

Ascend Public Charter Schools
Meeting of the School Board of Trustees
June 24, 2020
6:30 pm

Location:
Dial-in

Meeting minutes

Trustees in attendance

Shelly Cleary (treasurer, via videoconference) Amanda Craft (trustee, via videoconference), Glenn Hopps (trustee, via videoconference), Stephanie Mauterstock (chair, via videoconference), Oral Walcott (trustee, via videoconference)

Ascend staff in attendance

Amanda Basedow, Amanda Cuniff, Anastasia Michals, Andy Epstein, Angelica Harper, Anjya Thomas, April Jackson, Araliza Lopez, Ariana Carmona, Billie Quigley, Brandon Sorlie, Caitlin Davidson, Camille McQueen, Carl Watson, Chanmi Lee, Christina Pena, Crystal Lane, Cynthia Ovie, Dellianna Burrows, Dominique Artamin, Emeka Ibekweh, Erica Murphy, Garensa Sanon, Janet Akerele, Janna Genzlinger, Jordan Kullback, Korena Johnson, Leyde St. Leger, Lisa Margosian, Lissette Roman, Livia Angiolillo, Louisa Lindgren, Marsha Gadsden, Miatta Massaley, Michele Henry, Nancy Olisma, Nicole Duckett, Octavia Jackson, Pascale Artamin, Ranae Overstreet, Raymond Johnson, Shanah Worley, Shani Foster, Shanice Morris, Shanoya Belcher, Sophie Kramer, Sophie Weil-Roth, Sulafa Bashir, Tamilya Parris, Tessa Westfall, Tracy DeOliveira-Lewis, Zelda Washington, Zhuo Biao Cai, Zia Hinds (all via video or teleconference)

Stephanie called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

I. Public comment

Michele Henry, a teacher at Ascend, asked what plans are being put in place to keep Ascend's dedicated teachers.

II. Public comment update

There was no public comment at the prior board meeting.

III. Approval of board meeting minutes

Stephanie presented to the board the minutes of the May 20 meeting. Shelly moved to approve the minutes. Amanda seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

IV. Annual meeting

Amanda moved to reelect all trustees—Stephanie Mauterstock, Shelly Cleary, Christine Schlendorf, Nadine Sylvester, Oral Walcott, Glenn Hopps, Kwaku Andoh, Amanda Craft—to the Ascend Charter Schools Board for the 2020-2021 school year. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

The trustees agreed to elect officers and committees at the next board meeting. The schedule of meetings for the coming year was discussed, and it was agreed that a few meetings would be held at 4 pm to more closely align with the end of the school day and facilitate school staff attendance.

Stephanie provided an update on the work of the nominating committee and shared that they will be presenting candidates to the board over the next couple of months.

V. Adapting to our new reality

Lisa explained that the Ascend leadership team would now present the planning completed to date as we adapt to our new reality. Anjya presented the context for this new reality. A public health crisis has created the impetus for change; the economic crisis requires us to adapt to lower revenues; institutional racism has created a non-negotiable demand for action; and technology is no longer a supplemental tool for learning. Despite our pride in our past successes, necessity requires us to change Ascend's model. Anjya shared the working structures to complete this planning work. A core team of network leadership integrated, coordinated, and oversaw more than 17 workstreams. One of these workstreams addressed scenario planning for the fall. Led by Brandon and comprised of lower school, middle school, and high school academies, each academy was made of a cross-functional team of network and school leaders. Brandon presented the decision-making principles used by these academies to arrive at the scenarios for school in SY20-21.

Nicole presented the three scenarios for reopening our learning environment, which represent points along the spectrum from 100% in person to 100% remote. Across all of these scenarios, 1:1 technology is required and results in the need to invest in laptops and technology support for each student. In addition, an implication in all scenarios is the need to re-envision staffing models to support health and safety guardrails, ensure a remote option in every grade at all times, and to maximize student learning under our new budget reality.

One of the three scenarios involves a phased return to school, whereby select student groups return first. Sulafa presented the plan for which students would return to in-person, physically-distanced learning. However, all families are in the midst of completing a return to school survey now, and the inputs received from families will inform this plan. Brandon described the ways in which we will continue to assess student learning and culture to ensure the new model is supporting students.

VI. Executive session (minutes recorded separately)

At 7:06 pm Amanda moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel matters related to school staffing models and school leadership at East Brooklyn Ascend Lower School. Shelly seconded, and all trustees voted in favor and entered executive session.

VII. Exit executive session; resumption of open meeting

At 8:15 pm Oral moved to exit executive session. Shelly seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Amanda moved to appoint Lissette Roman as school director for East Brooklyn Ascend Lower School, effective July 1, 2020. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

VIII. Financial report

Shelly shared the April 2020 monthly financial report, which is projecting a higher net income than was forecasted in previous months due to our being out of our school buildings. We are in strong shape with respect to our SUNY metrics.

IX. Adjournment

At 8:27 pm, Shelly moved to adjourn the meeting; Amanda seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

Name:

Date: