

Board of Trustees Meeting February 24, 2025 (Virtual) Marion P. Thomas Charter High School of Culinary and Performing Arts 125 Sussex Avenue, Newark, NJ 07103

February 24, 2025 | 5:00 PM ET Zoom:

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

1. CALL TO ORDER - Open Public Meetings Act - 5:07 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			Allan Boomer		
Dashay Carter		\checkmark	Toni Ince		
Dr. Princess Towe					

Non-Voting Board Members Present									
Elijah Griffiths (Board Secretary/Administrator)	The Office of Jalloh & 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 gave a presentation update.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Operations & Finance Committee

Good afternoon, everybody. I'll just summarize the meeting that we had last week. So the first thing we talked about was enrollment. Our enrollment is actually doing really, really well. And when I say enrollment, I'm talking about for the next school year, not for this school year. We know this school year's enrollment was strong and it's already pretty much in the bag in terms of the budget and everything else. We have 626 applications for the next school year, which is a big increase from this time last year. We had 387 at this time last year, so we've almost doubled the number of families that have applied. We also have increased substantially, almost double the number of families that have ranked Marion P number one on their application. So this year we have 210 #1 rankings versus 106 at the same time last year. Our enrollment group, our effort I should say really the team is doing a great job. There are a number of virtual open houses that have that have been held as well as in person open houses. And we're also not taking anything for granted by also meeting, doing retention presentations with our 8th grade families to make sure that we get a chance to keep them in the village. I will say we have, we're excited about the event coming this week on February 26th, which is the Sankofa ribbon cutting and also the Open house. And there's a number of open houses in the month of March, March 5th, March 13th I believe. And then registration fair in May as well. We spent a good amount of time looking at how much and how we're spending money on social media, I mean on marketing. We spent about \$40,000 this fiscal school year on marketing and advertising, which included bus ads, online marketing, social media spend as well. Moving on, we did review some of the reports that was that Ms. Mincy reviewed today with regards to ELA performance relative to the other Newark schools. And we're pretty pleased especially about the reading and writing aspects. We're really pleased with those results. Moving on, we talked about IT in our committee. There were 979 tickets closed out for the school year, 14 are still open. One big push that the IT department is really making is trying to get more parents engaged in the online system real time. That's the system where parents can log in to see attendance and grades. And things like that, we find that if parents have access to that information. Then they'll be more engaged and making sure they take corrective actions at home with the kids. And so we've been using some of the times when parents are coming to the school like open houses, parent teacher conference as a chance to get folks registered. So we recently registered 250 parents for online access. And for this school year, we've had 719 families have logged in to the real time system, including 445 since the month of February. So that's really, really good on facilities. They just started using Incident IQ system two weeks ago and they're excited about how they'll be able to track the facilities open incident tickets as well. One project that's being worked on the facilities is a lock changeover project where we'll have the ability to have different sets of keys for different areas of the various buildings that did not have separate keys in the past. We just hired a new custodian who starts on March 17th in STEAM. We reviewed the snow removal. One thing that was very eye opening for me, you know, was Mother Nature, every time it snows, it costs us between \$20,000 and \$30,000 to get snow



removed. Just to show how seriously we take our safety, but how expensive it is to run the village. We also went through, we're in the midst of a water testing program or project I should say within facilities, just to make sure that the drinking water is safe. And so far the high schools drinking water came back with a good level, meaning good meaning a low level of lead contamination, so below average lead reading they checked 37 different drinking outlets in the high school. Moving on to finance, you'll see a number of reports that we're putting through today. Our bills list, you'll see our treasurer's report, just to highlight the Treasurer's report, we're up about \$2,000,000 over where we were just one month ago on our January treasury report. And if we look at where we were relative to two years ago, we're \$5,000,000 more in terms of our cash balance. So that's really strong. Our hope also, I know we've always talked about a deficit budget for this year, but our hope is that we won't hit the deficit that was projected that we should be at a lower deficit than what we projected. We reviewed our Charter aid, we reviewed if we projected originally a 1.8 million budget and our SBA thinks were on track to hit around 1,000,001, but it could be even lower than that with regards to how we land this year. We reviewed our leases, when I say leases, I mean the facilities that we've leased to third parties. We also reviewed the comments about the audit. Our audit came through with no comments, which is good. We do want to talk through the audit. We want to put a vote on receiving it and accepting the audit. However, we have not yet had an opportunity to meet with the auditor directly, so I'm not sure if that's being voted on or not today. But that is the sum total of what we talked about in finance and operations. A lot of stuff, but a lot of good things. Any questions or comments? (Boomer)

