

**New Dawn Charter Schools Board of Trustees  
August 14, 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. Katharine Urbati, Treasurer, Mr. Brian Baer, Secretary, Mr. Daniel Lewis, Proposed Board Member.

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

**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, NDCHS II: Mr. Muhammad Bilal, Principal

**I. Introduction of new Board Member Daniel Lewis**

Dr. Asmussen welcomed and introduced the proposed new board member, Mr. Daniel Lewis. Dr. Asmussen stated that Mr. Lewis came to New Dawn Charter Schools through Mr. Todd Bryant, the culinary chef instructor at NDCHS Brooklyn. Further, Mr. Lewis will be helping NDCS with the CTE application process. Mr. Lewis introduced himself to the board members. He spoke about his many years in the field of culinary, how he met Mr. Bryant, and how he later went on to open his own business. He further stated that he is excited about coming on board and assisting in any way that he can to help young people who are interested in pursuing a career in culinary or as just a hobby.

**Introduction of new Queens Principal Muhammad Bilal**

Dr. Asmussen introduced Principal Bilal to the Board members. Mr. Bilal proceeded to tell the board members about himself and his experience in the field of education. Mr. Bilal informed the board that he is originally from Chicago, that he has held numerous positions in his career in education that include teacher, Dean of school, assistant Principal, and Principal at more than one school before coming to NDCHS II. Mr. Bilal also informed the board regarding his extensive experience working with at-risk students and that he is happy to be part of the NDCS team and hopes that he can contribute to the success of New Dawn students. Mr. Tabano then stated that given Mr. Bilal's experience, Mr. Bilal is going to be a good fit at NDCS. Mr. Tabano welcomed Mr. Bilal, thanked him for joining the New Dawn team, and wished him well.

**II. Resolution: August Agenda— 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 agenda.

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

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

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

### **III. Resolution: July Minutes— Mr. Ronald Tabano**

Mr. Tabano asked if there was a motion to accept and approve the July 2023 board minutes.

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

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

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

### **IV. Renewal, Grants, Annual & Consolidated Reports—Dr. Sara Asmussen**

#### **Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance**

#### **Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

##### **a. Discussion of Annual Reports/Renewal**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that the renewal package is complete and that she is merging the packet and it will be submitted one day earlier than the due date. Dr. Asmussen also stated that both annual reports were submitted. The school finance reports are due November 1, 2023.

##### **b. Discussion of Consolidated Application.**

Dr. Asmussen informed the board members that Mrs. Nazli Flores and Ms. Emily Predmore are working on the consolidated application. The application is due August 31, 2023, and it is almost ready for submission.

##### **c. Discussion of Two Trees/Walentas Foundation**

Dr. Asmussen further informed the board that NDCHS was awarded the Two-Tree grant this year. The Brooklyn school was awarded \$25K for the culinary program. The grant will be used to help the chefs meet the standards and work certification for the CTE program, for site visits, for students to go on field trips, and to fund culinary supplies.

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

#### **Benchmark 4: Financial Condition**

#### **Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

##### **a. Resolution: Monthly Financials (tabled)**

Mr. Ramkissoon informed the board that the monthly financials are ready for July 2023. It is the first month of the new fiscal year. Mr. Ramkissoon also stated that he did not see anything that is remarkable in the July 2023 monthly financial report and that the accounting team is in the process of paying off any remaining invoices to close out the last fiscal year. Mr. Ramkissoon also stated that the school has settled its financial obligations with Barone Management. The

school does not owe Barone any monies since the school has paid what it has agreed to in the lease agreement. The Queens school still does not have 315 students enrolled, therefore, the school has met its obligation according to the lease agreement. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that the school has invoiced Barone Management for security. The total reimbursement from Barone Management for security services is approximately \$40K or \$20-\$21 an hour.

Mr. Tabano asked if there were any questions from the board members for Mr. Ramkissoon. There were no questions.

**b. Resolution: Fiscal Policies and Procedures (tabled)**

**c. Update on Audit**

Mr. Ramkissoon informed the board that the financial audit is in progress. The auditor has requested the student and the employee files that they will review when they are on site. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that if this does not happen this week, before the summer break, it will take place once school is back in session in September 2023 this year.

**VI. Architecture Plans—Dr. Sara Asmussen**

**Benchmark 1: Student Performance**

**Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning**

**Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

**Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance**

Dr. Asmussen confirmed that she provided all board members with the resolution for the kitchen project in Queens and the roof project in Brooklyn. Dr. Asmussen further stated that it was Mr. Ilya Azaroff, a licensed architect, who worked with her so that she was able to submit the grant application. Dr. Asmussen further informed the board that when she contacted the State to inform the State that the school needed three (3) bids for these projects, the State informed Dr. Asmussen that they needed a name right away. Subsequently, Dr. Asmussen submitted Mr. Ilya Azaroff's name as the architect that would take on the two projects. Dr. Asmussen also recommended to the board that, considering Mr. Ilya Azaroff's helpfulness to the school, NDCS go with him as the architect for the two projects. Dr. Asmussen also reminded the board members that the money for these projects must be utilized by September 2024. Dr. Asmussen stated that the cost for the kitchen in Queens was going to exceed the grant monies. However, she will focus on raising money for the project over the course of the year. The kitchen project in Queens will require breaking down a wall and combining a big classroom with the kitchen. It will be a full teaching and working kitchen. This project will require approved architectural plans and a construction company to complete the work. Dr. Asmussen also stated that at the Brooklyn school, pavers will have to be installed on the roof and the finishing of a classroom on the roof. The classroom area will require DOB approval. Dr. Asmussen finally stated that she already has an attorney working on this pro bono. Since Mr. Brian Baer is involved in these two (2) projects, Dr. Asmussen and Mr. Tabano agreed that he would have to recuse himself from this vote. Mr. Tabano also stated that both he and Ms. Urbati could motion to proceed with these two projects with Mr. Ilya Azaroff as the architect and Ms. Jane Sun will subsequently cast her vote, later when she returns from vacation, to approve and pass the resolution.

