

Board of Trustees Meeting October 28, 2024 (Virtual) Marion P. Thomas Charter High School of Culinary and Performing Arts 125 Sussex Avenue, Newark, NJ 07103

October 28, 2024 | 5:00 PM ET Zoom:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87205682710?pwd=dWh4bE5qWCtkWk9PcThPSWdLbVZZUT09

1. CALL TO ORDER - Open Public Meetings Act - 5:06 PM

• The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act ("Act") was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of, and to attend meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Marion P Thomas Charter School Board of Trustees has caused notice of this meeting to be advertised by having the date, time, and place there of posted on the district's website (www.mptcs.org), in the office of the Clerk of the City of Newark, and was published in the Star-Ledger in August 2024.

2. ROLL CALL

NOLL CALL					
Board Member	Present	Absent	Board Member	Present	Absent
Vincent Rouse	\checkmark		Julio Valdivieso	\checkmark	
Briana Gilchrist	\checkmark		Allan Boomer	\checkmark	
Dashay Carter		\checkmark	Toni Ince	\checkmark	
Dr. Princess Towe	\checkmark				

Non-Voting Board Members Present										
Elijah Griffiths (Board Secretary/Administrator)	Tina Jalloh (Board Attorney)									
Angela Mincy, Chief School Administrator/Superintendent	Joshua Solow (School Business Administrator)									



3. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

• Chairman Rouse gave an update.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

- Ms. Mincy, Mr. Shankar, and Mr. Abbaleo gave a presentation update.
 - Questions
 - I guess I'd probably bring this up at the next Curriculum Committee meeting, but I'll just kind of throw out there. There seems to be I've said this before across the whole state, there's just a disconnect. By the way, I think that it shows that you guys have been working hard and making progress with our students. And I think it's telling especially that if they stay longer with us, then we have more time to make an impact and the results start to pay off, right? Education is not an immediate thing. But is there anything that we could do? I see a disconnect. It's just across the state. These results seem to be. It's just weird to me again that like state proficiency tends to float around what, 50% even. That's before we factored pandemic in. It was always something. So across the state and we are a good state, we are telling us that only half of our students are proficient at the grade level, and so that tells me that either the entire state is doing something wrong, which is weird, and one of the best states for education, right? Or we're measuring it wrong. Just so when I always hear these things right, like you guys are experts as educators, and I'm interested in what I as a board member well we as a board could do help assist at a state level and maybe advocate that way. I know you guys operate in this world where you're kind of stuck with the paradigm that we have and you do the best you can within the paradigm. You do an admirable job because we're seeing results within that. I would just challenge you to maybe challenge you to come to the board and present us with challenges in ways that we can help support you in a way that you can't do yourself. (Valdivieso)
 - I think it goes beyond new jersey cause was gonna highlight the Nate scorecard that you mentioned I think last meeting where and correct me if I'm wrong because I didn't I just got the information from you but only 1/3 of students across the nation are on their right reading level which is you know that's even worse than the 50% number you just threw out. You know that and that's across the United States. So again, it's just hard to swallow, you know, and believe that like there's is parts of the system that are broken, you know. (Abbaleo)
 - o And will be so for the foreseeable future, it's up to us to honestly just keep pushing and doing the work. Math is killing us as you see, like we make a little bit of gain, we take some dips, and some grades are it's very uneven. Math is very difficult because we're literally raising a generation of non mathematicians. Like literally, you can't find math teachers who can really teach kids the way that they need to be taught. We saw this pre-pandemic. It has just been further exacerbated and it's going to just take some innovative ways to get out of it. I don't have those innovative ways right now. We're going to keep trying, you know, a little bit of everything. If I do, I'm going to bottle it up and sell it. But I will say it's really it's tough, it really is. And just over here, it's just like, honestly, it's and I don't think that you're saying this, but it's just, it's not for lack of trying. It's just a lot of mitigating factors. It's like, you know, we say it takes a village. It's true. We need everybody to do their part, we need them to do their part. You know? I'm saying like, we