- I got a couple, Alan. So it does look like the audit is on the agenda to vote on as a resolution or are you recommending that maybe we should pull it back and wait till the next board meeting to give you a chance to confer with the auditor? (Valdivieso)
 - I'm going to ask our SBA. The one thing I'm not aware of, there are certain deadlines for things I don't know if we're required to accept the audit results by this month or if we can afford to push it off. SBA, did you get an answer on that or if it is anyone else? (Boomer)
 - Yep, yeah, I can chime in. The audit was completed and submitted to the NJDOE by the deadline of January 15th, so it was fully complete. We ended with no findings and no recommendations, which is great. Essentially in school finance it's a A+ audit. You know, basically we gave them all our numbers and backup and they confirmed everything with no as I said findings or recommendations. So that's great, it's fully complete submitted. So what we're approving tonight is those actual reports. These reports are by a third party, our auditor, so that's why the wording is to accept them and not approve them. You know, it's a third party report. Nothing within these reports will change. But yes, we are scheduling a meeting for our auditor to join us at our next finance call to present on the audit. But as I said, you know nothing can or will change with those reports. So we're just accepting the audits reports as they are presented and approving or accepting us, loading them to the Department of Education. (Solow)
 - So, I'm sorry, but do we have to accept them today or could we wait a month, is my question? (Boomer)
 - Yeah, in my mind, ideally we would accept them today, but we could push it (Solow)
 - I will say I'm fine to accept them, but I will say that we do want to meet with them and thankfully the audit came back with no comments. And we've met with the auditor in the past, and so I feel comfortable with this auditor and the fact that



they found no findings for two years in a row. But just for the record, I do want to make sure that we do meet with them at some point and that's being arranged. So I'd be OK, Mr. Valdivieso, to vote, vote in the affirmative on that. (Boomer)

- Is this the ACFR PDF right just to make sure? (Valdivieso)
- It's the ACFR, and then the AMR. So the AMR is where they would list findings and recommendations and what the school would need to do for a corrective action plan. We don't have any, so that report there's not much detail in there but the ACFR is where it's the bulk of the audit report is. (Solow)
- Ok, just there's two typos on page 17. I don't know if it matters and since we're accepting it rather than approving it, there's probably nothing we can do about it at this point. But my name is spelled wrong and then the vice chair that's listed is still Ms. Carter. And it's been Ms. Gilchrist since before June 30th of last year, I believe. So again, I don't know how much that matters, if at all. (Valdivieso)
- Yeah, noted. I will definitely have them correct it going forward. (Solow)
- Also, Alan, separate question for you. Were you able to get an update on when they checked the
 water, what the PFAS levels were and if not, is there somebody on the call that might be able to
 answer that? (Valdivieso)
 - I'll defer to someone on the call that we only talked about lead in that particular meeting. (Boomer)
 - I don't have direct access right now, but that's something I could definitely get from Shankar and Mr. Collins and circle back to the team with. (Abbaleo)
 - And real quick, just so we're all clear, PFAS refers to the forever chemicals. It's another way of seeing the water quality. So we'll follow up on that with Mr. Abbaleo. (Boomer)

