CHESTER CHARTER SCHOLARS ACADEMY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

7:00 p.m., November 21, 2023

Date of Approval: Tuesday, December 19, 2023

Call to Order: The Board of Trustees for the Chester Charter Scholars Academy held a public Board Meeting in Chester, PA on November 21, 2023. The meeting convened at 7:03 pm. An Executive Session took place in advance of the public Board Meeting to discuss personnel and litigation matters. Members of the Board in attendance (at the time of the call to order): President Donald Delson, Ben Berger (via Zoom), Pam Greenblatt (via Zoom), Marilyn Henkelman, Frances Hoover, Chris Klock, Judy Owen, Lauren White (via Zoom) and Head of School/CEO Akosua Watts. Absent: Bill Cumby, Zach Oberfield, Alice Turbiville.

Public Comments: No comment, no members of the public present.

Approval of Minutes

* The Board reviewed and adopted the minutes of the September 19, 2023, meeting of the Chester Charter Scholars Academy Board of Trustees.

o Motion – Judy Owen

o Second – Chris Klock

* Ayes: 8 Nays: 0 Absent: 3

**President’s Report**

Don Delson (President)

Topics for the President’s Report will be covered in the Committee Reports.

**Committee Reports**

Finance Committee (Don Delson for Alice Turbiville)

* Current Financial State
* Currently our finances are in great shape. The only issue we’ve faced so far was in the first quarter when we made a deal with the district to defer reimbursement payments, which were paid in full after a two-month delay. However, in July, August, and September the district also delayed payment, which was unexpected. The resulting loss of interest income due to late payments was approximately $33,000. With the charter renewal upcoming we don’t plan to pursue this issue but if the district is late again, we will ask them to compensate for any lost interest.
* Currently projecting a $1.3 million year end surplus.
* Charter Renewal
* Our task is to prove we are financially sustainable for at least the next five years. We are currently working on a five-year forecast that includes 2025 plus four years beyond that. 2025 is the last year of settlement agreement. After 2025, we move back to statutory rates. If legislation doesn’t change and the rates don’t change, we will be in great shape beginning FY 2026.
* There was a brief discussion regarding reimbursement rates and the need to meet with Stephan Roots, the mayor of Chester. It was agreed that Ben Berger would set up a meeting between himself, the mayor and Don Delson.
* S&P Rating
* For the first time we received a positive outlook rating, which means if our trends continue our rating will increase to a BBB, investment-grade rating. This would be a huge endorsement of our financial management skills.
* Endowment
* The endowment has been static at $6.4 million and continues to go up and down with the market. The foundation received a $75,000 gift last week and gifts continue to come in.

Education Committee (Marilyn Henkleman)

* PSSA Results
* Now that we have scores from other schools, the committee will digest those results and provide a full report at the board meeting in December.

Nominating & Governance Committee (Judy Owen)

* Delegation of Authority Policy
* Motion to approve the policy – Don Delson
* Second – Marilyn Henkelman
* Ayes: 8 Nays: 0 Absent: 3
* By-laws
* Don Delson, Frances Hoover and Judy Owen completed a new copy of the bylaws and will bring them to the board for approval in December.
* Board Evaluation Survey Results
* Provided an overview of the evaluation results, highlighting issues of note.
* An outstanding issue that is important for the upcoming charter renewal is the need to have all board members complete and file the financial disclosure form by May 1, 2024. Akosua Watts promised to send a calendar invitation to all board members as a reminder to complete the filing by March 15, 2024.
* Board Orientation
* Orientation of new board member Chris Klock is now complete, and the new board handbook is online.
* Mr. Klock suggested that the history and status of CUSD be included in the next version of the handbook.
* Governance Workshop
* We received a proposal from Robert Clothier regarding providing a governance workshop for board members, which Barbara Klock has offered to pay for.
* Drew Schmidt, from the CCSA Foundation board, suggested this be a joint board workshop.
* The documents Mr. Clothier would need to prepare for the workshop would likely be the same documents we will already be preparing for the charter renewal, which would lessen the amount of prep work needed.
* The ideal time for the workshop would be the fall of 2024.
* There was a question regarding whether anything from the results of the board evaluation survey have necessitated the need for this workshop. Yes, it would be necessary as there were concerns from the survey results around operations and oversight.
* Ms. Owen will reach out to Barbara Klock and move forward with scheduling the workshop.

School Report, Akosua Watts (Head of School & CEO)

* Enrollment Update
* Overall, our enrollment numbers are down, largely due to the operations office being in transition.
* We also want to make sure we are meeting the needs of our current special education students before bringing in more regular education students.
* Given the dynamic of the funding structure of special education versus regular education, the budget remains stable even if enrollment is down.
* There was a brief discussion regarding how to meet the needs of more special education students, the ability to know when outside placement is the best alternative, and how the school has been identifying recently new students to receive special education testing.
* Family/Community Engagement Events
* Financial Literacy Workshop
* WSFS gave a financial literacy and new homeowner workshop. They will come back in early 2024 to do another workshop, focusing on small business opportunities and loans.
* Managing Emotions Workshop
  + This workshop was hosted by Anitra Green, a social worker in Chester. She will come again in January of 2024 and provide a self-care workshop for staff during professional development.
* Family Math & Literacy Night
* This event was very well attended, with over eighty people participating.
* The Healthier You Conference
* This conference was put on by Health Educated, an organization founded by Dr. Kristin Motley a, pharmacist in Chester, and it focused on providing health initiatives to the Chester community. Hundreds of people attended.
* Philadelphia Union, Chester Union & development league
* The Union is looking to expand soccer opportunities in Chester. They have started Chester Union, a club level soccer team and are committed to developing young soccer players. They are working with some of our elementary students to hopefully create a middle school team. We are hopeful more of our students will become interested in soccer.
* Bicentennial Athletic League Acceptance
* CCSA is now part of the bicentennial athletic league. This is a major achievement. Now we will be on a league schedule, which will include twelve or thirteen other schools, which are a mix of charters and independent schools.
* Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day
* We have created a Safety Patrol Team made up of 4th grade through Middle School students who have posts and duties throughout the day. One of the initiatives of this team is Ruby Bridges Day, which consisted of a symbolic walk outside followed by a small program in the school coupled with learning opportunities in the classroom.
* iAM Project
* Inspirations Speaker
* Cohort #3 interviews
* Neumann University partnership
  + Neumann’s president has committed to providing any CCSA student who applies to Neumann a $2,000 a year scholarship.
  + PSSA Scores in Context
* Overview of state averages versus CCSA, CUSD and CCCS
* Overview of goals for 23/24
* Looking to raise up the number of students who are scoring below basic.
* Upcoming Events
* Senior Pinning – Wednesday, December 13 at 5:30pm
* Honor Roll Breakfast – Thursday, December 14 at 8:15am

There was a brief discussion covering the following topics:

* Keystones: Scores from last spring are out but it is something that should be discussed in the Education Committee as the results are harder to interpret due to the many variables involved in how the tests are administered.
* Educator Open House: this event was not as successful as hoped and we plan to do another open house but capitalize on an event that we know will bring people to the building.

Adjournment: The public meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Date of Next Scheduled Public Board Meeting: December 19, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.