need every we literally need all hands-on deck because it's a multifaceted problem that we can't finger point, we just have to work together to work ourselves out of it. But it's true, when we looked at the state data that we receive, there's no for ELA or math, there wasn't a single grade. If I'm not mistaken, I want to say 53%. I don't think that there's any grade level that I can't remember. If it's now a little fuzzy. If it was 53 or 58, but there was across. Like and again, you're talking about you're struggling districts, you're affluent ones when you factor it all in, there's something to be said about that, and it's it is a larger conversation, Julio around when you look at if we're being, like, completely honest, when you look at those higher performing schools you look at it's like in some ways it's how can I say it it's just not safe if you will, for schools to even want to take on the most struggling students because you know you're going to get dinged for it because you're not being it's not safe to have a lot of students with IEPs for students who are not native language speakers because it's going to hurt the school. The schools gonna get their hand slapped for it when really it's a systemic problem that we need to figure out how to fix and how to make sure that kids are growing as a result of the work that we're doing. And again, you're talking to somebody who had the number one school who it was, the kids. Do you know what I'm saying? Like, that's it. It's we have to have an honest conversation that I don't think that a lot of people are willing to have ready to have that conversation right now. It's like a lot of finger about like, who's to blame? But it's just it's frustration. It's a source of frustration because these are the hands that hand that we are dealt. No. We just keep, you know, pushing, trying to make sure our teachers have the best professional development that we can get them and modeling and the coaching and to try to keep talking to our parents and do our best to engage them. But it's not easy. (Mincy)

- Yeah, I sit in those meetings and I see the amount of effort and brainstorming that's going on. I mean, you guys are we tried everything, right? We're bringing in different companies to try to, you know, revamp the ways we teach thing to teach to teachers. We're trying all kinds of stuff and so it's definitely not like and we're seeing results. So we are seeing results. I guess I'm just saying remember you guys are functioning, I use the NBA as an example because just started and I'm a Knicks fan. So you guys are the coaches operating within the rules of the game. But the rules of the game are there, so you have your limit in being revolutionary right. And I guess if we're playing the executive Office role here as the board, what can we do to change the rules of the game to make the system more fair, and I know that's asking a lot of balance. But you know, let's figure out maybe the board can take one step at a time. Things that we can do to make your lives easier beyond what you can do. (Valdivieso)
- I don't have that answer right now. It is definitely worth us coming back and think, you know, trying to brainstorm. I think that the biggest thing is just again showing up as a board supporting us, supporting our teachers, it's not the most comfortable space for them either. You know, like it's the system to the point that that we're saying it's the system that needs to be reimagined honestly. We have to reimagine the system and what success looks like for everybody right now it's a lot of layers to it that that makes it difficult for teachers to feel successful for their leaders to feel successful. But you know we deal with what we have and I don't like to like you know, I don't want it to seem like I'm making excuses for what? It's just it's the reality that we have. It's the reality. We just have to work



within the reality that we have. But I do appreciate the advocacy. Again, I don't have the answer for that, but we can like circle back and maybe think about what that would look like. But I was saying this if there's some lifting that from that standpoint that wouldn't, it would take more than Marion P's board. I will say that you it's gonna take an army of people to overhaul a system that I'll say this. It's not only not necessarily working for the kids that Marion P., it's not necessarily working for your kids either. Those of you who have kids on this line, it's a very small number of kids that the system adds is works for and so that's bigger than the kids that I'm serving here it's all of our kids, it's our nieces or nephews. We have to have an honest conversation about how to do this better and until then going to color within the lines that they tell us to and just try to do our best with what we have. (Mincy)

- Tell us what's broken. Tell us what we might, you know, be able to do something about and let us try to figure that out. Give us some work. (Valdivieso)
- For sure for sure for sure for sure. Any other questions at all? Thank you, Julio. Any other questions? (Mincy)
- o Additional statement given by Rouse.



