



MINUTES

For

Board Meeting

December 18, 2024

Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School
Perth Amboy, NJ

Dr. Paul Oliveira
Lead Administrator

Ms. Bernadette Pinto
School Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Ms. Norma Diaz
High School Principal

Mrs. Tobi Knehr
Middle School Administrator

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:42 PM by President Eloisa Hernandez-Ramos.

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		Additional Attendees	
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez, President	Present	Ms. Norma Diaz, High School Principal	Excused
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	Present Left Early 7:13 PM	Mrs. Tobi Knehr, Middle School Administrator	Present
Ms. Yadira Puntiel, Board Member	Present	Ms. Patricia Bombelyn, Board Attorney	Present
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member	Present		
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member	Present		
Ms. Bernadette Pinto, SBA/Board Secretary	Present		
Dr. Paul Oliveira, Chief Lead Administrator	Present		

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion to approve the public and closed Session Minutes of the Board Meeting held on: (Copies in the hands of Board Members).

i. October 30, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting

Board Members	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez, President			X		
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	X		X		
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member					X
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member		X	X		
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member					X

i. November 26, 2024 - Board Meeting

Board Members	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez, President			X		
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	X		X		
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member			X		
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member		X	X		
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member					X

VI. CORRESPONDENCE: None

Mr. Ramirez motioned to open nominations for Vice President and Corporate Secretary and Ms. Mercado seconded.

Motion to nominate Board Vice President.

Mr. Ramirez motioned to open nominations for Vice President and Ms. Mercado seconded.
Ms. Mercado nominated Mr. Ramirez and was seconded by Ms. Vaquero.

Roll Call for Mr. Ramirez for Vice President of the Board of Trustees.

Board Members	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Ms. Elosia Hernandez, President	X			
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	X			
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member	X			

Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member	X			
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member	X			

Motion to nominate Corporate Secretary.

Mr. Ramirez motioned to open nominations for Corporate Secretary.

Mr. Ramirez nominated Ms. Mercado.

Roll Call for Ms. Mercado for Corporate Secretary of the Board of Trustees.

Board Members	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Ms. Elosia Hernandez, President	X			
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	X			
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member	X			
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member	X			
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member	X			

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS (agenda items only):

The Board President invites members of the public to present any comments to the Board (limited to three minutes). Please begin your comments by stating your name and address. Individuals are invited to speak on one topic at a time, and no individual will speak more than once until all individuals so desiring have spoken once. The public is reminded to ensure the efficient and orderly operations of the meeting; members will be limited to speaking on agenda items for three minutes.

Mr. John Knehr, Andover, NJ, addressed the Board by capturing the current time of year stating that it is a week before Christmas. He further added that when we tell kids this story and refer to the Lead Person as a villain and the Grinch. He referred to AUL as being a small school that was mismanaged for a while and added that he (Dr. Oliveira) needed to come in and get to know the system. He spoke about losing one hundred plus students and seventeen plus staff. He added all left within the first three months. He commented that Dr. Oliveira had multiple harassment charges brought up against him. He further stated that he is here for his wife and his family which will be affected negatively. He stated that Tobi is loved by the staff and students alike. He further discussed the qualities you get in his wife as a hard worker and problem solver. He spoke about her last position in Paterson how she was able to receive twenty million dollars in grants and fundraising to help the students in Paterson how it helped them get multiple services for the students of Paterson and how it continues to this day. He added that this is part of her legacy. He further discussed that losing Mrs. Tobi Knehr is losing a person who fights for the community and students. He posed the question to the Board as to why the new Lead Person was hired.

Ms. Ada Pineiro, substitute nurse, said that she was employed by AUL since 2015, she added that she was the nurse here when no one was here and that she ran between the two buildings when there was only one

nurse at times multiple times a day. She further mentioned that she also stepped in as the middle school secretary and security guard when needed. She stated that she never complained about anything and always stepped in to help. She further commented that she needs to finish the current school year to be vested in her pension.

