**Ascend Public Charter Schools**

**Meeting of the School Board of Trustees**

**August 10, 2022**

**6:00 pm**

**Location: Dial-in**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Trustees in attendance**

Emmanuel Fordjour, Gamal Walker, Janai Jeter, Jackie Wilson, Nadine Sylvester, Shelly Cleary, Stanley Taylor (all via videoconference)

**Ascend staff in attendance**

Aaron Obrochta, Anastasia Michals, Carlos Zayas, Danique Day, Emily Acuna, Guy Johnson, Holly Curtis, Inan Barrett, Jennifer Bauer, Jonny Masci, Justin Moorman, Kate McGrath, Maryann Li, Nichole Benjamin, Nina Blalock, Oyindamola Lawal, Raul Ecehverz, Raymond Johnson, Recy Dunn, Tanneka McIntosh, Tenille Faria, Vanessa Aird, Zonya Hicks (all via tele- or videoconference)

**Public in attendance**

Aristha Israel, Autumn Vaughn, Brian Romero, Carolina Aracena, Chakka Assam, Daphne’e Manigat, Evan Coughenour, Fabia Depaula, Fabienne Rolfort, Frantz Louis, Jacinta Nelson, Jean Geraud Pierre, Jerry Charles, Josiely Andrion, Karelyn Hidalgo, Karina Quiceno, Katiana Jules, Kayon MchKenzie, Martin Masse, Martine Masse, Rochelle Dalton, Rose Metellus, Shanise Jenkins, Shaun Pascall, Taifa Johnson, Tricia Knight, Victoria Fleary, Yoanny De Los Santos (all via tele- or videoconference)

Nadine called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

1. **Public comment**

Victoria Fleary, a Brownsville Ascend Middle School parent, shared concerns with the Board about school security, and asked about any future plans to develop a gifted and talented program or to expand student transportation options.

Shanise Jenkins, a Brownsville Ascend Middle School and Brooklyn Ascend High School parent, shared her concerns with the Board about the high school’s capacity and schedule. She asked the Board about funding for extracurricular activities; supports for students’ academic outcomes and post-graduation planning; and teacher retention. She also asked about opportunities for students at the high school to earn college credits.

Shaun Pascall, Jacinta Nelson, and Autumn Vaughn signed up in advance for public comment, but did join the floor when called.

1. **Public comment update**

No public comment was offered at July’s meeting.

1. **Consent agenda**

Stanley presented to the Board the minutes of the July 13, 2022 meeting and executive sessions. Jackie moved to approve the meeting minutes and executive session minutes, Gamal seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

1. **Financial report and covid stimulus funds update**

Shelly summarized the financial highlights from June 2022, which continue to show strong financial performance. Net income is favorable to the budget, and we are tracking favorably against all covenants, SUNY and financial stability metrics.

1. **School reopening**

Recy shared Ascend’s latest promotional video with the Board, which highlights on Ascend’s new purpose, mission, and values statements.

Maryann shared a review of Summer Institute on Danique’s behalf due to technical difficulties. At each Institute, staff had the opportunity to learn and practice community building and problem-solving skills with their colleagues, with an additional focus on instructional and performance management. Leaders also spent time digging into data from Ascend’s work with The New Teacher Project and hearing from Kim Scott, author of *Radical Candor.* The board asked about learnings from institute that will be carried into SY22-23.

Maryann then spoke to the Board about Ascend’s preparation for school reopening. As we enter SY22-23, we are setting ambitious goals for the first 6 weeks of the year, recommitting to Responsive Classrooms, ensuring classroom libraries are well appointed and that tools to connect with families, such as ParentSquare, are high-functioning and being utilized well throughout the year.

In preparation for reopening, operations staff are ensuring that school buildings are ready, training stuff on all school procedures and systems, finalizing student filing and data systems, and working with key food, health, and facilities vendors.

Raul shared a brief real estate update. The future site of Brownsville Ascend Lower School, 1620 Pitkin Avenue, is on track to open in June 2024. The future site of Cypress Hills Ascend Middle School, which is currently co-located with Cypress Hills Ascend Lower School, is on track to open in June 2023. Construction for the future site of Flatbush Ascend Middle School is expected to begin in September.

Maryann discussed SY22-23 student enrollment, which is on track to meet annual goals. The student recruitment and enrollment team is working to align enrollment with teacher hiring.

Maryann then reviewed several technology updates that have been implemented to streamline parent communications and application management; and to improve school connectivity and cybersecurity.

She also reminded the Board that an updated staff handbook was rolled out in July, and announced that HR was able to prepare for benefits open enrollment a month earlier than in past years with additional capacity and expertise through several new hires.

Aaron spoke to the Board about the SY22-23 recruitment season, which has resulted in over 450 hires so far. Anastasia and Zonya, both Managing Directors of schools, spoke about contingency for classroom staffing, sharing that they are confident in current staffing numbers, and that any safety concerns have been addressed through alignment with the student enrollment and talent teams. The Board asked about nationwide talent trends and strategic solutions.

1. **FAMS update**

The Flatbush Ascend Middle School update was skipped for time. Ascend will share the updates with the Board at a future date.

1. **Strategic planning update**

Rochelle Dalton reviewed the goals and deliverables for Phase 1 with the Board and shared a summary of their stakeholder engagement and artifact review thus far.

1. **Executive session: principal hiring**

At 7:10 pm, Stanley moved to enter executive session to discuss legal updates and principal hiring for the 2022-23 school year. Jackie seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

At 7:24 pm, Jackie moved to exit executive session, which Emmanuel seconded and was unanimously approved.

Jackie moved to approve Jahkia Sanders as Principal of Canarsie Ascend Middle School. Nadine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

1. **Adjournment**

At 7:26 pm, Stanley moved to adjourn the meeting, which Jackie seconded and was unanimously approved.

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