5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Operations & Finance Committee

Good evening everyone and I didn't comment after the report, but I will say I was very, very impressed with all the reports thus far with regards to the progress being made by the students. It's just wonderful. I love the emphasis on voting too, because we've got to get them ingraining with that idea of their civic responsibility of voting how important it is and how disciplinary it is. So I'm now getting into my committee, our committee meeting the Ops and Finance Committee met on October 16th. The first thing we discussed was enrollment. Our enrollment target was 1300 students. We're at 1321, so we're above target, which is really, really a testament to all the great work with regards to recruiting and having a pipeline. And we're super excited to be over our target for enrollment. We also talked about just all the enrollment levels across the school across the village. You know, we were a little bit under our goal on pre-K. We were probably a little bit under our goal on Sankofa, but all in all above our goal. When it comes to operations, there were 426 trouble tickets that were closed in incident IQ. We talked about the fact that we have good Internet now with Crown Castle over at Sankofa and the boiler project is going well and it is fully or close to fully operational and that should be by now it should be just about fully operational for both boilers. We know we have one fired up successfully and I think the other one should be right there as well and that's fully paid for by an Esser grant. Finally, moving on to the finance reports. We reviewed all the reports that we're voting on today, the Treasurer's report, the Board Secretary's report, the Bills list, the reconciliation report, the budget and the contract renewals. As a high level of our financial picture in 2022, we had cash of 9.1 million. Today we're at 14.8 million, so we're \$5.7 million higher than we were two years ago. Our fund balance two years ago was 13.8 million. Today, 8 million, that's 4.2 million higher. I've given a bunch of good news. The one challenge I'd say to our finances is that our grant funding this year is going to be \$4 million lower than what it was last year, but all in all, our finances are in a good shape as well as our operations as well. Any questions or comments and also want to invite if there's any other committee member that'd like to speak. I'd love to have you add in as well if there are any comments. That concludes my report. (Boomer)

Personnel Committee

• Thank you. Yes, I will be putting out for Mr. Dashay Carter today. And so we met on October 17th, beginning at 5:07 PM and we had time to discuss our teacher vacancies. In Sankofa we have one vacancy, in Pac we have six, Steam 2, and in the high school 5 during our meeting time. One of the wonderful things about it is that our HR team is out there at different hiring events to make sure that folks who are qualified know that Marion P Thomas Charter School is hiring as well as notice have been sent to those who may be looking for employment, great teachers, and others from the district of East Orange who may not be employed coming here soon. And so our doors are open to those who may be looking for a place where they can fit in here at the village. Also, we went over the Employee Handbook with the changes and updates. Hopefully board members you had a chance to see those updates to the Employee handbook as we will be voting on that tonight. And that was basically our report for that evening our personnel report and also our employee handbook. One great thing again, our ad is that we do have folks who are on deck to come on to the village here in the next couple of weeks or so, about 19 plus folks so the vacancies will go down as we continue to move forward. That is our report for tonight. Again, hopefully you had a chance to read the updates for the Employee Handbook because that is one of our voting items tonight. Any questions? (Rouse)

Curriculum & Instruction Committee



- Good afternoon. We have basically 2 items for resolution. The committee met on the 8th of October, and we will need to have approved. I think we have around 11 field trips for the year going through to April. And then we have home instruction for those students who are home instruction. So we will need those two items approved. I assume we can package those two together. Mr. Abbaelo, do we have anything else on that? (Towe)
 - At the committee meeting, we just covered a lot of what was presented on, looked ahead a little bit at the academic calendar. So I don't want to belabor what we discussed at the meeting, but we also discussed those academic points, some PD opportunities, things of that nature as well. (Abbaleo)