Mrs. Tobi Knehr, Middle School Administrator, from Andover, New Jersey, I am a concerned citizen and taxpayer. She commented that she wrote a letter which will be provided to the Board. She stated that she is here especially due to the reduction in force. She commented that she is concerned that State reports indicate district funds are not being used for educational outcomes. She used the example of the installation of a new kitchen that is not being used for culinary purposes by students. She further indicated that she felt there was a lack of transparency in financial recording and budgeting. She stated that these practices not only erode public trust but also compromise the quality of education for our students. She further commented on the excessive salaries. Ms. Knehr stated that it is public knowledge that certain salaries are above industry standards she said that “although we value the expertise it should be balanced”. Ms. Knehr asked, “As students leave in droves why are salaries not being revisited?” She questioned how the Board ensures that remaining assistants and administrators, “people are not able to manage the workload especially when overtime is prohibited”, not to mention the abolishment of the Attendance office? The time allocated was over for public comment concluded. Ms. Knehr confirmed that she will return to further discuss the policies that are being violated.

Mr. John Knehr, Andover, NJ, readdressed the Board, he began by stating that the Lead Person has a restraining order against him by one of the faculty members along the way he is replacing people with his “cronies” from Linden. He further discussed the million-dollar man, that earning a million dollars in five years he feels he deserves. He added that “cooks the books” to what is going on. Mr. Knehr added that with a school of three hundred students, “Do you need a Lead Person with a school principal and vice principal? You can save a million dollars over five years.” Mr. Knehr added we will all know that this will wind up going to the lawyers. We are supposed to be here “educating kids we are supposed to know better”. Mr. Knehr stated that the Board should be held responsible individually and as a whole. Mr. Knehr stated, “If Tobi is let go tonight, understand that is what is going to happen.” He further added that the school would need to hire someone with a similar certificate for more money. He stated that there was a complete queue set up against my wife. He further discussed the rehiring of the old BA. He commented on the salary and hours of the BA. He added, “As I said last time Ms. Diaz is not up to it, how was she going to be the BA and Principal and Secretary? I do not see anyone taking notes tonight so how are we going to transcript this?” Mr. Knehr then asked, “Who is going to be the principal of the High School in January when Ms. Diaz is out for a month?” He addressed the Board by saying, “You would not let Tobi use three vacation days when she ran out of sick days when she had her knee done almost two years ago so who is paying for her month off?” He concluded by stating, “In conclusion, it saddens me right now. Lawyers would not be needed and that adults are running education” for students.

Ms. Ada Pineiro, Substitute Nurse, further commented that the “State of NJ requires that a nurse be in the building; those are state requirements.”

Mrs. Tobi Knehr, Middle School Administrator, concerned citizen, and tax payer, stated, “Everything I have spoken about does pertain to immediate concerns this would not Violation of regulation District policies.” She further discussed the critical concerns and specifically mentioned Policies 1540 and 4145 and demonstrated issues with the proper hiring procedures and adhering to these policies is essential. She stated

that ‘I respectfully addressed the Board with these and requests’ and that the Board ensure transparency and conduct a thorough and independent audit. She closed by requesting that the Board ensure all policies and full compliance with these matters and that she looks forward to the Board’s response.

Ms. Puntiel stated she was speaking as a member of the public and not a Board member. She continued by speaking about when she initially joined the Board and she was happy to be a part of it. She added that she did not vote for the October minutes as she did not agree with the cuts presented. She added that she was not happy to receive text messages and phone calls related to the way she voted. Ms. Puntiel stated that she would be resigning effective immediately.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it is with a heavy heart that we have to make these decisions and it saddens her that these decisions need to be made especially before Christmas. We are under the State’s eye and we were put on notice. Mrs. Hernandez stated the Board has been looking at the number since last school year, especially with the drop in June and that this is not something the Board wants to do. She further added that these decisions are related to the enrollment at AULCS and until we increase our enrollment which is directly tied to improving the instructional program. Mrs. Hernandez mentioned that she is one of the founders and that she is aware of the numbers throughout the enrollment decrease and that currently, the school has more staff now than it did with 400 students. Mrs. Hernandez closed by stating that the Board has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure the financial stability of the school.

