

Ascend Public Charter Schools
Meeting of the Schools Board of Trustees
January 15, 2019 6:30 pm

Location
Ascend Learning
205 Rockaway Parkway and via videoconference
Brooklyn, NY

Meeting minutes

Trustees in attendance

Stephanie Mauterstock (chair), Kathleen Quirk (vice chair), Amanda Craft (secretary), Shelly Cleary (treasurer), Kwaku Andoh (trustee), Christine Schlendorf (trustee), Nadine Sylvester (trustee), Oral Walcott (trustee) [all via videoconference]

Ascend staff in attendance

Andy Epstein, Kelly Garnes, Betsy Goldfarb, Erica Murphy [via videoconference], Susan Pollock [via videoconference], Dylan Schaffer, Brandon Sorlie, Steven Wilson

Stephanie called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm.

I. Public comment

No members of the public offered comment.

II. Public comment update

No members of the public offered comment at the previous board meeting.

III. Approval of board meeting minutes

Stephanie presented to the board the minutes of the November 13 and January 7 meetings, and the minutes of the November 13 executive session.

Amanda moved to approve the November 13 board meeting minutes, the January 7 board meeting minutes, and the November 13 executive session minutes. Nadine seconded and the motion was carried unanimously.

IV. Financial report

Andy and Shelly presented the November 30 financial dashboards and accompanying narrative for the schools and the consolidated education corporation, reviewing major findings. They noted that consultant Jim Ford and Ascend Learning Board Director and Finance Committee Chair Rick Arroyo will continue to join ACS finance committee meetings to facilitate collaboration between the two boards' finance committees and to further refine financial reporting documents and narratives.

V. School and network updates

- a. Mock exam results

Brandon reported that, based on projections made following the ELA and math benchmark 2 (mock) exams, the network is on track to meet its +10 percentage point goals in both subjects. Brandon and Erica then discussed their plan to achieve even larger growth in ELA by identifying and targeting students who are on the verge of proficiency. They emphasized that the overall network growth is being fueled by strong growth in the middle schools. Erica noted that the curriculum and instruction team has piloted providing lesson plans to all teachers in grade 3 and grade 7 this year, which has led to significant gains in grade 7 in particular. Lesson plans will be provided to teachers in all grades next year.

VI. Greenlighting: Central Brooklyn Ascend 3, 4, and 5

a. Talent recruitment

Betsy provided an update on the 2019-20 recruitment season, noting that of 540 total anticipated hires, the team has already hired for 80 positions. Betsy noted that hiring projections for SY 2019-20 are based on conservative retention assumptions and that her team is developing systems to identify teacher openings earlier, in order to anticipate the full hiring need.

b. Student recruitment and enrollment

Kelly provided an update on student recruitment and enrollment efforts underway for SY 2019-20. She discussed her team's three areas of focus, including groundwork and canvassing, digital marketing, and traditional advertising. She also detailed the staffing changes to her team, including the hiring of part-time canvassers who can be flexibly called upon to conduct direct outreach in the target communities.

c. Facilities and siting

Susan provided an update of planned real estate and construction projects for SY 2019-20, including the three proposed new lower school sites, as well as the status of financing for the construction projects. The trustees and Susan discussed the current status and details of the ground-up construction project at 123 Linden Boulevard that would serve as one of three new school sites. Dylan and Susan then presented an analysis of demographic, socioeconomic, and school performance data for the three school sites, detailing the opportunities and risks to enrollment at each. There followed a discussion regarding the demographics of the target communities and charter penetration in these areas.

d. Financial analysis

Andy presented an analysis of financial risk based on various enrollment scenarios at the planned new lower schools and the newest existing lower school, Cypress Hills Ascend Lower, showing that initial under-enrollment at certain schools would not pose meaningful risk to the financial health of the education corporation.

VII. Executive session (minutes recorded separately)

At 8:02 pm Amanda moved to enter into executive session to discuss the appointment of school directors to fill existing vacancies and planned openings at new schools. Kwaku seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

At 8:27 pm Amanda moved to exit executive session and to resume the open meeting; Christine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

VIII. Exit executive session; resumption of open meeting

At 8:27 pm Amanda moved to exit executive session and to resume the open meeting; Christine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Steven summarized the status of the 12- and 6-month greenlighting metrics and, based on the analysis presented at the meeting, recommended that the board greenlight two new school openings and revisit the greenlighting of the third new school at the February meeting of the board. Following a brief discussion, the trustees agreed to the greenlighting recommendation as presented.

Amanda moved a Resolution to authorized Christine and Shelly, as members of the Board's real estate finance committee of the finance committee, to approve Ascend Charter Schools entering into Leases or financings with respect to the facilities at 260 Shepherd Avenue, 123 Linden Boulevard, 870 Albany Avenue, and 1501 Pitkin Avenue upon terms substantially similar to those presented at the meeting, should approvals be required to consummate transactions prior to the next full Board meeting. Nadine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Amanda moved to appoint Elena Strauss as the director of Brooklyn Ascend Lower School, effective immediately. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

At 8:30 pm Amanda moved to adjourn the meeting, Shelly seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

Name:

Date