Culture & Climate + Alumni Committee Alumni

- Good evening everyone. So, at the alumni committee meeting, we first of all, we have resolutions to pass from the alumni committee meeting. We don't usually have resolutions from our committee, so I'm excited about these resolutions. But we have 3 resolutions that we want to put forth. The first one is the FAFSA/HESAA data sharing agreement. This resolution is a good thing because starting in 2025, all students who graduate from high school, whether that's a traditional district school or a public charter school, are required to complete the FAFSA. Or the New Jersey alternative fafsa form. This is important because oftentimes a lot of students don't apply for college because they think they don't have enough money to go. So now everybody's applying for this financial qualification, this can hopefully help more of our students get into school and receive financial aid. The next resolution you'll see is for Three Summers Creative. It is for our 25th anniversary video to talk about the history of the school, as well as the vision. I think this was something that we talked about in our board meeting. And so I'm glad to see it on the docket for resolutions. The last resolution that we have is the Essex Regional Education Services Commission. This is important because this is supposed to help increase the enrollment of eligible migrant immigrant students into the district. So I ask that everybody vote in the affirmative for these resolutions. Do we have any questions? (Gilchrist)
 - Yeah, Brianna, I just have a question. I think this obviously is a great partnership the ERESC partnership. I was just wondering, are there any documents that come with this cause it's just the resolution that we have to pass and I don't see like usually, we have like an MOU or something. (Valdivieso)
 - Yes, so we have the resolutions that's added here. I can send you the draft proposal. Are you specifically talking about the last one, right? (Gilchrist)
 - Yeah, the ERESC partnership. (Valdivieso)
 - Yeah, I can see the draft proposals and uh, it's in our many notes so I can send that over to you.
 (Gilchrist)
 - Oh, by the way, can I also just say I love the FAFSA, that resolution as well that, I mean, that just goes and this is beyond your normal, just what we teach in the classroom, we're teaching important life lessons here and helping students set themselves up for success beyond the village. I love that. All of these are great. (Valdivieso)

Culture & Climate

• So I think this will be my last report on the culture and climate, because Brianna is going to be taking this one over, but no big change because she's been in all of these meetings and I'm still going to be on the committee. So it's just she's going to run both alumni and culture and climate while I focus on trying to set up our safety stuff and build that. So we went through basically making sure that these



reports keep flowing in. We had first we addressed parent university making sure that we have a monthly kinda update on that. We also kind of discussed how our district, our village receives like parent input. And we identified it also in addition to the parent university events, parent concerns may come up through the monthly check-ins that principals do with parents. The communications that parents have directly with our CSA, the parent advisory councils, the Early Childhood Advisory Council, so we wanted to make sure, I guess we're looking to stressing to figure out ways to make sure that all of those different channels for parent input make their way back to the committee so that the committee can consider ways to implement them. So that was one of the things that we talked about. We talked about the importance again of continuing and we see it every, every, every board meeting, the district climate and culture calendar like our CSA makes that very known for everybody. We're glad about that and we wanted to make sure that we as a committee kept tracking that so at the end of the year when we do an assessment of the items that we do toward to push climate and culture actively, which I think is specially a big area of emphasis for our village that we are able to look back and list everything that we've done to push that initiative and that goal. Also as far as attendance we discussed whether we should continue to address that in that committee, we said it was still healthy to continue to do that understanding attendance is being tracked operationally as well. But we will continue to look at the attendance dashboard that we have access to just for purposes of seeing if there are any trends or anything like that and then we can reach back and ask Shankar or whoever else if we have a particular question about a particular day, why attendance may have dipped on a day or be different on another day, maybe we'll have an expert on attendance or on that come in and address, but we'll just continue to track it as a line item. Partnerships. Mr. Mickens actually just started a newsletter to tell us all about the different varsity sports that we've got going on, and I thought it was great. I don't know if he's on, if he wants to say anything about that, but we did take kind of like a review, a snapshot of where we're at and what we're how we're building those programs, sports, varsity, and intramural. I'll pause in case he is. If not, we can move on and we got a jam packed schedule, but just know there is a newsletter out there which is cool. And also we discussed what partnerships we have, we specifically talked about one of the board goals was trying to establish. We as a board and other members of the community of the village constantly come across opportunities of some kind or another through our contacts, right. So whether it's, hey, my network happens to know about a particular program at a particular college and we have a very warm contact in admissions for a particular program. And maybe that translates to opportunities for some of our high school students. You know, we want to be able to bring those in an easy way, like 1 central repository, who can then filter them to the appropriate person, right? Or what it could be that it could be, hey, there's a great program that the school might be in, you know, or the entire district might be interested in pursuing all of those things, they go to different people. Sometimes they come in. And so we want to make sure that they weren't kind of lost and we had an easy place that we could filter all of them through. And I think Mr. Mickens also volunteered to be kind of the central repository and the person to redirect those as appropriate if they don't exactly fall in his lane. Although a lot of them will, since he's in charge of partnerships. So if that needs further fine tuning, that's fine. We left that open. I'm just reporting that that's where we started at the committee. But it's good to know that we are working on having a way, we definitely want to make sure that as opportunities come up that we don't lose them. And so and that was something the board also talked about. So I was glad that we spent a little time on that. We quickly went back. We asked about the Ujamaa Cafe and confirmed that it has received use, has



