



ATMOSPHERE ACADEMY

taking learning to new heights

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

November 19, 2015

Atmosphere Academy Charter School Building

22 Marble Hill Avenue

New York, New York 10463

Board Members Attending:

Mr. Mervin Burton
Mr. Alan Dillon
Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr
Dr. Michael Lagas
Dr. Evan Powderly

Board Members Absent:

Mr. Grant Grastorf
Father Thomas Lynch

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Colin Greene
Ms. Elisabeth Nash
Mr. Christian Roman
Ms. Michelle Rumph
Ms. Karen Daniels
Mrs. Rose Castillo

No public representation was present.

- Dr. Evan Powderly called the meeting to order at approximately 5PM.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was waived due to no flag being on site.
- The meeting opened with a discussion by Mr. Colin Greene of the report card process and performance, the use of Power School, and the process around attendance and absences. The Board received the report cards for all students to review.
- There was a discussion of intervention work by the faculty to bring struggling students along to higher levels of performance. The number of students with 2 or more failures has been reduced from 76 to 31. Teachers have refocused on intervention, and it is working.
- Board member Alan Dillon arrived and joined the meeting. Dr. Powderly welcomed Alan Dillon to his first meeting.
- Since there was no public representation there were no comments from the public to record for agenda item #3.
- Dr. Lagas and Dr. Powderly reported on their SUNY board training session and the important elements that SUNY is looking for.
- There were no amendments to the agenda for this meeting.
- Agenda item 5.1. Major Expenses

- Colin Greene led a discussion of how major expenses are approved. Major expenses above \$15,000 will be signed by a board member. Checks have been and will continue to be treated the same way. A report will be made to the board about such expenses at the following board meeting.
- Major contracts will be sent to the board for comment before signing and the response due date will be identified. If no comments are received by that date the contract can proceed. These policies will be implemented through a revision to the Financial Policy document that will be approved at a future meeting and submitted to Barbara Acenowr at SUNY for approval. Based on his SUNY training session, Dr. Powderly confirmed Mr. Colin Greene's understanding that all material changes to the Financial Policy document or personnel policy must go to SUNY.
- Expenditures over \$50,000 must go to the board for affirmative approval by the Board or Executive Committee.
- On a separate issue, Dr. Powderly also noted from the training session that anyone coming into the school has to be fingerprinted. Mrs. Rose Castillo and Mr. Colin Greene confirmed that this already being done.
- Agenda Item 5.2 Finance Update.
 - Ms. Michelle Rumph reviewed the format for standard financial reports. Mr. J. Greene noted that the loans should be labeled as loan from trustee and not a loan from an officer.
 - She noted that the fiscal year end cash is negative \$25,679. A discussion of actions to reduce the cash and budget concerns followed.
 - A discussion of loan practice followed. Mr. J. Greene, lender to the school, said if a loan was due to be repaid but the school needed the money in less than a month, he would extend the loan. If the school did not need the cash for 2 months the loan should be repaid.
- Mr. Christian Roman joined the meeting.
- Agenda Item 5.3. Facilities Update.
 - Mr. Colin Greene noted that enrollment had finalized at 132. He noted some of the issues the school has been working on with its current landlord. He also noted the large payment for services due to Mindshift in December and that the school has been waiting for a CSP grant payout to be able to make that payment.
 - Ms. Rumph noted that the CSP grant is now in the bank.
 - Mr. C. Greene noted that with the signing of the lease for the rest of the commercial space in our building we will be able to have three grades in this building. Total students would be limited to something in the 300's rather than the 432 we are authorized to have. Therefore we continue to explore other building opportunities.
- The board meeting then broke for a tour of the new proposed leased space.
 - Occupancy of the new space will be available January 1, 2016.
 - Mr. Colin Greene described the use of the space.
 - Mr. Mervin Burton asked about permits. All are in place or pending.
 - Mr. Alan Dillon asked about fire drills. All are occurring or applied for as required.
 - The space will provide a total of 14 additional classrooms when partitions for the library and gym are installed.
 - A discussion of the new lease followed.
 - A motion was made to approve the lease, and the Board approved it by unanimous vote.
 - Mr. Jesse Greene was asked to send a copy of the full lease to the Board.
- Agenda Item 5.4 School -Wide Update.
 - Mrs. Castillo reported on the recent student-parent-teacher conference. It was a great success. 117 of the 132 families participated. Parents spoke up and came in prepared with questions and comments. Parents had appointments and saw up to 3 teachers.

- Dr. Powderly noted that a parent organization has been formed and by December it will be ready to operate.
- Ms. Elisabeth Nash gave a special education report. The DOE's Committee on Special Education has been supportive. What we have been doing is good for the students and the students are progressing. For these students, IEPs have been addressed using modified assignments and criteria, but more work is needed in this regard.
- Dr. Powderly invited the Atmosphere teachers to visit his school in Armonk as part of their development as co-teachers.
- Dr. Lagas asked how the students were doing. Mr. Roman reported that the students and parents trust us, but some students and families have circumstances that are impacting their behavior. He noted that remediation actions are being taken when needed. This is building trust with the students. Parents support the schools efforts to push the students. Overall the relations with the students are good. Most students exhibit good behavior, but there is a small percentage that demand more attention and intervention.
- Mr. Dillion asked about the enrichment trips to the Westmoreland Sanctuary in Westchester County. Two trips have been taken so far. Mr. Roman described how the attitude of one of the students was improved due to his experience there. Overall these are positive for the students.
- Mr. Colin Greene explained how the school was challenging the students to do more. He noted that the vast majority of students are doing what they need to be doing in terms of academics and core values. A smaller group of students are struggling in both regards.
- Mr. Dillion asked whether the school provides counseling. He was told that Atmosphere does provide that via its social worker.
- Mr. Colin Greene reported that generally the instruction needs to let the students own the discovery process more. On multiple fronts, efforts are being made to help teachers excite students' prior knowledge and release responsibility while also sustaining strong management.
- Dr. Powderly thanked Colin Greene for his work and leadership of the school.
- There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.