

Please note that due to the reinstatement of the Executive Order from the Governor allowing virtual meetings, we are offering Zoom meetings again. If you attend in person, you must wear a mask and must be cleared through our COVID-19 protocols.

**Agenda
New Dawn Charter Schools Board of Trustees**

March 2022 Meeting

**Tuesday, March 22, 2022
11:00 a.m.**

**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. Steve Ramkisson, Director of Finance and HR, Ms. Lisa DiGaudio, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Ms. Nazli Askin, Data Specialist
NDCHS: Ms. Donna Lobato, Principal, NDCHS
NDCHSII: Mr. Zach Flory, Principal NDCHS II
Guests: Mr. Digant Bahl, CPA, Accounting Solutions of New York, Inc., Mr. Juned Haque, Accountant, Accounting Solutions of New York, Inc.

I. Agenda

Resolution: March 2022 Agenda

Motion: Mr. Brian Baer motioned to accept and approve the March 2022, Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

Motion Seconded: Ms. Jane Sun seconded the motion.

Vote: The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the March 2022 agenda.

II. Minutes

Resolution: February 2022 Minutes

Motion: Ms. Jane Sun motioned to accept and approve the February 2022, Board of Trustees meeting minutes.

Motion Seconded: Mr. Brian Baer seconded the motion.

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

III. Bill Up

Benchmark 5: Financial Management – Accounting Solutions of NY, Inc.

Mr. Digant Bahl, CPA, Accounting Solutions of New York, Inc. described to the board the current Invoice processing procedures currently in use in both schools. He advised the board that many of Accounting Solutions of New York, Inc. clients are transitioning to Bill.com. He further explained that Bill.com is a more efficient program for processing invoices which requires a significantly less amount of paperwork and filing. Most of the work is done digitally and stored in a data base. Mr. Digant Bahl also stated that many bigger and successful companies have adopted this program. Mr. Bahl also informed the board that the cost for this program is approximately 2K per year and that Accounting Solutions of New York, Inc. would share the cost of the program with NDCS. He also offered to send the members of the board a power point presentation which described the program and how it works.

Mr. Bahl did confirm that they have been in touch with the auditors to ensure that this system violates no good accounting practices. It does not.

Ms. Katharine Urbati informed the board that she has used Bill.com and that she believes that it is a good program and that it is more streamlined than the system which the schools use now. Ms. Urbati also mentioned that there maybe a few vendors who may be resistant to the new program since they may be unfamiliar with it.

Mr. Bahl confirmed that if vendors still wanted paper checks and were hesitant in putting their bank account information on the Bill.com portal, they could still receive paper checks. Mr. Bahl also stated that there are between 10% to 15% of his customers who still prefer paper checks. However, all other of his customers are currently using Bill.com. Mr. Bahl also stated that in addition to being more efficient than the traditional paper check and approval methods currently used, Bill.com allows the customer to save time and money.

Mr. Ramkissoon raised a concern that if the school opted to use Bill.com, a second signature will not be required to process a check. Mr. Bahl clarified that Bill.com can be set up so that two or more approvals are required to process a check. Mr. Bahl also

stated that in the school's finance policy manual, an adjustment can be made where it states that two signatories are required on a check. Instead, the finance policy manual would indicate that two approvers are required to process a check.

Mr. Tabano asked Mr. Bahl to confirm that there was no requirement for an E-signature but simply just a click indicating approval. Mr. Bahl confirmed to Mr. Tabano that this is correct. Dr. Asmussen asked if we can keep internal approvals. Mr. Bahl confirmed that internal approvals can still be maintained.

Mr. Tabano thanked Mr. Bahl and Mr. Juned Haque for their presentation and indicated that Bill.com sounds like an innovative idea. Mr. Tabano asked if there was a motion to accept and approve Bill.com as the program used to process invoices and payments.

Motion: Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve Bill.com as the program used to process invoices and payments.

Motion Seconded: Ms. Jane Sun seconded the motion.

Vote: The board voted unanimously to accept and approve Bill.com as the program used to process invoices and payments.

IV. Financials— Mr. Steve Ramkissoon, Director of Finance and HR

Benchmark 4: Financial Condition

Benchmark 5: Financial Management

For the Brooklyn school, Mr. Ramkissoon stated that the finance report indicates that the school is at a negative income level. However, depreciation and amortization cancel the negative income and places the school in a positive income level of 539K with 511K cash on hand. Subsequently, the Brooklyn school is still doing well. Additionally, Mr. Ramkissoon indicated that the finance report shows 246 students enrolled but actually there are 276 students enrolled. Additionally, the Brooklyn school is increasing its enrollment numbers and the target goal of 335 enrolled students is within grasp. Student enrollment will affect revenue in both schools. All considered, the Brooklyn school has no financial concerns. For the Queens school, Mr. Ramkissoon reported that, as of today, there are 221 students enrolled. The Queens school has also had an increase in student enrollment recently.

