

**Ascend Charter Schools
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
August 11, 2021
6:00 pm**

**Location:
Central Brooklyn Ascend Middle School
1886 Nostrand Avenue
Brooklyn, New York**

Meeting Minutes

Trustees in attendance

Shelly Cleary (Co-treasurer), Emmanuel Fordjour (Trustee), Glenn Hopps (Co-treasurer), Stanley Taylor (Trustee) (all via videoconference)

Ascend staff in attendance

Jordan Akhurst, Sophie Balis-Harris, Danique Day, Lisa DeRoché, Recy Dunn, Raymond Johnson, Sophie Kramer, Leyde St. Leger, Maryann Li, Jonathan Masci, Aaron Obrochta, Lisa Roach, Anjya Thomas, Louis Trani, Richard Tucker, Zelda Washington (all via videoconference or telephone)

Public in attendance

Diana Duncan Ramsden

The meeting began at 6:02 pm. There was not quorum and so all voting matters were adjourned.

I. Public comment

There was no public comment.

II. Public comment update

No public comment was offered at the prior Board meeting.

III. Financial report

Shelly shared the highlights from the finance committee meeting, including the strong year of financial performance, with net income exceeding the budget due to the higher per pupil allocation, strong enrollment, unspent contingency, remote operations, and capitalization of tech costs. Covenant, SUNY, and internal financial sustainability metrics are tracking favorably, and our year end cash on hand covers 117 days of expenses. The finance committee also discussed Ascend's creation of a cross-functional compliance checklist, and they reviewed Ascend's federal stimulus spend commitments and ideas under consideration.

IV. School and network updates

Maryann updated the Trustees on Ascend's approach to reopening. Beginning with our first day of school on August 16, all scholars will participate in fully in-person instruction. The CDC has stated, "Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority." We are therefore returning to full in-person instruction with enhanced health and safety protocols, including universal masking, physical distancing, and limited indoor and in-person events with visitors. Staff must either be vaccinated or submit to weekly testing, we will engage in bi-weekly Covid-19

surveillance testing of all students, and all individuals who enter our school buildings will undergo a daily health screening consisting of a temperature check and questionnaire. Maryann shared current staff vaccination rates and information about a vaccination clinic scheduled at our Pitkin campus prior to the start of school.

Aaron provided an update to the Board on student enrollment and talent hiring trends. Across the network, projected student enrollment is higher than the target enrollment. Ascend is hiring staff for the student recruitment team and beginning to shift its focus to the next recruitment season. Staff hiring has picked up with a late summer surge in applications, yet we continue to experience a historically low number of teacher applications. All schools have contingency plans to ensure a teacher in every classroom and a successful start to the year.

Jordan informed the Board of a new initiative being launched this school year: inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism leaders (IDEALS). IDEALS are stipended roles at each school and the Ascend Learning office who will partner with school leaders to develop and facilitate DEIA professional development activities; apply a DEIA lens to all systems, structures, and practices; and coordinate DEIA events, morning meeting/advisory content, and other initiatives. Jordan also shared some of the professional development opportunities in place to support our DEIA learning framework, including all-staff anti-racism training from Race Forward and a new monthly professional development series.

Recy updated the Board on Ascend's plans for the Covid stimulus funding, which the finance committee reviewed in depth at its committee meeting. Ascend has committed about \$5 million in Covid stimulus funds to address unfinished learning and social emotional needs. Specific initiatives include tutoring, flex teachers, additional clinicians, the DESSA screening tool, instructional coaching roles to address learning loss, and investments in technology. A process has been established for schools to apply for funds once students have returned and school leaders can best assess their needs.

V. Adjournment

At 6:27 pm the meeting was adjourned.

Name

Date