

## BOT Meeting Thursday May 22, 2025 Minutes

Board Members in Attendance: Jim Sander, Robert Ansbro, Lucas Doe, Christopher, Ted Francavilla

Administrators in attendance: Norma Hurwitz, Leena Thomas, Eddie Kubina

Guest: Paul Augello

Not in Attendance: Sean Blackwell, Christopher Brignola

Meeting Called to Order by Jim Sander 6:34 pm

### I. Approval of Minutes

Robert motioned to approve the minutes, Jim seconds, all in favor

### II. Budget

The first draft of next year's budget, projections, results, was sent to be reviewed. The bond offer was a few years ago. The issue we have is an enrollment issue. A lot of charter schools are having the same issue. People moved out of New York, the birth rates are down, and there is a saturation of charter schools especially in the bronx. There seems to be one on every other corner. Our enrollment when we did the bond offering, we thought we would grow to 800 students. Over the last few years as our numbers kept going down, that was a concern, however we are still able to run a school with a balanced budget. It has hurt us, but it is not a real serious problem. We have an interest income, which is mostly invested in treasuries, still generating almost 1 million dollars a year in interest income. 1.2 million generates income for about 60 students. It does not seem the rates will drop any time soon. We have 333 students budgeted, but we are also starting a high school. It will take a few years to build out the 9 to 12. The marketing of the school just started. We might not see the numbers get back to 400 or 500 in the next few years. It will take time. It is important that we still have a good academic model. The budget, with the model we projected, we still have a balanced budget even with the declining enrollment. It is not as good as it was, but it is still balanced.

Total expenses are 11 percent up, personnel is up 18 percent, is it fair to say if we get more students, then expenses won't go up. Other than personnel, other expenses should be fixed. The personnel, you will need to increase with the high school since you need teachers for various subjects. If we get 20 or 30 more students enrolled, it should not affect our staffing model. If all of a sudden we get up to 380, we would have to look selectively where we might need to add an extra teacher. If we gain more in revenue, expenses won't go up the same.

Increased expenses were mentioned in the last meeting. Increased costs for energy and other things, will they be consistent or just a one time expense.

Moving into the new building is an expense we have never had before. We have utilities and other expenses that are our responsibility. Things like furnishing are one time costs, but baked into the budget are expenses that will be needed to maintain the building. Where we were, we did not have to worry about anything. The budget was made to run the facility the way we need.

It seems we will not have the surplus that we have had in the past, we have always had a high surplus, but now it will be smaller, but we will still have a surplus. We have never had facility costs, so that is the main change. We have not had to pay for maintenance, repair, and custodians. We will likely end up beating the current budget surplus. We are going to run the same model, but we know our operating expenses because of the high school staffing model and maintenance. We are currently at 1.1. It is usually 10-15 percent more than break even. We need to meet the minimum. We are a not for profit organization.

Paul does about 24 charter schools in NYS. He is familiar with success academy and kipp. They are an organization within an organization. He mostly works with independent schools.

There is no clarity on how much is given for each student. It is an input from a variety of sources and then it is published. 19903. We receive this from every one student. In NYC schools were able to apply for co-located space so charter schools would not need to pay for the shared space. If the DOE denied us the space, they would have to pay up to 30% of the facility costs. It has been a great deal for the school which is why we are sitting on a good level of money.

The accomplishments of the school were at the same time the school was being so economical. We saved the city millions of dollars and gave students an extraordinary education, we have now been able to build a brand new school. We own the building, but eventually if we had to give it up, it would go to NYC and they would have another school.

Do we need to make sure we are up to date technologically? We need to make sure our students come out of high school with the proper skills. Jim just wants to make sure we have technology that is up to date. There is \$300,000 in the budget for technology. It can be spent on a variety of things, there is always a healthy allotment in the budget every year.

