

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.

**October Meeting Minutes  
New Dawn Charter Schools Board of Trustees**

**Tuesday, October 26, 2021  
11:00 a.m.**

**New Dawn Charter High School  
242 Hoyt Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11217**

**New Dawn Charter High School II  
89-25 161<sup>st</sup> Street  
Jamaica, NY 11432**

**I. Introduction of New Staff**

**Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning**

Due to teaching schedules, new staff will come on throughout the meeting for introductions.

The following new staff members introduced themselves to the board of trustees and were welcomed to New Dawn Charter High Schools:

**Brooklyn:**

Sharhan, Hana – Aspiring Teacher  
Aska, Annick – Career Coordinator  
Roberts, Olivia C – Counselor  
Scappaticci, Isabella M – ELA Teacher  
Modestin Jr, Felix Z – Social Studies Teacher  
Brown, William M – ELA Teacher  
Goldenberg, Suzanne D – Art Teacher  
Tomecki, Mary G – SPED Teacher  
Dunbar, Anthony S – Outreach worker  
Coleman, Clintonia R – Outreach worker

**Queens**

Bhagwandeem, Sevanand – ELA teach  
Szczeny, Richard S – Social Studies  
Kang, Juhee – Korean/Art Teacher  
Zak, Michelle R – SPED Teacher  
Gumbs, Darius N – Aspiring Teacher  
Corsi, Christopher M – Social Studies  
Shinghirtis, Andrea – U.S. History  
Evans, Gabriel A – Math Teacher  
Haughton, Shavon R – U.S. History

**II. Agenda**

Dr. Asmussen asked the board to make the following changes to the October 2021 agenda:

Item 5b: Student Recruitment: Mr. Steve Ramkissoom

Item 7: Add Stimulus and Charter grant

Item 3: Audit report should read Audit Committee report

Mr. Tabano and the board acknowledged the changes and asked the board for a resolution on the October 2021 board meeting agenda.

**Resolution:** October 2021 Agenda

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the October 2021, Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

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

**Vote:** The board unanimously voted to accept and approve the October 2021, Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

### **III. Minutes**

**Resolution:** September 2021 Minutes

**Resolution:** September 2021 Executive Session Minutes

**Resolution:** October 2021 Audit Committee Minutes

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a resolution to accept and approve the September 2021 Board of Trustee Meeting minutes

**Resolution:** September 2021 Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to approve the September 2021 Board of Trustees board meeting minutes.

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

**Vote:** The board unanimously voted to accept and approve the September 2021 Board of Trustees board meeting minutes.

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a resolution to accept and approve the September 2021 Board of Trustee Executive Session minutes

**Resolution:** September 2021 executive session minutes

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the September 2021, executive session minutes.

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

**Vote:** The board unanimously voted to accept and approve the September 2021, executive session minutes.

Mr. Tabano then asked Ms. Katharine Urbati to give the board members a summary of the audit committee's meeting. Ms. Katharine Urbati reported that the Committee met with the auditors. The audit went very smoothly this year with no material changes. Ms. Urbati also indicated that this was the first year NDCHS had to include some new changes to two leases. Ms. Urbati thanked the New Dawn Staff. She further informed the board that there wasn't really anything that was a surprise, which is a testament to

the careful review of the financials that the board conducts every month. Ms. Urbati also stated that there was one suggestion from last year on having a written procedure for the bonds, which the board can discuss, but it is just a suggestion. She re-emphasized that this was not any kind of flag. She thanked Mr. Ramkissoon for the work done.

Mr. Tabano also thanked Steve Ramkissoon for his work and asked the board if there was a motion to accept and approve the audit committee minutes.

**Resolution:** October 2021 Audit Committee minutes

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to approve the September 2021 Audit Committee minutes.

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

**Vote:** The board unanimously voted to accept and approve the audit committee minutes.

#### **IV. Financials - Mr. Steve Ramkissoon, Director of Finance and HR**

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

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

Mr. Ramkissoon reported that both schools are in the first quarter of financials, and it is only one month since we have had students in the building. The schools incurred costs on all normal expenses including cleaning supplies, security, and such. He stated that he does not see any red flags. At the Brooklyn school, student recruitment is a big plus. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that a recruitment team was formed, which he will explain in greater detail later in the meeting. Steve Ramkissoon reported that Queens is also looking good. The target is to enroll 300 students, which the school does not have yet. However, there are no red flags either for the Queens school. In reference to the school bond, Steve Ramkissoon reported that as of this date, the school has paid \$3.4 M in terms of both principal and interest. All quarterly financial compliance reports were filed with Bank of New York Mellon. As of now, the school is fully compliant with the terms of the bond. Mr. Ramkissoon also stated that currently, the school has 1.6 M in Bank of Melon. Once all is finalized, in terms of closing out the bond, Mr. Ramkissoon will present invoices that were paid directly by NDCHS Brooklyn. He then asked the board if there were any questions or concerns.