Personnel Committee

• Our personnel Committee for the month of February in attendance at our meeting was myself, Vice Chair Ms. Gilchrist and trustee Carter. Ms. Migosi was also present and also our assistant Superintendent, Mr. Abbaleo. We went over our hiring and recruitment. Our hiring fair updates, that's coming up. New Jersey School Jobs, they already participated in that on the 20th of February. There's another one coming up in May and they will confirm with us at our next meeting what that exact date is. Kean University is also having a hiring fair on 3/24. That's in March next month and then also MPTCS will be having an internal job fair. The tentative date is coming up for next month as well, and so the board of trustees we're asking for everyone's support and making sure that we all blast the flyer through our networks so that we can make sure that we have the same amount of attendance that they did last time. Because we want to attract some great qualified and great teachers to come and be a part of the village. Also, our information for our teacher vacancies, our district total this month for vacancies are 17. Last month it was 16. So again we are trending in the right direction steadily. Sankofa has 0 vacancies at this point. PAC has 5, which decreased 2 from last month. Steam has 4, it increased by 1. And the high school has 9 and it increased by 2 resignations. That is our personnel report for the month of February. (Rouse)

Curriculum & Instruction Committee

• Good evening everyone. Though the committee met on the 11th and we had a very good meeting, we spent some time discussing the concept of or hope that we will begin to include a curriculum that addresses the world language and Spanish courses, and so I understand that vendors that we're going to meet with vendors, I'm not sure yet. Mr. Avenel, have they meet with vendors yet? (Towe)



- We've had two of the three presentations so far. (Abbaleo)
 - OK, great. And how are they looking? (Towe)
 - Good. I mean it. It's similar like they come well prepared. And I mean, they're salesmen, so they come with a polished package. They come with all kaboodle data and all the add-on. So, we're excited just to dig into the third one and see what explore what's the best option for our kids. (Abbaleo)
 - Great. We are encouraged by the whole notion that we're trying to at least get that as part of our curriculum also. And so you will certainly keep us abreast of that. And we did have a brief presentation on data, the testing, and we've already gotten that here and so with that having been said, we basically just have two areas to be resolved this I mean for resolution this week, the field trips and the home instruction. I'm looking at this list for the field trips and they go all the way to June. We may have some more later, but at least they go to June and we're voting on those now. And the other would be the home instructions. Some students will be coming out of home instruction and others will remain. And we have for various reasons that there are home instruction, illness or safety reasons. And so with that having been said, that's our report. (Towe)

Culture & Climate + Alumni Committee

- Good evening everyone. How are you today? I hope everyone is doing okay. I'm just pulling up the notes really quickly. The alumni committee met on February 11th. Yeah, we met on February 11, and we had a very long meeting because we went over a lot of details. So, everyone who was a part of that committee meeting, thank you for sticking around with us. The first thing we went over was our college and career. We currently have 452 applications in, 170 acceptances, and a little under \$1.5 million in scholarship money. So every time that number goes up, I'm going to keep announcing it because that is incredible. Thank you to our scholars. Thank you to our parents and all the people who are standing on top of them to get those scholarship applications in. That is incredible news. Thank you so much. The next thing we talked about, Ms. Mincy, also mentioned this was the Grove New Jersey Kids rated program. Our preschool team was working very hard to get on that list. And so thank you so much for all of that work and although we didn't get that 5 yet, we're coming for it. We're right there and we're coming. We also, Ms. already mentioned this, the Black History Month celebrations that's coming up on the 26th and the 27th, the Open house and our winter sports. One of our scholars just reached a 1000 points, so congratulations to that sophomore and to the team who organized that senior night. I heard it was an incredible success. So thank you so much for all the logistic work that went into planning. I know it had to move at the last minute and all the families that were able to come out and celebrate this scholar. So thank you so much. Any media that's been picked up around it. Please let us know so that we can amplify it. Also coming up is curriculum night on March 13. We have Read Across America the week of March 3rd through March 7th. At our next board meeting, you should expect to hear from our Student board representative. So that is all the updates I have from the on my committee meeting. Do we have any questions? (Gilchrist)
 - I was just gonna ask, do you know some of the schools that they got scholarships from? (Boomer)
 - At this report out, because we did list out like verbatim a lot of the schools that our students got accepted to at the last meeting, but I'm more than willing to pull that up if anybody wants to know the schools that some of our school, our students got accepted to. But I do not have an itemization of the scholarships. (Gilchrist)

