

Atmosphere Academy  
August 30, 2023



**Atmosphere**  
academy

**Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
August 30, 2023**

Atmosphere Academy Charter School  
Zoom Meeting

**Board Members Attending**

Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr.  
Mr. Colin J. Greene (ex officio, CEO)  
Mr. Alan Dillon  
Dr. Michael Lagas

**Board Members Not In Attendance:**

Mr. Jim Spitzer  
Dr. Tzvi Bar-David

**Others in Attendance:**

Mr. Gabriel Rosenblum  
Ms. Elizabeth Nash  
Mrs. Katherine Brennan  
Mr. Benjamin Pah  
Mr. Christian Roman  
Ms. Lona Nguyen (for item 4-11)  
Mr. Peter Markey (for item 7.1)  
Mr. Mike Zyborowicz (for item 7.3)  
Mr. Steven Glickman (for item 7.3)  
Mr. Joe Keeney (for item 7.3)  
Mr. Bob Keogh (for item 7.3)  
Mr. Kyle Pellerin (for item 7.3)  
Ms. Melissa Fox (for item 7.3)  
No other public in attendance

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

At approximately 5:06 PM, Dr. Lagas called the Board meeting to order.

### **Agenda Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was not performed as the meeting was held over Zoom.

### **Agenda Item 3. Executive Session**

At approximately 5:06 PM, the Board moved to enter Executive Session to discuss:

- a) discussions 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

Mr. J. Greene moved to enter Executive Session.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

After the discussion, at approximately 5:28 PM, the Board moved to exit executive session.

Mr. J. Greene moved to exit Executive Session.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

### **Agenda Item 4. Board Reports**

The Middle School Committee met this month. Mr. C. Greene began the board reports by providing an update on the Middle School Achievement Program. Mr. C. Greene spoke about the work that is being done in Achievement. There were some logistical and instructional hiccups this week that Atmosphere's leadership teams will be working to clean up. Mr. Pah spoke about student retention of content. He noted that 7<sup>th</sup> graders remember Atmosphere systems from last year, which is great to see. This will ensure that scholars are able to utilize systems effectively from the beginning of the year or "pick up right where they left off", as Mr.

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Pah stated. Teachers who have been at Atmosphere for years have institutional knowledge of Atmosphere systems, even those that are outside of their content area, which allows them to support with other key academic areas. Mr. C. Greene showed some pictures from the achievement activities.

To add on to the MS Committee, Ms. Nash spoke about “Week 0”, Atmosphere’s first week of school orientation program. Ms. Nash presented some of the Week 0 materials that were presented to students. Atmosphere helps scholars build goals for the school year ahead and reflect on how they can improve from last year. Atmosphere scholars also participated in fun activities to build rapport and get acquainted with their classmates.

The High School Committee met this month. Mrs. Brennan provided an update on the trips that 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade scholars have been taking as part of Atmosphere’s Explore New York orientation program. These trips included Lower Manhattan Walking Tours, New York Botanical Gardens, Central Park, and the American Museum of Natural History. Mrs. Brennan spoke about some of the other orientation items that Atmosphere scholars participated in during the first two weeks of school. Scholars participated in sessions including learning about Atmosphere systems, uniform expectations, extracurricular activities, chromebooks and technology, and more. The board asked about attendance numbers, which have been strong for the beginning of the year.

Mrs. Brennan also provided an update on the August Regents and Summer School Program. Seven courses were offered during summer school, which allowed them to brush up on their academics prior to the August Regents. This allowed scholars that had a lack of credits to make up credits during the summer. During August, Atmosphere offered almost all Regents exams. The only exam not offered was Algebra II. Any scholars who failed in June or did not show enough proficiency to be tested in June, or any scholar that wished to improve their score was able to test in August. Mr. C. Greene noted that not enough scholars tested at a proficient level during the August Regents. Atmosphere’s officers will do an audit of the HS Regents and Achievement programs to ensure that they are being carried out effectively. Ms. Nguyen presented the combined proficiency numbers across all Regents examination periods. Ms. Nguyen spoke to the COVID-19 waivers that were utilized for some students. Those waivers will not be in place moving forward.

#### **Agenda Item 5. Comments From the Public**

There were no comments offered.

#### **Agenda Item 6. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda**

Mr. C. Greene presented the Agenda for approval by the Board.

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Mr. Dillon moved to approve the agenda for August.  
Mr. J. Greene seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted. Agenda approved.

