



**ACADEMY FOR URBAN LEADERSHIP
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES
612 AMBOY AVE., PERTH AMBOY, NJ
7:00 PM
Wednesday, February 28, 2024**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM and presided over by Joshua Bishop-Mbachu.

In accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, *N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.*, notice of this meeting has been publicized by having the date, time and location of the meeting posted at the school, on the school website and advertised in the Home News Tribune which has been designated as the Board's official newspaper within the legal time required. Time will be allotted for public comment at this meeting.

II. FLAG SALUTE

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

III. MISSION STATEMENT

To employ an educational design and experience that merges the highest standards of academic excellence while fostering convictions and commitment to social and economic justice. The school acknowledges that both family and community involvement are integral to the student's academic achievement level, and will focus on fostering strong relationships between the school, family and community. Through these partnerships, the school will strive to create a nurturing environment by providing each student with the five resources deemed necessary for healthy child development by the President's Summit for America's Future. These include: a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, a safe place to learn and grow, a healthy start, a marketable skill through effective education, and a chance to give back to peers and the community.

In order to provide a quality education, the curriculum offered will involve rigorous academics with a holistic approach to education. Special emphasis will be placed on service learning and espousing the importance of civic and social responsibility. The development of character, leadership skills, conflict resolution abilities, and community responsibility will be stressed to provide the students with the necessary tools to become contributing members of a democratic society.

IV. ROLL CALL

Board Members:

Mr. Joshua Bishop-Mbachu - President - Present
Ms. Michelle Roman – Vice President - Present
Mr. Saad Syed – Corporate Secretary - Excused
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez - Present
Ms. Yadira Puntiel - Excused
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez - Present

Additional Attendees:

Dr. Jack Perna – Interim Chief Administrator - Present
Ms. Tobi Knehr - Middle School Administrator - Present
Ms. Lauren Gonzalez – Interim Director of Curriculum, Assessment, and Support Services - Excused
Ms. Patricia Bombelyn - Board Attorney - Present
Ms. Bernadette Pinto – Interim BA/Board Secretary - Present

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Move that the Board of Trustees approve the regular meeting minutes from December 20, 2023.

Motion: Mr. Ramirez

Second: Ms. Hernandez

**All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;
Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0**

MOTION PASSED

2. Move that the Board of Trustees approve the special meeting minutes from January 19, 2024.

Motion: Ms. Roman

Second: Mr. Ramirez

**All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;
Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0**

MOTION PASSED

3. Move that the Board of Trustees approve the regular meeting minutes from January 31, 2024.

Motion: Mr. Ramirez

Second: Ms. Hernandez

**All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;
Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0**

MOTION PASSED

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

Dr. Jack Perna shared the AUL Charter Renewal Letter dated January 31, 2024; a hard copy of the letter was shared with the public.

Letter from Ms. Kathleen Helewa Educational Consultants dated February 20, 2024

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Board President invites members of the public to present any comments to the Board (limited to three minutes).

Ms. Stracensky, parent and PTO Representative discussed the M1 & M2 grades in the portal and that they needed to match provided Report Cards. Multiple parents have shared this concern. Revisited the gym in the middle school and discussed the need to meet with the French Teacher during school-based events such as the Report card. Behavior management needed with some students and increased support so that teachers develop skills to deal with such behaviors.

Ms. Blanco, 21st Century Coordinator and Perth Amboy resident discussed the Barclay gym condition and how it impacts the 21st Century program. She stated that they have been created as possible. Ms. Blanco discussed her concern of safety at the high school as related to students not using uniforms. She explained that students and substitute teachers are sometimes mixed up since students do not wear uniforms.

Ms. Selby, a teacher at the middle school discussed her concern about the gym conditions.

VIII. PRESENTATIONS

AUL Probation Remediation Plan presented by Dr. Jack Perna

IX. STAKEHOLDER REPORTS

Ms. Stracensky, PTO Co-President shared that she encouraged parent participation and asked that more messages be provided to families about PTO and Board meeting dates. Students loved Valentine's day messages. They made a profit of approximately eighty dollars. Both went over very well with students.

The next event is for St. Patrick's Day and considering fundraisers. The last meeting was canceled due to inclement weather. Ms. Stracensky advised that the Agendas have been predetermined by the school personnel. She advised on the need for stronger educational values. She stressed the need to promote meeting dates and topics. Email address has not been established and messages need to be sent out.

