

**The Bronx Charter School for Children**  
**Board Meeting Minutes – August 17, 2023 4:30pm**

A meeting of The Board of Trustees (The Board) of The Bronx Charter School for Children (TBCSC) was held on August 17, 2023 at 4:30pm.

The following members of the Board were present: Denise Alexander (Executive Director), Paul Libretta (President,) Jane Rosen (Vice President), Bruce Greenwald (Treasurer), Nicole Schmidt and Candice Manzano

Absent: Joanne Carris, Mark Samuel, Maria Aveledo, Ken Blomster, Michele Smith

The Meeting was called to order at 4:38 by Paul Libretta, Board President

Jane confirmed Maxine is taking minutes today and moving forth.

APPROVED: The minutes from the July 31, 2023 Board Meeting were approved, pending Bruce's corrections. Minutes. Denise sent them on August 16, 2023.

Denise mentioned that she is waiting on approval for Michelle. Bruse asked whether we need a specific number for a quorum or just a majority. Paul did not have the bylaws immediately available but will check the bylaws. **Jane has since confirmed it is 51%.**

**Executive Director's Report**

**The Principals were not present. School started with staff coming back this week.**

We have a lot of contracted training for the Curriculum. Denise stressed the significance of training for curriculum and family orientation and success in these two areas as critical for the school. We are planning several additional family orientations. The goal for family orientation is 100%. The orientation provides the family with an overview of the school, its policies and priorities as well as providing an opportunity to ask questions. The school is also pushing hard on uniform compliance.

School starts the following Monday, August 21, 2023. There will be half days the first week of school, with a 1pm dismissal time each day. We are trying to fill all teacher positions. The discussions included talks about teacher hiring. The school has been rather successful at retaining teachers. A few teachers have left for the DOE due to shorter commutes. There are 5 vacancies in Elementary school. In the Middle School we have one teacher who resigned. There is a need for a math interventionist in the Lower grades and a 7<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher. We will use the math teacher for the time being.

The school is continuing its enrollment efforts throughout the year, prioritizing kindergarten enrollment. There was some discussion regarding whether or not the three kindergarten classes will collapse into two, as the kindergarten class remains the most unfilled. We do not want to make the mistake of this past year, when we held three kindergarten classes which could have

collapsed to two for efficiency. **The decision if and when to collapse to two classrooms should be made soon.**

Denise mentioned an article Bruce recently circulated to the Board regarding the under-enrollment of kindergarten students throughout the City, with approximately 30,000 seats currently unfilled. Denise recently attended the New York State of Education Conference which focused on enrollment numbers at the district level. Hot topics are enrollment and funding. Covid funding should be going away soon, and enrollment is down.

Paul questioned if displaced migrant families arriving in New York, were having an impact on enrollment. Candice responded that they were currently working with a couple families. However, the lack of stability in housing made it difficult to successfully communicate with the families. We are not sure we can get busing right away, because busing typically takes a long time. Candice further reported that if school were to start tomorrow, we currently have 493 students enrolled, same as last year, and we are continuing recruitment efforts. We have enrolled 10 children this week. We have 60 scholars not returning and have enrolled 70 new students.

Jane inquired about the success of summer school. Denise reported that we received all 100% of the grants we applied for. Attendance was an issue for us in summer school, and there have been some lessons learned and we don't yet know how much progress the scholars made. Teachers have not conducted their reports yet. We will also have summer school comparisons with other schools later on to determine success. We do know that the program was fully funded so all teachers will get paid all they are due according to the classes and activities they selected.

Paul called the next item for business: the Committee Reports, and most of those are not here.

### **Committee Reports**

**Paul noted that a lot of Committee heads were not present for the meeting.**

**The Academic Committee had not met recently but they are working on developing an achievement plan and getting ready for school.**

### **The Development Committee**

Emily is doing some work with her son today, so she is not present. Denise reported that Klyde Watson was most likely approved for \$15,000, and it will be used towards securing lockers for the middle schoolers. We are waiting for the following grants:

- **\$150,000 for Elementary School (Awaiting from FEMA NYS Homeland Security)**
- **\$75,000 for Middle Schoolers**
- **\$15,000 for Bronx Yankees for High School Placement**
- **\$25,000 from NY Assembly District 24**

- **\$25,000 for Jose Serrano (District 29)**

**We are currently applying for:**

- **\$30,000 for transitional housing students.**
- **NYSED \$941,000 for teacher training, social/emotional learning, mental health/trauma education for teachers and tech assistance.**

Emily will reach out to the Board Members for annual appeal on an individual basis as had happened in the past.

