**Ascend Charter Schools**

**Meeting of the Board of Trustees**

**May 19, 2021**

**6:15 pm**

**Location:**

**Dial-in**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Trustees in attendance**

Kwaku Andoh (Trustee), Shelly Cleary (Co-treasurer), Amanda Craft (Trustee), Stephanie Mauterstock (Chair), Nadine Sylvester (Trustee), Stanley Taylor (Trustee), Oral Walcott (Trustee) (all via videoconference)

**Ascend staff in attendance**

Tari Ankh, Dominique Artamin, Pascale Artamin, Tracy DeOliveira-Lewis, Recy Dunn, Cathy Jessup, Sophie Kramer, Crystal Lane, Jonathan Masci, Camille McQueen, Anastasia Michals, Aaron Obrochta, Leyde St. Leger, Richard Tucker, Thomas Vitola, Zelda Washington

**Members of the public in attendance**

Gloria Chasseriaud, Shevon Weeks

Stephanie called the meeting to order at 6:20 pm.

1. **Public comment**

There was no public comment.

1. **Public comment update**

No public comment was offered at the prior Board meeting.

1. **Consent agenda**

Stephanie presented to the Board the minutes of the April 21, 2021 meeting. Stanley moved to approve the minutes, Oral seconded and the motion was carried unanimously.

1. **Financial report**

Shelly reviewed with the Board the content of the most recent finance committee meeting. Ascend’s financial performance this year has been strong with revenue and expenses favorable to the budget due to strong enrollment, contingencies in the budget and remote operations. The finance committee has reviewed Ascend’s financial controls, which confirmed that Ascend has the proper checks and balances in place to mitigate future risks.

1. **Schools and network updates**

Sophie provided an update to the Board on spring reopening across schools. 28% of students are now enrolled in in-person schooling, with all schools hosting in-person classes in kindergarten, fifth, ninth, and twelfth grade, and some schools opening in-person sections in additional grades as parent need, building capacity, and staff accommodations allow. Parents, students, and staff are all happy to be back in person, and health and safety procedures are in effect with no evidence to date of any in school transmission of Covid-19. Despite the excitement, operating in person is taxing on our staff who are simultaneously running in-person classes, learning pods, and remote classes. The closure of sections due to positive Covid tests and resulting quarantines is also disruptive to students, families, and staff. Schools have observed an increase in at-risk counseling needs, which is being addressed with additional clinical support.

Aaron provided an update on student recruitment and enrollment. Both DOE and NY-area charter schools are seeing a decline in student applications. Following Ascend’s April lottery, this gap in student applications is manifesting in seat gaps in our lower grades. Our projections have led us to lower our enrollment target, which we are currently projected to fall just short of. We are therefore engaged in a three-pronged strategy of increasing application yield, driving student recruitment, and improving student retention.

Aaron also updated the Board on Ascend’s talent hiring goals for SY21-22. Ascend’s high offer rates and high offer acceptance rates show strong alignment between the recruitment team, principals, and candidates. The challenge, much like with student recruitment, is the low number of applications and fewer teachers entering the talent pool this year. Ascend is leveraging five strategies to drive applications: referrals, internal hiring, partnerships, content, and digital marketing.

1. **Strategic imperatives**

Sophie shared with the Board the revised multi-year strategic imperatives. She presented the imperatives from the last two years, showing their evolution from one year to the next. Next year’s imperatives reflect Ascend’s commitment to honing our student learning model to close the academic and social learning gap created by Covid-19; to building a workplace where all people can thrive, including actualizing Ascend’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism; strengthening the functioning of the AL office; and bolstering our financial foundation to ensure Ascend’s sustainability and support future growth. Ascend staff are writing org-wide goals that will underpin these imperatives.

1. **Executive session (minutes recorded separately)**

At 7:00 pm Amanda moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel matters, namely principal transitions. Shelly seconded the motion, and all Trustees voted in favor and entered executive session.

1. **Exit executive session; resumption of open meeting**

At 7:14 pm Amanda moved to exit exec session, Shelly seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

1. **Adjournment**

At 7:14 pm Oral moved to adjourn the meeting. Nadine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name Date