



JUMOKE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

In-person Session

999 Asylum Avenue, 5th Floor Conference Room, Hartford, CT 06105

“Loving Scholars, Nurturing Minds, Empowering Futures”

Tuesday, March 12, 2024 - 6:01 - 7:04 pm

Meeting ID: 842 2266 4881

Passcode: 1Wb4ia

Board Members Present:

Damien Pittola, Community Representative

Leticia Acosta, Teacher Representative

George Sutherland, Community Representative

Myron Stewart, Treasurer/Community Representative

James Michel, Board Chair/Community Representative

Suzette Debeatham-Brown, Community Representative

Janelle Lester, Strategic Roadmap Sub-committee Chair/Community Representative

Thomas Smith, Building Sub-committee Chair/Community Representative

Vera Smith-Winfrey, Community Representative

Staff Present: Dr. Troy Monroe, Arnel Hines, Dr. Gordon-Hall, Sharron Solomon-McCarthy, Kashay Green, Dr. Heather Jacobi, Latoya Johnson, Anthony DiGennaro.

Guests Present: Sky’aylekz and family, Brian and family, Essence and family and Ewurama and family.

i. OPENING

Welcome & Public Comments

The Jumoke Academy Board of Directors meeting was called to order on Tuesday, March 13, 2024 at 6:01 pm by the Board Chair. There were no public comments.

II. BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS

Opening Remarks

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Board Chair requested a motion for the tabling of the new prospective board member review to allow the board additional time for review. The motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Stewart. There was no opposition or abstention and the motion was carried unanimously.

III. CEO/SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT PART A

- February - Scholar of the Month Recognition
 - Sky’aylekz Collazo, JAH-TED

The board meeting continued with the CEO’s report; scholar of the month recognition. The CEO/Superintendent welcomed everyone to the meeting. Dean DiGennaro presented Sky’aylekz as Thelma Ellis Dickerson’s Jumoke Academy district scholar for the month of February. Sky’aylekz is

described as an exemplary Pre-K scholar who follows directions and offers support to her peers. She is kind, friendly and respectful and a great addition to the Academy.

- Brian Evans, JAH-SMaRT

Principal Green presented for Jumoke Academy Honors SMaRT for the February scholar of the month. Brian is described as an 8th grader who has grown, he consistently displays a positive attitude and takes full responsibility for his learning and shows great diligence in his work ethic. Brian is sociable and advocates for himself.

- Essince Jackson-Mendez, JAH-HC

Principal Jacobi presented the scholar of the month for February for Jumoke Academy at the Hartford Conservatory. Essince is described as respectful and kind to everyone in school. She comes to class prepared and ready to learn, she asks questions and takes time to assist her peers.

All scholars were presented with a gift bag with literature, a gift card and several other gift items. The CEO/Superintendent congratulated all scholars for a job well done.

CT State Spelling Bee

- Ewurama Obuobi, JAH-SMaRT

The Jumoke Academy districtwide Spelling Bee Champion Ewurama Obuobi represented the district at the State Spelling Bee Championship. She did a great job and is being presented with a certificate of accomplishment for her efforts along with other prizes she received as the district champion.

The Board Chair congratulated all scholars and their families on behalf of the Board of Trustees for representing Jumoke Academy well.

PART B

- District Updates Dr. Troy A. Monroe, CEO/Superintendent
 - District Report
 - Review of Prospective New Board Member

The review of the prospective new board member has been tabled per the unanimous vote of the board at the beginning of the meeting.

- Community Engagement
 - Newsletter

A copy of the district Community Engagement Newsletter has been distributed to the board and was also shared electronically. The Community Engagement Newsletter is a resource for our community and donors. Its purpose is to share information on events, activities and accomplishments at the Academy. The Academy is also making an appeal for funding support.

- Campus Tours

In continuation of our marketing efforts the Academy has been participating in tabling events in Hartford to promote and boost enrollment. We have seen some success in this effort with new enrollment. The Academy is also offering tours and shadowing opportunities for potential new scholars across campus on Thursdays in the afternoon. Interested families may contact each school directly to schedule an appointment for their tour and scholar's shadow experience.

- Black History Podcast

On Wednesday 2/28 the Academy showcased a Black History Month Podcast with Faculty and scholars in 5th and 7th grade from both middle school campuses. The event was hosted by the CEO/Superintendent. The scholars and faculty spoke passionately about what Black History means to them. A copy of the recording was sent to the board and it is also available on Jumoke Academy's YouTube Channel. Members of the board are encouraged to view at their leisure.

