

South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday, October 9th, 2014
WHEDco
50 East 168th Street, Bronx, NY 10452

AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order**
- II. **Resolution to Approve Minutes from September 11th, 2014 Meeting**
- III. **Resolution to Engage Loeb & Troper, LLP to Conduct Initial Audit and Review Fiscal Policies & Procedures**
- IV. **New York State Teachers' Retirement System Discussion**
- V. **Facilities Discussion**
- VI. **Principal's Updates**
 - A. Education Partners
 - B. Student Recruitment
 - C. Website
- VII. **Board Committees**
 - A. Executive Committee – Chaired by Board Chair
 - B. Finance and Operations Committee – Chaired by Board Treasurer
 - C. Education Committee
 - D. Personnel Committee
- VIII. **Future Board Meetings**
 - A. Thursday, November 6th, 4 – 6pm
 - B. Thursday, December 11th, 4 – 6pm

South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting

October 9, 2014

50 East 168th Street

Bronx, NY 10452

Board of Trustees Present: Nancy Biberman, Lori Chemla, Andrea Cohen, Eric Nadelstern, Davon Russell, Deborah Taylor

Board of Trustees Absent: Andy Arons, Valerie Capers, Kristin Erat, and Harvey Newman

Other Attendees: Ric Campbell, SBECACS; Cat Eugenio, SBECACS; Rebecca Kramnick, WHEDco; Meredith Leverich, WHEDco

Call to Order

Davon Russell called the meeting to order at 4:13pm.

Approval of September 11, 2014 Meeting Minutes

The Board unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes from September 11, 2014.

Rebecca Kramnick questioned whether or not minutes from Executive Sessions should be maintained in the same documents as regular meeting minutes, or whether they should be kept separately moving forward. Mr. Russell said that he would ask our liaisons at NYSED how they would like that information organized, since his understanding is that Executive Session minutes are subject to Open Meetings Law, as well. Lori Chemla said that committee meeting minutes should also be maintained and kept in one place.

Farewell to Deborah Taylor

Ms. Taylor announced that she would be moving to Pennsylvania at the end of October, and that this would be her last meeting as a Trustee. Mr. Russell once again thanked Ms. Taylor for her commitment to the school from its conception and for her invaluable contributions as a parent and community member.

Engaging Loeb & Troper for Initial Audit of Fiscal Policies and Procedures

Ric Campbell requested the Board's approval to engage Loeb & Troper to conduct an initial audit of the school's fiscal policies and procedures. The school's accountant, Digant Bahl of Accounting Solutions of NYC, recommended Loeb & Troper for this service. The cost for this service is approximately \$2,500, which is under the threshold that requires soliciting bids. Mr. Campbell explained that this initial audit is required by the State Education Department. He also said that the school's year-end audit will be more expensive and will require a bidding process to select the auditor.

The Board unanimously approved Mr. Campbell's request to engage Loeb & Troper.

Participation in NYC Teachers Retirement System (TRS)

Mr. Campbell stated that, in his opinion, making TRS benefits available to potential SBECACS teachers will be critical to the teacher recruitment process, ensuring that the teachers hired are of the highest caliber. He said that the quality of teachers hired will impact the school's success. He also said that the decision of whether or not to enroll in TRS is time sensitive, because as meetings progress with possible education partners, including NYU, he will need to have teachers hired before he can sign an MOU with an education partner. The hiring process cannot take place until employee benefits are finalized. Mr. Campbell suggested that the Board select an employee benefits package by the November Board meeting, so that he can begin hiring and sign an MOU with an educational partner in January 2015.

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Andrea Cohen said that she would like to learn more about what other charter schools offer for retirement benefits, and the implications on the budget. Mr. Campbell said that 17 charter schools are currently using TRS, and are still in operation. He also said that he would create a one-page summary for the Board to provide more information about TRS.

Mr. Russell suggested that a smaller group, the Personnel Committee, should meet to consider the affordability of TRS. Eric Nadelstern, Ms. Cohen, Mr. Russell, and Mr. Campbell said that they would, as members of that committee, meet before the next Board meeting to discuss this issue. They asked that other Board members send questions to them, so that everyone's questions can be considered during their committee meeting.

Facilities Update

Mr. Campbell reported on the progress being made on the three sites discussed in previous meetings: the former YMCA, the Courthouse, and the Conway building.

Mr. Campbell reported that Civic Builders toured the YMCA building and determined that present construction challenges would make a build-out very expensive, including changing ceiling heights which are not currently up to code. They advised that this building would not be affordable based on the school's budget and the amount of work that the building would require.