received healthy food, has definitely received interest from the school. So now we're just focusing on making sure it stays filled. And things for the future, one of them that we talked about for the future that we didn't get to this time is we want to take a look at what we're doing to ensure that families that are particularly susceptible to different types of trauma and child development issues that we are creating a positive culture and climate to be sensitive to that and proactive and create a welcoming environment for those families and provide the support that's needed. So that's on the horizon. And that concludes my report. Any questions? (Valdivieso)

- I'll report a statement rather. Thank you for the report. We want to commit today to working with Superintendent Mincy to make sure we fill this spot on the board for the parent representative, so that we can continue to work towards the goals that you all have in that committee. As we all know, Ms. Ince now has another role on the board. And so we want to commit to make sure that we fill that space. Thank you. (Rouse)
 - Since you brought that up, I forgot we did talk about that briefly as well and as you know, there are provisions right now in the bylaws to fill that spot very quickly, but last year we did, we decided to go with a more inclusive board. We voted on making it a more inclusive kind of election, so we still have that option on the table and we do want to figure that out. Also, though we talked about filling the student Rep position, we felt it was too late, we know that student government elections just happened and this is a really unique opportunity. Especially like we had a student trustee at my college aside from the student government president, and we did want to make sure, I think we're leaning towards making sure that this is a distinct position, not just an additional responsibility of the President, because it is one that's time-consuming but serving on a board of trustees is great for your resume as a young person. I mean, you get to see basically executive decisions being made and it's invaluable and pursue a career as a leader. And I know in my college that was a very sought after position because of the unique opportunity it offered and how great it looked on your resume heading into the workforce. For a high school student, that's got to be very valuable for your college application to be able to say, hey, I actually participated as a member of my school's board. So we definitely want to fill that, maybe through an election, but we're going to be exploring how that's going to be done very soon, obviously in consultation heavily with the CSA with the principal and that is on the horizon as well. (Valdivieso)
 - Yep. Thank you. Let's commit to do that before, before the year closeout. Meaning, before 2024, before we get to December so that we can move forward. OK. Thank you. (Rouse)
- Thank you all so much. Part of our Executive Committee report today is that we continue to partner with our partners with our Marion P Thomas Charter School Friends board so that we can make sure that our students, our scholars, and our teachers, have a safe, wonderful space to teach and learn. And we want to continue to bring further things to you as we move forward with that, I want to say congratulations again to Ms. Mincy and her team for getting the Sankofa site open for this school year. Wonderful space and place. We're glad to be back in our building and we're moving forward. Parents, we want to say this and I know Ms. Mincy won't mind me saying it, encourage others to come on and sign up for Sankofa. I know you want to keep it all to yourself, but we got to spread the love. It's a wonderful place. Board members, when you get a chance, please. I know you've been to other spaces, but please take the opportunity to go by to see the wonderful work that has been done at our Shipman St. property, the Sankofa space. Thank you so much. That is our report. (Rouse

Executive Committee



6. RESOLUTIONS

I. 2024-10-28-A: Approval of the October 28, 2024 BOT Meeting Agenda

Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse		V				Julio Valdivieso		K			
Briana Gilchrist		V				Allan Boomer	V	K			
Dashay Carter					V	Toni Ince**		K			
Dr. Princess Towe		✓									

