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Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter School | 215.387.5149 | 5501 Cedar Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19143

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**Meeting of the Board of Directors  
Wednesday, February 5, 2020 at 4pm  
339 North 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA 19139**

*The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m.*

Board Members in Attendance: Joe Conwell, Rebecca Davis, Patrick South, Noah Tenant, Bill Thorkelson, Elaine Wells, Wes Wyatt

Board Members Joined by Phone: Francie Middleton, Steven Ujifusa

Board Members Excused: Eric Dobson, Isaac Ewell, Steve Kempf, Matt Schuh, Steve Smith, Albert Oehrle, Wally Zimolong

Staff in Attendance: Heidi Bonner, Ruth Gonzalez, Colleen Smith

Guests: Jenna Smalley (Kleinbard LLC)

I.     Call to Order: *Bill Thorkelson*

Mr. Thorkelson calls the meeting to order.

There is a motion to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2019 board meeting, which is moved by Mr. Conwell and seconded by Mr. South. The motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Thorkelson updates the board on the Boys' Latin Middle School building that was nominated for historical preservation—the Historical Commission chose not to recommend that the building be designated as a historical site. Mr. Thorkelson explains that Boys' Latin can now make any changes to the structure without seeking approval. Mr. Thorkelson thanks Mr. Dobson, Dr. Tenant, and the staff for their hard work in fighting the designation.

Mr. Thorkelson then encourages the board to listen to Mr. Ujifusa's podcast where he interviews Jared Smith, a Boys' Latin graduate. Mr. Thorkelson advises that today's meeting will center around college admissions, which is critical to Boys' Latin's mission.

## II. CEO Report: Noah Tennant

Dr. Tennant begins by asking the board to spell the word “impluvium,” which was one of the winning words from the Boys’ Latin Middle School’s Latin Week spelling competition. Dr. Tennant describes a fun week where students participated in scavenger hunts, chariot races, and skits.

Dr. Tennant then explains how themes such as brotherhood and roots of the black family will be incorporated into Black History Month at Boys’ Latin. The school will host speakers and door decorating contests to bring information to the forefront of learning for the students, while getting the students involved in the planning process.

Dr. Tennant announces that the Boys’ Latin Lottery will take place on February 12, which is how the school identifies students who will be enrolled in both 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. There are 120 seats available for 6<sup>th</sup> graders with 253 applications received—Dr. Tennant states that this is the first year Boys’ Latin has gotten more applications than slots available for the Middle School. Dr. Tennant attributes the rise in applications to Apply Philly Charter, and Boys’ Latin is happy with the increased numbers. Boys’ Latin received 751 applications for the 150 available 9<sup>th</sup> grade seats, which is 400 more than last year. Dr. Tennant explains how Boys’ Latin is able to track which students stick with the application process after securing admission through the lottery.

There is a discussion on the lottery process and rise in applicants. In terms of a student being a good fit at Boys’ Latin, Dr. Tennant explains how there is less incentive for students to visit the school beforehand if that visit has no bearing on whether or not that student is accepted.

Continuing, Dr. Tennant announces that Gov. Wolf released a proposed budget which plans to cut \$280 million across the state for special needs students at charters. Boys’ Latin would receive about \$9,000 less per special needs student under this proposed budget. Boys’ Latin along with collective charters of both Philadelphia and Pennsylvania are plotting their fight against this budget. On February 6 the charters will deliver a letter to the Governor requesting to meet with him in an attempt to show how unkind this budget could be. Dr. Tennant explains how a special needs student at a district school would get significantly more funding than at a charter school.

Dr. Tennant then introduces Heidi Bonner to the board, Boys’ Latin’s Director of College Advising, who recently won an award for inclusion access and success from the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (“NACAC”). Ms. Bonner is here today to discuss college admissions, climate, impact on Boys’ Latin, and how Boys’ Latin can stick to its mission.

Ms. Bonner begins by giving an overview of the state of college admissions nationally, where there’s been a decrease in the number of high school seniors though college application numbers keep going up. The average selectivity rate for all

colleges nationwide is 66.7 percent. Ms. Bonner describes a 2019 change where NACAC was forced to remove three provisions from its rules. These provisions had previously prohibited colleges from recruiting students who had already deposited and committed elsewhere; recruiting transfer students; and offering incentives to students who apply for early decisions. Ms. Bonner explains that for Boys' Latin students, removing the first two provisions could be beneficial however early decision could be harmful because few students apply for early decisions due to not wanting to commit to somewhere they can't afford to attend.

Ms. Bonner then describes how highly selective colleges are failing to achieve socio-economic diversity. For example at top tier colleges, only 14 percent of undergrads come from the bottom half of income distributions. Ms. Bonner lists some of the factors as to why so few low-income students attend these institutions, which can include test scores, financial barriers, and lack of recruitment by top colleges in low-income areas. Boys' Latin wants its students to attend these colleges, however students face challenges in the form of cost, academic background, and social adjustment. These are predominantly white institutions which lack cultural capital, requiring an adjustment period. Students can face racial insensitivities from other students, professors, and faculty.