Mr. Campbell said Civic Builders has still not seen the inside of the Courthouse. SCG Retail, the school's brokers, are responsible for scheduling a time for Civic Builders to speak with the property owners. It is unclear whether or not the building's external landmark status will be a challenge.

Mr. Campbell reported that SCG Retail and Civic Builders are currently working together to develop an LOI for the Conway building, located at 151st Street and Third Avenue in the Hub neighborhood of the Bronx. The LOI should be approved by Civic Builders in the next few weeks and forwarded to the property owner. This LOI will likely include a clause giving the school and/or Civic Builders a right to rent an adjacent lot, on which a new, separate building could be constructed.

Ms. Cohen questioned SCG's usefulness in the site-search process. She asked whether or not the school could ask Civic Builders to conduct a larger site-search, since SCG has technically only brought one site to the school's attention to date. Meredith Leverich said that Civic Builders has a cost for site search of around \$20,000, which is why the school had originally engaged SCG to do this work. Ms. Cohen added that the additional cost of having Civic Builders conduct this work may be more cost effective in the long run if they are better equipped and better motivated to find other sites. Nancy Biberman agreed that Civic Builders has no ulterior motives, as brokers sometimes have since they are paid by the property owner based on the lease terms.

Mr. Campbell said that he has requested that SCG continue to explore other sites in the neighborhood. He said that it had not previously been made clear to SCG that the school might occupy two different buildings; SCG had originally understood that the school needed one space to fit nearly 800 students, which is the expected enrollment if the school receives NYSED approval for an extension into a high school. Now that SCG realizes that smaller spaces could potentially work, they will revisit the search. Mr. Campbell said he would report back to the Board on SCG's work moving forward, and we could end the school's exclusive agreement with them if the Board finds SCG's work unsatisfactory.

Mr. Campbell also reported that Civic Builders has indicated that if a deal with the Conway building goes through, there will be an initial fee of about \$15,000 for due diligence, which the school will have to pay. As the process moves along, there will also be a fee of approximately \$50,000 for pre-design work. Ms. Chemla asked if Civic Builders would split the costs with the school since they have an interest in the deal progressing, as well. Mr. Campbell explained that the costs to the school reflected only a portion of the total costs, of which Civic

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Builders would take on the larger burden. Mr. Campbell said that he would circulate a document with a list of services that Civic Builders can provide and the costs associated with those services, including a site-search.

Ms. Leverich clarified the time line for the Conway building, should a deal move forward. She said that the site would not be ready until September 2016. The school would still require an incubation space in year one. Mr. Campbell said that he plans to meet with the Archdiocese to explore possible incubation spaces.

Mr. Russell reminded the Board that fundraising will be essential and that the Board has to decide what financial burdens the school should take on with the understanding that the Board will be responsible for raising money to support extra expenses added to the budget.

Principal's Updates

Education Partners

Mr. Campbell reported that conversations with NYU have been going well. He has met with six senior faculty in the Steinhardt School of Education and said that he was pleased to hear some of the faculty from NYU express an interest in being part of the planning stages. The next step will be to speak with the Dean of the Steinhardt School of Education. In the meantime, Mr. Campbell said that he would also meet with other NYU faculty, including the Head of the Special Education department and other Secondary Education faculty.

Mr. Campbell said that Lehman College will be a partner to the school in some way, but it may be to a lesser degree. Lehman may provide a computer science component as part of the college's initiative to provide computer science certificates to teachers. Mr. Campbell repeated that SBECACS is a lead site on a federal grant for which Lehman applied, which includes a cluster of middle schools in the Bronx as program sites. Ms. Chemla said that the partnership with Lehman may be attractive to donors in the tech industry.

Mr. Campbell said that he has also had conversations with Julian Cohen from the NYC DOE to consider ways that SBECACS can partner with the DOE as part of the Middle School Quality Initiative. He also said that this type of partnership may come with capital. There is a meeting scheduled with Mr. Cohen on Friday, October 24th. Mr. Russell will also attend.

Student Recruitment

Mr. Campbell said that he and Cat Eugenio, SBECACS's Program Administrator, attended a District 7 middle school fair. He said that so many families expressed interest in the school that he and Ms. Eugenio ran out of flyers and forms very quickly, but were able to make copies at the school. In total, they collected 83 names and addresses for interested families. He also said that many families said that they have their children in charter elementary schools and want to keep their children in the charter system. Mr. Campbell said that he is also considering ways to attract students whose parents are not already seeking out middle schools for their children. He has met with WHEDco staff to think about ways to tap into their networks and ensure that students with the greatest need are represented in the student body.

Next Board Meeting

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 6th. The Board members should say whether or not they can attend so that an alternative date can be scheduled if necessary.

Meeting Adjourned

The Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:40pm.