Bruce recommended a change to the 5-year budget. He wants to make the targets more robust and set some developmental goals. The Development Committee and Denise should set development goals. It would help with long-term planning. Paul and Nicole agreed it would be very helpful to have more aggressive and specific targets.

### **Finance Committee**

Bruce motioned to approve the budget. This was seconded and the budget was approved. Bruce reported we do not have the final fiscal year-end June numbers yet, and so are awaiting the final accruals. There have been no changes to the budget following its presentation to the Board last month, so it is the budget everyone has. **Budget was approved.**

### **Governance Committee**

Mark was absent, so there was no update.

### **NYSED**

Jane and Denise were recently notified that Paolo Giovine will no longer be serving as liaison. Paolo apparently wanted to stay with the school, but the decision was ultimately not his. His replacement is Ms. Latoya Johnson – who will serve in the new role of liaison. All schools have a meeting with her in about 2 weeks.

Bruce: Is Paolo still remaining with SED?

Denise: Sounds like he is, just not with us. There should be a transition period during which background information on schools is provided.

**The Charter Renewal Application was submitted on time.**

**The Annual Report was submitted on time.**

Denise spoke of SED being understaffed. She responded to Bruce's question regarding using a consultant on the Renewal Team, that they do indeed use a consultant for the Renewal team, and it has been very helpful. We expect to continue with a Consultant for the Renewal Team, since that has been the norm. Denise is reaching out to Latoya to get an idea of when the Renewal visit will take place. She anticipates it taking place in October or November.

## **Facilities**

Bruce reported construction is underway at 629 Cortlandt, and a Tour is scheduled for tomorrow. Megan must confirm whether the tour will go on as scheduled. This will not be a substantive visit. The construction group is also going through a transition themselves. Bruce had a call with the departing and new managers of the construction group to establish timelines and progress. Everything is still up in the air. It remains unknown when the building will be available to us, for our portion of the work to start. **If the building is not available next September, we have an option to renew 138<sup>th</sup> Street location for another year. We do have to give them notice however, and it's at the top of everyone's list to deal with. We have to finesse the gap between when we have to give notice and when the construction group will be finished. It's a bit premature to make any predictions right now.**

Bruce inquired about where we are on the Branding Initiative. Denise plans to meet with parent stakeholders on August 31. She will shoot for two meetings with parents. Third meeting with the staff will be next, followed by meetings with donors. We will get feedback from parent stakeholders next week, followed by feedback from our other stakeholders.

Denise gave an update on the Branding Initiative and the work that went into trying to find a word which adequately defined the school. There were a lot of different words were considered, some were taken by other institutions, some just did not fit who we are. The goal is to find a word that encompasses who we are, and is synonymous with our identity, and what we hope to become more of. We reviewed Spanish cognitive words as well. While there wasn't an intentional focus on A words, there was a 'hook' with A words, and they seemed to resonate more with individuals. ABC and A+ came through pretty strongly. Nicole suggested another A word, but it was already taken. Based upon the original meeting, A words came out on top. Bruce reminded everyone of the significance of sticking to the Branding timeline, because we do not want the Branding to be reason the construction is delayed. Denise assured everyone we do not anticipate any problems with the Branding. The Branding could even be colors. The attorneys have been updated, and Jacob confirmed what the process should be like, and it seems to be going along well.

Jane inquired whether Denise was pleased with the Annual Report and the Renewal Application. Denise responded it was easier this year, and she was pleased with both the process and the result. The Annual Report was more technical, putting the information on the portal. Nora provided great feedback and guidance throughout the entire process, and this facilitated an easier process.

Jane suggested the need to evaluate the consultants as we go along because they are expensive.

We should consider what Strategic Planning should look like for us. We used to meet with Dan, however lately he has not been as available. We must engage with them as part of the three-year contract. Nicole agreed we should come up with a plan for Strategic Planning.

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:49pm.**

**The next meeting will be held on September 21, 2023.**

**The Executive Session began immediately following.**