

**Board of Trustees Meeting**

**Location:** New Dawn Charter High School, 242 Hoyt Street, Brooklyn, New York 11217

**Zoom Meeting (School Closed)**

**Date:** January 26, 2021

**Time:** 3:00 P.M.

**Board Members Present:** Mr. Ronald Tabano, Chairperson, Ms. Jane Sun, Board Member, Ms. Katharine Urbati, Treasurer

**Board Members Absent:** Mr. Jonathon Carrington, Board Member, Mr. Amit Bahl, Board Member

**Staff Members/ Visitors Present:** Dr. Sara Asmussen, Executive Director, NDCS, Mr. Jose Obregon, Director of Operations, NDCS, Mr. Steve Ramkissoon, Director of Finance and HR, Mr. Zach Flory, Principal, NDCHS II, Ms. Donna Lobato, Principal, NDCHS, Dr. Lisa DiGaudio, Director of Curriculum & Instruction

**Mr. Tabano, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.**

**I. Resolution: December 15, 2020 minutes**

**Motion:** Ms. Jane Sun motioned to approve the December 15, 2020 Board of Trustee meeting minutes.

**Motion Seconded:** Ms. Katharine Urbati seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The board unanimously voted to accept and approve the December 15, 2020 Board of Trustee meeting minutes.

**II. Financials— Mr. Steve Ramkissoon – Director of Finance and HR**

Mr. Ramkissoon briefed the board on the school's five (5) year performance history which demonstrated a net gain every reporting year. He also briefed the board on the Brooklyn school's total revenue net income for this month which stands at just over \$149K. Revenue was adjusted to reflect actual students assigned which is 269 students. Though student revenue was forecasted at a higher amount, the school is still income positive because expenses were less. If revenue and expenditures remain constant, Mr. Ramkissoon expects the school to be at a positive net income at the end of the year. Ms. Urbati asked, what is the actual total revenue received and if is reflected anywhere on the financial report. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that it is reflected on the balance sheet. Ms. Urbati stated that she wanted to make sure it was reflected in the financial report.



For the Queens school, Mr. Ramkissoon reported to the board that 245 students were projected to be enrolled, but as of the date of this financial report, there is currently only 141 students enrolled. It was expected that the school would be at 50% of projected student enrollment. Consequently, the revenue was adjusted to just over \$1.9M to reflect 141 students enrolled. Notwithstanding this lower enrollment number, the adjustment still reflects a net positive income. Mr. Ramkissoon reported to the board that if revenue does not increase, the financials will reflect a loss at the end of the year due to the deferred rent contract costs. Ms. Urbati indicated that this is more of a long-term liability rather than an immediate loss. Mr. Ramkissoon agreed but also emphasized that loss of student revenue will affect the school's financial position. Mr. Tabano asked Dr. Asmussen how this shortfall was going to impact Barone and the rental agreement which is based on student enrollment benchmarks. Dr. Asmussen stated that it will affect the rental agreement severely and it looks like the school will not meet the projected per pupil revenue. This will result in the school owing Barone money. Mr. Ramkissoon also stated that the school is allowed by the lease agreement a 10% shortage in revenue. If student enrollment is not increased, Mr. Ramkissoon projects that the school will be between 300K-400K short.

In respect to consolidated revenue, both schools are at a positive net gain of over \$306K. Both schools have plans to bolster student enrollment through a recruiting plan. Ms. Urbati asked Steve if he felt that there was something to be concerned about other than what was discussed. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that if student enrollment improves, the schools are expected to maintain a good financial position.

Mr. Tabano asked if there was a resolution to accept and approve the financials for December 31, 2020.

**a. Resolution: Financials for December 31, 2020**

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the financials for December 31, 2020.

**Motion Seconded:** Ms. Jane Sun seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The board unanimously voted to accept and approve the financials for December 31, 2020.

