

New Dawn Charter Schools Board of Trustees

September 26, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes

**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 Chairperson, Ms. Katharine Urbati, Treasurer, Mr. Brian Baer, Secretary, Mr. Daniel Lewis, board member.

Board Members Absent: None

Staff Members/ Visitors Present: NDCS: Dr. Sara Asmussen, Executive Director; Mr. Steve Ramkissoon, Director of Finance & HR; Mr. Jose Obregon Director of Operations; Dr. Lisa DiGaudio, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Ms. Emily Predmore, Data Specialist; Mr. Ashish Abraham, Recruitment & Marketing Specialist. NDCHS II: Mr. Muhammad Bilal, Principal; NDCHS: Donna Lobato, Principal.

I. Executive Meeting

Update on facilities and legal issues.

**II. Introduction of Official Board Member Daniel Lewis
Introduction of NDCS Recruitment & Marketing Specialist**

Dr. Asmussen introduced Mr. Ashish Abraham as NDCS's innovative marketing specialist. Dr. Asmussen also stated that Mr. Ashish Abraham began with New Dawn as a Science teacher, then he moved to the Internship Program, and now he is doing recruitment and marketing for New Dawn Charter Schools. Mr. Ashish Abraham then greeted the board.

Mr. Tabano officially welcomed Mr. Daniel Lewis, the newest board member. Mr. Tabano asked Mr. Lewis to tell the audience about himself. Mr. Lewis informed the audience that he is originally from the Outer Banks but grew up in Hudson Valley, New York. He also went to the Culinary Institute of America and is well acquainted with the school's culinary instructor Mr. Todd Bryant who asked him to get involved. Mr. Lewis stated that he is looking forward to applying his area of expertise. Mr. Lewis also stated that he has forty (40) years of experience in the culinary field. He also had his own businesses for twenty (20) years down in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Since then, Mr. Lewis has had three restaurants and is continually active in terms of trying to promote culinary education. He is a SERV Safe instructor and proctor as well.

Mr. Tabano welcomed Mr. Lewis again and for helping with NDCS culinary program.

III. Resolution: September Agenda—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 agenda.

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

Motion Seconded: Ms. Jane Sun seconded the motion.

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

IV. Resolution: August Minutes—Mr. Ronald Tabano

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

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

Motion Seconded: Mr. Brian Baer seconded the motion.

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

IV. Update on Renewal & SCG Grants—Dr. Sara Asmussen
Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance
Benchmark 5: Financial Management

a. Discussion of Renewal

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that she and Mr. Bilal met with the State and there is no date yet for the renewal visit. Dr. Asmussen stated that she is working on the data for Benchmark 1 which is due to the NYSED on October 3, 2023. The State has accepted all changes submitted, including the CTE program.

b. Discussion of Stronger Connections Grant

Dr. Asmussen informed the board that she applied for the Stronger Connections grant for both schools. This program will take every single initiative the schools have including PBIS, restorative justice, progressive discipline policy, and all other similar initiatives and place it under one umbrella. Dr. Asmussen stated that the program is outrageously expensive, but the Stronger Connections Grant, if awarded, would pay 100% of the program. Dr. Asmussen further stated that by connecting all the existing programs such as restorative justice attendance, PBIS, and school engagement the overall goal and connections between these programs will be much clearer to all those that participate in these programs. This new program will be a model and it will be in writing. Dr. Asmussen stated that it will help the school organize. Dr. Asmussen also stated that she also asked for an individual to oversee PBIS since PBIS can be easily overlooked

when the school year becomes busy. Dr. Asmussen stated that the school needs to manage PBIS more efficiently. Dr. Asmussen further stated that the Stronger Connections Grant will fund these initiatives and the installation of a new entrance at the Queens school which is CPTED compliant. Dr. Asmussen also informed the board that a safety specialist that the insurance company sent to the school to evaluate systems in place indicated that while the school itself was safe and that he was particularly impressed with security. However, he also said that the main entrance at Queens was the second most dangerous entryway he had ever seen. Dr. Asmussen stated that she wants the Queens school main entrance to resemble the Brooklyn school main entrance. This will mean replacing the heavy wooden doors with glass so that the security can see who is buzzing and trying to get into the building. Finally, Dr. Asmussen stated that she should be hearing back from the grant in the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Tabano asked Dr. Asmussen if had already applied for the grant and Dr. Asmussen confirmed that she did. Mr. Tabano asked how much the grant would provide the schools with. Dr. Asmussen replied that it would total 1.1M for the Queens school and 1.3M for the Brooklyn school over the duration of the grant until 2026. Dr. Asmussen also explained to the board members the qualifications needed to receive the grant.