Discussion:

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II. 2024-10-28-B: Approval of the September 23, 2024 BOT Meeting Minutes

Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse**		V				Julio Valdivieso				V	
Briana Gilchrist		K				Allan Boomer		K			
Dashay Carter					\vee	Toni Ince		K			
Dr. Princess Towe		✓									

Discussion:

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<u>2024-10-28-E</u> 2024-10-28-F	C: Appro D: Appro E: Appro E: Appro	oval of oval of toval	Octobe the Nev he Sno he Cint	er 24' F wark Co w Con tas Cor	inance ommor tract Re otract						
Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse		\checkmark				Julio Valdivieso		N.			
Briana Gilchrist		V				Allan Boomer	✓	\			
Dashay Carter					V	Toni Ince		\			
Dr. Princess Towe**											
Discussion: ● IV. <u>2024-10-28-</u> F	H: Appro	oval of (Octobe	e <u>r 24' P</u>	ersonn	el Report					
Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse	\checkmark					Julio Valdivieso		\checkmark			
Briana Gilchrist						Allan Boomer		✓			
Dashay Carter					\checkmark	Toni Ince**		✓			
Dr. Princess Towe											
<u>Discussion:</u> ● V. <u>2024-10-28-1</u>	: Approv	val of E	mploye	ee Hand	dbook	<u>Updates</u>					
Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse	\checkmark	\checkmark				Julio Valdivieso		\searrow			
Briana Gilchrist		\checkmark				Allan Boomer		\searrow			
Dashay Carter					✓	Toni Ince		\			

Dr. Princess Towe**

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^{**:} Motion Seconded



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VI. PACKAGE J - K | Motion: Towe - Ince** | Approved 2024-10-28-J: Approval of Field Trips 2024-10-28-K: Approval of Students on Home Instruction

Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse		\				Julio Valdivieso		\checkmark			
Briana Gilchrist		K				Allan Boomer		\checkmark			
Dashay Carter					\checkmark	Toni Ince**		\checkmark			
Dr. Princess Towe		N.									

Discussion:

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VII. PACKAGE L - N | Motion: Valdivieso - Ince** | Approved

2024-10-28-L: Approval of HESAA Data Sharing

2024-10-28-M: Approval of Three Summers Creative Proposal

2024-10-28-N: Approval of ERESC Partnership

Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse**		V				Julio Valdivieso	✓	V			
Briana Gilchrist		\				Allan Boomer		V			
Dashay Carter					V	Toni Ince		K			
Dr. Princess Towe		V									

Discussion:

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VIII. TABLE UNTIL OUT EXECUTIVE SESSION O - P | Motion: Rouse - Valdivieso** | Approved PACKAGE O - P | Motion: Rouse - Towe** | Approved

2024-10-28-O: Approval of the NECCS Settlement Agreement

2024-10-28-P: Approval of Retreat Consulting Group Agreement (updated)

Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse	V	N				Julio Valdivieso		\			
Briana Gilchrist**		N				Allan Boomer		\			
Dashay Carter					\vee	Toni Ince		\			
Dr. Princess Towe		V									

Discussion:

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- 7. PUBLIC COMMENT It is now time for public participation. To engage in public comment, all speakers must register via the district's website no later than 5 calendar days prior to the advertised meeting by 5:00 PM ET. Please state your name and address for the record. All speakers will have 2-minutes to address the BOT.
 - J. Holley signed up, but did not appear.

MOVED TO GRIEVANCE HEARING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION | Motion: Rouse - Valdivieso** | Approved

LEAVE GRIEVANCE HEARING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION | Motion: Rouse - Gilchrist** | Approved

- 8. CLOSED SESSION 10:15 PM
- 9. CLOSING REMARKS FROM BOARD CHAIR:

Thank you to all for your hard work and dedication to the village. Have a great evening! Committees thank you for meeting.

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN: 10:15 PM ET Rouse - Boomer** | Approved

Respectfully submitted at: 10/28/2024

Submitted by: Elijah D. Griffiths