##### **a. Auditors Report**

Mr. Ramkissoon went over the results of the audit. He stated that the school followed all accounting procedures and that no discrepancies were noted. The auditors made recommendations for investment of revenue available. Mr. Tabano agreed that there were no egregious findings in the auditor's report then asked the board if there was a motion to accept and approve the auditor's report.

##### **b. Resolution: Auditors Report**

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and auditor's report.

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

**Vote:** The board unanimously voted to accept and approve the auditor's report.

**c. Resolution: Report for Financial Transparency to NYSED**

Mr. Tabano confirmed that all board members had a copy of the financial transparency NYSED document and asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the document.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to approve the report for financial transparency to NYSED.

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

**Vote:** The board unanimously accepted and approved the report for financial transparency to NYSED.

**d. Resolution: Monthly Financials**

Mr. Tabano asked if there was a motion to accept and approve the October 2021 financials.

**Resolution:** Monthly Financials

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to approve the October 2021 Financial reports.

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

**Vote:** The board unanimously accepted and approved the October 2021 Financial report.

**e. Staff Incentives – Dr. Asmussen, Executive Director**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that incentives are paid to staff members based on individual participation in committees. At the Queens school, there were nineteen (19) staff members who participated in committees and at the Brooklyn school, there were twenty-two (22) staff members who participated in committees and all will receive some level of incentive. These incentives are calculated line by line, person by person, and by the analysis of the work they've accomplished in their committee the prior year. Ms. Urbati asked if the incentives were for performance and committee work or just committee work. Dr. Asmussen replied that it was just for committee work. However, Dr. Asmussen stated that she would like to propose adding the performance piece for administrators in the future.

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a resolution to accept and approve staff incentives as described by Dr. Asmussen.

**Motion:** Ms. Jane Sun motioned to approve the staff incentives.

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

**Vote:** The board unanimously accepted and approved the staff incentives.

**V. Recruitment Staff/Students**

**Benchmark 1: Student Performance**

**Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity**

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

**Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, & Retention**

**a. Staff Recruitment – Ms. Lobato**

Ms. Lobato reported that at the Brooklyn school, there is a need for a science teacher and the guidance counselor. Ms. Lobato mentioned again that the Dean's position is on hold until further notice. Queens school also needs a SPED teacher. The recruitment committee is posting jobs on Indeed and Idealist with not much luck so far. Job fairs will be held. Ms. Lobato contacted an agency called A Tutor which does teacher placement.

**b. Student Recruitment – Mr. Steve Ramkissoon**

Mr. Ramkissoon informed the board that the student recruitment committee is comprised of the two school principals, himself, and anyone who interacts with students. He has reached out to Vanguard to obtain postcards that were mailed to potential students. Last year, 25,000 postcards were mailed out. The cost was approximately \$20,000 but with two new students recruited, this expense would pay for itself. A new mailing list will be available in three weeks and other postcards will be mailed out. The cost of the new mailing costs will be submitted to the board for approval. Additionally, phone calls are being made and other avenues are being considered to enhance student recruitment. Various social media platforms are being used to reach potential contacts that can assist in student recruitment. Ms. Jane Sun asked if this data recording was being done to track who recruited new students. Mr. Ramkissoon confirmed that there is a tracking document in place for this purpose.

Mr. Tabano again wished the recruiting team members well and recognized that at this time, all schools are competing for professional staff and students.

**c. Outreach—Ms. Nazli Askin**

Ms. Askin reported to the board that the two (2) new outreach workers are in the field visiting students today. They both started working at NDCHS last month, meeting with all the staff at both schools to talk about each staff member's mentees. They ascertained where the students are, what their status is, and what they can do to help the students come back. They are making phone calls to get in contact with students and to set up a meeting time and a meeting place. If they cannot contact the student, they will be visiting them at their home. The students that cannot be reached, are because the students are working. Therefore, they have made plans to physically meet with these students at their workplace to help the students figure out what they will ultimately decide to do. The focus of the outreach team will be to bring students back to school.

