

**New Dawn Charter Schools Board of Trustees**

**October 30, 2023, Board Minutes**

**11:00 a.m.: Finance Committee Meeting**  
**11:30 a.m.: Full Board of Trustees 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**  
**547-505-9101**

**Board Members present:** Mr. Ronald Tabano, Chairperson, Ms. Katharine Urbati, Treasurer, Mr. Brian Baer, Secretary, Mr. Daniel Lewis, board member.

**Board Members Absent:** Ms. Jane Sun, Vice Chairperson

**Staff Members/ Visitors Present:**

NDCH: Dr. Sara Asmussen, Executive Director; Mr. Steve Ramkissoon, Director of Finance & HR, Mr. Jose Obregon Director of Operations, Dr. Lisa DiGaudio, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Ms. Emily Predmore, Data Specialist, Mr. Ashish Abraham, Recruitment & Marketing Specialist.

NDCHS II: Mr. Muhammad Bilal, Principal.

NDCHS I: Ms. Donna Lobato, Principal

**I. Finance Committee Meeting**

**II. Resolution: October Agenda— Mr. Ronald Tabano**

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

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the October 2023 Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

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

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

**III. Resolution: September Minutes – Mr. Ronald Tabano**

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

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

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

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

**IV. Update on Queens Renewal— Dr. Sara Asmussen**

**Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance**

**Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

**a. Update on Renewal**

Dr. Asmussen briefed the board members that Mr. Bilal and Dr. DiGaudio are continuing to work with the Queens staff to prepare them for the State renewal visit. Dr. Asmussen also informed the board members that November 14, 2023, will be the day that the State Charter renewal team will meet with the board via zoom. Mr. Tabano asked Dr. Asmussen what time the zoom meeting would take place. Dr. Asmussen replied that she believed that it would take place sometime in the morning and that she will let the board members know as soon as she knows. Mr. Tabano also asked Dr. Asmussen to provide him and the board members with any questions or topics that the State renewal team may want to discuss. Dr. Asmussen stated that she would do so as well.

**b. No grants this month**

Dr. Asmussen informed the board that she has not applied for any grants this month and that she is still waiting for a response from the Stronger Connections grant.

**V. Financials— Mr. Steve Ramkissoon**

**Benchmark 4: Financial Condition**

**Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

**a. Report of the Finance Committee**

Ms. Katharine Urbati reported to the board that the Audit Committee spoke with the school's accounting firm and discussed the results of last fiscal year's audit. Ms. Urbati also reported that the audit was a clean audit. She thanked Dr. Asmussen, Mr. Ramkissoon, and the whole team. Ms. Urbati further stated that there were no significant findings and that the audit revealed a great program ratio. The school is currently at 88% being spent on programs and has a year's worth of cash reserves. Ms. Urbati also informed the board that two (2) items that were recommended by the auditors as potential changes were (1) a recommendation to formalize a policy regarding the school's bond and (2) focusing more on countering potential cyber threats. Aside from these two recommendations, Ms. Urbati stated that overall, the school received another great audit report. Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there were any questions regarding the annual audit. There were no questions.

**b. Resolution: Audited Financials**

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept the annual audited financials.

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

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

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

Mr. Ramkissoon informed the board members that he uploaded to the school portal the updated financial policies and procedure manual. He stated that the manual is very similar to what the school had in the past. One of the changes made was that the school was now utilizing check signing on bill.com. This new procedure prompted an update to the manual. The manual also describes day-to-day operations of the school procurement procedures. The manual describes anything that is related to finance and several charts are used to depict routine procedures. These added charts to the manual depict cash flow and check issuing procedures as well. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that aside from these small changes, the policies and procedures are basically the same. He asked the board to approve the financial policies and procedure manual if there were no objections.

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there were any questions or concerns regarding the school's financial policies and procedure manual. There were no questions or concerns. Mr. Tabano then asked if there was a motion to accept and approve the new financial policies and procedure manual.

#### **c. Resolution: Fiscal Policies and Procedures**

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the new financial policies and procedure manual.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve financial policies and procedure manual.

