



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes June 22, 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
Mr. Alan Dillon
Mr. Jim Spitzer (left during item 6.6)

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Colin J. Greene
Mr. Bryan Fryer (left after item 6.2)
Mr. Peter Markey (left after item 6.2)
Mr. Benjamin Pah
Mr. Christian Roman
Mrs. Elizabeth Kelly
Mrs. Katherine Brennan
Mr. Gabriel Rosenblum
Ms. Ericka Shammgod (item 6.1 only)
Mr. Angel Piña (item 6.1 only)
Mr. Andrew Raia (item 6.5 only)
Mr. Darryl Jenkins (item 6.6 only)
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 did not meet this month.

The Accountability Committee met this month to discuss the rounds rubrics and forms that Atmosphere's leaders will be utilizing next year.

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

Mr. C. Greene presented the Agenda for approval by the Board. There were no changes to the Agenda.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the Board Agenda for June 2021.
Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted. Agenda approved.

Agenda Item 6.1. Guests

Mr. C. Greene introduced Mr. Angel Piña, Atmosphere's 7th Grade Leader, who will be moving into the Associate Director role next school year.

Mr. Piña provided background on the different roles that he has had at multiple schools in New York City. Mr. Piña has worked both in operations and academics. He reflected on this past year and discussed the Grade Leader position, and his vision for the role moving forward. Mr. Piña also discussed his professional aspirations. The Board asked Mr. Piña how he plans to build his skills moving forward, and what additional resources he might need to achieve his goals. Mr. Piña discussed his areas of growth and plans to support Atmosphere's academic program in the upcoming school year and beyond.

Mrs. Brennan introduced Ms. Ericka Shammgod, Atmosphere's Social Science Instructional Leader, who will be moving into the Science Instructional Leader role next school year.

Ms. Shammgod presented the Amplify science program, and her wish to renew the program for the 2021-2022 school year. Ms. Shammgod discussed the benefits of Amplify and how it supports teachers and scholars. Amplify provides students with a hands-on experience that allows them to grasp science material more easily. Ms. Shammgod spoke about the impact that Amplify has had on student test scores. There has been an improvement since Atmosphere started using Amplify. Ms. Shammgod is requesting that the Board approve the Amplify program for the 2021-2022 school year in the amount of \$25,620. Mr. C. Greene touched on the digital component of the Amplify program, and the added benefit and resource that it provides for students.

Mr. Burton moved to approve the Amplify program in the amount of \$25,620.
Mr. J. Greene seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted. Amplify program approved.

Agenda Item 6.2. Finance Update

Mr. Fryer presented the financials for the month ending 5/31/2021. Mr. Fryer noted that cash position is strong – this year, Atmosphere’s cash balance is almost double what it was at this point last year. During the Finance Committee meeting, the committee discussed paying off the trustee loan sooner than initially expected to improve financial standing. Atmosphere’s operating surplus amount has also grown substantially year after year.

Mr. Fryer discussed the potential for increased expenses moving forward, including salaries as there are more staff members next school year, and rent/utility payments that could increase.

Mr. Fryer presented the FY22 budget, which needs to be submitted to SUNY after Board approval. Mr. Fryer has factored in some of the grants receivable that Atmosphere is expecting.

Mr. C. Greene summarized the finance meeting that he, Mr. Burton, Mr. Fryer, and Mr. Rosenblum held last week. The conversation included free cash flow, Atmosphere’s salary scale, and the potential to hire a CFO in future years. The Board discussed what the CFO’s role would look like, and how a CFO would fall into Atmosphere’s organizational structure. The Board further discussed different tactics to hire a CFO, and resources that Atmosphere could utilize, such as a recruiter.

Mr. Fryer presented the FY22 budget for approval by the Board.

Mr. Dillon moved to approve Atmosphere’s FY22 budget for submission to SUNY.
Mr. J. Greene seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted. Budget approved.

Agenda Item 6.3. Board Minutes

Mr. Rosenblum presented the May 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 May 2021.

Mr. Spitzer seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

Motion adopted. May minutes approved.

Agenda Item 6.4. School Update

Mr. C. Greene discussed the High School/Middle School Board Committees. The Board discussed different ideas for creating these committees and will further this discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. C. Greene also discussed the hiring process for high school staff, and the timeline. Atmosphere will likely start hiring for high school positions in the winter.

Mr. C. Greene presented Trustees Week, which he proposed to be in September. Trustees will have the opportunity to visit schools, meet with students, attend trips, and speak with staff. Trustees Week will take place the week of September 20th.

Agenda Item 6.5. Academics Update & Student Learning Update

Mrs. Brennan provided an update on course offerings and the need to expand course offerings for next school year to further support the Achievement program. English Lab will instead be English Achievement. The same system will be in place for Math, as there will no longer be a Math Lab, but rather Math Achievement. These changes will impact the 6th and 7th grade schedules. In 8th grade, honors students will no longer have Lab classes, as they will be preparing for the Regents exam, and will instead have Honors Math and Honors Science.

