

**New Dawn Charter Schools Board of Trustees  
May 23, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes  
11:00 A.M, Executive Committee Meeting  
11:10 A.M,/ Full Board Meeting**

**New Dawn Charter High School  
242 Hoyt Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11217**

**New Dawn Charter High School II  
89-25 161st Street  
Jamaica, NY 11432  
347-505-9101**

**Board Members present:** Mr. Ronald Tabano, Chairperson, Ms. Jane Sun, Vice Chair, Mr. Brian Baer, Secretary, Ms. Katharine Urbati, Treasurer

**Board Members Absent:** Jonathon Carrington, Member

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

**I. Agenda**

**Resolution: May 2023 Agenda**

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the April 2023 Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

**Motion:** Mr. Brian Baer motioned to accept and approve the May 2023, Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the May 2023 Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

**II. Minutes**

**Resolution: April 2023 Minutes**

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the April 2023 Board of Trustees board minutes.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the April 2023 Board of Trustees minutes.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the April 2023 Board of Trustees minutes.

### **III. Resignation of Mr. Jonathan Carrington**

Mr. Tabano asked Dr. Asmussen to address the resignation of Mr. Jonathan Carrington. Dr. Asmussen stated that since Mr. Carrington has not communicated with the board for several months, she believes that it is in the best interest of the board to view this as his official resignation from the board of trustees. Mr. Tabano and the Board of Trustees agreed to officially recognize Mr. Carrington's resignation from New Dawn Charter Schools board of trustees.

### **IV. Financials—Steve Ramkissoon** **Benchmark 4: Financial Condition** **Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

#### **a. Report of the Finance Committee—Katharine Urbati**

Mr. Ramkissoon reported that the finance committee met to discuss the upcoming fiscal year's budget to include cost of living increases. The finance committee also discussed student enrollment and the need to continue recruiting new students to support the projected budget.

Ms. Urbati reported to the board that although she was initially skeptical about next fiscal year's budget, she acknowledged that student enrollment has gone up. This fact supports next fiscal year's budget based on a projected three hundred fifty (350) student enrollment count. Further, Ms. Urbati stated that the new fiscal year's budget allowed for an appropriate cost of living increase. Ms. Urbati also stated that rising insurance costs, including employee health and dental insurance, were considered as part of the new budget. Ms. Urbati also stated that investment strategies were discussed. Lastly, Ms. Urbati stated that she believes that NDCS has a solid budget in place.

#### **b. Resolution: Salary Increases**

Mr. Ramkissoon informed the board that current market rates indicate that salary increases range from 3.5% to 4.6%. Further the salary for federal employees will increase between 4.5% to 4.7%. These predictions, along with employee performance, were used for the proposed salary increases.

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the salary increases for the upcoming fiscal year.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the salary increases for the upcoming fiscal year.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve salary increases for the upcoming fiscal year.

### **Resolution: Monthly Financials**

Mr. Ramkissoon reported to the board that the Brooklyn school's net income is now at a positive \$700K. There are two (2) more months remaining in the fiscal year and Mr. Ramkissoon stated that he foresees no surprises. He also reported that the Brooklyn school has 231 FTE students.

For the Queens school, Mr. Ramkissoon reported that the school has a net income of \$1.1M and 258 FTE students. Mr. Ramkissoon further stated that the Queens school is also financially on track. The consolidated net income for both schools is now approximately \$1.2M.

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the monthly financials.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the monthly financials.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the monthly financials.

### **c. Resolution: 2023-2024 Budget**

Mr. Ramkissoon informed the board, as he had previously mentioned, that COLA increases were calculated based on current market rates and quoted the sources that he used to make his calculations. Mr. Ramkissoon also informed the board of NDCHS's employee turnover rates. There was approximately a 60% turnover rate for those employee positions funded by grants. NDCHS II had a 45.2% turnover rate and NDCHS a 39.4% employee turnover rate. The average turnover rate considering these three employee categories averaged approximately 32%, which is equivalent to last year's employee turnover rate. Both schools are actively seeking teachers. Mr. Ramkissoon informed the board that a 3.5% salary increase based on employee performance is projected in the budget. He also spoke about the rising costs of insurance and that he is still waiting for a quote from Austin Insurance company. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that, nevertheless, he expects no significant changes in the proposed budget.

