

Atmosphere Academy  
June 28, 2023



**Atmosphere**  
academy

**Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**  
June 28, 2023

Atmosphere Academy Charter School  
Zoom Meeting

**Board Members Attending**

Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr.  
Dr. Michael Lagas  
Mr. Alan Dillon  
Dr. Tzvi Bar-David (joined during item 6.2)  
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  
Mrs. Katherine Brennan  
Mr. Benjamin Pah  
Ms. Lona Nguyen (for items 6.1-6.4)  
4 Atmosphere Scholars (for item 6.1)  
Mr. Peter Markey (for item 6.3)  
Ms. Sabrina Marion (for items 6.1-6.2)  
Ms. Dorena Johnson (for items 6.1-6.2)  
No other public in attendance

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

At approximately 5:05 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 (covered after item 6.4)**

The Middle School Committee met this month. Ms. Nash provided an update on Summer School. This year, Atmosphere is piloting a Summer Bridge program for scholars who may not have been retained in grade level, but who will need additional support over the summer to ensure that they are successful in the next grade level. This program was the idea of one of Atmosphere's teachers. As the pilot year, Atmosphere will evaluate the program to determine its efficacy and viability for the future. The board also looked at pictures from Atmosphere's Art Show, Washington D.C. trip and career exploration events. All events went extremely well. Mr. C. Greene also played a video from 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation, which was held at Lehman College.

The High School Committee met this month. Mr. Roman provided a High School placement update. 87.71% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders are returning to Atmosphere's High School for SY 23-24. Seven scholars will be attending public schools and two scholars will be attending different charter schools. Three scholars will be attending independence schools, including Lawrenceville and Horace Mann. Two scholars will be attending specialized schools, and nine will attend parochial schools. Nine scholars are moving out of New York State. Mr. Greene has noted that some of the numbers are remained stagnant across years despite increased enrollment, such as the number of scholars attending independence schools. A goal for Atmosphere would be to increase those numbers in future years. All in all, Atmosphere is very pleased with the placement of its 8<sup>th</sup> graders and the fact that so many scholars are returning to Atmosphere high school. Mr. Pah then provided an update on Atmosphere's Stock Market Team, who had the opportunity to visit Warburg Pincus, a major investment firm. They participated in a stock market competition. The scholars were able to present a business model to real Warburg Pincus executives and employees, which is such a great experience for them.

### **Agenda Item 4. Comments From the Public**

There were no comments offered.

### **Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda**

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

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

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

Motion adopted. Agenda approved.

### **Agenda Item 6.1. College Now Scholars**

Mrs. Katherine Brennan gave a brief introduction of the College Now program that Atmosphere 10<sup>th</sup> grade scholars have participated in this year. This program was offered through Lehman College. It provides a great opportunity for scholars to take advanced courses and start to earn college credit while still in high school. 11 scholars were selected to participate. 7 scholars completed their courses. 4 scholars withdrew from the program. Mrs. Brennan is looking to make changes to the program for next year, such as offering on-campus or hybrid courses. Additionally, stronger monitoring of the scholars will be put in place for next year to ensure a higher percentage of scholars finish.

Four Atmosphere scholars then joined the board meeting to convey their experience to the board. One scholar spoke about juggling both AP classes and College Now courses. He specifically spoke about his experience in the English College Now course. A second scholar also spoke about managing the coursework. He noted that he was able to successfully get it done by paying close attention in class and dedicating enough time to both courses after school. He spoke about some of the topics that were covered and how the college course was more advanced and covered material that was not covered in the AP course. He also noted that some material that was covered in Atmosphere's AP English course was not covered in College Now, but helped him succeed in that course. A third scholar spoke about his experience in the Quantitative Math College Now course. His professor went above and beyond to offer extra help to scholars, which the scholar appreciated. He also noted that there were topics and concepts that he learned about that he could see himself using in his future line of work, like Consumer Price Index. A fourth scholar was able to participate in the College Now program in-person, which is different from other scholars who participated in the program via Zoom. Being in-person helped her get immediate, hands-on support and extra help from the professor after classes. The scholar spoke about her growth from the first essay that she wrote to the final essay that she wrote. The scholar noted that the Atmosphere Europe trip did cause her to have to catch up on a lot of work.

