

**New Dawn Charter Schools Board of Trustees  
October Meeting  
Monday, October 31, 2022  
11:00 a.m.: Executive Session  
11:15 a.m.: Board Meeting**

**October 31, 2022, Board of Trustees 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 Chair, Mr. Brian Baer, Secretary, Ms. Katharine Urbati, Treasurer

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

**Staff Members/ Visitors Present:** NDCS: Dr. Sara Asmussen, Executive Director, Mr. Ramkissoon, Director of Finance and HR, Dr. Lisa DiGaudio, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Mr. Jose Obregon, Director of Operations, Ms. Nazli Askin, Director of Student Support Services, Ms. Emily Predmore, Data Specialist and NDCHS: Ms. Donna Lobato, Principal

**I. Executive Session**

The board went into Executive session at 11:00 AM and concluded at 11:15 AM. Afterwards, Mr. Tabano addressed staff members in attendance and reminded everyone that the City of New York has upheld the pandemic open meetings law until the end of November 2022. Therefore, the current board meeting falls under such law.

**II. Resolution: Agenda**

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the October 2022 agenda.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the October 2022, Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the October 2022 Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

### **III. Resolution: Minutes**

Mr. Tabano stated that there was a request to make a change in the September 28, 2022, board meeting minutes and asked Mr. Jose Obregon to explain the change. Mr. Obregon stated that Ms. Urbati asked to make a correction indicating that monies invested in CD's would be reinvested every three (3) months instead of every month. Ms. Urbati concurred. Mr. Obregon then stated that he would make that change as requested before the minutes were posted on the school website.

Subsequently, Mr. Tabano asked if there was a motion to accept and approve the September 28, 2022, board minutes.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the September 28, 2022, Board of Trustees meeting minutes.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the September 28, 2022, Board of Trustees meeting minutes.

### **IV. Financials—Mr. Steve Ramkissoon – Director of HR & Finance**

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

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

Mr. Steve Ramkissoon reported to the board that for the first quarter of fiscal year 2022-2023, the Brooklyn school is on track, and he sees no red flags except for the need to increase student enrollment.

Similarly, Mr. Steve Ramkissoon reported that there are no major fiscal issues in the Queens school besides the need to recruit more students. He also stated that there will be a student recruitment event on November 7, 2022, and he expects to see an increase in student enrollment as a result. Ms. Katharine Urbati asked about a \$10,007.55 expenditure listed under Student Services line and Mr. Ramkissoon explained that this expenditure was for substitute teachers used. Ms. Urbati then asked if this expenditure was expected every month and if so, would that expenditure place the school over budget. Mr. Ramkissoon explained that the expenditure is over budget, however, using substitute teachers saved the school money as opposed to hiring a permanent teacher for whom benefit costs would have to be factored in. Ms. Urbati concurred. To be clear, when and if, teachers start applying for jobs, we will hire permanent teachers replacing the substitute teachers.

#### **a. Resolution: Monthly Financials**

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept the October 2022 financials.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the October 2022 financials.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the October 2022 financials.

Mr. Tabano asked Ms. Urbati if she would report on the financial audit that NDCHS underwent. Ms. Urbati reported that she met with the auditors, and they recommended that the school have a bond policy. The auditors suggested a separate bond policy from the school's bond policy that is incorporated in the school's investment policy. Ms. Urbati then asked Mr. Ramkissoon to explain what it would take to separate the bond policy from the school's investment policy. Aside from that suggestion, Ms. Urbati reported that the audit went very well and thanked everyone who worked diligently to make sure that the school's finances are in order. Mr. Tabano also thanked Mr. Ramkissoon and Dr. Asmussen for their work to ensure a clean audit.

Mr. Ramkissoon also reported the reason that the school's money is currently invested, however, once the school acquires a permanent COO, the school will have more flexibility in using other forms of investments. Ms. Urbati asked Mr. Ramkissoon if he expects to have a new bond investment policy in place by the end of the year. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that he is hopeful to have the COO by the end of the year.

#### **b. Resolution: Audit**

Mr. Tabano then asked the board member if there was a motion to accept the results of the annual audit.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the results of the annual audit.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the results of the annual audit.