Mr. Tabano then asked the board members if there was a motion to approve and accept the 2023-2024 budget.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the 2023-2024 budget.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the 2023-2024 budget.

**d. Resolution: Tax Returns**

Dr. Asmussen stated that the board previously discussed tax returns in a phone conference. Mr. Tabano subsequently stated that the board needed to vote on accepting and approving last year's tax returns.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve last year's tax returns.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve last year's tax returns.

**V. Resolution/Bids**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that there is a renewal cost for Chalk which is the platform for the school's curriculum package. The cost of the renewal is \$8,900. For a two-year renewal.

Mr. Tabano asked if there was a motion to accept and approve the renewal of the Chalk contract as described by Dr. Asmussen.

**a. Chalk Curriculum Renewal**

**Motion:** Ms. Jane Sun motioned to accept and approve the renewal of the Chalk contract

**Motion Seconded:** Mr. Brian Baer Sun seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the renewal of the Chalk contract.

**VI. Hiring, Recruitment, and School Updates  
Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity**

**a. Dashboard—Dr. Sara Asmussen**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that the outreach effort is doing very well. At the Queens school, there were twenty- one (21) students recruited in the month of February, twenty-eight (28) in the month of March, and fourteen (14) in the month of April. Simultaneously, in the Brooklyn school there were twelve students (12) recruited in the month of February, ten (10) in March, and sixteen (16) in April. Dr. Asmussen also pointed out that the ELL student population has dropped in both schools. However,

she pointed out that this was primarily because other students that do not fall into this category are being recruited.

**b. Staff Hiring—Steve Ramkissoon**

Mr. Ramkissoon informed the board that he posted ten (10) positions on Indeed. Some of the postings are for actual vacancies and other postings are for backup hires in case a staff member decides to leave at the last minute. He also mentioned that there were interviews conducted for the principal position in Queens, for a PE teacher in Brooklyn and for SPED teachers which is a priority. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that he plans to have another job Fair before the summer to get more candidates to fill vacant positions in both schools. Mr. Ramkissoon also mentioned that there were two (2) contract offerings made to individuals funded through grant monies. These individuals were offered contracts to function as interns in the counseling department.

**c. Student Recruitment—Dr. Lisa DiGaudio**

Dr. DiGaudio reported to the board that both schools continue to receive applications for enrollment. Dr. DiGaudio further stated that this week there are eight enrollment (8) appointments scheduled and five (5) at the Queens school. Dr. DiGaudio also stated that open houses are still being scheduled for potential new recruits, zoom meetings are being conducted, and the distribution of enrollment packages is continuing. Dr. DiGaudio also mentioned that schools are attempting to discharge students who are LTA, but it must be approved by the NYC DOE.

Mr. Tabano stated that this was expected and that New Dawn should take advantage of the opportunity to recruit these students that other schools want to discharge. Mr. Tabano asked Ms. Lobato if only students scheduled to take the June 1, regents exam will be admitted into the school. Ms. Lobato confirmed that only students taking the U.S. history Regents on June 1 will be allowed into the school. Mr. Tabano informed the board that the June 1 regents exam was a “test regents” exam and this is the reason that it is not being administered with the other scheduled regents exam.

**d. School Updates—Donna Lobato/Jose Obregon**

Ms. Lobato stated that the ELA teacher resigned and took a position in the DOE. The school is seeking potential candidates to fill that position. Ms. Lobato also stated that students are preparing to take the regents exam. Additionally, Ms. Lobato reported that a new staff member accepted a contract as a counselor position at the school which is being funded by a grant.

Mr. Tabano remarked that it is good that interns are hired to fill those grant funded positions since it satisfies some of the grant requirements.

Mr. Obregon reported to the board that this week the NYESLAT exam is being administered and that students continue to prepare for the upcoming regents exam. Mr. Obregon also confirmed that the Queens school is receiving a significant number of

students who are transferring from other schools. He further stated that many of these students are ELLs. Additionally, Mr. Obregon reported that, today, the Queens school will be hosting Principal interviews.