X. INTERIM CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Academic Excellence
2. Human Resources and Recognition
3. Finance and Facilities
4. Executive

XII. MOTIONS

Academic Excellence

1. Move that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Interim Chief Administrator, approve the following field trip requests:

Field Trip	Students/Sponsor	Date(s)	Location	Cost
Kean University	40 students (9-12 grades / M. Velasquez	March 7, 2024	Kean University Union	Bus Cost \$380.00 Funded by ARP ESSER
Engineering Day at Rutgers University	12 students (all grades)/K. Howlet	March 12, 2024	Rutgers University Bush Campus Piscataway, Nj	Cost per student \$12 x 12 = \$144 Bus: \$400 Funded by ARP ESSER
Seton Hall University Tour	38 Students 11-12 grade K. DePeri	March 19, 2024	Seton Hall S. Orange, Nj	Cost per student \$10 x 38 = \$380 Bus: \$600 Funded by ARP ESSER

Motion: Ms. Roman

Second: Mr. Ramirez

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

2. Move that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Interim Chief Administrator purchase 25 copies of print and digital ESL textbooks entitled *Asi Se Dice*, Level One, as well as the *Asi Se Dice* Student workbook(s) (consumable), and one each of the Teacher edition for the text and student workbook at a cost not to exceed \$11,098.00 funded by ARP ESSER. - Tabled

Human Resources and Recognition - No motions

Finance and Facilities

1. Move that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Interim Chief Administrator, approve the Bills List for the period of 2/1/24 to 2/28/24.
2. Move that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Interim Chief Administrator and School Business Administrator, approve the Board Secretary's (A148) Report, Treasurer's Report, and transfers for the month ending January 2024. Be it further resolved that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Interim School Business Administrator/Board Secretary approve the

certification of funds pursuant to N.J.A.C 6A:23A-16.10(c)3, that as of January 31, 2024, no budgetary line item account has encumbrances and expenditures that in total exceed the line item appropriation in violation of 6A:23A16.10(a).

3. Move that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Interim Chief Administrator, accept the Revised Budget presented at the January 31, 2024 meeting in the amount of \$10,252,838.

Motion: Ms. Roman

Second: Mr. Ramirez

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

XIII. OTHER MOTIONS

1. Move that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Interim Chief Administrator, approve Kean University Career Job Fair to be attended by Miriam Rodriguez at a cost not to exceed \$100.00 in March 2024 funded by ARP ESSER.

Motion: Ms. Roman

Second: Mr. Ramirez

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

2. Move that the Board of Trustees approve LDM Professional Services LLC for consulting services at a rate of \$100.00 an hour not to exceed \$5,000.00 previously approved by the executive committee on February 8th, 2024.

Motion: Ms. Roman

Second: Mr. Ramirez

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

3. Move that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Interim Chief Administrator, approve the Notice of Intent to exercise the renewal option pursuant to AUL's lease with the Hispanic Christian Center, Inc.

Motion: Ms. Hernandez

Second: Ms. Roman

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

4. Whereas the Board of Trustees hired the law firm of Nirenberg and Varano to conduct investigations into a series of three administrative personnel matters on January 17, 2024, and
 - Whereas the Board of Trustees have received and carefully reviewed the following Investigative Reports of Nirenberg and Varano:
 - the February 7, 2024 Report of Investigation Pertaining to Hostile Work Environment Complaint by a staff member against an Administrator; and
 - the February 7, 2024 Report of Investigation Pertaining to Hostile Work Environment Complaint by a staff member against an Administrator; and

- the February 20, 2024 Report of Investigation Pertaining to Hostile Work Environment Complaint by a staff member against two Administrators; and
- Whereas, the current Interim Lead has carefully reviewed and considered the three Reports of Investigation, and recommends the adoption of the determinations of the Reports, which do not substantiate any of the allegations of a Hostile Work Environment;
- It is hereby resolved by the Board of Trustees that the determinations of the three aforementioned reports are adopted, and the Interim Lead Person shall notify the personnel involved of the relevant determinations, and implement any remedial actions recommended in his discretion.

Motion: Mr. Ramirez

Second: Ms. Hernandez

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

5. Move that the Board of Trustees accept the resignation of Joyel Furges as Principal of the Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School submitted February 28th, 2024.

Motion: Ms. Roman

Second: Mr. Ramirez

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

6. Move that the Board of Trustees accept the resignation of Lauren Gonzalez as Director of Curriculum Assessment and Support Services of the Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School submitted on February 28th, 2024.