#### **d. Dashboard— Ms. Nazli Askin**

Ms. Askin reported that in Brooklyn there are 250 students on the ATS roster. Between September and October, 41 new students have enrolled. Currently, there are 156 students that are enrolled in Brooklyn. SPED population is at 43% and ELL students are at 11%, the ED population is at 82%. Immunization compliance rate is that 95.8%. The school is working with students that are missing their immunizations so they can get those. Regarding gender, there are 62% male and 32% female. The Queens school has 223 students on their ATS roster. The school has 20 new enrollments since the beginning of the school year. SPED population is at 36%, ELL percentages are at 15%, and economically disadvantaged population is at 80%. The school is 100% in compliance with immunization requirements. Gender percentages are 60% male and 40% female.

#### **VI. Facilities—Jose Obregon, Director of Operations and Student Services**

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

##### **a. Update on both buildings**

Mr. Obregon reported that this week, the Brooklyn school obtained its TCO through the efforts of Brian Baer and the school architectural team. What is needed now is to close out an open electrical work order at the Department of Buildings so that the documentation for a permanent C of O can be submitted. Mr. Obregon reported that Mr. Brian Baer was able to contact the electrical contractor that will be able to close that open inspection for a minimal fee of \$1,800. Mr. Ramkissoo already has the invoice, and the school is to submit payment so it can close out the opened electrical inspection at the DOB.

Mr. Obregon reported that he spoke with Mr. Ed Cinni who has secured a contractor that is going to install a carbon monoxide detection device in the mechanical room. Mr. Ed Cinni also indicated that he will be moving on that open item this week as well. After those two items are resolved, there will be no obstacles for obtaining the final certificate of occupancy for the Brooklyn school building.

Mr. Obregon also reported that there is also an issue on a rooftop as water is coming through the fourth-floor ceiling when it rains heavily. Mr. Obregon informed the board that Mr. Ed Cinni, Mr. Brian Baer, and he were discussing this issue this morning. Mr. Obregon reported to the board that he believes this to be a design flaw. The leakage is due to inadequate design of the entry ways into the mechanical room on the rooftop. Apparently, there was not an adequate barrier, or an adequate stop, put in place between the roof floor and mechanical room. Therefore, when there is substantial rain, water flows freely on the rooftop and seeps into the mechanical room. This water then subsequently seeps through the ceiling and onto the fourth floor. Mr. Obregon stated that Benchmark is aware that they need to fix that as soon as possible. Mr. Tabano

asked, why has Benchmark not done anything about this situation since they have known about it for a month now. Mr. Obregon also stated that more pressure needs to be applied either to benchmark or GKV to resolve this issue. Mr. Tabano asked Mr. Brian Baer what he thought was the best course of action. Mr. Brian Baer replied that his suggestion was to come up with a detail that benchmark can produce, which is essentially a new curb, that creates a dam between the roof and the mechanical room. This will mean raising the sill of the door. Mr. Brian Baer said that it is not an insurmountable task, it is just a matter of getting it done. Given the relationship with GKV, Mr. Baer said he would offer his services as an architect to come up with a solution. In that matter, it will get done quickly without any agenda. Mr. Tabano then asked if we can hold GKV responsible so they pay to have this flaw fixed. Mr. Baer replied that the school is likely going to have to pay a Benchmark to perform the work. Whether or not we go back to GKV for reimbursement, will have to be a different discussion. However, Mr. Baer stated that he would rather get it done sooner rather than later.

Mr. Tabano stated that he agreed. Mr. Tabano also stated that he believes that the school will not be able to go back to GKV or Benchmark for any type of reimbursement. and get anything. Mr. Tabano believes that this was another design for and fault and that GKV should be liable for it. Mr. Tabano asked Mr. Baer what he estimated the costs to get this repaired. Mr. Baer stated that he estimates under 5K. since it is not a big job. However, it does involve several trades such as a carpenter involved, a door contractor, and a roofer at the very least. Mr. Tabano agreed that we should get this problem fixed sooner than later. Mr. Tabano also stated that he would like to send the bill to GKV and ask them to pay since the school has already paid a considerable amount of money due to GKV design flaws. Mr. Obregon also advised the board that Benchmark sent a roofer to look at the issue and the roofer indicated that he had advised Benchmark that this was going to be an issue.

Mr. Obregon reported that at the Queens school, a security company came to review security measures for the building. The security company will provide a proposal for installing a security system in the school which includes door alarms, door security devices, and a FOB system for access control which also includes elevator access control. Additionally, the outdoor security camera system is already in the process of being installed by MSP Networks. Mr. Obregon also added that since there was an incident involving a possible intruder in the backyard area several days ago, new security gates may be required to limit access to the yard area.

Mr. Tabano then remarked to Dr. Asmussen that when they meet with Scott Barone next Thursday that these items will be discussed. Other items that will be discussed with Barone Management will be the clearing and re-paving of the backyard area at the Queens school, the installation of garbage collection sheds, and fixing the lighting in the alleyway.

