

CHESTER CHARTER SCHOLARS ACADEMY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

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

Date of Approval: Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Call to Order: The Board of Trustees for the Chester Charter Scholars Academy held a public Board Meeting in Chester, PA on March 21, 2023. The meeting convened at 7:02 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, Pam Greenblatt, Marilyn Henkelman (via Zoom), Frances Hoover (via Zoom), Mandy Kennedy (via Zoom), Zach Oberfield, Judy Owen, Alice Turbiville, Lauren White, Ian Wilcox (via Zoom), and Head of School/CEO Akosua Watts. All participants attended via Zoom. Absent: Bill Cumby.

Public Comments: No comment.

Approval of Minutes

- The Board reviewed and adopted the minutes of the February 21, 2023, meeting of the Chester Charter Scholars Academy Board of Trustees.
 - Motion – Marilyn Henkelman
 - Second – Judy Owen
- Ayes: 11 Nays: 0 Absent: 1

President's Report

Don Delson (President)

- Strategic Plan Update
 - Ian Wilcox is planning to reconcile the resource plan with the budget. He will meet with Alice Turbiville to discuss this matter, and potentially attend the next Finance Committee meeting.

Committee Reports

Facilities Committee, Mandy Kennedy (Committee Chair)

- Building expansion update
 - The final coat of paint is up, and the space is ready for furniture.
 - A/C condensers for the roof will be installed in June.
 - Mill work arrived on March 21.
 - Work on the sports court and wall will begin soon and should take about a week to complete.
 - The only potential scheduling issue is the fire alarm upgrade planned for the summer, which requires turning off the entire system for at least two weeks. Students will be present in the building for a summer program, and this presents a logistical challenge. The plan is to find a window of time at the end of the summer, between the summer program and the beginning of the school year. BSI feels confident that two weeks will be sufficient to complete the work. Akosua Watts will meet with them on March 22 and will provide an update to the board.
- Data and telephone network expansion

- o The school secured federal subsidized funding, but one of the challenges is compliance with the many vendors with respect to established e-rates. Currently, things are moving in the right direction and the timeline seems to be working with all parties.
- There was a brief discussion regarding a party to celebrate the opening of the new building space.

Finance Committee, Alice Turbiville (Committee Chair)

- Current Year Budget
 - o No major changes from last month's update
 - o The main item for consideration is what to do regarding the \$2 million surplus and whether we instruct the Foundation to hold back unrestricted contributions.
 - o There was a brief discussion regarding bank balances that exceed \$250,000. The members generally agreed that it would not be necessary to change banks or move funds at this time.
 - o There is a desire to explore money market options and Alice will work in conjunction with Corliss Boggs, the Treasurer of the CCSA Foundation board.
- 2023-2024 Budget
 - o Planning for a higher budgeted surplus to absorb the loss of ESSR funds.
 - o Currently looking at a \$1.5 million surplus, after accounting for regular salary increases. Most ideas under consideration for the surplus are compensation related.
 - o Considering a permanent increase in all base salaries. The Finance Committee will explore different approaches with respect to what the school can afford and will provide recommendations to the board in May, with the plan to adopt one of the proposed changes in June.
 - o There was a brief discussion regarding CCSA's salaries versus other schools. CCSA is generally below the pay scale for public schools but on par or above scale of other private and charter schools. It was generally agreed that overall compensation structure needs to be explored, and that in the future an in-depth comp study would be beneficial.
 - o There was a brief discussion regarding how the recent expense stipends were received by staff. Akosua Watts explained that she was honest with staff regarding the need to buffer inflation rates and that generally the expense stipends were well received. But given how all schools are struggling to fill positions, the bottom line is a more permanent compensation solution will need to be recommended to the board.
- Meeting with majority bond holder
 - o He visited the school on March 20 and met with Don Delson, Corliss Boggs, Akosua Watts and Alice Turbiville.
 - o He was very impressed with the plan to augment funding from the Foundation to cure the deficit but informed the group that appeasing all bond holders would be necessary.

Education Committee, Marilyn Henkelman (Committee Chair)

- Update on outreach to other schools
 - o Completed outreach interviews with a variety of schools.
 - o Major finding is CCSA has a smaller leadership group than many of its peers and the school would benefit from added senior level staff.
 - o Two new positions have been identified:
 - Director of School Culture
 - Assistant Director of High School
 - o There was a brief discussion regarding how these positions could potentially ease administrative burdens. Akosua Watts explained that these positions would expand the capacity of the leadership team. The Director of School Culture would not interfere with the position of Director of Athletics and Character Development, currently held by Ryan Fisher. The Climate Managers would likely be reporting directly to the Director of School Culture.
- Chat GPT
 - o This new technology is rapidly developing.
 - o There was a discussion regarding the need to develop a philosophy about the use of this technology.

Nominating/Governance Committee, Judy Owen (Committee Chair)

- Judy Owen announced that Ian Wilcox will resign from the board, due to a combination of professional and personal commitments. He will continue his duties until July 1, 2023.

Frances Hoover, Alumni Outreach Update

- Reviewed the alumni survey/launch and administration plan
 - The survey will go out by Friday, March 24.
 - Referral marketing strategy is in place – students will receive gift cards for every referral they make.
 - Staff have also been asked to reach out to alumni they are still in contact with.
 - Goal is minimum 50% participation.
 - Hope to share final analysis and results with the board at the June meeting.

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

- Enrollment
 - Numbers have recently contracted. We are at the point in the year where we no longer accept new students. From a budgetary standpoint however, we are fine; we had higher than normal reimbursements this school year.
- Attendance
 - Average daily attendance rate is currently hovering around 92%.
 - New mentor program seems to be impacting some students, and definitely creating a positive point of contact with respect to relationship building. Hope to continue next year with smaller program.
- Performances/Events
 - Provided overview of recent trips and performances, highlights include: collaborations between voice, dance and theater classes that celebrated Black History; Philadelphia Union Gala where four students from the I Am project spoke; a Women in Sports panel sponsored by the Philadelphia Union attended by female high school students.

Adjournment: The public meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Date of Next Scheduled Public Board Meeting: May 23, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.