**a. Resolution: Kitchen Plan Queens (Mr. Baer recuses)**

**Motion:** Mr. Ron Tabano motioned to accept and approve the culinary kitchen plan/project at the Queens school with Mr. Ilya Azaroff as the architect.

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

**Vote:** The board will vote to approve this motion when Ms. Jane Sun returns.

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

**Motion:** Mr. Ron Tabano motioned to accept and approve Brooklyn school roof plan/project with Mr. Ilya Azaroff as the architect.

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

**Vote:** The board will vote to approve this motion when Ms. Jane Sun returns.

**VII. Staff Recruitment—Mr. Steve Ramkissoon**

**Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning**

**a. Update on Recruitment/Marketing Position**

Mr. Ramkissoon stated that NDCS is now actively seeking to fill the position of student and staff recruitment, marketing, and grant writing specialist. He stated to the board that there is one individual that was interviewed and may be suitable for this position.

**b. Status of Current Hiring**

Mr. Ramkissoon informed the board that he is continuing to post vacancies on several employment sites. He also stated that he is working on recruiting a contracted substitute teacher in Queen as a fulltime permanent employee. This will require the school to pay an acquisition fee to School Professionals so they may release the teacher. Mr. Ramkissoon also informed the board that Brooklyn has hired a new ELA teacher and that individual has already reported to work. Brooklyn has also hired a new PE teacher. Both the new ELA and PE teachers will officially start work on September 5, 2023. Mr. Ramkissoon also stated that he has posted some positions as part-time positions to attract qualified individuals.

**c. Resolution: Staff Handbook**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that the Staff handbook is complete and updated. Mr. Tabano asked if there were any questions or concerns from the board members regarding the staff handbook. There were no questions or concerns. Mr. Tabano then asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the NDCS Staff handbook.

**Motion:** Mr. Brian Baer motioned to accept and approve the NDCS Staff handbook.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the NDCS Staff handbook.

**VIII. Student Recruitment--Dr. Lisa DiGaudio (tabled until September)**

**Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance**

**Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity**

No new students have been enrolled for the summer. A full enrollment report will be given at the September meeting.

**VI. School Updates**

**a. Brooklyn—Ms. Donna Lobato**

Ms. Lobato informed the board that the staff is preparing to administer the Regents exam on Wednesday and Thursday. Ms. Lobato projected that she will have six or seven students graduate in August 2023. Ms. Lobato also confirmed that the STEM equipment funded by the Borough president's grant was delivered to the school and it included technology like laptops and 3D printers. She also informed the board members that she has scheduled two (2) interview calls with potential part-time SPED teachers for the Queens school.

**b. Queens— Mr. Muhammad Bilal**

Mr. Bilal also informed the board that he is getting ready to administer the Regents exam at the Queens school. Mr. Bilal stated that he is focusing on making sure that all the proper procedures are followed for the administration of the exam. Additionally, one of his goals is to meet and to get to know his staff and his students so he can establish a rapport with them. Mr. Bilal also stated that he will work with the admin staff to fill those vacancies that need to be filled with qualified individuals.

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

Dr. DiGaudio informed the board that NDCS was adding a few new courses for the fall. These new courses include nutritional science, astronomy, and a Google course that was piloted over the summer. The school has now expanded to include the full Google Suite. Dr. DiGaudio also stated that the school has changed the approach to math. The curriculum will now focus more on some of those foundational skills. Dr. DiGaudio also stated that all the instructional maps were updated accordingly. Finally, Dr. DiGaudio stated to the board that she will have a more detailed report after she meets with the other content area instructors in September.

**VII. Facilities—Mr. Jose Obregon**

**a. Update on Roof work in Queens**

Mr. Obregon briefed the board members that has confirmed with Barone Management that the asbestos removal phase on the fourth floor is now complete. Subsequently, the construction will be moving school furniture back into the classrooms today and tomorrow. Mr. Obregon also stated that what will happen continuously until the end of the week and probably throughout the summer, is the structural reinforcement of the supporting beams inside fourth floor classrooms. Mr. Obregon also stated that Barone has indicated that they will be finished working on the fourth floor before school is back in session in September 2023. The installation of the pavers on the roof and the fencing will be completed by this Friday. Finally, Mr. Obregon informed the board members that Barone management has indicated that the handicap lift will take several months to complete at the Queens school.

**b. TCO versus COO**

Mr. Obregon informed the board members that Metropolis Group Inc. is working to renew the Brooklyn temporary C of O which expired. Mr. Obregon also indicated that Mr. Brian Baer is helping to expedite this requirement. Further, Metropolis Group stated that it will contact the commissioner to try to get it expedited. Mr. Obregon also stated that he has asked Metropolis Group Inc. to indicate specifically what is holding up the final C of O for the Brooklyn school. Mr. Obregon further stated that he has not received a detailed response from Metropolis.

**IV. New Business**

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was any new business to discuss. There was no new business. Mr. Tabano asked the board members if September 26, 2023, was an acceptable date to hold the next board meeting at 11:00 A.M. All board members agreed on that date and time.

**V. Public Comment**

No public comment was made.

**VI. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:32 A.M.