



MINUTES

Full Board of Directors Meeting Special Meeting

**September 13, 2023
6:15 pm**

The meeting was held virtually via Zoom using this [link](#)

MISSION: We exist to foster a diverse and equitable community of youth and adults striving together for academic, personal and civic excellence.

VISION: Inclusive excellence in public education.

The Board uses a series of qualifiers, where appropriate, to help clarify the nature of each presentation/report.

1. The decision has been made and updates are provided (Inform)
2. Input is needed to assist the board to make the best decision (Discussion/Input)
3. Brainstorming is needed to help identify all options (Brainstorm)
4. Input and/or decision is assigned to a Special Committee (Small Group)
5. The decision is ready for vote (Vote)

ATTENDANCE

Board Executive Committee:

Joe Whitfield, Chair
Marc Fulton, Co-Treasurer
Annie Bielecki, Secretary
Stephanie Grossman, Vice Chair

Board Members:

Grace Nailing, Board Member
Ambar Suero, Board Member
Nikea Bland, Board Member
Katherine Casey, Board Member
Kaylee Hart, Board Member
Kenny Smith, Board Member

Highline Ex-Officio Members:

Chris Ferris, Highline Academy Executive Director
Vanessa Rodriguez, Highline Academy Northeast Principal
Manda Troutman, Outreach and Communications Manager
Austin Young, HANE Teacher
Erika Paulino, HASE Front Office Manager
Nora Clark, HASE Flex Teacher
Sarah Verni-Lau, HASE Principal

Other:

Luis, Highline Academy HR Director
Michelle Farrell, HANE Teacher

Absent:

Drew Goltermann, Co-Treasurer
Meg Ramey, Board Member
Kamrin Coffey, Board Member

Topic	Presenter	Goals	Outcome
Call to Order – Joe Whitfield – Call to Order (6:18 pm) Quorum Establish A quorum of the Board was established. The agenda was adopted with no changes.			
Consent Agenda – Joe Whitfield – Governance – Vote (6:19 pm) Minutes from the August 28, 2023 meeting A motion was made by Joe and seconded by Stephanie to approve the August 8, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.			
See BOD Packet for: - BOD Agenda 09072023 - HANE Expansion Scenarios - August 28 Board Meeting Minutes			
Public Comment (6:20 pm) No public comment			
Finance Update - Marc Fulton (6:21) - We are mostly through the audit. PERA adjustment for HANE caused us to go over our total expenses. Under law we cannot have that, so we need to approve a new budget for this new PERA number. This only happened at HANE, not at HASE. Marc specified that this is a net-zero change to the budget, and asked for any questions. - A motion was made by Marc and seconded by Stephanie to approve the amended budgets for 2022/2023. . The motion passed unanimously.			
E.D. Update - Chris Ferris - Inform (6:25 pm) - HANE Expansion scenarios - The district can not lose elementary school seats in the foreseeable future but were open to discussing other options for a middle school expansion. Chris feels we should choose our 1st 2nd and third choices and what we do NOT want to do and communicate this to DPS. The hope is to get something in writing from the school board before the next election to avoid a “handshake” scenario. - Chris spoke to Drew at length and he encouraged Chris to discuss our WHY- - students do better when they stay in one school through 8th grade - More students enable internal capacity (Academic Director) - Adding students increases PPR - Reducing our elementary population would allow us to provide staffing and programming more closely aligned with HASE and therefore better serve HANE kids with smaller classrooms - HASE middle school graduates are role models in the community - Option 1: Stay the same, no M.S in the foreseeable future - DPS would crowd classrooms - No growth opportunity - Pluses: no distractions, stabilization - Option 2: Eliminate ECE program			

