



Board Meeting (held via Zoom)
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
May 9, 2023
6:00PM - 8:29PM

Members Present:

James Moore, Chair
Hector Torres, Vice-Chair & Treasurer
Allison R. Kokkoros, Member
Robbie Dean, Secretary
Johan Uvin, Member
Larry Villegas-Pérez, Member
Teresita Retana Piedra, Member
Vilma Rosario, Member
Giovanni Delfino, Member
Yeshimebet Belay, Member
Ana Mejia, Member

Members Absent:

None

Staff:

Robert M. Skelton, General Counsel
Angela Kim, Chief Operations Officer
Chrissey Nguyen Klockner, Director of Development and Communications
Karla Vasconez, Executive Assistant to the CEO
Libby Miller, Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives
Chinedu Onwudiwe, Director of Finance

Others:

Jewel Cornelius-Royer of Marcum LLP, Chief Financial Officer
Trish Kelly of Marcum LLP

Quorum: Yes

Welcome & Pre-Meeting Announcements

Board Chair Jim Moore provided opening comments and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm. Mr. Moore welcomed Ana Mejia as the new student member of the Board, and invited her to introduce herself, which Ms. Mejia did.

Review of Agenda

Mr. Moore asked if there were any proposed changes to the agenda previously sent to the Board. Board members did not propose any changes to the agenda.

Consent Agenda Approval

The following items were brought forward for approval as part of the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes of the Board's regular meeting held on February 8, 2023
- Minutes of the Board's special meeting on April 3, 2023

Mr. Torres moved to approve the Consent Agenda, and Ms. Rosario seconded the motion. Following the invitation for discussion on the motion, a roll call vote was conducted, and the Consent Agenda item was approved unanimously.

Public Comment Period by members of school community

Mr. Moore confirmed that no members of the public had signed up to give comments during the Public Comment Period.

Mission Moment

Ms. Kokkoros then introduced Jorge Garcia, Director of Student Information and Learning Systems, to share his vision for the Maestro platform, for students, and for the compilation and use of data. Mr. Garcia explained that his department is collaborating with a cross functional team to determine the priority for enhancing business processes to better serve our students. He noted that they will launch a new version of our Student Information System in July which will have a better user experience and be easier to navigate, and which will include a student portal feature. Mr. Garcia also stated that he is restructuring his team to enhance the level and quality of service they provide to the School community.

CEO Report

CEO Allison Kokkoros referred to materials shared in advance and noted the following highlights in her report:

- Ms. Kokkoros noted that she had positive meetings with the student government at each campus, and that Ms. Retana Piedra and Ms. Mejia had each attended one meeting. Ms. Retana Piedra noted that the student government was very engaged and motivated. Ms. Kokkoros also had meetings with the cross-campus faculty working group and approved their recommendations for the coming School year related to 1:1 devices, continued hybrid schedule, and asynchronous work.
- The DEIB Advocacy Committee will finalize the DEIB plan by the end of June.
- It is a tough DC government budget cycle, with the DC Council facing declining revenues. The adult UPSFF funding appears not to be further increased, and it appears that charter schools will not receive full parity pay from the DCPS union settlement. It is uncertain what charter schools will receive or how it will be structured.
- The School rolled out employee recognition awards. The award winners will likely be announced at the all staff celebrations on either June 22 or 23.

- The Charter School Board unanimously approved the 25-year renewal of our charter. Mr. Moore noted the strong affirmation of the outcomes and performance of the School from DC Public Charter School board members.
- Mr. Villegas-Pérez noted that due to the DC budget challenges, the Mayor's budget eliminated over 700 vacant positions and did not authorize any new positions. It did not call for layoffs, however. He also noted that job security was key for staff and students and that there may be funding opportunities for the School that would defray the personnel costs. Mr. Dean stated that he was interested in learning how adaptations to the strategic plan could have the most impact in this budget and policy environment.
- Ms. Kokkoros noted that student, faculty, and managers' feedback has been very helpful in defining the choices the School has made. Laptops and data plans were confirmed by all groups as absolutely necessary for student success.
- Ms. Kokkoros stated that there will be a survey of adult learners conducted in conjunction with peer schools in the fall, and that the School undertook a PR blitz with the DC Council and the community about the DC budget issues and impacts. Mr. Uvin noted that his team models the economic impact of schools and other NGOs, and offered an exploratory conversation if the School was interested.
- Mr. Torres noted that the overall increase in DC student enrollment was driven by adult learners, and that this represented an opportunity for the school. He also noted that the new voting laws could affect interest and support for adult education.
- Mr. Moore reminded the Board that graduation was scheduled for June 20, and requested that all members attend if they could. He also noted that the School should be sure to pursue broadband and digital equity grants.

Financial Report as of March 31, 2023

Trish Kelly and Jewel Cornelius-Royer joined the presentation with Mr. Torres, Treasurer.