**b. Investor's Bond Presentation**

Mr. Ramkissoon reported to the board that the presentation went well. Dr. Asmussen also verified that the meeting proceeded very well. Dr. Asmussen also stated that the investors were interested in the school's social distancing policies and when students are physically coming back. There were no questions on the school finances but rather on school

programs. The investors were briefed on construction items, bond value and expenditures, student enrollment, 20-21 projected fiscal outcomes, and other business-related updates. Slide presentation was very helpful which depicted pictures of the school. Mr. Obregon also reported that the investors were briefed on punch list items which has been reduced to approximately ten (10) outstanding items. Mr. Ramkissoon reported that there is approximately a \$1M remaining balance to finish the construction project. There is approximately \$2.7M remaining in the bond fund. Some of that money will be used to reimburse the school for the per pupil revenue that was used to fund some of the construction costs. At the end of the construction project, Mr. Ramkissoon projects that cash on hand will exceed \$6M for both schools. As far as Bond Compliance, the school is doing well. Ms. Urbati asked if our debt service ratio will be as good next year and if there will be any major problems. Mr. Ramkissoon replied that he expects that the school's income will be in a net positive. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that perhaps re-negotiating our lease agreement with Barone will be an option. Otherwise, the schools are in good shape. Mr. Ramkissoon also reported that he informed the investors that the schools received its \$646K in PPE monies as well.

## **I. Facilities—Mr. Jose Obregon – Director of Operations**

### **a. COVID updates: Room filter & HVAC filters**

Jose Obregon briefed the board on air filters for the HVAC system which are designed to filter out COVID-19 particles in air. These filters are engineered to mitigate the risk of transmission. Mr. Tabano confirmed that these filters are MERV-13 filters and are not too expensive. Additionally, Jose Obregon briefed the board on portable air purifiers which can purify the air in a room size of 550 sq ft every twelve minutes. These portable air purifiers cost about \$250. Per unit. Dr. Asmussen asked Jose Obregon to proceed with acquiring these for the Queens school.

### **b. General**

Jose Obregon briefed the board members on a walkthrough that he conducted last week in Queens to verify that items that needed to be fixed were fixed by Barone. There are still a few items that need to be fixed including windows that are not insulated and that allow cold air into the space, two leaky toilet tanks, at least two electric heater units that are not working in the B stairwell, and room heating units that are not warming the space adequately. The hallways are also cold and there is no heat in those hallways. Additionally, the B stairwell windows need to be painted. Finally, Jose Obregon briefed the board that locks still need to be replaced in the Queens school and that he will reach out to a third vendor to get pricing. Jose Obregon also reiterated that Barone has indicated that they will not pay for changing of locks, but that Steve Ramkissoon might be able to

negotiate an agreement with them. Further, the locksmiths in the Bronx who have experience working with schools will not come out to Queens. Therefore, Jose Obregon will reach out to another vendor. Dr. Asmussen reminded the board members how the safety of all and physical security is affected adversely by the inability to lock classrooms.

## II. Updates on Charter Revision – Dr. Sara Asmussen

Dr. Asmussen informed the board that she spoke with the SED Charter School Office attorney about committees and they agreed that certain committees are no longer mandated except those that are needed such as the audit committee. Also, the school name change to New Dawn Charter Schools was approved.

- a. **Bylaws** – Dr. Asmussen informed the board that the bylaws are changed. Therefore, this is no longer an open item.
- b. **Investment Policy** – SED initially approved but then rescinded the investment policy proposal since they do not mandate or require such a policy. Dr. Asmussen also informed the board that SED does not require a curriculum policy. However, SED does believe it is a good idea to have one.
- c. **CTE Program** – This still has not been approved. Dr. Asmussen informed the board that under this program, students are supposed to be taking tests. Ms. Lobato is working with the State office to ascertain what can be done to get students their CTE certification outside of school or online and getting the school's culinary program started. For now, SED will allow New Dawn to continue with the program in place until the details of the CTE program are finalized.
- d. **Director of Curriculum & Instruction** – Dr. Asmussen stated that it was agreed that this proposed change needs to have some wording changed. Also, the positions will remain open at the school and a decision to fill these vacancies, such as the Director of Student Services, will be made later. Since our renewal is during this year, the school can subsequently make these changes.
- e. **Student and Parent Handbook** – Dr. Asmussen informed the board that we must remove 8<sup>th</sup> grade 15-year-old students addressed in the draft student and parent handbook.

Mr. Tabano remarked that SED is not easily or quickly approving revisions especially regarding 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

### **III. School Reports**

#### **a. Brooklyn—Ms. Donna Lobato**

Ms. Lobato informed the board that both an ELA and Science teacher resigned. The ELA position is now filled. She also confirmed that interviews are taking place to fill the science teacher position. Ms. Lobato also confirmed that finals are being administered now. As of today, there are at least twenty (24) seniors and possibly more that are slated to graduate in January this year. Mr. Tabano asked if the Spring term is still scheduled to begin February 2, 2021. Ms. Lobato confirmed that it will start February 2, 2021. Finally, Ms. Lobato also stated that New Dawn Brooklyn will be doing cross school PD with the NYS mentoring program.