- Commercial Broadcast

To ramp up our marketing efforts the Academy will have a 30 minute spot on NBC CT 30. The video will be aired during sporting events in both English and Spanish on NBC Telemundo, CT Live and Peacock. The schedule will be shared with the board.

- Charter Renewal

The Academy just received the charter renewal summary report from the November 7, 2023 site visit. The leadership team is in the process of reviewing the document and will submit responses by the due date of March 21st. The Academy will receive information on the final outcome at the CT State Board of Education(CSDE) meeting scheduled for April 3, 2024. The exact time and location has not yet been shared with the Academy. Information will be shared with the board as soon as it is received. An executive summary of the report will be shared with the board. The CEO/Superintendent stated that the recommendations include areas of operation, procedures and fiscal policies. The Board Chair asked if the Academy will need support from the board in its response to the recommendations and if there were any concerns regarding the board performance. The CEO/Superintendent stated that the report is being reviewed and he cannot speak to the details but knows that there are recommendations relating to policy writing and board oversight that will need to take place, reviewed by legal counsel and voted on by the board.

Ms. Lester asked if the responses to the report are required for CSDE to make a decision on our charter renewal. The CEO/Superintendent stated that there will be items for us to respond to and as such, some level of corrective action is standard. The Academy must show improvement in the areas that require action.

Ms. Lester stated that the March 21st response deadline is a short turnaround if CSDE requires the Academy to have a corrective action plan in place. An extension of the response date will allow the Academy to make every effort to craft an appropriate response. The CEO/Superintendent stated that he cannot speak to how the charter renewal decision is made but in his experience CSDE will always make recommendations or ask for corrective action. Typically CSDE gives charters a timeline on when to complete corrective actions. The Academy's response will address what plans are in place and will be put in place to address those recommendations.

- PCLB Update

The Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation(PCLB) came for the Spring site visit on February 27th. The leadership team met with the representatives who toured our T.E.D. campus. The leadership team was able to articulate the needs of the Academy. The PCLB team had questions about Academics. The PCLB Program Officers will return to the Buck Foundation to present their findings as to the needs of the Academy. We typically receive feedback in May.

The Board Chair asked for clarification on the level of their advocacy. The CEO/Superintendent stated that a new liaison has been assigned to the Academy and she visited to learn more about the needs of the Academy to ascertain how PCLB can provide support; the visit was positive and a tone of support for the Academy was evident.

The Board Chair asked what the requested amount was. The CEO/Superintendent stated that the request was for \$850,000.

- Board Retreat - Saturday, September 14, 2024

We have a tentative date of Saturday, September 14th for the board retreat from 8:30 am to noon, the location is to be determined. Members of the board are asked to save the date and to provide any concerns regarding a conflict.

PART C

- Curriculum & Instruction
 - Academic Update
 - Parent Workshop

Dr. Marie Gordon-Hall, CAO

The Academic Department hosted two Parent Workshops one in October and the most recent one took place on March 5th. The October workshop focused on an overview of curriculum programs and resources available to families and the March session on how families can support scholars with preparing for State testing. This Parent Workshop is an opportunity for families to see what the tests look like and available resources they can use to support their scholars. This workshop was facilitated by the principals who did an amazing job. The resources shared with families were included in the board packet. Principals will share this information again during Monthly Minutes with Monroe on March 19th for families who could not attend. The information from the workshop was uploaded to the Parent Hub for families to access.

Mrs. Acosta asked for clarification on the scheduled date of the follow up session. Mr. Stewart asked if the March 19th date will be advertised for families. Dr. Gordon-Hall confirmed that the information will be shared via ParentSquare which is our communication Hub for the Academy.

Mr. Stewart asked why attendance was low. The CAO stated that low attendance was possibly due to inclement weather, families who had pre-registered did not attend. The October Parent Workshop had over 30 families, this session we had a much lower turnout.

Mr. Stewart asked if the Academy will advertise the March session to ensure a greater attendance. The CAO stated that this will be advertised by the end of the week. The follow up session is virtual and will take place during Monthly Minutes with Monroe.