#### **d. Resolution: September 2023 Financials**

Mr. Ramkissoon reported to the board members that he is using the new reporting format as Ms. Katharine Urbati recommended, which utilizes more notes to clarify certain areas of the monthly financial report. Ms. Urbati stated that she can now interpret certain items more clearly because of the new format and has no questions regarding the monthly financial report. Mr. Ramkissoon proceeded to report that both schools continue to have a positive cash flow despite being below the targeted enrollment numbers. He further stated that both schools are doing well to begin the first quarter of the new fiscal year.

Mr. Tabano asked if the board members had any questions or concerns regarding the September 2023 financials. There were no questions or concerns. Mr. Tabano then asked if there was a resolution to accept and approve the September 2023 financials.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the September 2023 financials.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve September 2023 financials.

**VI. Contracts—Dr. Sara Asmussen**

**Benchmark 1: Student Performance**

**Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning**

**Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

**Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance**

**a. Resolution: NTN Math PD**

Dr. DiGaudio explained to the board members that NTN Math is used as a consulting firm for math at both schools. Dr. DiGaudio explained that the consultant comes to each school and works directly with each math department and coordinates with Ms. Lobato and Mr. Bilal. Dr. DiGaudio also said that she believes that this service is essential. Dr. DiGaudio also stated that she is seeking board approval to renew the existing contract for both schools. The cost of the renewal is approximately \$8K per school. Mr. Tabano asked the board if there was a motion to accept and approve the renewal of the NTN Math PD contract.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the renewal of the NTN Math PD contract.

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

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

**b. Resolution: Chromebooks and Cart—Mr. Jose Obregon**

Mr. Obregon informed the board that the Queens school is running low on Chromebooks due to an increase in student enrollment and that the Brooklyn school has a need for teacher laptops. Mr. Obregon also stated that he received quotes from Dell Inc. Staples, and CDW-G. After reviewing the three quotes. Mr. Obregon informed the board that Dell, Inc. offers the most cost-effective option and that their Google Educational licenses are far less expensive than the other two bids. Mr. Obregon informed the board that the approximate cost for thirty (30) new chrome books with educational licenses and fifteen (15) teacher laptops is approximately 16K. Mr. Tabano then asked the board if there was a resolution to accept and approve the purchase of Chromebooks and Laptops from Dell, Inc.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the purchase of Chromebooks and Laptops from Dell, Inc.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the purchase of Chromebooks and Laptops from Dell, Inc.

**VII. Staff Recruitment— Mr. Ashish Abraham**  
**Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning**

**a. Status of Current Hiring**

Mr. Abraham informed the board that NDCS hired a new science teacher at Queens. Mr. Abraham also informed the board that the positions of SPED teacher, aspiring teacher, global studies teacher and Phys. Ed teacher in Queens, and literacy specialist in Brooklyn were posted. Mr. Abraham also stated that NDCS entered into a contract with Kokua for short-term replacements or short-term fills. The Kokua company is an addition to the current company that the school is using to provide substitute teachers.

**VIII. Student Recruitment— Mr. Ashish Abraham**  
**Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance**  
**Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity**

**a. Status of Current Recruitment**

Mr. Abraham reported to the board that in September 2023, the Queens school had 61 new enrollments and the Brooklyn location had 39 new enrollments. Mr. Abraham further informed the board that he has finalized the schedule for Open House enrollment events that are scheduled every other Thursday. Mr. Abraham explained that this week, on Thursday, the open house will be in Brooklyn. Additionally, neighborhood schools were notified of the open house enrollment event. Mr. Abraham also informed the board that next week the Open House enrollment event will be at the Queens school. In addition to the open house enrollment events, Mr. Abraham stated that he reaches out to the guidance counselors at different schools and invites them to NDCS. He is also visiting individual schools and making presentations to their entire guidance team. Mr. Abraham stated that he reviews and explains NDCS's enrollment application process, the turnaround time for a student that has an IEP or does not have an IEP and what they can look forward to as well as the programs that NDCHS offers.

Mr. Tabano thanked Mr. Abraham for the information.