- Doesn't support high community need for ECE
- DPS designed the building for ECE
- One of HANE'S strongest programs
- 4 classrooms (ECE classrooms) wouldn't be enough space for M.S in any case
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- Pluses: Provides 4 classrooms for M.S.
- More PPR funding.
- Option 3: Increase Elementary Enrollment
 - We are already stretched to meet current enrollment
 - No additional classrooms available
 - Does not help to expand the M.S, in fact it makes it harder
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 - Pluses would be increasing PPR funding
- Option 4: DPS Builds an ECE center on SE corner
 - Does not solve immediate needs
 - Would involve a NOT FUN construction project
 - Would involve fund raising?
 - Not sure if DPS is all in on this.
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 - Pluses: Could meet community needs for ECE and M.S.
 - Would open 8 classrooms
 - We have a strong ECE program and Director already in place
 - Strong funding support
- Option 5: DPS Builds a M.S wing on the south end of the building
 - Does not solve immediate needs
 - Would involve a NOT FUN construction project
 - Would involve fund raising?
 - Not sure if DPS is all in on this.
 - Harder to build onto existing building
 - Could end up making total enrollment huger than we would like
 - Doesn't impact the increased demand for elementary school
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 - Pluses: Would meet community needs for ECE and M.S.
- Option 6: DPS adds portables to the site
 - Temporary solution (?)
 - Harder to manage when some classrooms are external
 - Would DPS only put elementary students or M.S as well?
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 - Pluses: Could be a possible interim solution during construction
 - Could be completed by next school year.

Chris then opened up the floor to other creative suggestions.

Stephanie asked about staffing at a middle school- in light of our difficulties staffing our current school, why would we want to take on the burden of staffing a middle school. Chris said that was a good question and is unsure if the teacher shortage would or would not affect our hiring abilities. Erika asked if we are going to be able to control capacity on this M.S., or whether DPS will push students on us at the Middle School level. Erika said that M.S students who don't come from the elementary school take up lots of energy. Chris said we do not have control over who enrolls at the school. Stephanie asked what is the rush, why now? Chris said DPS projections run to 2027, so suggested we discuss now or wait until a few years out to revisit the idea. Chris said the Board right now is

favorable. Ambar mentioned that there is a 12% growth in the FNE, meaning the schools are very needed right now. Elementary schools are at capacity in the FNE right now so DPS recognizes that they do not have enough M.S to meet needs in a few years.

Kenny asked what would be a better indicator to trying to predict how a MS would perform- looking at HASE or looking at HANE k-5. Do we think a MS at HANE would better serve elementary HANE students.

Vanessa said these concerns are very real. Staffing issues are a concern. We are in a district facility and enrollment zone school and therefore do not have a whole lot of control over our enrollment. Our community has a real need for seats. She said we need to be cautious and make sure DPS is on board with any expansion. Vanessa said the community wants this (HANE parents), and she's taking this into consideration. Agrees with Stephanie that perhaps we take more time to decide. She said the MS would open 6th first and then 7th, etc. Would require a lot of Admin increase as well, as the Elementary Admin can't run HANE and ALSO create a middle school. How do we keep an equitable school when we are constantly having students pushed into the school. Vanessa said 35 kinders in a class is challenging- they divided the classes up. We have a strong preschool program.

Nikea asked Vanessa about replicating HASE- doesn't sound like that's a possibility and we shouldn't follow that staffing model if we are in a different position in the FNE.

Chris said that the original plan of reducing Elementary and expanding MS could allow us to follow the HASE model but since that is no longer a possibility we have to look into other solutions.

Austin speaks on behalf of Michelle Farrell- the ECE building- how would Specials and such work if ECE is in a separate building. Maybe M.S. could better manage being in a separate building.

Vanessa is unsure how that could work. Said DPS is not interested in building a separate building for a M.S.

Nikea asked how many ECE students at HANE matriculate to Kinder, Chris said almost all.

Ambar would like us to humanize this a bit more- the community was promised k-8. Ambar thinks the district has good intentions in thinking about the FNE expansion that it sees in projections. Kids that come into our schools are on FRL and generally less wealthy. Suggests a quick analysis of the projections for M.S. Said there's a desire private funding to come in and support.

Katherine said our responsibility is to the families we serve. There was demand for our families, but the scenarios that are presented are not necessarily the best ones for the families.