Safety Committee



- Hi everybody. We had a great safety meeting, very productive, went over, spent a lot of time on the threat assessment teams again making sure that we have hit all of the checklists for the state requirements as well as the Department of Education's Guidance that was issued. Shout out to Mr. Williams and to our Superintendent and to Mr. Abbaleo for digging deep in to make sure that we have checked off every requirement that we need to check off going forward, at least provided status on where we are. We've got a policy that is not yet finished being reviewed. It's been put up to the committee at this point and it's on our review. So hopefully by next meeting we'll have something for the board to vote on in that respect, depending on whether any modifications are necessary. Everybody's really worked hard on that, so big kudos to everybody. Also Mr. Williams has been working diligently to provide us with a report on where we stand on secure measures for the school, making sure our safety and security team is adequate and we look forward to hearing an update on that next meeting, we discussed that. We also discussed, you know, again just checking boxes. We also discussed making sure that drills are going on appropriately. Again, nothing significant there, they are. One of the other last things, we spent some time talking about how to best ensure that families felt safe in sending their children to our village, to our schools, and with the prospect of, you know, with stuff you're hearing in the news now about ICE trying to raid schools and making sure that if the worst were in that respect, if federal agents were to try to overstep their authority that our officials are well prepared to protect our children within all of their rights under the law. And that's all I got. (Valdivieso)
 - Julio, I just wanted to ask, are there any material updates with regards to students feeling more safe? Because one thing that I notice is that there's what's actually happening, and then what people who are kind of fear mongering are making people believe like they've been fake announcements of fake raids. You know folks that are really weaponizing what's already a hostile environment for immigrants. Has there been any update on how folks are, whether folks are feeling any better? (Boomer)
 - o So a couple of things we did discuss this and I'm going to yield to our administration, we'll probably be able to give you a better update. At the meeting, we talked about how we could do that more effectively. Because first we talked about making sure that it wasn't just us reassuring people and not doing things to be prepared. As you probably already know that the state has done a great job of laying out some guides. And secondly, we discussed what are the steps that we can take, you know, again knowing that I can openly say that you know to get into the schools they need a judge issued warrant. It's not enough to just have somebody at the agency signing, there's these things that they call warrants or they're there court warrants, but they're not a judge issued warrant, and that's not gonna get it done. Also, everybody's on standby and make sure our attorneys are properly immediately called in the case that something like that has happened. Securities on standby. All of that. And then the next step is knowing all that, how do we communicate that best to our children and their parents and to that, you know, I probably am not the best person that get to do it justice. So I yield the floor to whoever wants to step forward from the administration and address that. (Valdivieso)
 - Yeah, I would say informally, things have calmed down quite a bit since the initial kind of shock waves, everything that transpired. And to your point and everything, you know, folks, weaponizing it and it just being, you know, on the forefront of media for days and weeks when on the early onset, things have calmed down a bit. I could say that informal and then what I will say is that this is something that we'll formally ask in our student surveys that are going out in the