VIII. PRESENTATIONS:

- a. A Winter Holiday Performance

IX. STAKEHOLDERS REPORTS: None

X. CHIEF LEAD ADMINISTRATORS REPORT:

Dr. Oliveira presented his Lead Person report sharing the data for December 2024 that included Professional Development for Administration, Teaching, and Support Staff, four unfounded HIB Cases, Safety Drills that included Lockdown and Fire Drills, Lockdown Drill and Discipline Report, Student Attendance, Staff Attendance, Special Services (I & R S, Classified, Bilingual/ESL, Free/Reduced Lunch Students, Enrollment, School-Wide Activities: Guidance Department Activities Reports, Parent Outreach/Engagement, Longitudinal Summary for ELA and Mathematics.

XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

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

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The Academic Excellence Committee, upon recommendation of the Lead Administrator, presents the following motions to the Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School Board of Trustees for approval:

1. Approve the stipend for a Child Study Team Case Manager for the School Year 2024-2025. Total cost not to exceed \$12,000.00 funded by IDEA Acct. # 20-250-200-300-000-097.
2. Approve AULCS participation in NJSchoolJobs Virtual Education on February 20, 2025, at a cost not to exceed \$599.00.
3. Approve AULCS Field Trips. Copy in the hands of the board of trustees. Acct. #11-000-270-500-000-072.

Number of Students /chaperones	Grade	Requested by	Date	Time	Event/ Location	Expense(s)
8/1	10 & 11	Ms. Diaz C. DePeri	5/28/25	7:00 AM - 2:30 PM	Middlesex County Youth Wellness Summit Middlesex College Edison, NJ	Bus- \$390

4. Approve the following staff Professional Development requests, Title II, Acct. #20-270-200-300-000-096.

Professional Development	Staff Member	Date(s)	Location	Funding Source
NJSLA and NJGPA Workshop	Ms. Norma Diaz	1/22/25	The Westin Princeton at Forrestal, NJ	No Cost

HUMAN RESOURCE AND RECOGNITION

The Human Resource and Recognition Committee, upon recommendation of the Lead Administrator, presents the following motions to the Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School Board of Trustees for approval. All appointments and reappointments are contingent upon and may be modified based on student participation and the district's receipt of sufficient State School Aid and other revenue funding.

1. Appoint the following staff as listed (Certified):

#	Candidates Name	Effective Date	Degree	Credited Exp./ Step	Assigned Subj. Area	Location	Total Annual Salary Rate
1.	Adam Reagan	1/2/25	BA	9 year	Biology Science Teacher	High School	\$71,250
2.	Esmeralda Cabrera	1/2/25	DR	12 year	Mathematics Teacher	High School	\$80,000

2. Accept the resignations of the following staff:

#	Employee Name	Position Title	Effective Date
1.	Diana Collazo	English Language Arts Teacher	01/31/2025

3. Approve the return to work from the temporary suspension of the following employee:

#	Employee Name	Position Title	Effective Date
1.	Dr. Luis Diaz	Teacher of Bilingual Biology	12/11/2024

4. Approve the return to work from a military leave of the following employee:

#	Employee Name	Position Title	Effective Date
1.	Brandon Bongart	Social Studies Teacher	01/02/2025

5. Appoint the following staff as listed for 2024-2025 Stipend Positions:

#	Employee Name	Stipend Position	Stipend Amount
1.	Branford Pazant	7th Grade Advisor	\$500.00
2.	Branford Pazant	8th Grade Advisor	\$500.00
3.	Mabel Leonardo	Child Study Team Case Manager	\$40/hr. Not to Exceed \$12,000.00

6. Approve the job description for a part-time aide to assist with special needs and multilingual students.

FINANCE AND FACILITIES

The Finance and Facilities Committee, upon recommendation of the Lead Administrator and the School Business Administrator, presents the following motions to the Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School Board of Trustees for approval.