#### **c. Resolution: Incentives**

Mr. Tabano stated that the board members had met in the Executive Session to discuss incentives. He then asked was there a motion to approve the incentives discussed during the Executive session.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the incentives as discussed in the executive session.

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

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the incentives as discussed in the executive session.

### **V. Hiring, Recruitment, and School Updates**

**Benchmark 1: Student Performance**

**Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student & Family Engagement**

**Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance**

**Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity**

**a. Staff Hiring—Mr. Steve Ramkissoon**

Mr. Ramkissoon reported that there is one new hire starting today which is a second culinary chef. He also stated that recruiting efforts are continuing utilizing recruiting platforms like Indeed. Mr. Tabano asked what positions are vacant at each school. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that in the Brooklyn school, there are several SPED and an aspiring teacher vacancy. At the Queens school there are several SPED, a Math, and a social studies teacher position vacancy.

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

Dr. DiGaudio informed the board that recruiting efforts are continuing with two (2) open houses scheduled at each school. Additionally, both schools are continuing to reach out to students who have stopped attending.

**c. School Updates—Ms. Donna Lobato**

Ms. Lobato reported that there were twenty-seven (27) graduates in June and seven (7) graduates in August for the Brooklyn school. The Queens school had seventeen (17) graduates in June and fifteen (15) graduates in August who transferred to Brooklyn to graduate. Lagging attendance is being addressed by mentors reaching out to students and parents. Parent Teacher conferences are scheduled this coming Monday. The conferences will be both in person and virtual for those that cannot come in person. There will be active shooter training conducted at the Queens school in the next few days.

**d. Internship & Culinary—Ms. Nazli Askin**

Ms. Askin informed the board that the Internship started up in person again since its suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are thirty-three (33) sites that the school is now working with. There are a few students working at hair salons and working with makeup artists. There are some students interested in real estate associated with us. Students are engaged and they want to go out. Ms. Askin informed the board that fifty-two (52) students are placed at an internship site to date. Regarding the culinary arts program, Ms. Askin stated that the school continues to work towards getting CTE certification. Ms. Askin will be visiting with Innovation Charter High School this coming Thursday to get more insight on their culinary program. The goal is to start the culinary program at NDCHS Brooklyn in February 2023. Ms. Askin also reported that the school found a grant to fund a salad bar. Ms. Askin also reported that there was a college fair conducted at both schools for seniors and it turned out very well. There were over twelve (12) different colleges that participated. Ms. Askin concluded by informing the board that there are twenty-four (24) seniors at the Brooklyn school and twenty-seven (27) seniors in Queens.

**e. Dashboard—Dr. Sara Asmussen**

Dr. Asmussen reported that the demographics of students at NDCS is increasing with more males than females applying. The Brooklyn school is comprised of 61% male students and 39% female students. The Queens school is comprised of 58% male students and 42% female students. There are currently 246 students enrolled in the Brooklyn school. Not many students transferred in October 2022. The students that were discharged were all transfers and there were no dropouts. Dr. Asmussen further stated that to date, there are no dropouts yet. However, there will be discharges coming. Students who are 21 years old present a challenge since NYC will not discharge them until the following year if they turn 21 in July or August of the current school year. There are sixteen (16) students in Brooklyn and nine (9) students in Queens that fall into this category. Dr. Asmussen stated that she is discussing this with the NYC Charter School Office. Dr. Asmussen also reported that SPED percentages are down. She stated that she will do further research on why the SPED student numbers have declined. Dr. Asmussen indicated that the SPED student percentages are usually between 40 and 45%. The ELL percentages have increased. Free and reduced lunch percentages have increased in Brooklyn. Percentages in this category hover around 73%. This number has now increased to 85.8%. The schools are of approximately one third Hispanic students and 60% African American. As far as test results, Dr. Asmussen stated that she is very happy with the Global Regents results. Dr. Asmussen further stated that Dr. DiGaudio is working with teachers to try to reach a 75% pass rate for all Regents exams. That is our goal.