Turning to the 2019 National Clearinghouse Report, only 67 percent of students enrolled in college in the fall after finishing high school. Ms. Bonner explains how a higher number of students are going to college this year than last, however students are choosing to go to more vocational schools. Boys' Latin is trying to address these issues by establishing a dedicated college advising office, getting students involved in the college process earlier, SAT prep, a Warrior Fund to help students with costs such as books, and a proposed full-time Alumni Coordinator to follow up with all alumni to get a sense of how they're doing. Ms. Bonner describes how many Boys' Latin students graduate college after seven or eight years because they go to college for a while, then have to leave in the middle of their education to work because money becomes a major issue.

Ms. Bonner describes ways for the board to help by seeing if employers have internships for high school students, identify possible clubs that could be lead, and lobby for increases to appropriations for student aid at the state and federal level.

A discussion follows on the students' attitudes toward college, financial burdens for students and families, and students' decisions to attend a two-year versus four-year college. Ms. Bonner describes the financial hardships for a family making \$30,000 per year trying to budget for tuition that costs \$23,000 per year.

Ms. Bonner and Dr. Tenant conclude their presentations.

### **III. Board Committee Reports**

#### **a. Parent Liaison Report: Elaine Wells**

Ms. Wells begins by identifying one reason students aren't as interested in attending college, namely the idea of the "internet millionaire"—someone who makes good money off of social media. Ms. Wells describes a host of college alternatives being presented to young people to prevent debt incurred from a four-year college, such as trade schools and apprenticeships where students come out of the program with a well-paying job. Dr. Tennant adds that 66 percent of Boys' Latin seniors have their applications in, and the students who do not want to go to college go to trade school.

There is a discussion on the Boys' Latin mission and charter renewal. Dr. Tennant informs the board that college admissions numbers plays no part in the charter renewal process.

Ms. Wells notes that she tries to get her own children involved in as many extracurricular activities as possible, which is a driving component for many colleges. Dr. Tennant adds that Boys' Latin wants to make sure students have robust resumes by introducing two iterations of the leadership academy.

Ms. Wells concludes her presentation.

b. Finance: Wes Wyatt

Mr. Wyatt begins by stating that Boys' Latin currently has strong balance sheet strength with 72 days of cash on hand, and 122 days of cash on hand including the foundation. Mr. Wyatt explains that increased line items are related to special education revenue. Mr. Wyatt states that everything is tracking much better than expected and Boys' Latin is where it needs to be.

A discussion follows on special education costs. Mr. Wyatt explains how there is a variable around what each student will need, which is a case-by-case basis that Boys' Latin cannot plan for.

Mr. Wyatt concludes his presentation.

c. Facilities: Steve Kempf and Bill Thorkelson

Mr. Conwell begins by explaining how the facilities committee has been continuing the process of creating a facilities master plan. The first phase of the initial assessment was completed by an outside consultant, which now requires analysis over a five-year span. Mr. Conwell describes one of the ideas discussed, such as consolidating the high school and middle school. Mr. Conwell explains that each phase of the process takes about three-to-four months. The facilities committee will give a presentation at the next board meeting as financial decisions will need to be discussed and approved.

Mr. Conwell concludes his presentation.

d. Development: Pat South

Mr. South begins by announcing that Boys' Latin has exceeded its \$1 million budgeted fundraising goal through cash on hand and commitments, currently sitting at \$1.2 million. Mr. South states that without skipping the annual event this year Boys' Latin would be closer to its true goal of \$1.4 million. The development committee went through its donor list to reach out individually in lieu of the annual event. Mr. South explains that the committee is confident in its current fundraising state and will figure out an event for next spring.

Turning to EITC, Mr. South explains how the committee will start talking to companies and contacts for ETIC giving next school as the EITC cycle for this year has ended. Ms. Smith adds that the committee has been fostering stronger relationships with people who are currently in Boys' Latin's donor base, and also forging new connections with potential donors. Ms. Smith asks the board to consider potential donors.

Ms. Smith notes that Boys' Latin will be putting on a production of the play *Holes* this March, which would be a great opportunity to have any potential donors to watch. Dr. Tenant adds that Mr. Celeiro has been a strong addition to the theatre program at Boys' Latin.

Mr. South concludes his presentation.

e. Governance: Bill Thorkelson

Mr. Thorkelson describes how Messrs. Oehrle and Zimolong have been working on two three-year terms for trustees. Mr. Thorkelson drafted a grid to see where all trustees land on the timeline. Mr. Thorkelson notes that Boys' Latin would like to recruit four to six new trustees over the next year or two. Mr. Thorkelson asks the board to consider bright, aggressive, committed candidates and outside-of-the-box thinkers. Mr. Thorkelson notes that Boys' Latin would like a more diverse board and thanks Messrs. Conwell and Kempf for their 12 years of board participation.

Mr. Thorkelson concludes his presentation.

*With there being no need for executive session, the meeting adjourns at 5:56 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

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Steven Ujifusa, Secretary