

Minutes of the Academy of the City Board of Trustees Meeting of August 25, 2015

A meeting of the Board of Trustees (the “Board”) of the Academy of the City Charter School (the “School”) was held on August 25, 2015 at 5:00 pm at the School (31-29 60th Street, Woodside, NY 11377).

Notice was given of the meeting by submitting a notice electronically to the Queens Courier newspaper, posting the meeting notice on the school’s website and posting a paper notice outside the school building at Academy of the City Charter School, 31-29 60th Street, Woodside, NY 11377.

The following members of the Board were present: Angela Howard (Vice Chair), Richard Welles, James Traub, Harold Elish (Treasurer) Ernest Brooks, and Michela Nonis (Secretary), via Google Hangout. Nancy Sills (Chair) participated via telephone, but did not vote.

The following staff members and visitors were present: Richard Lee (Principal), Pilly Quintanilla (PCO Co-Chair) and Monica Kahn-Liriano (PCO Co-Chair).

Angela Howard (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting.

Minutes of the July 21, 2015 Meeting: AH moved to waive the reading of the minutes of the July 2015 meeting and ratify them as written. The minutes were previously circulated to the board. All were in favor.

PCO Report: Monica Kahn-Liriano gave the PCO report. The PCO is gearing up for the beginning of the school year and is trying to sign up class parent volunteers for the coming year. One of the PCO’s chief goals this year, in addition to fund-raising, is to increase parent participation. The PCO is aiming for a bigger turnout for curriculum night than last year.

School Report: The School Report, previously distributed to the board, is Exhibit A. RL gave the school report. He said that the school is fully enrolled: currently 421 students enrolled/budget is 405 students. There will be some fall off as the school year begins. The school is now interviewing candidates for art teacher—the previous teacher will not be able to come back. The school is prepared to hire a temp for the first 2 weeks of the year. Does not want to hurry with hire—looking for the right person for the school.

RL spoke about test scores for the past year. The big highlight is significant progress in performance on the math test, an overall increase of 20 percent. AoC has gone from under-performing the district to exceeding the district average. It recorded the 4th-highest increase in math scores in the city—enough to merit a mention in the widely-read Chalkbeat blog. However, ELA scores only increased 1 percent from last year, and remain 9 percent behind the district. The message for SUNY as it considers renewal of the charter is thus a mixed one.

RL talked about the school’s plan to improve performance, especially on ELA. The breakdown of test results shows that while students are reading well, they are not doing well enough on their written responses. RL and Desiree Galashaw (Vice Principal) are now looking at curricular programs focusing on the test years, grades 3 through 5.

The gym now has air conditioning, which is a new improvement for the school. The school also has cheerful, newly installed tiles in the hallways.

AoC is in the process of negotiating a ground lease for the portables, a process that has been slower than expected.

RL returned to the question of curriculum and pedagogy. RL and DG recently delivered a talk to the staff on planned changes in the instructional program. Teachers had felt that they did not have adequate time for core subjects, so the school is now moving to 90-minute instructional blocks for ELA and Math. This has necessitated discussions with the UFT in order not to violate the terms of the collective-bargaining agreement, which give teachers a break after no more than 3 hours.

Teachers will also begin drawing up lesson plans in a more formal and standardized way than in the past. All teachers had drawn up weekly lesson plans based on a larger unit plan; now they will draw up daily lesson plans.

RL will work with teachers on these issues, focusing on grades K-2, DG will focus on working with the teachers in grades 3-5.

Teachers will give greater attention to encouraging higher-order thinking. Teachers will post the most important questions of the lesson (class), and will sum up so that students understand the most important take-away of the class. Exit tickets will be used at the end of the lesson to check for student understanding.

There will be an enhanced emphasis on writing skills. The school is currently working to introduce rubrics in writing. There will be one set of rubrics for K-2, and one for 3-5. Writing skills will be tested in three major assessments over the course of the year, as is already the case in reading and math.

RL also pointed that, according to our accountant, the school is now paying approximately \$25,000 a year in order to collect fees for school lunches, which amount to about \$13,000 a year. The fact that this is not economical was previously discussed with Digant Bahl and with the Finance Committee. RL advised the Board that the school would stop collecting fees for school lunch.

Chair Report: The board package previously distributed to the board is Exhibit B. NS spoke about board benchmarks for the SUNY renewal process and the past, current and ongoing board initiatives with regard to those benchmarks.

OSP Report: The OSP report, previously distributed to the board, is Exhibit C. RW pointed out that before the school had received the latest test scores. OSP would now work with TLC to revise the application to reflect the test scores.

The question arose of AoC's school information system. RL explained that the SIS would permit teachers to take attendance via iPad, administrators to track student lunches, disciplinary reports and the like. The next stage would be to incorporate student progress reports, and then to record real-time test results. The school is now talking to OSP about using the ePortfolio system to feed program data into the SIS.

Finance and Operations Committee Report: The Finance Report, previously distributed to the board, is Exhibit D. HE delivered the report of the Finance and Operations Committee. He noted that the school's actual year-end numbers tracked almost exactly the figures projected at the outset of the year—an impressive achievement and a tribute to our accountant and his team, and to RL and his team.

AH then moved that the Board go into Executive Session to discuss the review of a particular corporation. HE seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed. There were no votes taken in Executive Session. The business of the Board during Executive Session being completed AH moved that the Board return to public session. JT seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. The Board returned to public session. There being no further business before the Board, AH moved that the Board adjourn, HE seconded the motion and all were in favor.

The next Board meeting will take place on September 24, 2015 at the School at 5:00 pm. There will be a meeting of the Education Committee on that date, starting at 4:00 pm.