**VII. Grants & Reports—Sara Asmussen**  
**Benchmark 1: Student Performance**  
**Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student & Family Engagement**  
**Benchmark 8: Mission & Key Design Elements**

**a. DYCD – Dr. sara Asmussen, Executive Director**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that the Queens school received \$82K from the DYCD grant. The grant allowed the school for expenditures made up to three years ago. Dr. Asmussen thanked Mr. Ramkissoon since he worked on making this possible.

**b. Stimulus Grant SUNY**

Regarding the stimulus funds from SUNY, Dr. Asmussen reported that SUNY has not posted an RFP at this time. She will follow up.

**c. Charter Renewal Data**

Dr. Asmussen also reported to the board that she met with a representative from BOCES and that she went over the school's data and the comparison school's data with her. Dr. Asmussen stated that the BOCES representative stated that New Dawn should review the school data, year by year, because the representative did not believe the data was being presented accurately or fairly when used to compare NDCHS to other schools. Dr. Asmussen also stated that the financial data that she received from the state was also very impressive regarding NDCHS and that she will share that data with the board members. The data shows that NDCHS is standing on solid financial ground for the past six years even as the school carries a bond. Dr. Asmussen also stated that parent and student surveys were very positive as well. Additionally, the New Dawn staff rated working at New Dawn higher than the average charter school. For example, whereas 60% of teachers in other schools said they agreed that they liked and worked together in their respective schools, 89% of NDCHS staff said they highly agreed, and 6% said they slightly agreed. Dr. Asmussen stated that as the school enters its charter renewal process, items such as solid financial management, staffing, parents, student support, students indicating they believe NDCHS is a safe and a beautiful school all are positive indicators. Dr. Asmussen stated that she was very pleased with all survey results.

Mr. Tabano asked if the survey results were from the previous school year and Dr. Asmussen confirmed that it was the SED's survey for the previous school year. Dr. Asmussen further stated that, except for the four-year cohort outcomes, the school's data looks excellent. Dr. Asmussen confirmed that she mapped out every cohort including the 2007 cohort and, the graduation rate for the cohorts ranged from 50-65% across the years. Additionally, data shows that 13% of NDCHS students were remanded to prison or other types of rehabs by the courts. This data shows that New Dawn has a large percentage of high-risk students. This piece of data is tracked and recognized by the state as well.



## **VIII. School Reports**

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

#### **a. Brooklyn— Ms. Donna Lobato – Principal, NDCHS**

Ms. Lobato briefed the board that the school is restarting its relationship with the NYPD and the counseling department is starting groups again. Counselors will focus on specific topics to address the different SEL. She also mentioned that last month Benchmark, the construction company, gave the school a donation of school supplies, backpacks, and other school items. The school continues to reach out to LTAs. Many students have moved and NDCHS is trying to reach out to those students as well. All committees have restarted including PBIS, recruitment committees, and the others. This year, PLC is being conducted a little differently. It is being conducted by topic that is related to student engagement and will include differentiation.

#### **b. Queens—Zach Flory**

Mr. Flory informed the board members that Tuesday there was a shooting two blocks away from the school. It was unrelated to our students or anybody in the building. However, the police came through what was the school's backyard with guns drawn to search the shed on the other side of the fence. There was a New Dawn teacher outside with students for horticulture class. Mr. Flory further stated that he met with Growing Up Green safety team, and they did not receive any warning from the NYPD. Mr. Flory said that he was reaching out to the 103<sup>rd</sup> Pct to ensure that nothing of that nature happens again without the school being notified. If properly notified, then he would call for a shelter in. Mr. Flory stated that he did notify parents of what transpired and confirmed that the students made it home safely.

Mr. Flory stated that he worked out an acceptable fire drill schedule with Growing Up Green Charter School and that a fire drill will be conducted this coming Thursday. Mr. Flory also informed the board that the school has its PBIS system fully back online. Students are being motivated by using Sunbucks as well as other initiatives. Efforts are being made to involve the students in Breast Cancer Awareness week and many were wearing pink. Mr. Flory also stated that tomorrow students will be participating in anti-bullying seminars.

Mr. Tabano stated that he agreed that the NYPD should be more proactive and immediately notify the school of any incident that might affect school safety in the future. He asked Mr. Flory to contact them and stress the importance of timely communication for the sake of student and staff safety when incidents like this occur.

