10. Board Roles

Mr. C. Greene introduced the topic and noted that the terms of some board members were coming to an end.

Dr Lagas nominated himself for another term.

Mr. J. Greene seconded the nominations.

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

Vote no: none

Dr. Lagas is elected to another term as trustee.

Agenda Item 7. Consent Agenda

There were no consent agenda items.

Agenda Item 8. Executive Session

At approximately 7:26PM the board moved to enter Executive Session to discuss

- a. 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 and
- b. The proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition, sale or exchange of securities, because publicity could substantially affect the value.

Mr. J. Greene moved to enter Executive Session.

Mr. M. Burton seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

After discussion, at approximately 7:56PM, the Board moved to exit Executive Session

Mr. J. Greene moved to exit Executive Session.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

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 7:58PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. J. Greene moved to adjourn.

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Mr. Spitzer seconded the motion.

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

Meeting adjourned.