**VII. Facilities—Jose Obregon**  
**Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance**

**a. Update on both buildings**

Regarding facilities, Mr. Obregon reported that there are no significant facility issues. Barone Management did address some minor plumbing issues at the Queens school and is scheduled to send an electrician to extend power for the leased water fountains that are being used in the building. Mr. Obregon also informed the board that Mr. Brian Baer was able to secure another TCO that will be good until the end of July for the Brooklyn school. Mr. Brian Baer confirmed that he is working with GKV to obtain the as-built drawings that are necessary for the final inspection.

Mr. Tabano asked Mr. Baer if the money that CFS claimed was due to them ever resolved. Mr. Baer confirmed that CFS and GKV worked that issue out. Mr. Tabano also asked if the construction projects that Barone is supposed to complete have started. Mr. Obregon replied that Barone visited the school to conduct a construction survey. However, no other action has been taken by Barone.

**VIII. Grants & Reports—Sara Asmussen** **10 minutes**  
**Benchmark 1: Student Performance**  
**Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student & Family Engagement**  
**Benchmark 8: Mission & Key Design Elements**

**a. Discussion on Re-Opening Plan**

Dr. Asmussen reported that regarding ESSER grants, both applications were rejected mostly for financial reasons. One of the things the school was supposed to do was to discuss the reopening plan every six (6) months. Dr. Asmussen stated that there were no changes from the original plan.. As everyone knows, all students are back in class, and there is no remote instruction. Dr. Asmussen asked if anybody had any questions regarding the reopening that happened two years ago. There were no questions.

**IX. Public Comment**

No public comment was made.

**X. New Business**

Dr. Asmussen informed the board that the U.S. History Regents scoring packet may be delayed until June 23, 2023, which is after graduation. Therefore, we will not have an actual count of graduates until after this.

Dr. Asmussen also informed the board that there are six (6) people coming in to interview for the principal position over the next two (2) weeks. Dr. Asmussen then asked Mr. Steve Ramkissoon to talk about the school's investment plan which was shared with the board members.

Mr. Ramkissoon stated that in his plan, he detailed how much money is in interest earning accounts. He also identified escrows accounts and what accounts are not earning interest. He reminded the board members that two board meetings ago, the board had approved Merrill Lynch as an investment manager. However, after the completion of all the paperwork, Merrill Lynch remembered that they do not work with charter schools. The board then agreed to keep monies in Bank of America and later move the monies to IDB. The school also has two (2) interest accounts with Vanguard and IDB. The bond money is still with Mellon bank and cannot be touched. That money is earning interest at Mellon Bank. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that the biggest concern is for Queens school. The Queens school has a high cash balance. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that he has communicated with Chase Bank where the Queens School funds are kept. He discussed the rates that are being offered by Chase Bank for CD accounts and treasury notes which are more secure. Mr. Ramkissoon recommended that, for the Queens school, the monies are placed in CDs or U.S. Treasury notes.

Mr. Tabano asked Mr. Ramkissoon what the interest rate is with IDB. Mr. Ramkissoon replied that he must recheck but he believes it to be 3.5%. Mr. Tabano further stated that the school needs to understand how much liquidity will be needed and then figure out if the remaining monies should be invested in CDs or Treasury notes. Mr. Tabano also stated that interest rates will probably go down and, therefore, the school needs to decide quickly which investment strategy it will use. Mr. Tabano asked Mr. Ramkissoon to come back to the board with a further analysis and Mr. Ramkissoon's recommendation on the best investment strategy. Mr. Ramkissoon agreed to do so and would submit his recommendations to the board within the next week.

Ms. Urbati added that it seems like interest rates are hovering at or right below 5%. Therefore, there is not much of a difference. However, Ms. Urbati stated that the school should proceed with whatever it is most comfortable with if it is staggered so that it has access to liquid funds as it rolls over.

Dr. Asmussen reminded the board members that the school calendar must be approved, but she is waiting for the DOE to publish NDCHS's final calendar. Dr. Asmussen will have the final Calendar before the end of June. The board agreed to have the next board meeting on Tuesday, June 20, 2023, at 1:00 P.M.

Mr. Tabano also stated that after the meeting, the board members will look at board evaluations.

## **XI. Adjournment**

The board meeting was adjourned at 1154 A.M.