1. Approve the Bills List for the period of November 27, 2024, to December 18, 2024.
2. Approve the Board Secretary Report and Treasurer Report for November 2024.
3. Discuss the October 15, 2024 budget.
4. Topics of Discussion
 - A. Compliance
 1. Audsum due January 1, 2025 & AFCR due January 15, 2025
 2. Revised Budget FY25 (upcoming in January)
 3. Title I Amendment (upcoming in January)
 4. IDEA Amendment (upcoming in January)
 5. HEDI Payroll
 - B. Facilities
 1. St. Michael's Lease Update
 2. Barclay Campus Update

EXECUTIVE/GOVERNANCE

The Executive/Governance Committee, upon recommendation of the Chief Lead Administrator, presents the following motions to the Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School Board of Trustees for approval:

*First reading of the following policies:

1. Policy #0141 Board Member Number and Term (Revised)
2. Policy #0141.1 Board Member Number and Term – Sending District (Revised)
3. Policy #0141.2 Board Member Number and Term – Receiving District (Revised)
4. Policy #0164.6 Remote Public Board Meetings During Declared Emergency (M)(Abolished)
5. Policy #2200 Curriculum Content (M) (Revised)
6. Policy #3160 Physical Examination (M) (Revised)
7. Policy #4160 Physical Examination (M) (Revised)
8. Policy # 5337 Service Animals (Revised)
9. Policy #5350 Student Suicide Prevention (M) (Revised)
10. Policy #7231 Gifts from Vendors (M) (Abolished)
11. Policy # 8420 Emergency and Crisis Situations (M) (Revised)
12. Policy #8467 Firearms and Weapons (M) (Revised)
13. Policy #9181 Volunteer Athletic Coaches and Co-Curricular Activity
14. Policy #9323 NOTIFICATION OF JUVENILE OFFENDER CASE DISPOSITION
15. Policy #7610 VANDALISM

*First reading of the following Regulations:

1. Regulation #3160 Physical Examination (M) (Revised)
2. Regulation #4160 Physical Examination (M) (Revised)
3. Regulation #5200 Attendance (M) (Revised)
4. Regulation # 8467 Firearms and Weapons (M) (Revised)
5. Regulation # 7610 VANDALISM

Consent Agenda Items

Board Members	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez, President			X			
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	X		X			
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member						X
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member		X	X			
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member			X			

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 the 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: Personnel & Attorney-Client Privilege

Motion to move into Executive Session:

Time Entering 7:23 PM

Board Members	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez, President			X		
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	X		X		
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member					X
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member			X		
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member		X	X		

Time Returning 8:16 PM

XIII. OTHER MOTIONS:

1. Move that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Chief Lead Administrator, approve the medical leave of absence of the following employee #15483.

Board Members	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez, President			X			
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	X		X			
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member						X
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member			X			
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member		X	X			

2. Move that the Board of Trustees, under the recommendation of the Chief Lead Administrator, approve the resignation of Cara Kirner DePeri, Senior Class Advisor Stipend, effective 12/11/2024.

Board Members	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez, President			X			
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	X		X			
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member						X
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member		X	X			
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member			X			

3. Approve the workforce reduction due to the current low enrollment to ensure economical and efficient of school operations:

Position	Name
Administrator	Tobi Knehr
Executive Assistant	Luis Vargas
Security Guard	Peter Bosques
Custodian	Fermin Ramirez Rojas
Custodian	Santiago Florez
Substitute Nurse	Ada Pineiro
Attendance Officer	Maria Sena

Board Members	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez, President			X			
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member	X		X			
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member						X
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member		X	X			
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member			X			

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Members of the public desiring to make a public comment may come forward at this time. Please begin your comments by stating your name and address. Individuals are invited to speak on one topic at a time, and no individual will speak more than once until all individuals so desiring have spoken once.

The public is reminded that to ensure the efficient and orderly operations of the meeting, members of the public will be limited to speaking on items for three minutes.

NEW/UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Discussion regarding a Social Worker Policy: There exists “Social Worker” references within Policy #8468 CRISIS RESPONSE, Regulation #6111 SPECIAL EDUCATION and Regulation #1570 INTERNAL CONTROLS. - Tabled

Consider creating a science lab partnership with MCC or adopting a new science program with labs.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

XIV. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to Adjourn

End Time 8:27 PM

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstention	Absent
Ms. Eloisa Hernandez, President			X			
Mr. Ambiorix Ramirez, Board Member		X	X			
Ms. Yadira, Puntiel, Board Member						X
Ms. Mayra Mercado, Board Member	X		X			
Ms. Cecilia Vaquero, Board Member			X			