



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes February 15, 2023

Atmosphere Academy Charter School
Zoom Meeting

Board Members Attending

Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr.
Mr. Alan Dillon
Dr. Tzvi Bar-David (through item 6.3)
Dr. Michael Lagas
Mr. Colin J. Greene (ex officio, CEO)

Board Members Not In Attendance:

Mr. Jim Spitzer

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Gabriel Rosenblum
Ms. Elizabeth Nash
Mr. Christian Roman
Ms. Lona Nguyen
Mr. Peter Markey (for item 6.1)
No other public in attendance

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

At approximately 5:14 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. Board Reports

The Finance Committee met this month. Those topics will be covered later in this meeting.

The High School Committee and Middle School Committee met this month. Those topics will be covered later in this meeting.

Agenda Item 4. Comments From the Public

There were no comments offered.

Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda

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

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the agenda for February.
Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

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

Motion adopted. Agenda approved.

Agenda Item 6.1. Finance Update

Mr. Markey presented the financials for the month ending 1/31/2023. Financially, the standalone month of January was a challenging month. Revenue was somewhat lower than in prior months as it is adjusted downward in this pay period. There are a few expenditures that drove expenses up. This included stipend payments, state unemployment, field trip costs and

property taxes that had been previously accrued. At the end of the year, Atmosphere still expects to have an operating surplus north of \$1 million before depreciation. Mr. Markey noted that per pupil payments 5 and 6 will be adjusted to account for Atmosphere's enrollment. Atmosphere is billing as far in advance as possible for grants. Atmosphere's cash position as the end of January was north of \$1 million.

The board asked about the upcoming payables and Mr. Markey provided more detail on what was upcoming. Mr. Markey presented the statement of financial position. The bulk of prepaid expenses line item is the Europe trip that is upcoming in March for high school students. The trustee loan has been paid off. At this time, Atmosphere compares well to the budgeted items that were determined prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.

The board asked about the balance sheet and how this may impact real estate ventures moving forward. Mr. Markey presented an analysis of what he looks for in a balance sheet and what metrics he will be closely monitoring over the course of the next few weeks and months. Mr. C. Greene presented the Cash Planning document that Atmosphere utilizes to closely monitor cashflow. Atmosphere will likely take a loan from Atmosphere Foundation to finish out the month of February positive. Mr. C. Greene noted some of the upcoming expenses listed on the cash planning document.

Mr. C. Greene, Mr. Rosenblum and Mr. Markey will be doing cash planning for the remainder of the year next week to ensure Atmosphere is set up for success.

Mr. Rosenblum gave a brief update on grants. Mr. Rosenblum and Mr. Roman provided an update on student recruitment. Atmosphere is making a push to have all current 8th graders apply to Atmosphere's high school. Mr. Roman is working directly with Atmosphere's 8th grade School Counselor to ensure these conversations are held and applications are submitted.

Agenda Item 6.2. Board Minutes

Mr. Rosenblum presented the January Meeting Minutes for approval by the Board.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the Board Meeting Minutes for January 2023.

Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

Motion adopted. Minutes approved.

Agenda Item 6.3. Middle School Update

Ms. Nash provided an update on intervention. At the end of each quarter, the Grade Leaders at Atmosphere need to score themselves on their intervention efforts. There is a rubric that relates to the three main buckets of intervention – behavior, attendance and academics. The rubric is holding others accountable to have data driven conversations. It allows Grade Leaders to see what to prioritize in future weeks and months. The rubric is broken down by documentation, urgency and fidelity to process. The biggest area of growth has been academics. The grade leaders are required to provide guiding questions that they will use to address outstanding items with their local teams. The board asked if the grade leaders are responsible for self-evaluating. Ms. Nash said that they are, but they are also evaluated by Ms. Nash separately so she can determine if their scores match. The board asked exactly what is broken and what needs to be fixed. Ms. Nash noted that Atmosphere has policies and structures in place that work, but items come up that prevent weekly meetings from taking place which in turn cause critical intervention work not to be done. Implementation is the area that requires improvement.

Mr. C. Greene presented an update on Achievement. Atmosphere is holding special Saturday and break achievement sessions where leaders are utilizing special lessons to help students get prepared for the New York State Exam, as well as future exams. Mr. C. Greene presented some photos and videos from the Achievement Day on 2/11, as well as some of the work that students did. Mr. C. Greene also presented the “Blue Planet” lesson that students worked on. Students watch a video on dolphins and then use their comprehension skills to note key vocabulary words, provide a gist of the story and then determine how to characterize a dolphin. This is essentially dissecting information to break it into their components and parts. This work is also being done twice per week during in-school achievement sessions. The board asked how the trips that Atmosphere students take may factor into their performance on these tasks. Mr. C. Greene noted that any travel does assist students with these questions as they are able to utilize their life experience.

Mr. C. Greene presented the grading policy that is staff facing. This has been revised in the past few weeks to ensure proper grading. Part of the reason for this revision was related to the failure crisis that Atmosphere was experiencing. The grading policy is meant to intervene around a failure. Students should be given the opportunity to make up assignments, which should include multiple interventions. Mr. C. Greene presented the different components of participation grades, such as preparation for class, behavior, etc. Screenshots have been added to the grading policy to make it much clearer for staff what is being asked of them. Mr. C. Greene noted that the grading policy helps instructional leaders identify trends that may need to be addressed. It also provides clear guidance on when a student should attend academic reflection and Saturday reflection before a 0 is ever issued for an assignment. Extra Help dates are noted on the grading policy as well so it is transparent for all staff.

Ms. C. Greene briefly presented a revised teacher evaluation rubric which has been rolled out to instructional leaders, and in turn, teachers. The teacher evaluation workflow was also presented. Observations, communication, professionalism, planning and grading all flow into

different audits or logs which then flow into the teacher evaluations. The core four tasks for instructional leaders are Evaluation, Staffing, Program Development and Student Achievement. These four items capture the essence of the Instructional Leader role and makes things more palatable and makes key outcomes more clear. Regular meetings are needed to keep people focused.

Mr. Roman spoke about the MLK Day event that was held with SAR, a neighboring school. Atmosphere and SAR students met in groups to create artwork related to MLK Day and analyze the “I have a dream” speech. The event was extremely successful and allowed Atmosphere’s 8th graders to meet and spend time with students from different backgrounds.

Agenda Item 6.4. High School Update

Mr. Roman presented a College Knowledge Action Plan. The Culture Team is leveraging assemblies to ensure HS graduation requirements are clear to all students. Atmosphere is also looking to hire a college advisor that can connect them with scholarships and help walk students through the college application process. Atmosphere will be planning college tours for students that will take place in the city, state, tri-state area, Massachusetts and the mid-Atlantic region. Mr. Roman is also working on a curriculum to explain “Why College?” to students.

Mr. C. Greene went on to present HS Intervention. As noted in the Middle School Update above, certain items in the gradebook policy were not being properly managed. Atmosphere is ensuring that they get back on track by ensuring fidelity to the policy.

The High School trips are going to take place in March. Since Mr. Pah was not able to join this meeting, this information will be presented in the March board meeting.

Mr. C. Greene also spoke about the Regents Midline, which students will soon be taking. This is a mock regents exam, but will allow Atmosphere to see where students currently are in their knowledge and testing skills.

Agenda Item 7.1. Executive Session

At approximately 6:41 PM, 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.
- b) 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.
- c) discussions regarding proposed, pending or current litigation.

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

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

After the discussion, at approximately 7:32 PM, the Board moved to exit executive session.

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

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

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 7:32 PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

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

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

Meeting adjourned.