

Ascend Public Charter Schools  
Meeting of the Schools Board of Trustees  
August 21, 2019 6:30 pm

Location  
Brooklyn Ascend Middle School  
123 East 98<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn, NY

Meeting minutes

**Trustees in attendance**

Stephanie Mauterstock (chair; via videoconference), Amanda Craft (secretary), Shelly Cleary (treasurer; via videoconference), Christine Schlendorf (trustee), Nadine Sylvester (trustee), Oral Walcott (trustee)

**Ascend staff in attendance**

Andy Epstein, Betsy Goldfarb, Brandon Sorlie, Carl-Anthony Watson, Crystal Lane, Dellianna Burrows, Dianette Diaz, Dylan Schaffer, Erica Murphy, Jenny Markus, Miatta Massaley, Raymond Johnson, Richard Tucker, Susan Pollock, Zelda Washington

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

**I. Public comment**

Miatta Massaley, school director at Bushwick Ascend Middle School, requested an update on the status of board action related to Ascend's senior leadership.

Richard Tucker, a teacher at Bushwick Ascend Middle School, requested an update on the status of Ascend's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work. He acknowledged the positive steps already taken on this front, and noted the importance of continuing this work going forward.

Crystal Lane, school director at Brooklyn Ascend Middle School, expressed concern about a change in the dress code policy at BAMS. She noted that families at the school were frustrated by the last-minute nature of the policy change, and that the late change made it challenging to enforce procedures at the school. She requested that school directors be consulted on such changes in the future.

**II. Public comment update**

Stephanie, Nadine, and Amanda provided a response to the several comments made at the July board meeting related to Ascend's DEI work, and related to the board's engagement with the schools and Ascend's school directors. They noted the distinct roles of the Ascend Charter Schools (ACS) board and the Ascend Learning (AL) board, and affirmed that the ACS board is committed to ensuring that Ascend Learning serves the schools as per the terms of the management contract between the two entities. Stephanie noted that the ACS board has requested regular updates on Ascend's diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

**III. Approval of board meeting minutes**

Stephanie presented to the board the minutes of the July 24 meeting and the minutes of the July 24 executive session.

Amanda moved to approve the July 24 board meeting minutes and the July 24 executive session minutes. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

#### **IV. Financial report**

##### a. School financial reports

Shelly presented the June 30 financial reports and accompanying narrative, highlighting major findings (including year-end cash position, SY 2018-19 end-of-year enrollment, and rent reimbursements) and areas of focus (including SY 2019-20 enrollment). Andy updated the board on revised spending plans developed in anticipation of under-enrollment at the new schools, and on the SY 2019-20 goal for cash on hand.

#### **V. School and network updates**

##### a. Summer Institutes

Brandon reported that Summer Institutes are underway at the schools, and that according to survey data, sessions so far have been well received by staff and are overall stronger than last year. Brandon noted that All Teacher Institute launched Monday with an exciting event at the Brooklyn Museum featuring numerous speakers and student performances. Amanda requested that Brandon review Institute session survey data in detail during a future academic committee meeting.

##### b. SY 2019-20 Strategic Initiatives

Erica presented the SY 2019-20 networkwide Strategic Initiatives that will guide the schools' work in the coming school year. There followed a brief discussion about how resources are allocated to advance these goals.

##### c. Talent update

Betsy provided an update on talent recruitment through August 1, noting that the networkwide retention projection had dropped somewhat since July 1, mostly due to late-reported vacancies and resignations. Brandon discussed how schools accommodate for vacancies at the start of the school year, and Betsy discussed the Talent Team's strategy regarding referral bonuses for late vacancies.

##### d. Student recruitment update

Carl provided a high-level overview of student enrollment status across the network, and Jenny discussed the status of enrollment at various schools, noting areas of focus in the near term and efforts underway to fill enrollment gaps. She also provided a breakdown of student application projections, newly developed by the team based on the previous year's enrollment trend data from Cypress Hills Ascend and current recruitment season data at the new schools. There followed a discussion of the causes for under-enrollment and efforts to increase enrollment through the first part of the school year.

##### e. Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Susan provided the trustees with a detailed update on the status of Ascend's ongoing DEI work, including recent actions undertaken and updates to the timeline of planned action items and deadlines for the coming months. Susan also updated the trustees on a discussion with Ascend officers and managing directors regarding how best to ensure that school directors and trustees are engaged with each other throughout the school year.

There followed an in-depth discussion among trustees and Ascend staff about this work, with a particular focus on ensuring that a strong system for school director and trustee engagement emerges. Amanda offered to spearhead this work, in partnership with Brandon and the schools team.

#### **VI. Executive session (minutes recorded separately)**

At 8:12 pm Oral moved to enter into executive session to discuss two personnel matters related to a trustee candidate and a member of the staff of Ascend Learning, and to discuss embargoed state exam results. Christine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

#### **VII. Exit executive session; resumption of open meeting**

At 8:40 pm Amanda moved to exit executive session and to resume the open meeting; Oral seconded and the motion was carried unanimously.

#### **VIII. Board matters**

##### **a. Election and re-election of trustees**

Stephanie moved to elect Glenn Hopps as trustee for school year 2019-20, effective immediately upon approval from SUNY CSI. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

A discussion followed regarding the re-election of trustees to the board. Amanda moved to re-elect Stephanie Mauterstock, Kathleen Quirk, Amanda Craft, Shelly Cleary, Kwaku Andoh, Christine Schlendorf, Nadine Sylvester, and Oral Walcott as trustees for school year 2019-20. Christine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

##### **b. Election of officers**

Amanda moved to elect Stephanie Mauterstock as board chair, Christine Schlendorf as board secretary, and Shelly Cleary as board treasurer for school year 2019-20. Christine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

##### **c. Committee appointments**

Following a brief discussion, the trustees agreed to appoint Stephanie, Shelly, Christine, Nadine, and Amanda of the board's Executive Committee for school year 2019-20. Stephanie proposed tabling the appointment of members to the board's other standing committees until the September meeting of the board, without objection.

#### **IX. Adjournment**

At 9:07 pm Nadine moved to adjourn the meeting; Christine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Name:

Date