### **Agenda Item 7.1. Finance Update**

Mr. Peter Markey presented financials for the month ending July 31, 2023. Atmosphere is profitable in the months leading up to the school year. Atmosphere saw a profit of almost \$400k in July. The additional rent payment to RJC, trustee loan and foundation loan have all been paid off. With respect to prior year grants, the ESSER 2 and ESSER 3 grants have been fully utilized and the money has been received. For the Title grants (2, 3 and 4), Atmosphere has requested payment on the final tranche. These funds are expected to arrive in the next two weeks.

### **Agenda Item 7.2. Board Approvals**

Mr. Rosenblum presented the board meeting minutes for July 2023.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the Board Meeting Minutes for July 2023.  
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. Dillon and Mr. J. Greene  
Vote Abstain: Dr. Lagas  
Vote no: None

Given lack of quorum, this will be re-voted on at the next board meeting.

### **Agenda Item 7.3. Accounting Firms Presentations**

Mr. Rosenblum introduced the Citrin Cooperman team to present their finance services proposal. Mr. Mike Zyborowicz and Mr. Steven Glickman introduced themselves and provided a presentation on their services. Most Citrin Cooperman employees are paired with clients that are in their specific area of expertise, for example, non-profits. Mr. Zyborowicz spoke to continuity of staff and how multiple staff members are trained on each account to ensure good service. Citrin Cooperman is a full service finance firm, so they have a robust set of individuals

who can answer questions related to all aspects of finance. Mr. Zyborowicz also spoke to the fees and how they try to stick to a fixed fee amount so there are no surprises for clients on pricing. Mr. Zyborowicz and Mr. Glickman then presented their proposal for the board to comment on or ask questions about. The board asked about the start-up and set-up costs and what goes into them. Mr. Zyborowicz noted that there are options related to the service fees, including the Rapid Finance Assessment which is not mandatory. Onboarding items would take about 2-3 weeks. Once a company gets through onboarding, they move to finance and accounting outsourcing, of which there are two options to choose from depending on time on-site. The board asked which team members would be responsible for the onboarding. Mr. Glickman noted that he would be involved in the process every step of the way. The board also asked about systems that the Citrin Cooperman Team would recommend. They noted that they would bring some platforms to the table that could help with cash planning and budgeting.

Mr. Rosenblum introduced the 4<sup>th</sup> Sector Solutions team to present their finance services proposal. Mr. Joe Keeney, 4<sup>th</sup> Sector's President, spoke about his experience and the experience of the firm. 4<sup>th</sup> Sector has roughly 50 professionals and serves 75 clients. Mr. Keeney noted that 4<sup>th</sup> Sector works with both large and small networks. Their philosophy is to be the best, not the biggest, and they have an emphasis on quality. Service excellence and professional mastery are two items that 4<sup>th</sup> Sector focuses on. The board asked 4<sup>th</sup> Sector about systems that 4<sup>th</sup> Sector would want to utilize for Atmosphere. Mr. Keeney spoke about Sage Intact Accounting based on the reporting flexibility. He noted that 75% of their clients also use Quickbooks Online, which he believes to be a fine platform for charter school use. He noted that making a change is expensive and time-consuming, so if Quickbooks is functioning, it may be better to stick with it. The board asked about the time required to make such a transition. Mr. Keeney noted that this would likely require a 6-month process. The board also asked about continuity of staff. Mr. Keeney noted that he, Mr. Keogh and Mr. Pellerin are responsible for ensuring a seamless onboarding process, but mentioned that they have already hired someone for the role. There is also a Senior Accountant who has charter experience. The board asked about the start-up and set-up cost structures. There is a \$10k transition fee at the beginning of the engagement. The board asked about the monthly and weekly process. 4<sup>th</sup> Sector typically presents financials to a leadership team in the third week of each month and then present financials to the board of trustees in the last week of the month. Mr. Keeney noted that they would develop a cadence for 1-2 days per week onsite, but they are available for discussions or meetings any day. The board asked about the onboarding process and how long it will take. Mr. Keeney noted that a month and a half would be sufficient to take over the entire process fully.

The board then discussed the pros and cons of moving forward with both firms. The board moved to a vote to approve 4<sup>th</sup> Sector Solutions pending reference checks.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve 4<sup>th</sup> Sector Solutions pending positive reference checks.  
Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

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

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Vote no: None

Motion adopted. Agenda approved.

**Agenda Item 8. Consent Agenda**

There were no consent agenda items.

**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 7:21 PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. J. Greene moved to adjourn.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

Meeting adjourned.