

CHESTER CHARTER SCHOLARS ACADEMY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

7:00 p.m., February 20, 2024

Date of Approval: Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Call to Order: The Board of Trustees for the Chester Charter Scholars Academy held a public Board Meeting in Chester, PA on February 20, 2024. The meeting convened at 7:00 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, Bill Cumby, Pam Greenblatt, Marilyn Henkelman, Frances Hoover, Zach Oberfield, Judy Owen (on Zoom), Alice Turbiville, and Head of School/CEO Akosua Watts. Absent: Chris Klock, Lauren White

Public Comments: No comment.

Approval of Minutes

- The Board reviewed and adopted the minutes of the December 19, 2023, meeting of the Chester Charter Scholars Academy Board of Trustees.
 - Motion – Marilyn Henkelman
 - Second – Bill Cumby
 - Ayes: Nays: 9 Absent: 2

President's Report

Don Delson (President)

CCSA Foundation

- The firm Diverse Force has been engaged to conduct the search for a new executive director. They will also help provide feedback on the long-term structure of the foundation office.

HOS Evaluation

- Michelle Porterfield and the firm Leadership Solutions will lead the evaluation process for the head of school. It will be a one-year project with a one-time cost of approximately \$12,000.
 - Motion to approve the hiring of Leadership Solutions – Bill Cumby
 - Second – Marilyn Henkelman
 - Ayes: Nays: 9 Absent: 2

There was a brief discussion, which covered the following topics:

- The Executive Committee will review the data gathered during the HOS evaluation process.
- It was suggested the current HOS evaluation process be included in the charter renewal application.

Charter Renewal

- The application is in a first draft form and is on track to meet the submission deadline.
- Our attorney is of the belief the process will be informal, shouldn't take too long, and will likely be approved.

Partnership with Widener University

- The new university president is very civically engaged and would like to create a partnership between our two organizations. Don Delson and Akosua Watts met with her in the fall of 2023 to begin talking about a tutoring/coaching program which would potentially provide one on one support for students in grades 3-8. The Chester Children's Chorus runs a similar program with Swarthmore College, and it is very successful.
- Don and Cordelia Delson met with representatives from the chorus to learn about how they structure their tutoring program.
- After the charter renewal, the Education Committee will work on creating a pilot program for third and fourth graders with the plan to scale up from there.

There was a brief discussion which included the following points:

- Tutoring would happen after school to avoid pulling kids from core school time.
- The 21st Century Program already contains some tutoring so the pilot program could easily fit in with that program and time slot.
- Need to determine how tutors from Widener would be identified. It is important to ensure quality candidates, not just hire students looking for experience to put on their resumes.
- Would it be possible to bring CCSA students to Widener? Is there a potential for high school students to take college level classes?
- It was generally agreed that the pilot program should be rolled out one grade at a time.

Committee Reports

Nominating & Governance Committee (Judy Owen)

DEI Statement/Vote

- Judy Owen read the proposed DEI statement to the group: *CCSA is dedicated to the ongoing maintenance of an inclusive, equitable and just community for all its members.*
 - Motion to adopt the new DEI statement – Donald Delson
 - Second – Marilyn Henkelman
 - Ayes: Nays: 9 Absent: 2

Charter Renewal

- There is a first draft of all nine sections, as well as many of the appendices. We are now in the editing phase.
- Many thanks to Akosua Watts and Alice Turbiville for all their hard work.
- The final deadline is April 1, but we would like to submit it before then.

Education Committee (Marilyn Henkleman)

- Mid-Year Assessments were recently completed. Generally, there were small improvements, but we had hoped for greater progress. The results did provide the opportunity to discuss the idea of one-on-one support and tutoring.
- The Think & Grow Program (an agricultural science program at Chester High School) was a program we recently had an opportunity to take over. It is not something we can support right now, but perhaps there is equipment or other resources we can use. The program itself is potentially a program that could develop once we complete the next phase of the building expansion.

Finance Committee (Alice Turbiville)

Review of January Financials

- We made a few changes to our Five-Year Projection. Originally, beginning in 2026 we would have surpluses because of the return to statutory reimbursements. We made a few adjustments, including staff salary increases and new programming initiatives, etc. Next year, the board will need to take these areas on and figure out how those surpluses will specifically be used.
- Will be submitting the final projection to the board for review to be included in the final draft, which will be submitted with the renewal application.

Current Year Budget

- Things are good and cash is up to \$9M.
- The district recently repaid us owed money of approximately \$2M and they no longer owe us anything.
- Revenues – there are projected increases due to an increase in the identified special education students.
- Expenses – Special Education costs are getting high especially because of outplaced students. As of now we are over budget by approximately \$150,000 and will likely be over by approximately \$250,000 at the end of the year. We anticipate this trend to continue upwards and we will have to mitigate these increased costs in the coming years.

Other News

- Charter Choices underwent a sale and are part of a servicing company for charter schools. They have expanded capabilities because of that – HR, IT, etc. They will probably expand their service offerings, but these changes are not likely to affect us – our services and service team will stay the same. They did not change their name.

School Report (Akosua Watts)

Teacher Education/Recruitment

- Tara Park, our Strategic Planning and Partnerships Director, is working on finding different pathways to get educators certified and working in the school sooner - identify folks who have already made contribution to our school and get them fast-tracked for certification. She is

working on Identifying programs where that exists – potentially West Chester and/or Delaware County Community College.

Artificial Intelligence

- Recently conducted an AI workshop with staff. It was a mixed response, but generally folks are coming around to it. It's not just a tool for students to cheat, it's beneficial to educators. The bottom line is, we need to use AI, or we'll be left behind.

Highlights & Academic Updates

- Homecoming 2024 @ Neumann University (1/6)
- FE: Growth Mindset Workshop (1/17) & Financial Aid (1/30)
- 100th Day of School (2/7)
- Valentine's Day MS Skating Incentive (2/14)
- Re-Enrollment and Open Enrollment Process
 - Less than a hundred families left to re-enroll.
 - Approximately 300 applications received during the month of February.

Upcoming Events

- ArtSmart Process Recital – Wednesday, February 21 at 5:00pm
- JHF Visiting Professorship w/ Rev. Dr. Luther Smith
 - Topic: How Do We Empower the Work of Hope
 - Thursday, February 22 at 6:00pm
 - Wendy and Jim Emerich, donors and former board members of the foundation, are largely responsible for this event.
- Black History Assembly – Wednesday, February 28 at 9:15am

Adjournment: The public meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Date of Next Scheduled Public Board Meeting: March 19, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.