- spring. So once those roll out, you'll have a quantified metric and some real data from students, staff, and obviously families as well that we could rely on and quantify a bit further. (Abbaleo)
- But you also I think just to Mr. Boomer's question, you also said that like you guys did reach out affirmatively to the families to make them aware that we are taking steps to...(Valdivieso)
- Yep. And then everything that Mr. Valdivieso explained in terms of, like the judicially issued warrants, things like that, even just educating our staff members around what to ask in case ICE does show up, things like that. Those are the steps that we've taken between probably the last five to six weeks or so. (Abbaleo)
- And if you are a parent and you're listening, you know, or somebody that's concerned about that, please reach out and ask these questions. You have the safe in sending your child to the village. (Valdivieso)
- Mr. Valdivieso, so is that matter you mentioned over the judge's signed warrant is that special for schools or is that any sort of private building? (Boomer)
- I don't want to give out legal advice that people would rely on, so I'm going to just say this is for entertainment purposes, but I would not open the door without a warrant signed by a judge. Anyway, but yeah, I would say that if somebody's going to bust in your home, the 4th Amendment is very sacred in this country. So I would just continue to ask for a warrant and not open the door, and that's just a plain statement of your rights. And we've already had the Homeland Director threaten AOC a couple of times for saying that openly, but oh well, it is what it is. That's the law. (Valdivieso)

Executive Committee

- We want to make sure that we continue to realize that we are in a season of celebration for Marion P Thomas Charter School and we are in our 25th year. And so just want to make sure that everybody understands that we will be coming back with a detailed report on how everybody can participate in the festivities. That will be coming forth from administration down to our scholars and our community partners. In the near future, so look forward to a report from how everybody can participate in that in the months to come. (Rouse)
 - One question, I'm sorry for the chairman. I know that there was a potential vendor that we were going to hire. So are we prepared to put a motion forward to sign that agreement or are we not at that stage just yet? (Boomer)
 - No, we're not. We're not at that stage just yet. We need to go over some things with yourself and also the Superintendent. And we're going to look forward to it. I don't want to wait until the next meeting, but before that time, board of trustees, I'm going to ask you to volunteer some more time to look over it so that we can come back to the table and have a meeting to move that forward. Because time is of the essence and the village deserves the best. (Rouse)
 - Yeah, that's right. And has our legal counsel had a chance to review the agreement just yet? (Boomer)
 - Absolutely they have. And that's why we could not put it on the table tonight cause we needed to look over a few more things. (Rouse)



6. RESOLUTIONS

I. 2025-2-24-A: Approval of the February 25, 2025 BOT Meeting Agenda

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

Discussion:

- I don't know if this is a typo, it says reorganization meeting for February 25th. (Valdivieso)
 - That is a typo. Thank you for catching that. I will update it. (Griffiths)

II. 2025-2-24-B: Approval of the January 27, 2025 BOT Meeting Minutes

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

Discussion:

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III. 2025-2-24-C: Approval of February 25' Finance Report

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

Discussion:

^{**:} Motion Seconded



IV. <u>2025-2-24-D: Accept the FY 24' ACFR and AMR and Submission to NJDOE</u>											
Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse		\				Julio Valdivieso		N.			
Briana Gilchrist**		>				Allan Boomer	✓	\checkmark			
Dashay Carter					V	Toni Ince		\checkmark			
Dr. Princess Towe		V						-		-	
Discussion: • We will be meeting with the audit firm in the next 30 days. (Boomer) V. 2025-2-24-E Approval of February 25' Personnel Report											
Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse		V				Julio Valdivieso		\checkmark			
Briana Gilchrist		N				Allan Boomer		\checkmark			
Dashay Carter					\checkmark	Toni Ince**		✓			
Dr. Princess Towe		\									
Discussion: • VI. PACKAGE F - G: Motion: Towe - Valdivieso** Approved 2025-2-24-F: Approval of Home Instruction Students 2025-2-24-G: Approval of Field Trips											
Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Voting Members	Motion	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Vincent Rouse		N				Julio Valdivieso		\checkmark			
Briana Gilchrist						Allan Boomer		V			
Dashay Carter		\checkmark			\checkmark	Toni Ince**		\checkmark			
Dr. Princess Towe	\checkmark	\checkmark									

Discussion:

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**: Motion Seconded



- 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.
 - No speaker's for public comment.
- 8. CLOSED SESSION 6:26 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: 6:26 PM ET Rouse - Gilchrist** | Approved

Respectfully submitted at: 2/24/2025 Submitted by: Elijah D. Griffiths