V. Financials—Mr. Steve Ramkissoon
Benchmark 4: Financial Condition
Benchmark 5: Financial Management

Mr. Ramkissoon reported to the board that he changed the financial report format to include Ms. Katharine Urbati's request to depict budget utilization more precisely. He then asked the board members if the new format was acceptable. Ms. Urbati stated that she believes that it works. Ms. Urbati also stated that she believes that it is easier to see things "jump out" in the new format. It also addresses some of the questions that Ms. Urbati presented today, including why the school spent so much on office supplies. Ms. Urbati stated that this could very well be because it is the beginning of the year and that is when these items are purchased. Ms. Urbati stated that the goal was to be able to check those types of expenditures.

Mr. Ramkissoon expressed his apologies to Ms. Urbati and stated that he will resend a new financial report for the Brooklyn school since the one he previously sent was inaccurate. Mr. Ramkissoon also elaborated on how he uses depreciation costs in his financial reporting and how it affects the bottom line. Ms. Urbati recommended that next year we program depreciation costs to make the budget more transparent and easier to understand. Ms. Urbati also said the schools remain in a positive financial position, which is most important. Mr. Ramkissoon then further elaborated on office supply expenditures at the Brooklyn school. There were no questions or objections regarding those expenditures.

Mr. Daniel Lewis suggested to Mr. Ramkissoon to add notes to the financial report to clarify any questionable expenditures. Ms. Urbati agreed to utilizing notes on the financial report going forward.

Mr. Ramkissoon continued to report that the Queens school is on track to meet its financial goals. He also addressed the negative 19K for repairs that is depicted in the monthly report and

that Ms. Urbati inquired about. He stated that he normally does not forecast expenditures for repairs at the Queens school since the landlord normally takes care of repairs. However, Mr. Ramkissoon also stated that he would get back to the board and provide details for those expenditures. Ms. Urbati recommended that those expenditures should be netted out against the actuals for rent and lease. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that he would get back to Ms. Urbati regarding this recommendation.

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the August 2023 monthly financials for both schools.

a. Resolution: Monthly Financials

Motion: Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the August 2023 monthly financials for both schools pending the corrections that need to be made as discussed.

Motion Seconded: Mr. Brian Baer seconded the motion.

Vote: The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the August 2023 monthly financials for both schools pending the corrections that need to be made as discussed.

b. Resolution: Fiscal Policies and Procedures

c. Update on Audit

Mr. Ramkissoon reported to the board that the audit is on track and that it is going well. The auditors were on site visit last week. All the HR and student files were presented to the auditors as requested. Mr. Ramkissoon also stated that, overall, everything went well. There were no significant questions from the auditors. The auditors did review the financials, all the supporting documents, contracts, etc. There was also an IT questionnaire that Mr. Ramkissoon completed and submitted to the auditors. The intent of the questionnaire was to determine if the school was responding appropriately to prevent data breaches. Ms. Urbati asked Mr. Ramkissoon if it was the same audit team that was present last year, and Mr. Ramkissoon confirmed that it was and hence the audit team was familiar with the school.

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: Kitchen Plan Queens (Mr. Baer recuses)

Dr. Asmussen stated that the board did vote on the kitchen plan for the Queens school during the last board meeting but Ms. Jane Sun was not present. The board decided to wait until Ms. Sun returned. When Ms. Jane Sun returned, she approved of the plan. Dr. Asmussen stated that notwithstanding Ms. Sun's approval of the plan, she recommends that the board have a formal

vote and a resolution. Mr. Tabano and the board members agreed with Dr. Asmussen's recommendation. Mr. Tabano asked if there was a motion to accept the kitchen plan for the Queens school with Mr. Braian Baer recusing himself from the vote.

Motion: Ms. Jane Sun motioned to accept and approve the kitchen plans for the Queens school.

Motion Seconded: Ms. Katharine Urbati seconded the motion.

Vote: The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the kitchen plans for the Queens school. (Mr. Baer recused)

Mr. Tabano asked if there was a motion to accept the kitchen plan for roof plans for the Brooklyn school with Mr. Brain Baer recusing himself from the vote.

b. Resolution: Roof Plan Brooklyn (Mr. Baer recuses)

Motion: Ms. Jane Sun motioned to accept and approve the roof plans for the Brooklyn school.