Mentions the community problem- the district doesn't have a middle school problem right now, but they will soon. Perhaps we continue this conversation to levy addressing the class size problem while also moving towards encouraging a M.S solution. Katherine doesn't feel great about any of our options right now but wants to have a convo with DPS to find something to best serve the community.

Chris showed the M.S projections which show a -271 capacity in the FNE in 2027.

Chris stressed that we are not making a decision today- she just needs to know what we should be pushing for.

Kenny wants to know the potential response that would ruffle the fewest feathers of the DPS board?

Chris said that she doesn't think any of the scenarios definitely ruffle feathers. Vanessa asked if we have the autonomy to have some say in our academic enrollment, in light of the district owning the building. Chris said she requested that they send the revised capacity info and is waiting to hear back.

Erika agrees with both sides of this convo- the political and personal (community). She took a job at HASE to get her kid into the school since the schools in her neighborhood are not good. Said we owe it to the community to perfect our model. Thinks at this time a MS is not feasible. What kind of MS can we have if we are not meeting the needs of HANE elementary. She appreciates the strong base that HASE elementary gave her children. We need to balance all the emotion and politics and work with what we currently have.

Stephanie agrees with Erika that we need to build a strong academic foundation for the kids. If we can't fully staff what we currently have she worries we might bite off more than we can chew.

Chris shared capacity info: including center based programs and MLE rooms and such, our capacity is 563 ECE - 5th (which we are already above). If they used the full classrooms it would increase to 638. Unclear whether or not they would mandate that every room be used as a classroom.

Nikea asked if this is a binding agreement or can they just change every year since it's their building?

Chris said she wants a binding agreement because of that very issue. Likened it to exploring having the district purchase HASE. Suggests having the district explore further.

Sarah said that HASE has a closed enrollment and HANE has to receive students all year long. Said enrollment projections have changed and HASE is actually under enrolled in kinder.

Chris mused about purchasing a building for HANE to get out from under DPS.

Kenny said we've been having iterations of this conversation for a while now. He was adamantly against it at the time. Now he thinks it's maybe an opportunity to restate our non-negotiables with DPS. We are going to have to think creatively about how we will meet the needs of the community. Class size caps, increasing scale.

Marc said Kenny makes good points.

Grace agrees with expanding to M.S. and understands the need of a parent to want their kid in the same school thru 8th. We can't know the future- we might still be struggling whether or not we expand.

Annie said she wants a HANE middle school ASAP, but understands that we need to not give up too much.

Nora worries about the replication of HASE at HANE- their closed enrollment allows them the opportunity to not worry about that stuff.

Annie asked about expanding but still capping the enrollment in some way.

Nikea said she's worried about the tenuousness of the conversation with DPS

Kenny said that we should be able to define our rules.

Vanessa said that they asked for Annie's idea and DPS said no.

Erika said we need to work with what we have. We have very little negotiation room. Erika said to continue our work at the elementary level and create a good base, and then we will be able to bring that success to DPS.

Vanessa said that community response is big- parents think we are the best school in the neighborhood, and we are. Parents are EXCITED for a Middle School. If the Board votes against moving forward we should be prepared to deal with disappointed parents

Ambar said we have a duty to grow this school and support the community.

Chris agrees with Vanessa that we are the best option in the community. Said there IS an opportunity for funding, long term.

Annie suggests getting out the first 3 options, and continuing the conversation with DPS on the last 3 options, Chris says the same.

Sarah says DPS essentially answered these questions already and said No.

Chris had a convo with Russ and got the feeling that DPS is willing to explore ideas still.

Sarah said it seems that building additional space would be required no matter what.

Annie makes a motion to approve Chris continuing the convo with DPS but taking the two options of eliminating ECE and Increasing the ECE-5 off the table. Stephanie seconds.

Kenny abstains, no one opposed, motion passes.

Reminders/Announcements – Annie Bielecki – Inform (7:44 pm)

- Next BOD meeting: Monday, September 25th at 6:15 pm [Here Via Zoom](#)

Adjournment –Stephanie – Adjourn Meeting – Vote (7:45 pm)

With no further business up for discussion, a motion was made by Stephanie and seconded by Grace to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.