Dr. Asmussen reported that the Queens school has 233 enrolled. The school has approximately 30% special education students which is normal for them since they usually have approximately 33 % SPED students. The Queens school's ELL percentages have dropped a little, but it is still above the district average. The free and reduced lunch percentages are low, but it is probably because they have not received all their lunch forms back from students. The school is usually at 93% for Free and reduced lunch percentages. The school is still above the 75% cutoff since anything below that percentage will cost the school money. Dr. Asmussen stated that she is sure that once they get all their forms in, the percentages will increase. Immunizations at the Queens school are at 100%.

There are more Asian students at the Queens school than in Brooklyn. There is a small percentage of Native American students, but Dr. Asmussen believes it was a misclassification of the meaning of "American Indian" as an their ethnic group. She will go back and re-examine those numbers since she does not believe that the school has 4% Native Americans. The Queens school has a lower African American student percentage than Brooklyn. As far as Regents scores, the ELA results were great as was the Global and Living environment results. Dr. Asmussen stated that there is some work to be done in Algebra regents results. Otherwise, the Queens school is doing well. Finally, Dr. Asmussen stated that Dr. DiGaudio is working with teachers to make improvements where needed.

Ms. Jane Sun asked Dr. Asmussen if the change in male to female ratio changed only for the Brooklyn school. Dr. Asmussen replied that both schools have changed and the male to female student ratio used to be 50:50. However, the Brooklyn school has experienced a huge change. Dr. Asmussen stated that statistics indicate that African American males have a higher

percentage of getting kicked out of school and the pandemic may have exacerbated those numbers. Therefore, the schools might be seeing a greater influx of male students.

Ms. Jane Sun asked if the SPED population was affected by the pandemic as well in some form. Dr. Asmussen asked Mr. Tabano to elaborate on his experience concerning the SPED population at Wildcat Charter school. Mr. Tabano confirmed that at his school the SPED population decreased by approximately 4%. Dr. Asmussen also stated that it still is not clear why the SPED population has decreased. Mr. Tabano also stated that he believes that it may be a result of all the waivers granted. Therefore, SPED students who graduated in greater numbers because of all those waivers.

## **VI. Facilities—Jose Obregon**

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

Mr. Obregon reported to the board that CFS Fire Systems is required to be part of the final NYFD fire alarm inspection since they installed the system. However, CFS has indicated that they are still owed 6K for the fire alarm installation contract. However, Steve Ramkissoon confirmed that both Benchmark and GKV Architects were paid in full. Casey Fire Systems was a subcontractor under GKV Architects. Therefore, the school is not responsible for any outstanding monies due to CFS. Mr. Obregon also stated that any outstanding monies owed to Casey Fire Systems has to be resolved so that it does not affect the final Fire Alarm inspection which is necessary to obtain the final C of O. Mr. Obregon also stated that Metropolis is still trying to work out a date with the FDNY for the final inspection. The school is waiting to get notification of the inspection date. Mr. Brian Baer also commented that the final sign-off is also part of CFS, which is the engineer of record. Mr. Brian Baer also confirmed that the money owed to Casey Fire System (CFS) is owed by GKV and not Benchmark. He also stated that he called Mr. Joe Barbagallo from GKV last Friday afternoon. So far, he has not heard back from him. Mr. Brian Baer stated that he would put an email together, copy all the interested parties on this call on that email, and see if this can get resolved sooner rather than later. Mr. Brian Baer also stated that CFS understands that it is GKV who owes them money so they will work with the school to get the inspection done.

Mr. Obregon also reported to the board that the outside façade at the Brooklyn school which was loose and falling off the side of the school is now fixed. Mr. Obregon confirmed that he was present when the repair job took place and checked to make sure that all the stone slabs were secure and not shifting. Mr. Tabano asked Mr. Obregon what the contractors did differently to re-secure the stone slabs. Mr. Obregon stated that they used a different fastener and placed them in different locations on the stone slabs. Additionally, the installers used a different adhesive than the original which was the incorrect one.

Mr. Obregon also stated that he spoke with Mr. Ed Cinni once again and he promised to get someone out to the school to finally fix the electric strike at the ramp door in the back.

