



Annual Board Meeting (held via video conference)

DRAFT Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2021

Members Present:

Patricia Sosa, Chair
Brahim Rawi, Vice-Chair
Margaret Yao, Secretary
James Moore, Treasurer
Allison R. Kokkoros, Member
Bo Pham, Member
Vilma Rosario, Member
Hector Torres, Member
Johan Uvin, Member

Members Not Present:

Yeshimebeth Belay (Mama Tutu), Member
Francisco Ferrufino, Member

Staff in Attendance:

Alejandra Amaroli, Communications and Development Manager
Kristine Dunne, General Counsel
Jerry Luna, Chief Financial Officer
Karla Vasconez, Executive Assistant to the CEO

Quorum: Yes

The meeting was called to order at 6:09 PM.

Review of Agenda

Board Chair Patricia Sosa referred to the planned agenda and asked if Board members had any proposed changes to the agenda. No changes were proposed.

Minutes Approval (ROLL CALL VOTE):

Minutes of the Board's annual meeting held on February 3, 2021 were brought forward for approval. Vilma Rosario motioned to approve the minutes, and Bo Pham seconded. The February 2021 Board meeting minutes were approved unanimously by a roll call vote.

CEO Report

CEO Allison Kokkoros thanked everyone for their tremendous work. She began by sharing a mission moment, as we have done before at board meetings. Allison has been visiting virtually with classes and student government throughout the pandemic. She mentioned that students have shared many ideas and had many questions, around reopening in particular. At a recent student government meeting, student Mintwab Tadesse shared. Allison asked if Mintwab would

be willing to share her message at this board meeting, and she agreed. Mintwab Tadesse takes classes at the Harvard Street Campus and is a member of Student Government. She started at the School in Orientation and is now in Level 3. Mintwab's video remarks reflected on her experience of education during the pandemic and how she learned to use technology to make her virtual education easier. She expressed appreciation for her teachers, the Student Services team, and IT staff who have helped her this school year.

Allison provided an overall school update. She mentioned that the School has engaged with the school community in a variety of ways, such as through Fall 2021 Semester planning surveys for all employees and all students. Now that we have received the survey results, the team is going through them to summarize the input to help our fall planning. The School also participated in the second district-wide adult learner survey done in partnership with peer adult charter schools; there were over 4,000 students surveyed city-wide. The surveys have provided important information and has helps us to elevate the voice of DC's adult learners before our policy makers especially during the budget season. Some of the key takeaways from the information gathered from surveys and elsewhere are:

- eagerness to know what next school year is going to look like e.g., whether some or all in-person, hybrid, and virtual.
- suggestions and questions on faculty scheduling and on our safety protocols and safety measures, as we continue to adapt and improve our protocols based on feedback.
- feedback from students that they are prioritizing work at this time and need modified learning schedules to be able to study at this time. This may mean, for example, blended learning, online 2 days a week, to enable students to study.
- Students gained transferable technology skills and increased confidence in technology.

Allison shared that student government members expressed interest in finding a way to hold graduation this year. We are discussing graduation plans for the future, looking into the possibility of holding the event in-person in a safe manner.

The School is strongly encouraging everyone in the school community who is able to get vaccinated to do so as soon as possible. Some student government members are encouraging their fellow students to get vaccinated and elevating obstacles to getting vaccination so they can be addressed systemically. For example, individuals who are turned away for incorrect reasons, such as lack of insurance. With regard to staff vaccinations, our staff in survey responses indicating that 91% of our staff have either been vaccinated or plan to be vaccinated before the start of the fall semester.

Allison shared advocacy priorities. We were able to secure hold-harmless funding for adult schools this year, and we do not yet know about next school year. We are also discussing education options for adult students for next school year, recognizing that adult students may need to attend online if they want to continue their education. It is important that adult schools receive equitable funding for example when it comes to federal pandemic-related funding. We

are also advocating for continuation of the Migration Justice Learning Fund, which provides access to legal services, and the Adult Learner Transportation Subsidy. We are also advocating for access to vaccines.

Allison provided additional school updates including:

- Update on current enrollment (1,755), attendance (71%), and operating status (hybrid mode).
- Update on the School's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) journey, including update on leadership team and staff training.
- Health, Wellness and Safety Updates, including COVID-19 testing pilot and upcoming vaccine clinic.

Board members asked questions about the information shared by the CEO. Hector Torres asked if vaccination will be required for students and staff. Allison responded that at the moment there is not a mandate to be vaccinated for charter schools including adult schools such as ours. We have, however, strongly encouraged and supported students and staff having their vaccine questions answered and taking advantage of the vaccine. We held a vaccine town hall with our staff where we heard from one of the graduates who works at the Washington Center who shared about her initial reluctance to get the vaccine.

Patricia Sosa asked about the attendance rate. Allison explained that the 71% rate is exceeding the expectation of the PCSB. It is slightly lower but in the range that we have seen in the past. Adult education in this context is strong. We make sure to reach out to students to check in and offer supports as needed. Sometimes the students just need a pause for various reasons. We have designed it so that they can come right back when they are ready. This is the approach to support the students to persist in their education, and to eradicate some barriers they might have.