- Academic Calendar - options for consideration

The Chief Academic Officer(CAO) shared two versions of the proposed 2024-25 Academic Calendar. Both calendars reflect 181 days for scholars and 187 days for 10-month staff; this has been the case over the last couple of years and is the same on both calendars. Both calendars include two early release days each month; this is our way of giving teachers more time to collaborate and allow more Professional Development (PD). The additional training for teachers is due to several new State initiatives which includes the State mandate for the kindergarten cutoff age, which states that scholars must be 5 by September 1st to start kindergarten. In addition, the new reading requirements and academic programs. Mr. Stewart asked if the Academy has taken into account the scholars we will lose due to the new State mandated cutoff age for kindergarten. The CEO/Superintendent stated that has been considered as well as what protocols will be implemented to promote qualifying PreK scholars.

The CAO stated that version one 2024-25 year reflects two weeks winter recess in December from the 23rd through to January 1st for 12-month staff. 10-month staff and scholars will have two full weeks break from December 23rd through to January 3rd. The Board Chair asked if it's standard protocol for the District Office to be closed during Winter recess. The CAO confirmed that the District Office is typically closed for Winter recess which is the same amount of time scholars are off. This year however, the change will be to two full weeks break for the entire district. Harford Public Schools (HPS) students will have the two weeks off and historically our attendance drops significantly whenever we bring scholars back before the host district. Teachers are contracted for 187 days and that timeframe is already included in the draft calendars. If our teachers are brought back for two additional days we will be required to pay them for those two days which will have budget implications.

Mrs. Debeatham-Brown asked if December was the only change between the two calendars. The CAO confirmed. The Board Chair asked for confirmation that the board will need to vote on the selected calendar at the next board meeting. The CAO confirmed. The Board Chair advised the CAO to provide a recommendation for the 2024-25 Academic Calendar at the next meeting for board consideration.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

i. Approval of February Minutes

The Board Chair requested a motion for the approval of the February Minutes. The motion was made by Mrs. Debeatham-Brown and seconded by Mr. Smith. There were no oppositions or abstentions and the motion was carried unanimously.

V. CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

Mr. Arnel Hines, CFO

i. January Financial Statement

The Finance Sub-committee had a meeting last Thursday and the January Financial Statement was pulled from the Consent agenda. As indicated last month the projection column would be added. An annualized net surplus of \$189,000 is reflected. The previous column reflects year to date expenses over revenue due to timing of revenue and expenses drawdown. The annualized projection reflects that we will make up any deficit. The CFO will continue to provide updates to the board.

We do have a correction to last month's Minutes regarding a statement the CFO made that we are waiting for the PCLB funds; that is not the case. We already received PCLB funds for this fiscal year. The PCLB funds are typically received in May; the funds then go into cash advance total dollars. The CFO communicated this to the auditor and they made a year to date adjustment to move cash out to deferred revenue. That adjustment is not reflected in this report but it will in the next Financial Statement. We received \$550,000 in PCLB funds and we are deferring \$500,000 into this current year and whatever money is not used up will continue to be deferred.

The Board Chair asked for clarification on when the PCLB funds were received. The CFO confirmed that the money was received in May of the last fiscal year. The funds received are for June 1st through to May 31st. Last month's Minutes will reflect the updates and placed back on the Consent agenda to be voted on at the April board meeting. Given the clarification and updates on the Financial Statement shared with the board the CFO requested a vote for approval.

The Board Chair requested a motion for the approval of the January year to date Financial Statement. The motion was made by Mrs. Vera-Smith and seconded by Mrs. Debeatham Brown and Mr. Sutherland. There were no oppositions nor abstentions and the motion was carried unanimously.

ii. Audit Update

An update was sent to the board on Saturday on where we are with the annual audit process. The CFO stated that this is brought back in an effort to respond to any questions from the board. The Board Chair asked for a summary of the audit status and asked that the CFO provide a timeline and context for the board. The Board Chair further stated that his understanding is that the Audit process began June 30th and the Academy is required to submit the completed report for FY2024 by December 31st; six months after but it has not been submitted. The CFO stated that the correct year is FY2023 not 2024.

The Board Chair stated that the Academy initially asked for a 30 day extension and a 2nd extension and are currently on our 3rd extension. The Board Chair further stated that based on the memorandum communicated to the board the report will be filed by March 31st. The CFO confirmed that the goal is to file by March 31st. The CFO stated that the Finance team is working with the auditor and providing daily and weekly updates and have scheduled meetings with the auditor on site to provide any information that they may need to get us to completion.