Motion Seconded: Ms. Katharine Urbati seconded the motion.

Vote: The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the roof plans for the Brooklyn school.

c. Resolution: Accounting Solutions Inc.

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if they received and reviewed the Accounting Solutions Inc. contract. All board members responded that they did receive a copy of the contract and that they did review the contract. Mr. Tabano then asked if there was a motion to accept and approve the Accounting Solutions Inc. contract.

Motion: Mr. Brain Baer motioned to accept and approve the Accounting Solutions Inc. contract.

Motion Seconded: Ms. Jane Sun seconded the motion.

Vote: The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the Accounting Solutions Inc. contract.

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

a. Status of Current Hiring

Mr. Ashish reported to the board that there was a folder assistant created. This folder was shared with the principals and the rest of the admin team. The folder was broken down by location and categories. In that folder, there were approximately seventy (70) resumes that were downloaded

and placed into those folders. The folders were then made available for those staff members that were responsible for conducting interviews and the formal hiring.

Dr. Asmussen also informed the board that the schools have begun to hire part-time SPED teachers. Mr. Tabano asked if this part-time hiring was being conducted through an agency. Dr. Asmussen replied that it was not. Dr. Asmussen also informed the board that the part-time SPED teachers are being used strategically so they can be present when there are the most students in school. Mr. Tabano asked if the school reached out to the new hires or did the new hires apply as full-time SPED teachers. Dr. Asmussen replied that the positions were originally advertised as part-time positions.

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

a. Status of Current Recruitment

Mr. Ashish reported to the board that he started to collect data that will allow NDCS to track how many students have walked in unsolicited since the beginning of the semester. However, since September, Brooklyn has approximately thirty-six (36—9 enrolled in the summer) new student enrollments and the Queens school has forty (40—7 enrolled in the summer) students enrolled not including those students that were scheduled for today. Mr. Ashish stated that the data that he is collecting is broken down by the walk-in students and students that were scheduled. Mr. Ashish further stated that it is helpful that guidance counselors are assisting parents to fill out the pre-enrollment form at the Queens school. Mr. Ashish further stated that the Whole Power apps from Microsoft enable the automation process to make tracking data simple. Mr. Ashish informed the board that he would like to use this process and build an entire system where emails and reminders could be sent to potential recruits, tracking the process from beginning to end. Mr. Ashish also informed the board that there are quite a few students enrolled who have IEPs as well. Mr. Ashish also stated that as of last Friday, there were 166 students in Queens and 117 in the Brooklyn school. He also stated that tomorrow is student open enrollment day. Mr. Ashish stated that he is expecting quite a few students to come. Mr. Ashish emphasized that a coordinated effort with the guidance counselors from other schools to help process new recruits makes a difference.

V. School Updates

a. Brooklyn—Ms. Donna Lobato

Ms. Lobato reported to the board that she is focusing on students coming back to school and getting back into routines. The students are adjusting slowly but surely. Ms. Lobato stated that she believes that mentoring continues to be important to help the students re-integrate themselves in the school environment. She also stated that PLC groups are meeting and focusing on getting students back into those routines. Ms. Lobato also reported that CSE is moving forward in both schools. Ms. Lobato stated that she believes that the Queen CSE is in much better shape this

year. Ms. Lobato also stated that she is assisting with the recruiting process and focusing on getting part-time SPED teachers on board.

b. Queens—Mr. Muhammad Bilal

Mr. Bilal reported to the board that the Queens school has two (2) new SPED teachers who will help the students who have IEP's get the support they need in the classroom, especially since the school is coming up for renewal. Mr. Bilal further reported that he is working with Dr. Lisa DiGaudio on instructional classroom expectations; he stated that he is visiting classrooms all week and making sure the teachers are implementing the workshop model. Mr. Bilal stated that he wants to ensure that teachers are following the norms that they need to have in preparation for that site visit. Mr. Bilal also stated that he is working with Mr. Ashish to improve enrollment and to make sure that student enrollment numbers increase. Since Mr. Bilal's tenure as Principal, there are forty (40) new enrollments. Mr. Bilal stated that his goal is to recruit forty (40) new students per month or ten (10) per week. Mr. Bilal also stated that he wants to roll out the counselor referrals that have just been finalized so students can get the support they need. Mr. Bilal further stated that instead of just doing discipline, he wants to make sure students are getting the support they need. Finally, Mr. Bilal reported that he is working with Mr. Ashish to recruit more staff and particularly a Global Studies teacher, a science teacher, and an ELL teacher positions which are currently vacant. Mr. Tabano thanked Mr. Bilal