Jim Moore asked if there is a timetable for when OSSE will provide guidelines on adult learning safely coming back in-person. Allison shared that K-12 guidelines were issued a week ago and it highly disincentivizing distance learning (only with a doctor's note). However, there are different considerations for adult education. In terms of timing, Allison thinks that it may be a couple of weeks before we receive that guidance.

Jim also asked how the staff are holding up, including teachers. Allison shared that people are tired, have a lot on their plates and are tired. We seek ways to prioritize what we take on and deprioritize what is not critical. We are having this conversation constantly. We also stood up a health, wellness & community task force, led by talented staff who stood up programs for staff, such as meditation and cooking classes, on Fridays for several months. There was a lot of participation, and we are grateful to the team who led this work. We also set sheltered work time for staff, so that there are scheduled times on Mondays where there are no meetings. People were saying they are in meeting after meeting, and they needed some sheltered time without meetings for their work.

CFO Report

CFO Jerry Luna presented the CFO report. He presented an overview of how we stand for the third quarter of the school year and what we are looking for at the end of the school year.

Overall, there was not a big change in financial standing from second quarter to third quarter. We are still over budget for revenue, approximately, half a million dollars and we are also under budget for expenses, but we are projecting for the current school year to be over revenue by \$600,000. We received a substantial amount in federal funding, approximately \$1 million. This is more than in the past, so the overall revenue picture is much better than we anticipated.

Expenses we are running about \$415,000 below budget. Overall, we are expected to be under budget by \$750,000 for the whole year.

Jerry shared that everything is trending better than was anticipated at the beginning of the school year. Having a virtual space has meant lower expenses, less security, less printing. We also had a hiring freeze in effect. We do not expect any significant differences between now and the end of the school year. Overall, we expect to have a positive change in net income. As a reminder, the School has substantial liquid access, approximately \$21 million, which represents 255 days of cash on hand. As a note, our cash balance is always highest in the first quarter because we get paid at the beginning of the fiscal year and we get less as the year goes on. That is how payments from the DC Public Charter School Board work.

Brahim Rawi shared that in his service on the Finance Committee, he believes the School's financial health looks good. The Finance Committee met with Jerry Luna and reviewed the finances, including the 2020 budget. Jim More added that the Finance Committee met and discussed the School's investment portfolio, and that our investments have performed very well.

Break:

There was a 10-minute meeting break.

Committee Updates

Strategic Planning & Oversight Committee

Committee Chair Johan Uvin shared that the committee met with the Principals HollyAnn Fresno-Moore and Karen Rivas and Director of Learning & Evaluation Lynold McGhee.

Johan shared that at its first meeting the committee began by reviewing its designated functional areas and selecting a chair. The committee's two main functions are organizational strategic plan and school performance oversight. They spent most of the time discussing the SY2020-2021 including school performance. They also heard more about what the School looks like today, including what are the virtual and in-person activities, what type of supports are available for students, and areas of integrated support services. They received an excellent presentation from the staff that shared the central issues in the life of our students: e.g., issues related to the pandemic or triggered by the pandemic such as unemployment, health, mental, wellbeing challenges, anxiety, depression. They talked about the challenges at each campus and overall.

For one of the campuses, the transition to post-secondary education for some students is not as easy or straightforward as it was pre-pandemic. Then they did a deep-dive into performance issues, mostly focusing on what the District has decided to do around performance, which is that they intend to use a 3-year, 3 phase process on putting in place a new way of thinking about performance for charter schools, in other words to move toward a new accountability system based on the input from the different charter schools. There would be internal data collection in the 21-22 school year that will only be shared to schools, and no public release of data. In a second phase which will be school year 22- 23, data will be collected and shared but without school rating. The third phase will be before implementation of this new accountability framework and will take place in the 23-24 school year with an anticipated release date in fall 2024. There will be many opportunities for the team to provide input and feedback to school leaders and officials from the district around measures we believe are appropriate.

As for the current year, there is a good understanding by the District of data collection challenges and some flexibility has been provided around that as it pertains to specific goals and targets that were set not knowing the significant impact that the pandemic would have on participation, attendance, performance, etc.

Lastly, Johan shared an update on the strategic plan. In early 2020 the School started a process of visioning for creation of a new strategic plan with all faculty sessions. We had planned a May 2020 strategic plan kickoff with the board and staff, then as we all know this was curtailed by COVID-19. The current thinking is to gather a strategic planning steering task force consisting of staff and board members for a meeting this July and develop a work plan containing information and data to develop strategic planning or refresher of the current strategic plan. We anticipate a three-month data collection. The committee is considering a strategic plan Board retreat likely in October and then would begin the writing of the plan in November with Board review and approval in December 2021 with the plan going into effect in early 2022. He emphasized that there will be full alignment and integration of all the DEI work with the School's strategic plan.

Margaret Yao noted that we are going through transition and at this time it is an important time to be on top of the changes. She also shared that the strategic planning process will have a fairly quick timeline following the delay due to COVID-19 but that we now have an appropriate way to put the new strategic plan in place.