A comment on the actual balance sheet. We have a little over a million dollars in Flagstar bank, they are not the strongest bank, they are okay. When Signature bank failed, no one lost money. We used to have a team that we worked with. The new team at flagstar just left. The team we used to work with was customers. We could change banks, customers could be a better option. We are only insured for 252,000. We should move the money and put it somewhere else since we are over the FDIC insurance limits. We just got the DOE payment, so we have to get it through the flagstar account, it is then normally sent to schwab. A certain amount is left in the bank and then the rest goes to schwab. We have found that this method works well. We leave operational dollars in flagstar. It won't happen in the future since our budget is more aligned with expenditures. It is made sure that we won't leave an egregious balance in the checking. We leave an amount that will cover our expected expenses.

### III. Education

The ELA and math exams went well. The students had time to practice with the interface and knew how to use it well. The tests seemed fair. Some of them seemed very easy. The most difficult for math was fifth and sixth grade, but the tests were still fair. The ELA tests were not too difficult. They were what we were expecting. We feel the students were well prepared for both and we are optimistic about how they performed.

The science test was more challenging. It seemed as if they made it more difficult than the previous year. We need to give students more hands-on experiences, more labs, we do a lot of reading, our students rely too much on the reading, they are used to referring to the text. We need to work more on using the text, but not relying on it. Giving them more scenarios, it was more about critical thinking, if this were in the equation, how would it be different. We teach with text in front of them and we need to do it more with can you remember the information and now manipulate it.

We may not be helping them make the connection, they need to think about what the process is. The fifth grade teachers saw the challenge and they saw the need to do what Eddie and Leena are talking about. Have the experience and have a conversation to see how it connects to other things and see how the text connects to the experiment. The teachers have become critical thinkers. The state is expecting students to have the knowledge base and be able to do the experience that connects with it. The state has put a lot of effort into doing the experiment or activity. There is a need as a country because we have fallen behind in educating people for their bachelors or their masters. We have to make sure that individuals are fully prepared. We are dealing with a population where we have motivated parents and children. The children do not have the opportunity at home to engage with their parents. Ultimately it is good to change the way science is taught and learned. Colleges used to demand knowledge, now they are more easy going. We may do better in comparison to the rest of the city.

Thomas states how science has been taken over by technology, it is about asking questions and formulating answers. Life science is changing so it is impacting the other sciences. It is a different way of thinking and now with the technology we have, we have the ability to collect more data, but it fogs up the concept.

The museum of natural history is a good resource. It is the only museum founded on the basis of the public school system. There is a lot of online access. There are professional development activities. There is a new exhibit on evolution.

Our science program is dependent on reading and understanding. We have to combine both more often and more effectively. The books we have and online resources, we need to use it more broadly. We have a limited time. We are one of the few schools that teach science and social studies 5 times a week. We will analyze the test once it is published online. In order to do well on that test it will need to be developed from kindergarten and up. Topics are repeated and built upon each year. We have to figure out how to get students better versed.

We saw in the students that they were more confident and really trying. In the science test it was a different tone. The students looked like they were struggling.

They did well with the computers

We have used AI in the classroom. Teachers are able to use AI to help align questions more closely to the Next Gen standards. It is a way for them to reword questions to either make them more approachable or more challenging. Students are also able to use AI. They mostly make use of Chat GPT or Copilot. They are able to use AI to ascertain information that they then summarize or write about. They are also able to use AI to help improve their writing. Everything is hand written and they can then type what they have written, or they find information on a computer and then hand write their responses. We avoid allowing students to only use computers because they are then too tempted to copy and paste and they will not learn anything that way. We monitor how they are using technology and AI. It does allow them to be more engaged in the work and they like being able to use it.

#### IV. Committee Reports

James is nominated for president and it is seconded

Chris is nominated for vice president and it is seconded

Lucas is nominated for treasurer and it is seconded

Sean is nominated for secretary and it is seconded

Bob is in charge of building and development, Lucas is in charge of finance, and Chris is in charge of education.

There is no new business to discuss

Meeting Adjourned at 8:01 pm.