Ms. Katharine Urbati asked about 300K that was owed to the Brooklyn school from the Queens school. She also asked if that revenue was reflected in the bottom line of the financial report for both schools. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that the money owed to Brooklyn was for services rendered to the Queens school and that this debt was reflected in both financial reports for each school.

Ms. Katharine Urbati also asked about a difference in loan repayment totaling approximately 2K and asked if that was reflective of the loan repayment schedule. Mr.

Ramkissoon stated that the difference in payment was reflected in the loan re-payment schedule and that he would furnish Ms. Urbati with that re-payment schedule. Mr. Ramkissoon also stated that he still believes that both schools are on a positive financial track.

Ms. Jane Sun stated that she noticed a rate increase in energy bills from Con Ed. Mr. Ramkissoon confirmed that he re-negotiated the energy contract, and the school is now paying 2-3 cents less per kilowatt as compared to last year. Mr. Ramkissoon also informed the board that he expects a substantial increase next year in medical insurance costs. Mr. Tabano asked if there was a motion to accept and approve the March 2022 monthly financials.

a. Resolution: Monthly Financials

Motion: Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the March 2022 monthly financials.

Motion Seconded: Ms. Jane Sun seconded the motion.

Vote: The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the March 2022 monthly financials.

Mr. Steve Ramkissoon confirmed that the board members received a copy of IRS Form 994 for the yearly tax filing. He also stated that Accounting Solutions of New York, Inc. had reviewed the form and found no discrepancies. Mr. Ramkissoon asked if any of the board members had any questions or concerns. Ms. Urbati stated that she had none. No other board member raised a concern either.

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to approve and accept the tax returns as presented by Mr. Ramkissoon.

Motion: Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the school tax returns.

Motion Seconded: Mr. Brian Baer seconded the motion.

Vote: The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the school tax returns.

b. Financial Transparency—Dr. Sara Asmussen

Dr. Asmussen informed the board that the financial transparency form presented to the board is a federal government requirement for the CARES grant. It outlines how much money was spent and what it was spent on by category.

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

a. Staff Hiring—Steve Ramkissoon

Mr. Ramkissoon reported that since January, there have been four (4) new hires. Also, there is a social studies teacher candidate that is currently in the interview process. He also stated that hiring continues to be a challenge. As of this board meeting, there are four (4) vacant positions in Queens and three (3) vacancies in Brooklyn. Mr. Ramkissoon also reported that both schools are in the process of determining which staff members should be retained and which should not. Obviously, this process may create additional staff vacancies.

b. Student Recruitment—Steve Ramkissoon

Mr. Ramkissoon reported that student recruiting is going well. There are open houses scheduled in the Queens school on April 5 and at the Brooklyn school on April 7. During these open houses, students from other schools will come in with their counselors to determine if they want to attend NDCHS. The recruiting committee continues to meet every other week to plan recruiting activities and strategies. NDCS continues to reach out to potential students by utilizing recruiting and marketing postcards. Three thousand postcards were mailed to date. Approximately one thousand were returned as undeliverable. He also stated that the recruiting committee is planning to target other venues such as advertisement in local businesses like laundromats, advertisement on subway platforms, buses, and even shelters. He stated that he will get advertisement costs to the board for these additional recruiting efforts.

c. School Updates—Ms. Donna Lobato/ Mr. Zach Flory

Ms. Lobato reported the following to the board. A new global teacher will start on Monday. There is a SPED demo scheduled for this week. There was also a viable candidate that was interviewed for the Science teacher position. Field trips are resumed including a recent trip to Citi Field for the LGBT conference. The college bridge program was successfully launched and there are ten (10) students participating in Brooklyn. Students in the college bridge program are exploring different pathways including college, trade/vocational schools, and the taking of civil service exams. Queens students are also being included in the bridge program. The school had a keyboard walkthrough as well as a cultural walkthrough. Both went very well. Finally, the school is preparing to administer the Regents exam in June 2022.

Mr. Flory reported the following to the board. The new parent coordinator is now onboard. Ms. Kim Fields from the Brooklyn school trained with her at the Queens school to get her familiarized with her duties and responsibilities. The new parent coordinator is working diligently to bolster student recruitment and the school now has 219 students enrolled. There are additional students that are being processed for enrollment that will also add to the student roll. The school is still seeking an ELA teacher and there is an interview scheduled next week. Committee work is resuming in the school and the focus is on PBIS. The goal is to increase student attendance and to encourage students to

come to school on time. The school is also using other motivators like the Sun bucks program. Kickboard is also being used at the school. Teachers enjoy watching each other's classes. Mr. Flory is also using John Antonetti's learning walk method which also utilizes visits to other classrooms in the attempt to enhance instructional strategies. State Senator Leroy Comrie visited the Queens school. The Senator spent some time with students. He also visited the internship program, spoke with some students at internship, and visited some classrooms. He also spent some time sitting down with a panel of about eight (8) students for about an hour and answered their questions and gave them some advice regarding their futures and moving forward. Overall, it was an enjoyable experience for all.