Mrs. Brennan introduced Mr. Raia, Atmosphere's English Instructional Leader, who is joining the Board meeting to discuss a change in English resources for next school year. Mr. Raia reiterated the changes that Mrs. Brennan discussed above and expanded on the Read 180 program that was in use this year. Read 180 has previously been used in English Lab classes. Mr. Raia and Mrs. Brennan recommend discontinuing the Read 180 program, given the class changes that Mrs. Brennan mentioned above and the limited time that students would be able to use Read 180 next year. Mr. Raia's recommendation is

to switch to a program called Freckle, which allowed teachers to provide targeted support for students. Through Freckle, students would also be able to earn incentives, which include customizing their pages and avatars. The program is currently being used in over 10,000 school districts. Mrs. Kelly noted that Freckle provides less of a scripted curriculum, which allows Atmosphere's teachers to implement the program as needed.

Mrs. Brennan went on to present her instructional rounds rubric and form. This process will allow for stronger inter-rater reliability and accountability for leaders. The Board agreed that this system will help to identify gaps and ensure that problems are addressed in a timely manner.

Mrs. Brennan also noted that she was able to lower the cost of the Blue Engine program for next school year. Blue Engine will provide resources, coaching and support for six teams of co-teachers and three instructional leaders.

Agenda Item 6.6. Culture Update

Mr. Roman and Mr. Jenkins presented the high school acceptance data for Atmosphere's 8th grade scholars. As of now 111 scholars have been placed at high schools. 56 scholars are still undecided. Three students will attend specialized high schools, which is an increase from last year. Additionally, scholars will be attending public high schools, charter high schools, and parochial schools, among others. These outcomes are already very impressive, even with many high school decisions still to be made.

Mr. Roman noted that he, Mr. C. Greene and Mr. Pah are working on a letter to SUNY to highlight Atmosphere's accomplishments from this year. Mr. C. Greene noted that Atmosphere would like to publicize these outcomes to further spread the word about the school and celebrate the scholars' achievements. This could be done through a variety of media forums.

Mr. Roman went on to present his cultural rounds rubric and form, which will provide more accountability and structure for the culture team.

Agenda Item 6.7. Operations Update

Mr. Rosenblum presented the current enrollment data for next year. Atmosphere's waitlist remains large, with almost 300 students on the waitlist. Atmosphere will continue to pull students off the waitlist as needed. There are a number of families who accepted their seat at Atmosphere, but have not yet come in for registration. Mr. Rosenblum is determining whether these prospective families will actually be enrolling or not. If not, Atmosphere can pull more families off the waitlist.

Mr. Rosenblum went on to present the operational rounds rubric and form, which will allow him to give targeted feedback to the operations team in each building.

Agenda Item 6.8. Programs Update

Mr. Pah presented the program rounds rubric and form and discussed his process for utilizing the resources next year.

Mr. Pah presented a videography contract with No Ledge in the amount of \$26,000 for Board approval. This contract is for various videos that will be filmed and edited, including a graduation video.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the No Ledge contract in the amount of \$26,000.
Mr. Burton seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted. No Ledge contract approved.

Mr. Pah presented the Career Exploration program, which included Jazz, Aviation, Medical, and much more. Mr. Pah shared two videos from the Career Exploration event. Mr. C. Greene presented pictures from the Aviation Career Exploration event. Students were able to sit in multiple planes, experience a flight simulator and have a great experience learning about planes.

Agenda Item 6.9. Achievement Update

Ms. Litvak began by presenting data from interim assessments, such as the midline exam. Ms. Litvak noted that the state exam was different this year, being multiple choice only. 8th grade scholars performed near the same level on Multiple Choice this year compared to last year on both the English and Math midline. All grade levels performed better this year than Atmosphere scholars in 2019.

Ms. Litvak spoke about the differences this year compared to previous years, in terms of remote learning, and how that impacted the data. Ms. Litvak also discussed Atmosphere's student population in terms of tenure at Atmosphere. This year, Atmosphere had more new 7th grade and 8th grade students than in previous years.

Ms. Litvak also presented scholar growth from baseline to midline, and how students made a big improvement throughout the year.

Agenda Item 7. Consent Agenda

There were no consent agenda items.

Agenda Item 8. Executive Session

At approximately 7:55PM, the Board moved to enter Executive Session to discuss:

- a) discussion regarding proposed, pending or current litigation.
- 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) 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.

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

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

After the discussion, at approximately 8:25PM, the Board moved to exit executive session.

Mr. Burton moved to exit Executive Session.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. Dillon, Mr. J. Greene, Dr. Lagas, Mr. Spitzer, Mr. Burton
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 8:25PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Burton moved to adjourn.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Meeting adjourned.