Mr. C. Greene asked the scholars for feedback on the College Now program, especially as most of the scholars mentioned feeling overwhelmed at some point in the year, like during the

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Europe trip where no technology was allowed. Some scholars noted that they would not make any changes besides perhaps being in-person for the program. Other scholars noted that having their computers on the Europe trip may have distracted from the experience, so they would not have made any changes. Mr. C. Greene then asked what the College Now program did for the confidence levels of the scholars when it came to college courses. All of the scholars said that they walked out of the course more comfortable in their skills and more confident that they can succeed in college courses now and beyond.

The board and officers congratulated these scholars on their successes in a program that Atmosphere has not offered before.

### **Agenda Item 6.2. Advanced Placement and Regents Update**

Ms. Dorena Johnson, Atmosphere Social Studies Director, provided an update on Social Studies Advanced Placement and Regents courses and exams. To prepare for these exams, scholars took mock exams, attended Saturday prep sessions, and participated in AP Bootcamp during classes in the two weeks leading up to the exam. Students were placed in individualized tracks based on data gathered throughout the year to ensure that they could receive targeted support. All students sat for the US and World Regents exams in June. For the Regents and AP Prep Saturdays, the student turnout was tremendous. Students wanted to be successful and therefore took hold of their preparation by attending these extra sessions. Many 10<sup>th</sup> grade students came into Atmosphere, or back to Atmosphere, with limited Regents skills in key areas. Ms. Johnson and the Social Studies team worked to combat that knowledge gap by utilizing the measures mentioned above. Ms. Johnson presented a chart to demonstrate which grade level scholars would ideally take each Social Studies-related Regents exams. Atmosphere wants as many scholars as possible to earn Regents Diplomas and Advanced Regents Diplomas in order to bolster their success in college and beyond. Ms. Johnson discussed some of the lessons learned from this year, the first year that Atmosphere is offering these Regents and AP exams. She and her team will be working to put new initiatives in place and tweak current programs to ensure even further scholar success.

Ms. Sabrina Marion, Atmosphere's Math Instructional Leader, provided an update on Math Regents courses and exams. Ms. Marion took measures similar to those that Ms. Johnson took to increase proficiency on these exams. For the Geometry Regents, from the Midline Exam to the Regents Exam, the proficiency percentage went up by 24% to 48% of scholars proficient. For the Algebra II Regents, from the Midline Exam to the Regents Exam, the proficiency percentage went up by 17% to 51% of scholars proficient. Ms. Marion noted that this is an accomplishment, but Atmosphere would like to make major improvements for the future. Ms. Marion spoke about utilizing the Midline Exam data to target growth areas and increase proficiency on the Regents Exam. She noted some factors to consider for this school year. For example, this was the first year of Atmosphere's High School and administering these exams, so there are expected to be some growing pains. In class, teachers explicitly model how questions should be annotated and answered. Middle School teachers stepped up to assist High School

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scholars during Saturday sessions as well. Ms. Marion then discussed some strategies to improve this program for next school year.

### **Agenda Item 6.3. Finance Update**

Mr. Gabriel Rosenblum presented a brief enrollment update. Right now, Atmosphere's numbers look very strong with over 1500 students on the potential enrollment list. Atmosphere will continue to monitor these numbers closely to ensure that they remain as close to 1,440, Atmosphere's maximum enrollment, as possible.

Mr. Peter Markey presented the financials for the month ending May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. The payment of additional rent to Riverdale Jewish Center was paid in June. That item will be reflected on future statements. Mr. Markey spoke about some digging that he did on the SUNY fiscal benchmarks. He provided comparisons to Success Academy's financial scorecard from SY 20-21. The amount of cash on hand leads to better metrics, which Atmosphere will strive for in the future. Mr. Markey also presented the balance sheet and statement of cash flows. Mr. C. Greene asked Mr. Markey to provide an update on grants. Mr. Markey explained the process of collecting the final 10% of the

### **Agenda Item 6.4. Board Approvals**

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

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

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

Motion adopted. Minutes approved.

### **Agenda Item 7. Executive Session**

At approximately 6:51 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) discussions regarding proposed, pending or current litigation.

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- 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. J. Greene moved to enter Executive Session.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

After the discussion, at approximately 7:10 PM, the Board moved to exit executive session.

Mr. J. Greene moved to exit Executive Session.

Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

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

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 7:11 PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. J. Greene moved to adjourn.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

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

Vote no: None

Meeting adjourned.