The Board Chair stated that it is important that all members of the board have a clear understanding of what issues caused the delay. The CFO stated that delays were caused by staffing issues on both sides and the Business Office not being able to provide requested documents due to staff shortage. The CFO stated that the audit firm initially did not request any information until the Business Office reached out to them. The 3rd delay was because the accountant left the Academy and during the process of interviewing and hiring a replacement there was a delay in getting information to the auditor. The CFO stated that the Finance Office is currently responsive to the request of the auditor to get to completion.

Mr. Stewart asked if we are one hundred percent comfortable that the auditors will not ask for additional information. The CFO stated that he does not know if the auditor will request additional information from the Academy. He further stated that everything shared in the memo to the board is all that the auditors needed up to this point. The new lease pronouncement pointed out in the memo was never requested by the auditors before; this is a new requirement.

How leases are handled is outdated and the government has a new requirement. The auditor shared a template with the Academy which will be used to provide the lease information in a different format for submission as part of the audit. Mr. Stewart stressed that our biggest concern is not having to request for an extension. He believes that finance should review documents submitted in the past and give them to the auditor in advance and not wait for a request.

Mr. Pittola asked if the auditor is waiting for items from the Academy and if the CFO anticipated any delays getting the required documents to them. The CFO stated that there are a couple outstanding items including the lease pronouncement that he has to submit to the auditor. The auditor will be in this week and he will have those documents ready.

The Board Chair stated that he is concerned that 3 months of delay may create a false impression and may send a negative message given the Academy's history going 10 years back. The lease requirement should have been brought to the attention of the finance office at the very beginning and not at the last hour given that it is a new requirement. The Academy should have been made aware of this from 2020 when the document became a requirement. The Board Chair stated that needs to be a question for Walter when he meets with the board. The CFO stated that the lease procurement came out in 2019 but was only asked of the Academy within the past year.

Mrs. Debeatham-Brown asked what plans are in place for a new auditor, she further stated that it will serve the Academy better to have them replaced given the current circumstances. The CFO stated that the Finance Sub-committee discussed this issue and will be prepared to move forward with the RFP once the annual audit is completed. The Board Chair asked if Mrs. Debeatham-Brown is proposing that the Academy complete an RFP for a new auditing firm. Mrs. Debeatham-Brown responded absolutely.

The Board Chair stated that the current fiscal year ends June 30th and the new auditing firm will need to be onsite for the transition. The Board Chair stated that this transition is a long tedious process which will be taxing on the staff and as a result the Academy will unfortunately have the current auditing firm for another cycle; unless the Academy can prepare the RFP and get a new auditing firm in by early May. The Board Chair stated that the audit work starts in April when auditing firms typically start sending requests for documents.

Mrs. Suzette Debeatham Brown states that we should be ready to act upon submission of the completed audit. Ms. Lester is in agreement. The Finance Sub-committee will do their best to find a replacement; the CFO stated that the Academy has also received referrals. Ms. Lester strongly believes that we should move forward with another auditor. The Board Chair stated that the timeline may not be favorable for this to happen because the work that needs to be done will take time to allow for a smooth transition. If we are able to bring in a new auditing firm; the completion of the audit must happen by December 31, 2024. We had a delay last year and another delay will be a grave concern.

iii. Budget Update

The CFO is prepping at least three separate proposed budgets for the Finance Sub-committee. The Finance Sub-committee will meet to have the budget available for April board meeting discussion and for board approval.

VI. SUB COMMITTEE REPORT

i. 325 Renovation Update

The CFO stated that Baybrook Remodeling is the contractor we are planning to use for the 325 renovation project. They are confident that they can complete the renovation within the current funding timeline and budget amount. They toured the facility and will review the architectural plans to see how they can save the Academy money. They are working on a proposal and are waiting for an official report from the Fuss & O'neill who has stated that there are no signs of asbestos. The hope is that we will receive the report within the week to submit to the contractor. Once we receive the proposal from Baybrook Remodeling it will be reviewed by the Building Sub-committee and the Finance Sub-committee and presented to the board at the April board meeting. The contractor is confident that the work will be completed by September 2024.

Chair asked what is the deadline for use of funds. The CFO stated that the funds will need to be obligated by September 2024. The State may provide an extension through to 2025 but the plan is to complete the work by September 2024.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

i. There was no executive session.

VIII. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

i. Teacher Leadership Evaluation Model

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The Board Chair requested a motion for the adjournment of the board meeting. The motion was made by Mrs. Debeatham-Brown and seconded by Mrs. Acosta. There were no oppositions or abstentions and the motion was carried unanimously. The Jumoke Academy Board of Directors meeting concluded at 7:04 pm.