#### **b. Queens— Mr. Zach Flory**

Mr. Flory informed the board that finals will be wrapping up this week. Students will be meeting with teachers during office hours. Additionally, he will be conducting mid-year reviews with his staff. Mr. Flory also informed the board that the school is using the Danielson framework for remote learning. Finally, Mr. Flory stated that the 1<sup>st</sup> COVID-19 testing session took place in the school last week. Right now, it is open to staff, but Mr. Flory stated that it will soon be open to students as well.

#### **c. Resolution: COVID Vaccination—Dr. Sara Asmussen**

Dr. Asmussen informed the board that some staff are concerned that they will be terminated if they do not take the vaccination. Dr. Asmussen stated that she spoke with labor law attorneys and they confirmed that the school can absolutely require employees to be vaccinated to retain their positions at the school. Dr. Asmussen also indicated that she does not want to terminate anyone that refuses to get vaccinated, but going forward, she proposes that employees will be required to perform their duties in person without any limitations. Mr. Tabano agreed that the school should not force anyone, but he agrees with Dr. Asmussen that employees will be required to perform their duties as required in person. Mr. Ramkissoon also indicated that the school will inform employees that if they are not vaccinated and are exposed to COVID-19 and they are out of sick time, they will be required to take leave without pay. Mr. Tabano asked Steve Ramkissoon to formulate a policy to present to the staff, so this expectation is perfectly clear. After the policy is generated, the board can vote to approve it next board meeting. Ms. Urbati also stated that pros and cons should be considered for the new policy. Dr. Asmussen stated that she is considering having employees sign an acknowledgement of the policy when it is



approved. Mr. Tabano stated that considering the litigation involving the DOE, Charter schools, and parochial schools concerning COVID-19 testing at the schools, it is better that the testing continues to be a paid service. Dr. Asmussen also commented that there was good participation at the Queens school since people clearly want the testing. Considering that it is more expensive to test in Brooklyn, testing will not be done at the Brooklyn school at this time. Finally, Dr. Asmussen informed the board that a benchmark will be discussed at every meeting to comply with the State's recommendation.

**IV. Charter School Performance Framework Discussion**  
**Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention**  
**Donna Lobato & Zach Flory**

Ms. Lobato spoke about Benchmark 9, which focuses on student enrollment targeting specifically on English language learners (ELLs), retention of students with disabilities, and recruitment and retention of economically disadvantaged students. She informed the board that this is what the school agreed with the State to do. Mr. Flory elaborated on the numbers pertaining to each of these three (3) groups. The data indicates that Brooklyn is slightly behind District 15 in enrolled ELL student percentages, but the Queens school is exceeding District 28 in ELL student percentages. Both schools are exceeding their district's SPED and economically disadvantaged percentages. Ms. Lobato remarked that Brooklyn will be targeting the ELL student population for recruitment. Ms. Jane Sun asked for clarification of the 9% ELL population in district 15. She asked if this was a measure of high school ELL students or total number of students in the district. Dr. Asmussen confirmed that this reflects only high school percentages.

Mr. Flory informed the board that Vanguard recruiting mailings went out on January 18, 2021. He also spoke about the high target areas in both Brooklyn and Queens. Mr. Flory also stated that schools are getting some positive feedback and potential students are reaching out to both schools.

Ms. Donna Lobato spoke about upcoming home visits and reach out to those students who are failing to attend. During home visits, flyers will also be distributed throughout the community. Flyers will be distributed at local businesses, community centers, foster agencies, high schools, and the legal aid society. On the new student enrollment applications, there will be a question regarding where students are coming from so recruiting sources can be tracked. Ms. Jane Sun asked if the student enrollment can be filled out online. Ms. Lobato replied that she believes most students fill out the enrollment application online, but she will verify. Dr. Asmussen confirmed that most enrollment applications are done online.



**V. New Business**

There was no new business discussed. Next board meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Mr. Tabano informed the board that he will be meeting with Barone Management this coming Thursday and he will let us know if any follow up action is required.

**VI. Adjournment**

**Mr. Tabano asked if there was a motion to adjourn the board meeting**

**Motion:** Ms. Jane Sun motioned to adjourn the board meeting.

**Motion Seconded:** Ms. Katharine Urbati seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The board unanimously voted to adjourn the board meeting at 4:07 PM.