c. Curriculum & Instruction: Dr. Lisa DiGaudio

Dr. DiGaudio reported that, not surprisingly, students are significantly behind in math according to the data coming in from Math 180 and from the IXL results of the placement exam that incoming students take. Dr. DiGaudio stated that she will have complete testing results at the end of the month. Additionally, Dr. DiGaudio informed the board that most students that are being evaluated are significantly behind two (2) to three (3) grade levels. Therefore, the emphasis will be to continue to work on building foundational skills. The substantial changes in the math curriculum right now are that there are sixth, seventh and eighth grade standards linked for foundational practice so that students can try to close the gaps. Simultaneously, teachers are teaching the regents material. Dr. DiGaudio also reported that she helped implement a curriculum design process protocol from West Ed. Dr. DiGaudio also stated that she is in the process of compiling that report. Notwithstanding all the challenges, Dr. DiGaudio stated that she feels that both schools are set to do well this academic year.

Mr. Tabano asked Dr. DiGaudio to talk about the new Math Regents that the State will be rolling out soon. Dr. DiGaudio informed the board that the state has shifted back to the next generation learning standards from Common Core. Dr. DiGaudio further stated that the new trend in the June and August Regents is a tremendous amount of reading and writing. This is significantly more than was seen in the past. This holds true even with the living environment regents. Dr. DiGaudio stated that the emphasis should then be to work on building vocabulary and content level vocabulary for students across the board in all subjects and getting students used to the problem-solving piece. Subsequently, the new regents exam requires significant multi-step solutions that students must be able to perform when they are taking the regents exam. Dr.

DiGaudio stated that to address this change in the regents exam, this new requirement is now embedded in all of the instruction.

VII. Facilities—Mr. Jose Obregon

a. Update on Roof work in Queens

Mr. Obregon reported to the board members that the roof in Queens is almost completed except for two (2) gates that Barone Management must install. Mr. Obregon also stated that the construction on the fourth floor is continuing. That construction on the fourth floor involves placing reinforcing beams in the fourth-floor classrooms. Mr. Obregon also informed the board that Mr. Brian Baer communicated with Barone Management and asked them to speed up the process. However, Barone Management is estimating that it will take until December 2023 to complete the work. Currently, construction work is limited to the weekends. Mr. Brian Baer asked Barone to come in at night after the school day to expedite the process.

b. TCO versus COO

Mr. Obregon reported to the board that Mr. Brian Baer and he had a meeting with Metropolis. Mr. Baer and Mr. Obregon spoke with Ms. Kayla Liebman, the project manager, who is heading the expediting process pertaining to the items that the school needs to fix to obtain a permanent COO. Ms. Liebman did provide a list of tasks that need to be completed to obtain a permanent COO. Additionally, Mr. Obregon stated that Ms. Kayla Liebman called him today and told Mr. Obregon that she would send him a list of the contacts who can fix the open items. For example, Ms. Kayla Liebman stated that there are two (2) plumbing issues that need to get resolved. There is also an electrical plan that needs to be signed off by the electrician that did the electrical work at the Brooklyn school. Lastly, Mr. Obregon reiterated that Ms. Kayla Liebman informed him that she would get back to him soon regarding who the school should contact to remedy the outstanding items.

VI. New Business

There was no new business discussed.

VII. Public Comment

Mr. MJ from AT&T joined the Board meeting and stated that he is the Outreach Manager for New Dawn Charter. He also stated that he wanted to take a second to introduce himself and let the board know that AT&T is committed to helping to provide students with a safe environment to learn and make access to technology easier and a little bit more affordable. AT&T has invested about 2 billion in this initiative, which includes helping to serve the unserved or underserved students in closing that digital divide, and to help with student and staff safety, which could be something as easy as a wearable panic button on a student or student or staff ID. Additionally Mr. MJ also stated that AT&T can also help connect with opportunities to more grant monies as well that can be used as the school sees fit. Finally, Mr. MJ stated that a different time, he would like to learn more about the New Dawn Charter and see if he could

discuss a partnership. MR. MJ stated that he would leave his contact information in the chat. Mr. Tabano thanked him for joining the meeting.

VII. Adjournment

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if October 24, 2023, at 11:00 was an acceptable date and time for the next board meeting. All the board members agreed on that date and time. The board meeting was adjourned at 11:55 A.M.