**VI. School Updates**

**a. Brooklyn— Ms. Donna Lobato**

Ms. Lobato informed the board members that the end of the first marking period is almost ending and that students are being given the opportunity to make up any work to improve their grades. Additionally, Ms. Lobato informed the board that Regents examination preparation is under way for the upcoming January Regents. Ms. Lobato informed the board members that PD is now taking place so that teachers can utilize the equipment that was given to the school through the Borough president's grant. This training will allow teachers to be prepared for robotics classes that will be made possible with the equipment that the school received. Ms. Lobato informed the board that student clubs are being implemented, which seem to be assisting in increasing student attendance.

Mr. Tabano thanked Ms. Lobato for the update.

**b. Queens— Mr. Muhammad Bilal**

Based on the current enrollment, Mr. Bilal stated that his goal is to increase the numbers of students who have schedules and who are coming to school up to the 350-student enrollment goal. Notwithstanding current enrollment, Mr. Bilal stated that enrollment is still going well. He further stated that he is observing that at least four (4) to five (5) students are coming in for enrollment every day. Mr. Bilal thanked Ms. Lobato for the upcoming SPED teacher interviews. Mr. Bilal stated that he is also interviewing a global history teacher this week. Mr. Bilal informed the board that there is an interview scheduled with two (2) aspiring teachers coming up shortly thanks to Mr. Abraham's recruiting efforts. Mr. Bilal reported to the board members that the new living environment teacher started today; this new hire is critical since the regents exam is only a few weeks away. He is also continuing his walkthroughs and will continue visiting classrooms in preparation for the charter renewal site visit on November 13 and 14. He also informed the board that Dr. DiGaudio and he will be doing a PD on Thursday which will focus on rigor and on accountable talk. Finally, Mr. Bilal informed the board that he is getting ready to do the practice site visit to prepare teachers for the actual site visit on November 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

**c. Curriculum & Instruction: Dr. Lisa DiGaudio**

Dr. DiGaudio informed the board that the emphasis now is on the upcoming Regents exams. There are only eight weeks left before they begin. Dr. DiGaudio stated that teachers are dealing with a lot of skill gaps, especially in math. Dr. DiGaudio also stated that there will be some time spent reviewing SLOs. Analysis of trends regarding student work and subsequently adjusting preparations for January exams are critical. Making any course corrections in curriculum or practices in whatever is needed will be important in the next coming days. Dr. DiGaudio also informed the board that she is looking at a program called Lexia since both schools are getting many students that have low English language proficiency. Dr. DiGaudio will determine if this program will help students with their English proficiency. This program was highly recommended from the migrant education program at the NYSED. Mr. Tabano asked if there was a large influx of migrant students. Dr. DiGaudio confirmed that there is and especially at the Queens school.

**VII. Facilities—Mr. Jose Obregon**

Mr. Obregon reiterated what Mr. Brian Baer stated previously regarding his conversation with Metropolis. Kayla emailed a listing of the items that still need to be signed off to obtain a final COO for the Brooklyn school. Mr. Baer and Obregon listed outstanding items. Even with these items outstanding, we still have our temporary COO in place at this time. Mr. Obregon stated that he will continue working with Mr. Baer to get a final resolution.

For the Queens school, Mr. Obregon informed the board that the heating units in the building are still not completely functional and that Barone Management has been notified on various occasions. Mr. Obregon also informed the board that one of the units was reported smoking. The FDNY will do a fire inspection.

Mr. Obregon also informed the board that construction continues on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor at the Queens school by Barone Management. That construction is scheduled to go on at least into December 2023 and most likely into 2024.

Mr. Tabano thanked Mr. Obregon for the update.

#### **V. New Business**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that while it is not new business, she wanted to inform the board that the demographic at both schools is changing. For example, in Brooklyn, SPED students have dropped to 38%. However, the free and reduced lunch percentage has gone up to 95%. Historically, the Brooklyn school has never been over 75-76% in free or reduced lunch percentages. At the Queens school, the SPED percentage has dropped to 26%. The free and reduced lunch percentage has dropped to 79%. Dr. Asmussen stated that this is a big change for that school as well. Dr. Asmussen stated that she is not sure what these changes signify but she will be looking into it.

#### **VI. Public Comment**

No public comment was made.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

The board members agreed to hold the next Board of Trustees meeting on November 21, 2013. The meeting adjourned at 11:36 A.M.