Motion: Ms. Roman

Second: Mr. Ramirez

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

7. Move that the Board of Trustees accept the resignation of David Hannan as Physical Education Teacher of the Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School submitted on February 28th, 2024.

Motion: Mr. Ramirez

Second: Ms. Roman

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

8. Whereas, on December 20, 2023 the Board of Trustees approved and adopted the findings of the Final Investigative Report of Lisa Gengeleski, Esq., of Lindabury, McCormick, Estabrook and Cooper received on December 18, 2023, concerning allegations that staff members may have unreasonably failed to comply with school policy requiring mandatory reporting of potentially abused children; and
- Whereas the Board of Trustees also instructed the previous Interim Lead, Dr. Natasha Howard, to draft recommendations for discipline in keeping with the investigator's recommended consequences; and

- Whereas, the previous Interim Lead, Dr. Natasha Howard, did not submit to the Board any recommended consequences; and
- Whereas the Board of Trustees is satisfied that the current Interim Lead, Dr. Jack Perna, has given careful consideration and review to the December 18, 2023 Final Report of Lisa Gengeleski, Esq., and the Board's directive as to formulating recommendations for discipline to the previous Lead by resolution of December 20, 2023;
- It is hereby resolved that the recommendations of the current Interim Lead, Dr. Jack Perna, that employee Maria Sena will be suspended with pay for one week on dates to be determined and selected by the Lead, receive a written notice that further violations of school policy may subject her to termination, and her next salary increment shall be withheld, are hereby approved and adopted by the Board of Trustees.

Motion: Ms. Roman

Second: Mr. Ramirez

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

9. Move that the Board of Trustees under the recommendation of the Interim Chief Administrator accept the findings of HIB Report #3 dated February 12th, 2024.

Discussion: Mr. Ramirez requested that an Assembly be provided to the students

Motion: Ms. Hernandez

Second: Ms. Roman

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

10. Whereas on January 23, 2024 the Board of Trustees received a Complaint of inappropriate communication and harassment by one Administrator against another Administrator, and immediately retained Kathleen Connelly, Esq., of Lindabury, McCormick, Estabrook & Cooper, to conduct an investigation into said Complaint; and
Whereas during the investigation, the Administrator who brought the complaint added an additional allegation of racially offensive remarks; and
Whereas, the Board has received and carefully reviewed the February 8, 2024, Report of Kathleen Connelly, Esq.;
It is hereby resolved that the Board approves and adopts the findings of the Report of Kathleen Connelly, Esq., that none of the three complaints are sustained.

Motion: Ms. Roman

Second: Ms. Hernandez

All In Favor: 4: Mr. Bishop-Mbachu, Ms. Roman, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Ramirez;

Abstained: 0; Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Board President invites members of the public to present any additional comments to the Board (limited to three minutes). - No public comments were held.

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Public bodies may meet in closed session when the matters under discussion are:

- (1) Matters made confidential by state, federal law or rule by court.
- (2) Disclosure would result in an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy, unless the person affected consents in writing.
- (3) Disclosure would impair the body's right to receive federal or state funds.
- (4) Collective bargaining.
- (5) Lease or acquisition of property, setting of banking rates, investment of public funds if disclosure would harm the public interest.
- (6) Investigations into violations of law.
- (7) Strategies to protect public security. Pending, ongoing or anticipated litigation or contract negotiation, including attorney-client privilege. The threat of litigation must be more than theoretical for this exemption to apply.
- (8) Personnel matters affecting employees of the public bodies, unless all parties request or consent to a public hearing. Prior to discussion of personnel, affected employees must be given notice, known as a Rice notice, which gives the employee the right to request a public hearing.
- (9) Proceedings that could result in a suspension, civil penalty, or loss of a license or permit.

Discussion Items:

1. Attorney-Client Privilege
2. Kelly v. AUL
3. Negotiations Update
4. Personnel
5. HIB report
6. Ongoing Investigations

The Board went into Executive Session at 9:59 pm.

Motion: Mr. Syed; Second: Mr. Ramirez
Voice Vote: All In Favor: 4; Opposed: 0

The Board came out of Executive Session at 11:12 pm

Motion: Ms. Roman; Second: Mr. Syed
Voice Vote: All In Favor: 4; Opposed: 0

XV. ADJOURNMENT

The Board President entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:51 pm.

Motion: Mr. Ramirez; Second: Ms. Roman
Voice Vote: All In Favor: 4; Opposed: 0