#### **c. Internship Program—Jose Obregon**

Mr. Obregon reported that the internship program in both schools continues to move along. He further stated that Ms. Lobato and he are sitting in on internship sessions in Brooklyn and Mr. Obregon with Mr. Flory in Queens. Internship is being conducted the

first four periods every day. Students are divided into groups at both the Queens and in Brooklyn school. Designated teachers are continuing to work with students on their papers. Both Ms. Lobato and Mr. Flory have offered recommendations to the internship staff regarding where they can improve. Mr. Obregon also confirmed that the Myers Briggs assessment is being administered to students. Mr. Obregon closed by stating that he will continue to monitor the internship staff and work with them to improve the program.

**d. Curriculum and classroom observations— Dr. Lisa DiGaudio,  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction**

Dr. DiGaudio reported to the board that with charter renewals it is important to demonstrate the school is linking student progress in the internship program with the academic program. Therefore, an alignment was developed that breaks down each one of the sectors on the Myers Briggs. For example, if the topic is athletics, every single content area that the students have regarding to athletics is linked to statistics. This will allow staff to see that there is an academic connection to a topic of interest that a student may have.

Dr. DiGaudio also informed the board that she has established a liaison with Mount Sinai. She will be working with them on building an HIV curriculum and using like different videos on increasing HIV and AIDS literacy that Mt. Sinai are piloting.

Dr. DiGaudio also informed the board that she is working on project-based learning which will be integrated into at least one class for each teacher by the spring.

Dr. DiGaudio also stated that Dr. Asmussen and her met with the SED and discussed A Game and alternative accountability. The discussion went extremely well.

Dr. DiGaudio mentioned that the RAPSA conference is approaching and that she will be presenting. Dr. DiGaudio is on that advisory board, and she will be presenting on alternative accountability and how that impacted our students at New Dawn.

**IX. Legal Compliance—Dr. Sara Asmussen, Executive Director  
Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance  
Benchmark10: Legal Compliance**

**a. School Attorneys**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that the school's lead attorney left the firm we have always worked at and last week our secondary attorney left. Dr. Asmussen recommended that, considering the exceptional legal work that they have done for New Dawn, the school should retain them even if they now work for a different law firm. The new law firm that the school's attorneys will be with is NY based and more cost effective. Additionally, since the school attorney is handling a legal matter pertaining to the Queens' school and its lease, it makes sense to stick with the school attorney that is handling that for New Dawn now.

Mr. Tabano agreed that it will be better to stay with the school's attorneys even if they move to another law firm. He further asked Dr. Asmussen to get the board a cost analysis and comparison for legal work that still needs to get done so the board can approve the transition next month. Mr. Tabano asked that this proposed change be on the November board of trustee meeting agenda.

#### **b. Discipline Policy**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that the legal compliance discipline policy was submitted to the state in April, and it is still not approved. Dr. Asmussen further stated that Ms. Lobato spent quite a bit of time with the school's special education attorney, making sure that the discipline policy complies completely with all federal and state legal requirements. However, the school cannot use the new discipline policy until it is approved by the state. Mr. Tabano expressed frustration that this is taking so long to approve and asked what department is holding up the approval. Dr. Asmussen stated that she believes that it is the State's legal department which is not moving on this issue. Additionally, the state has not approved Dr. DiGaudio's position either of Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Asmussen also stated that the school is using Dr. DiGaudio in her new role regardless since this impacts students. Mr. Tabano asked if the board could do anything to try to expedite these matters and Dr. Asmussen replied that these issues will be brought up on November 15 during the charter renewal visit.

#### **X. Public Comment – Dr. Sara Asmussen, Executive Director**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board she was working to completely align board meeting minutes and agenda to the way that the sector finds acceptable. She stated that she believes that she has achieved this and that public comment is one of the components that was missing. Mr. Tabano asked if Dr. Asmussen was able to record for the public hearing pertaining to the charter renewal and, if so, to give the board an update. Dr. Asmussen confirmed that thirteen (13) students were recorded and some parents who spoke positively about New Dawn Charter High School. The hearing is scheduled for November 1, 2021, at 5:30 PM. Dr. Asmussen stated that she will resend the information to the board.

#### **XI. New Business**

Mr. Tabano asked if there was any new business. Dr. Asmussen stated that the board had discussed having meeting prior to the charter renewal visit on November 15, 2021, to review items that may be discussed. The board agreed to meet on November 9, 2021, at 11:00 AM to discuss potential topics or discussion points for the charter renewal visit.

Mr. Tabano asked the board to decide on the next board meeting date and the board members decided to meet at 11:00 A.M. on Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

#### **XII. Adjournment**

The board of trustees meeting adjourned at 12:28 PM