

Ascend Public Charter Schools
Meeting of the Schools Board of Trustees
April 16, 2019 6:30 pm

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

Meeting minutes

Trustees in attendance

Stephanie Mauterstock (chair), Amanda Craft (secretary), Kwaku Andoh (trustee), Nadine Sylvester (trustee), Oral Walcott (trustee) [all via videoconference]

Ascend staff in attendance

Andy Epstein, Kelly Garnes, Betsy Goldfarb, Susan Pollock, Dylan Schaffer, Brandon Sorlie

Stephanie called the meeting to order at 6:39 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 March 19 meeting, and the minutes of the March 19 executive session.

Amanda moved to approve the March 19 board meeting minutes and the March 19 executive session minutes. Nadine seconded and the motion was carried unanimously.

IV. Executive session (minutes recorded separately)

At 6:41 pm Amanda moved to enter into executive session to discuss the appointment of a school director at East Brooklyn Ascend Lower School. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

V. Exit executive session; resumption of open meeting

At 6:48 pm Amanda moved to exit executive session and to resume the open meeting; Oral seconded and the motion was carried unanimously.

Amanda moved to appoint Meghan Daly as school director of East Brooklyn Ascend Lower School for school year 2019-20, effective July 1, 2019. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

VI. Financial report

Andy presented the February 28 financial dashboards and accompanying narrative for the schools and the consolidated education corporation, reviewing major findings and noting the addition of cash analysis tables to the finance package. There followed a discussion of the status of the FY 2020 budgeting process and the draft FY 2020 budget, and of the net income target for FY 2020. Andy noted that the final budget, with an accompanying narrative, would be presented to the full board for approval at its May meeting.

VII. School and network updates

a. Talent update

Betsy presented the March talent dashboard, noting progress made towards hiring to staff the new lower schools opening in SY 2019-20. She discussed the talent team's continued focus on retention, including efforts underway by Ascend senior leadership to meet with each school director and managing director to ensure the schools are making every effort to retain the network's best teachers and leaders. Betsy briefed the board on progress towards the team's monthly hiring goals, noting that though the team is behind their initial hiring projections made in October, that they are on track with teacher hiring based on revised estimates from school directors. There followed a discussion of efforts to enhance outreach efforts and bolster leader hiring.

b. Student recruitment update

Kelly reported that the SY 2019-20 lottery event was a success and that her team has successfully transitioned from its focus from recruitment to enrollment, noting the increase in human capital available on her team to manage the registration of students.

There followed a brief discussion of continued recruitment efforts underway and on the status of enrollment at Cypress Hills Ascend.

c. Academic update

Erica reported that, based on feedback received from school staff during the network's most recent town halls and subsequent research and planning conducted by her team, the schools would shift from using STEP assessments to F&P assessments in reading in SY 2019-20. There followed a discussion of the limitations, benefits, and costs of both programs, as well as the challenges of implementing the transition.

Brandon then presented an update on efforts underway at the schools to prepare students for the NYS exam in math in the final days before the exam, including adjustments to curricular pacing, assessments, daily schedules, and staff assignments.

d. Development update

Susan presented an update on Ascend's development efforts, including information on recent interactions with several funder prospects.

e. Real estate update

Stephanie and Susan proposed that the board table the real estate update to a later meeting of the board given the absence of members of the real estate subcommittee from the meeting, without objection.

VIII. Board matters

a. Nominating committee update

Stephanie, on behalf of the nominating committee, discussed the results of the committee's recent efforts to recruit trustee candidates, noting the committee hopes to schedule interviews with at least two candidates in the coming weeks.

b. CMO evaluation tool

Stephanie updated the board on the status of the creation of a CMO evaluation tool for the board, currently underway in partnership with Ascend staff and an external consultant. She reported that the key stakeholders were reviewing a full draft and working to resolve remaining questions and gaps, and that a new draft would be circulated to the full board in advance of its next meeting.

At 7:47 pm Oral moved to adjourn the meeting; Nadine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

Name:

Date