

South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday, February 27th, 2014
CEI-PEA
28 West 44th Street, New York, NY

AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order** – Davon Russell
- II. **Resolution to approve minutes from January 23rd, 2014 meeting**
- III. **Introductions**
 - A. Andrea Cohen, Esq., elected to Board at January 2014 meeting, pending NYSED approval
- IV. **Discussion**
 - A. Charter Revision, School Timetable and Enrollment Plan – Davon Russell, Ric Campbell
- V. **Resolutions**
 - A. Resolution to request a planning year and open the school in September 2015
 - B. Resolution to request a revision in the Enrollment Plan, and begin with a cohort of only sixth grade students
- VI. **Other Business**
 - A. Establish Board Meeting Calendar
 - B. WHEDco Loan Agreement – Davon Russell
 - C. Facilities – Davon Russell
 - D. Board Recruitment – looking for expertise in Special Education, Fundraising and Finance

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Attendees

Board Members Present: Nancy Biberman, Ric Campbell, Harvey Newman, Davon Russell, Deborah Taylor

Other: Andrea Cohen, Board Member Candidate; Rebecca Kramnick, WHEDco; Meredith Leverich, WHEDco; Frank San Felice, CEI

Absent Board Members

Valerie Capers, Eric Nadelstern

Call to Order

Davon Russell called the meeting to order at 2:07pm.

Introduction of Andrea Cohen

Ms. Cohen is an attorney with a passion for education. She has volunteered with Yonkers Partners in Education (YPIE) offering fundraising assistance, and Let's Get Ready, providing one-on-one college admissions mentoring to a low-income high school student. Ms. Cohen is preparing School Trustee Background Information forms, which will be submitted to NYSED for approval shortly. The Board approved Ms. Cohen's membership at the January 23rd, 2014 Board meeting, upon NYSED approval.

Approval of January 23rd, 2014 Meeting Minutes

The Board unanimously passed a resolution to approve the January 23rd, 2014 meeting minutes.

Discussion

Mr. Russell reported on an early December call from NYSED, where the authorizer informed us that we would be chartered as either a middle school or a high school, as opposed to both a middle/high school as the school had originally applied. The co-lead applicants, Mr. Russell and Mr. Campbell, decided to open as a middle school serving grades six through eight, with the opportunity to request an extension in year three and grow into a high school. Mr. Russell stated that since the decision had to be made very quickly, he and Mr. Campbell maintained an enrollment plan that included sixth and seventh grade cohorts in the first year. However, upon further consideration, it was decided that it would make greater sense to begin with sixth grade only to increase the school's potential impact. Children entering the school as seventh grade students would

only have two years in the school, which is not long enough to have an optimal impact. After discussing the ramifications, the Board suggested that the school request to amend the enrollment plan and open with a class of 110 sixth grade students.

There was also a discussion of the timetable for opening. It was decided that the school should apply for a planning year to ensure that the many important decisions that need to be made are not rushed. A planning year would allow the Board to choose a principal very carefully and ensure that the leadership team is the right fit for the school. Mr. Russell said that he and Mr. Campbell brought these considerations to our liaisons at NYSED, who were very encouraging about the changes and appreciated the thoughtful consideration the school is taking before opening. Mr. Russell explained that based on the conversation with NYSED officials, the five year Charter term would not begin until the school opens in 2015. The Board advised Mr. Russell to ensure that we receive the appropriate documentation that indicates the new start-date for the Charter term. Mr. Russell also indicated that the CSP funds will still be released to us this year and the grant period for the planning period can be up to 18 months long.

Mr. Russell explained that if the Board passed resolutions to make amendments to the enrollment plan and request a planning year, then the next step is to submit a formal letter to NYSED detailing these requests.

Mr. Newman asked about the licensure the school will require since sixth grade is included in elementary certification, which is common branch as opposed to subject specific. Mr. Campbell then described the many different licensures that exist in New York State (Pre-K – 2, K – 6, 5 – 9, 7 – 12). Since the school's educational plan includes hiring subject-specific teachers, the school will look for teachers with dual certification in 5 – 9 and 7 – 12, or will help teachers become dual-certified when appropriate. The Board stated that they would seek advice from WJS, a consulting firm, to make sure that the hiring is consistent with educational regulations.

Resolutions

The Board unanimously passed the following resolutions:

- To request a planning year from NYSED to postpone the opening of the school until September 2015
- To request an amendment to the enrollment plan previously submitted and enroll a cohort of 110 sixth grade students in year one

Other Business

Board Calendar

The Board discussed future meeting times and decided to meet on the third Thursday of every month. Starting in September, meetings will take place in the Bronx. The Board also discussed the rules surrounding participating by phone. Mr. Campbell indicated that it may be the case that, because the meetings must be public, Board members cannot

participate by phone unless the meeting location of the caller is also made public and announced in advance.

WHEDco Loan Agreement

Mr. Russell indicated that the school has already incurred a few expenses that have been paid by WHEDco until CSP funds become available. These expenses include D&O insurance, which was purchased before the first Board meeting, and the deposit for the NYC Charter School Center's Start Right program. Our counsel at the Lawyers Alliance for New York has advised the school to create a promissory note indicating that the school will pay WHEDco back at a mutually agreed upon time with zero percent interest. The Board unanimously voted to approve the terms of the promissory note. Ms. Biberman and Mr. Russell recused themselves from voting, since they are WHEDco employees.

Start Right Program

Ms. Leverich, a WHEDco staff member, debriefed the Board on the Start Right workshops that she has attended on the school's behalf.

501c3 Status

Ms. Kramnick reported that the Lawyers Alliance for New York paired us with a law firm that is working on the school's tax exemption application pro bono. She explained that the school is required to obtain 501c3 status within one year of the issuance of the charter. The attorney working on this is confident that we can meet that deadline, and will request expedited processing if necessary.

Facilities

Mr. Russell described that in addition to the old Bronx Court House, there are other potential sites for the school. He also explained the costs associated with such a lease agreement, including rent, security deposit, and potential build-out. If the request for a planning year is granted, then the school would have additional time to find a space that is most appropriate; however, it should be noted that the current site under the Court House site may require some security deposit to hold it for a year. Mr. Russell promised to meet with the relevant parties in the coming weeks. Mr. Russell stated that he had been in contact with Richard Levine, a real estate expert, who has offered to provide guidance and help negotiate if necessary. Mr. Russell said that he would have more information about viable options before the March 20th meeting and would provide a more detailed report on three possible sites at that time.

Board Recruitment

Mr. Russell asked the Board to consider people in their personal and professional networks that might be a good fit for the Board. If NYSED approves Ms. Cohen's application, then the Board will have eight voting members, which may become problematic if there is a tie. The goal is to have 11 Board members, and to add expertise in Special Education, Fundraising and Finance. Mr. San Felice stated that the Board

should grow very soon in order to have active committees described in the school's Charter application.

Meeting Adjourned

Mr. Russell adjourned the meeting at 3:18.