**Ascend Charter Schools**

**Meeting of the Board of Trustees**

**July 14, 2021**

**6:00 pm**

**Location:**

**Dial-in**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Trustees in attendance**

Kwaku Andoh (Trustee), Shelly Cleary (Co-treasurer), Emmanuel Fordjour (Trustee), Glenn Hopps (Co-treasurer), Stephanie Mauterstock (Chair), Stanley Taylor (Trustee), Oral Walcott (Trustee) (all via videoconference)

**Ascend staff in attendance**

Jordan Akhurst, Tari Ankh, Danique Day, Recy Dunn, Catherine Jessup, Lauren Kinrich, Sophie Kramer, Leyde St. Leger, Tracy Lewis, Anastasia Michals, Aaron Obrochta, Billie Quigley, Brenda Smith, Richard Tucker, Zelda Washington (all via videoconference or telephone)

Stephanie called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

Stephanie shared with the board the sad news that Christine Schlendorf, long-time ACS Trustee, has passed away after her long battle with cancer. Christine served on the ACS Board for over a decade, contributing enormously to Ascend’s fulfillment of its mission and its growth, particularly through her service on the real estate and finance committees. In January 2021, her foundation—The Peter Schlendorf Foundation—donated $11,000 to fund the Ascend Learning Support Center (the learning pods established at Pitkin during the pandemic). We are deeply grateful for her many years of service and dedication to our Central Brooklyn families. Ascend has written to Christine’s family and shared with them that we will dedicate a room at our Pitkin building in honor of Christine's many years of service to the Ascend community. The Board held a moment of silence.

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 June 23, 2021 meeting and executive session. Shelly moved to approve the minutes, Stanley seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Recy introduced Danique Day, Ascend’s new chief schools officer, to the Board.

1. **Financial report**

Shelly reviewed with the Board the content of the most recent finance committee meeting. Ascend’s financial performance this year continues to be strong with revenue and expenses favorable to budget due to the higher PPA, stronger enrollment, unspent contingencies in the budget, remote operations, and capitalization of tech costs. Ascend’s cash on hand is strong, as are sustainability indicators, covenants, and SUNY metrics.

The finance committee also reviewed the finance team org chart. In addition to the traditional finance responsibilities of accounting and planning analysis, the finance team now includes the legal and real estate functions. The technology team, which had previously resided with finance, has shifted to operations.

The finance committee also discussed allocating the federal Covid stimulus funding that Ascend will receive. Stephanie inquired as to whether Ascend was applying for the emergency connectivity fund, which reimburses schools for technology based on parent need.

1. **Covid stimulus funds**

Cathy updated the Board on Ascend’s approach and plans for the Covid stimulus funding. Ascend is poised to receive $26M in stimulus funds, which will be dispersed in two tranches. Ascend may spend the grant on one of the stated permissible uses, and it must be spent within three years. Ascend has established three priorities for the use of the funds, which are tied to our strategic imperatives: closing the learning gap for all students, supporting our students’ mental health, and making investments to realize our schools and organizations of the future. Several immediate applications of the funding have been identified, including the hiring of a flex teacher at each school, establishing a small group tutoring program, hiring additional clinicians and culture associates, and investing in a social-emotional screener. Ascend is also setting up a process for schools to apply for spending once students have returned and school leaders can best assess their needs. Ascend will report back to the Board regularly on planned initiatives and spending of the funds.

1. **Charter renewals**

Sophie provided an update to the Board on Ascend’s charter renewals. SUNY’s first year visits to EBACS, EFACS and LGACS were interrupted due to the pandemic, so SUNY interviewed staff members this summer in lieu of a traditional first-year visit. In their pre-reads, the Trustees reviewed a letter from SUNY summarizing the interview. Sophie also informed the Board that the Brownsville Ascend charter renewal application is underway and due for submission in mid-August. As a vote of confidence in Ascend, SUNY offered the network the opportunity to align all nine charter renewals on a common cycle. By submitting one renewal application for multiple schools, we would reduce duplicate submissions and the frequency of charter renewal applications.s Ascend’s revised charter renewal schedule would lead to all nine charters being up for renewal in 2024

Stephanie shared with the Board that Amanda Craft will be taking a three-month hiatus from the Board after her decade long service to Ascend.

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

At 6:44 pm Oral moved to enter executive session to discuss pending litigation. Glenn seconded the motion, and all Trustees voted in favor and entered executive session.

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

At 6:52 pm Stanley moved to exit exec session, Glenn seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

1. **Adjournment**

At 6:53 pm Stanley moved to adjourn the meeting. Kwaku seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

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Name Date