- Mr. Torres noted that there were still reporting issues to be ironed out.
- Ms. Cornelius-Royer stated that the projected loss for FY 22-23 was \$1.9 million, which was an improvement from the budgeted loss of \$2.2 million.
- Ms. Kelly stated that while net revenue increased by \$1.1 million due to the higher enrollment, the net revenue was offset by less federal stimulus money and less fundraising contributions than budgeted. In addition, the School paid an all staff bonus of \$500,000 in December and there was an additional \$247,000 related to data costs.
- Ms. Kelly also noted that the \$1 million in G&A expenses were mostly due to consultant expenses, which should decline as the School builds out its staff teams.
- Ms. Kelly also noted that investment income was \$869,000 higher due to increased interest and dividend earnings.
- Mr. Moore asked for an explanation for the change in the net income compared to the information provided in February. Ms. Cornelius-Royer acknowledged that they had stated the net income would be about a \$500,000 loss, but that they had not properly quantified the projected expenses. Mr. Torres noted that we need to make sure that we do not repeat issues that are causing reporting errors, and that the Finance Department will have to be very proactive and timely. Mr. Uvin stated that we need to tighten up internal controls and oversight.

- Mr. Dean asked whether the School calculates per student expenses. Mr. Torres noted that the School needs to examine staffing and all expenses more critically. Mr. Villegas-Pérez noted that grants often come with the opportunity for training, education and technical assistance that can lead to better outcomes.

There was a short break from 7:10pm until 7:17pm.

Strategic Planning & Oversight Committee

Mr. Uvin noted the following:

- The Committee is tracking progress of the strategic plan based on three priority areas using the dashboard that is included with the board materials.
- In the next phase, the Committee will be exploring the School’s theory of change, and how it will happen. The Committee was also asking “so what” – how can we measure and evaluate the impact of the strategic plan. Ms. Kokkoros noted that the School has collaborated on a proposal with the AIR Promise Center that seeks to evaluate the impact of the School on the DC community.

Governance & Nominating Committee

Ms. Rosario noted the following:

- The Board last conducted the board evaluation in late 2021 through Education Board Partners. The School has taken the board survey questions and are loading them into our school survey system so that we can administer the survey ourselves. Lynold McGhee, the School’s Director of Learning and Evaluation is helping with this effort.
- We are continuing our efforts to reach out to potential new board members.
- We will be welcoming Ana Mejia to the Committee at our regular meeting tomorrow evening.

DEIB Task Force

Mr. Villegas-Pérez noted the following:

- The Committee was working on building the capacity of the staff, and that there was a possibility of focus groups with students who are also parents to learn more about their specific needs.

Finance & Development Committee

Ms. Kelly and Ms. Cornelius-Royer joined the presentation with Giovanni Delfino, Chair of the Finance Committee.

- Mr. Delfino noted that the Form 990 for the School was ready to be filed, and that Board members should provide any comments as soon as possible.
- Ms. Cornelius-Royer stated that the budget development was focused on the mission of the School. The proposed budget calls for a loss of about \$500,000. Revenues were tied to the projected student count, and also represented an increase in revenues produced by the Achieve the Dream fundraiser and by an increase in cafeteria food prices. The cost of laptops and data plans are tied to the projected student count and are a major expense for the School. The projected budget includes a 3% salary increase for those on the staff compensation scale but does not include a FY24 bonus.

- The budget does not include any funds from the DC government for parity raises for the faculty which were related to the DC Public School settlement with the teachers union, since the DC Council had not yet decided the structure or amount of the funding.
- The budgeted loss is not projected to significantly impact operating reserves since much of the loss is represented by depreciation and amortization.

Closed Session

Mr. Moore noted the next item on the agenda is slated for closed session, citing the DC Code provisions for doing so:

- Discussion in closed session pursuant to DC Code § 2-575(b)(10) – personnel matters
DC Code § 2-575(b)(11) – trade secret and commercial or financial information.

Mr. Torres made a motion to approve entering the closed session for the stated purposes. Ms. Retana Piedra seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted to approve entering the closed session as proposed. The Board voted unanimously to enter closed session. Following the vote, the Board entered closed session.

Following the closed session, the Board returned to the open meeting at about 8:25pm.

Open Session

Following the discussion of the budget and financial reporting in the closed session, Mr. Delfino recommended that the Board adopt the FY23-24 budget as presented by the Finance & Development Committee. Mr. Uvin moved that the FY23-24 budget be adopted, and Mr. Torres seconded the motion. Mr. Dean conducted the roll call vote, and all members present approved the motion (Ms. Rosario was unable to rejoin the open session due to technical difficulties).

New Business

- There was no new business offered.

Adjourn

Mr. Moore adjourned the meeting at 8:29pm.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Dean, Board Secretary