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

a. Update on both buildings

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that at the Queens school, Barone is moving to get the roof paved and is also installing a handicap elevator that will allow access to the rooftop. The windows that need to be fixed were fixed and Jose Obregon is working with Barone on a few other minor repairs. At the Brooklyn building, Mr. Brian Baer and Jose Obregon are continuing to work on the roof issue which should be resolved since Dr. Asmussen received funding for work on the Brooklyn school roof. Dr. Asmussen also reported that the correct solenoid was installed by Benchmark recently in the mechanical room. The NYC DOB will need to come back and verify the installation after which the school may then proceed to get a final certificate of occupancy. The handicap ramp on the first floor still needs to be fixed.

Dr. Asmussen also reported that GKV had mistakenly billed the school for 26K. After reviewing the bill, Mr. Brian Baer discovered that the school was being billed for work belonging to another project and not the Brooklyn school. GKV is now making the adjustment, and this will allow them to proceed with processing the necessary documentation with the DOB for the final CoFO.

b. Resolution: Security bids at Queens

Dr. Asmussen reported that Jose Obregon did go back to Mutual Security and get the length of the security contract reduced and on track with the Brooklyn security contract as Mr. Brian Baer had suggested. She asked that the board approve the contract. Mr. Tabano asked the board if there was a motion to accept and approve the security contract for Queens.

Motion: Mr. Brian Baer motioned to accept and approve the Queens security contract with Mutual security, Inc.

Motion Seconded: Ms. Jane Sun seconded the motion.

Vote: The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the Queens security contract with Mutual security, Inc.

VII. Grants & Reports—Sara Asmussen

Benchmark 1: Student Performance

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

Benchmark 8: Mission & Key Design Elements

a. ESSER grant updates

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that ESER projects will start in April, However, in Queens, the project will be reduced since there is not sufficient funding. Kitchen equipment will be purchased, that can be taken if the school moves, rather than doing a complete renovation of the kitchen area. Dr. Asmussen also stated that the roof project at Brooklyn will be done first, followed by the Queens kitchen project. Mr. Brian Baer said that he would reach out to the architecture to expedite these projects.

b. Stimulus Grant

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that the Queens school is not eligible for this grant since the school receives facility funding. Also, the Queens school is categorized as not being in good standing. This is the reason that Dr. Asmussen continues to fight this categorization since it impacts the funding that the school can receive. The State has indicated that they will review the categorization standards that they use for transfer schools and especially after the Brooklyn school did well enough to receive a five (5) year renewal.

c. Homeless Grant

Dr. Asmussen reported that Ms. Janisha Crawley, the lead counselor at the Brooklyn school and who also heads the McKinney Vento committee, was able to obtain 9K for the school's homeless fund. She will produce a spending plan that will augment but not supplant mandated services that the school is required to offer.

VIII. Project Updates—Lisa DiGaudio

Benchmark 1: Student Performance

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

a. Student Engagement

Dr. Lisa DiGaudio spoke to the board about the upcoming Regents and how the US. and Global History Regents have become more complex and require students to answer twenty-four (24) stimulus-based questions. Students are required to use different skills, including historical context and outside information to respond to the text sets. The final essay is the civic literacy essay, which is like the argument essay and the

enduring issues essay in global history. Students are presented with a series of documents and must respond providing historical times context and outside information. The essay requires a lot of writing. To help students prepare for these two regents, the plan is to spend a lot of time looking at historical documents and primary source documents to get students used to developing outside information and historical context. Dr. DiGaudio also informed the board that there is an excellent website called “Consider the source New York.” It is an entire repository of primary source documents that can be built into assignments, and then graded right onto the site. Additionally, to help students improve their essay writing skills, NDCHS is going to conduct string essay writing for the civic literacy in May 2022. Students will have that full month of essay practice in order to build their stamina since the Regents exam is in June 2022.

b. Classroom Management

Dr. DiGaudio also reported that she attended the SAM conference in January and that it provided some valuable student engagement sessions. Also, one of the presenters at the conference, Andy Hargreaves, authored a book regarding student engagement and classroom management which has some valuable insight and recommendations including on how to provide detailed and descriptive feedback to students.

c. Project Based Learning

Regarding PBL, Dr. DiGaudio reported that all staff in both campuses will provide proposals to incorporate projects into their classrooms that align to the engagement work, PLC work, and the concept of building engagement and student interaction in the classroom.

Ms. Jane Sun asked if January Regents were administered. Dr. DiGaudio replied that the January 2022 Regents exams were cancelled. Dr. DiGaudio also confirmed that the in addition to the June 2022 Regents, August 2022 will be administered as well.

IX. Public Comment

None.

X. New Business

None.

XI. Adjournment

The board agreed to hold the next meeting on Tuesday, April 26, 2022, at 11:00 AM. The board adjourned at 11:52 AM and went into Executive session.