At the Queens school, Mr. Obregon reported that the water pump failed and that it has affected the water pressure such that the bathrooms on the fourth floor are not fully functional. Baronne Management is aware and they are trying to replace or fix the pump this week. Also at Queens, two security guards were replaced that were not working out as needed.

Finally, Mr. Obregon asked the board to reconsider holding off on the resolution approving the Luton lighting maintenance contract for the Brooklyn school . Mr. Obregon stated that he read contract incorrectly as to the yearly amount that they will charge. Mr. Obregon said he would go back to Lutron to re-negotiate the yearly amount they are asking for.

Mr. Tabano asked if Barone secured the roof at the Queens school. Dr. Asmussen sated that they have not. Mr. Obregon further stated that the only security device installed was a door alarm on both stairwells. Mr. Obregon also stated that at one point Chris Karalis, the construction representative for Barone, was considering putting caging on both stairwells but nothing proceeded pending the roof project. Mr. Obregon will give him a call to find out what the status is. Dr. Asmussen emphasized the importance of having this safety measure installed for the students' safety.

Finally, the security system in Queens will be fully installed by next week . This will secure the doors and elevators with controlled electronic keys that will be issued to staff.

Mr. Tabano clarified the board members that the school is still negotiating the actual work to be done on the roof in Queens. Mr. Tabano also stated that the school has gone back and forth with Barone several times and hopefully there will be some conclusion or at least a plan in place. The school is pursuing that project and it is going to happen. Mr. Tabano stated that now it's just a matter of when. Mr. Tabano stated that the school wants to see so it can take the next step.

## **VII. Grants & Reports—Sara Asmussen**

### **Benchmark 1: Student Performance**

### **Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student & Family Engagement**

### **Benchmark 8: Mission & Key Design Elements**

#### **a. Land Use Attorney**

Dr. Asmussen confirmed that the school now has a land use attorney. The attorney has stated that he would like to work directly with Bruno from Metropolis. This signifies that we are going to start the roof construction project in Brooklyn. Additionally, Dr. Asmussen stated that since a second culinary chef was hired today, work on the kitchen renovation project in Queens can commence. It will not be the huge project that was visualized, but at least now that the schools have two people who understand culinary, they can work with us on redesigning the kitchen space in Queens. Dr. Asmussen stated that the schools are ready to begin those two projects.

Dr. Asmussen also informed the board that the school is group B for the ESA desktop audit. This will happen in January 2023. Dr. Asmussen also informed the board that Donna, Nazli, Sevenand, Danny, Ron, and Cecilia all went to the PBIS conference last week. Dr. Asmussen stated that up until now, the PBIS Technical Support Center had asked questions such as, what can we do for students? What positive things can we implement in our schools? How is it going to impact things? How do we control students? Now, the question is how do we get the adults to do what needs to be done? So, the group that attended the PBIS conference from NDCS are going to be part of the overriding committee that will redesign everything. Dr. Asmussen also

stated that there is already much of this in the curriculum. Part of the plan is to train Mike Di Fede so we can push into classrooms, do the PBIS, social, emotional and the educational at the same time. Dr. Asmussen believes this will be huge and it will take up a big part of next year. It will also allow us to tie both schools together, get consistent policies across both schools.

Mr. Tabano asked Dr. Asmussen to explain to the board members what they expect the adults to do now and where the focus has shifted to adults. Dr. Asmussen explained that the teachers must figure out how to look at the student who was acting out in their class and figure out why they are acting out in such a manner. Teachers will have to moderate their own emotional response and ask themselves; how do I switch that behavior to a positive behavior? Does the student need extra reading support? Does the student need extra anger management support? Therefore, it is taking control of the entire class and then working as a group and as a school to help provide the support for that student. Rather than address behaviors piecemeal, it will include a whole school approach.

### **VIII. Policies and Procedures**

- a. NA

### **IX. New Business**

No new business was discussed.

### **X. Public Comment**

No public comment was made.

### **XI. Adjournment**

The board agreed to meet again on November 22, 2022, at 11:00 A.M. The board adjourned at 12:00 PM