Finance & Development Committee

Committee Chair Brahim Rawi shared that the committee met with CFO Jerry Luna and discussed 4 main points:

1. Third quarter financial report that was shared with the committee.
2. IRS Form 990, which the members of the Board of Trustees each received.
3. Update on the Harvard street lease between the School and its supporting organization, Community Capital Corporation (CCC). Brahim was pleased to share the good news that CCC secured its first of two 10-year extensions on the prime lease with the District of

Columbia. The two organizations are working together now to have the new sublease in effect by July 1st.

4. Fiscal 2022 budget process, including discussion about potential revenue shortfall.

Jerry Luna then provided a financial overview. He shared with the Finance Committee the financial flows we are looking at for FY 2022. Jerry shared about this year's internal budgeting process, including himself, the Chief Human Resources Officer, and IT Governance Director meeting with every budget manager to better understand how each program has evolved, to see how it has changed and adapted it, and how they see it for next year in a potentially hybrid environment. We have seen how the demand of the program impacts staffing and technology needs. Jerry indicated that the meetings were very fruitful, and he is sharing high level information about the financial forecast. Changes we anticipated for FY 2022 are going to be more challenging. If we do not receive the hold-harmless funding, we may be looking at a significant decrease in enrollment which means a significant decrease in revenue. There are some mitigating factors to take into consideration, one of them is that the Mayor has proposed a 3.6% increase in the per pupil increase. We understand that there is \$1.4 million of ESSR funding that has been allocated for the School. We are in the process of finalizing the sublease renewal for the Harvard Street Campus and believe we will be able to reduce that lease cost (most of the reduction falls in the fact that the interest expense CCC paying went down from \$750,000 less a year when refinanced last year. The interest they are paying on that loan is 1.795% (low)). Personnel increases last year were frozen. We do need some capacity building and have some personnel needs. Could possibly increase revenue from students perhaps through some type of technology fee, since we spend so much on computers and things like that. Overall, what you are seeing here is a \$4 million drop in revenue. This is essentially as the worst case. As Brahim mentioned, when we are looking at revenue, we like to see a big chunk of numbers. So, when we look into revenue, we are looking at per pupil enrollment because that represents 96% or \$28 million of revenue, so if we could focus on increasing enrollment, every 100 people that we enroll above 1700 is an additional \$1.5 million that we do not need to make up. Obviously if we do not do any increases that eliminate a million dollars. We have 1400 people in our interest list that we need to work through and see what the conversion is, basically how many people out of the list become students. Jerry shared that we will have that data as we move to our new SIS system in July, but wanted to make sure the Board understands the high-level situation we are in and try to identify strategies. We do not know if the drop in enrollment is temporary (for COVID, or other factors) or if it is an actual structure in the enrollment. We need to be cognitive of this as we have learned that many students have left DC for various reasons. Locally we have plenty of financial resources available, including our investments which have grown \$10 million this year. Additionally, we have \$4 million to cover the gap for this year. If it is a structural gap and we find ourselves with the same numbers, we will have to consider other measures to make sure expenses align with revenue.

Brahim asked if we could invest in staff to support working on the student waiting list. Allison agreed that we have to be investing in our most key strategic priority areas and building the capacity that we need as a team for the future and for creating the future that we need. She shared

that there is an opening right now for Outreach and Recruitment. We are in the process of getting interim support. In addition, our Human Resources team have put together a supplemental staff initiative where staff within the organization whose normal duties were curtailed because of the pandemic have been detailed to where the School needed them. Examples include people helping to distribute food, calling students to check-in and ask if they need supports or resources, helping with outreach and recruitment. In addition to hiring a new permanent full-time person we have fantastic supplemental staff. The communication and development team has also been short staffed. Everybody realizes that it is a key priority to stand up a full team to be in place to maintain our social media presence and get information out from students.

Jerry shared that another area we could focus on is development. He suggested looking at student retention data, understand what motivates people to come or not, and consider role that would focus on recruitment retention and registration since it makes up 96% of our revenue source. This year will be an inflection point for us because if in fact it is a structural issue we need to better focus and understand the population demands and better structure what we need to do. Allison plans to report back at the next regular board meeting on how we have done on structuring our capacity to meet the present need. Johan also suggested checking federal (U.S. Census Bureau) or DC government for data on the last five years' community survey data on commuting patterns, including migration into and out of the city. Margaret noted that this is the kind of data that the Strategic Planning & Oversight Committee would look at.

DEI Task Force

DEI Task Force Chair Jim Moore started by reminding the Board how we came to the DEI and now Belonging – so will be known as the “DEIB” Task Force. It goes back a couple of years, looking at what was happening, the political climate was for immigrants, and stress and pressures our staff and students were experiencing because of that pressure. At the time we decided to look at how we structure the organization, so that it addresses the issues of DEI and helping students prepare and prepare staff to help the students prepare for life in America. We hired consultants and they presented a report on March 31st. We had the chance to review the summary of the report. The reason the Board is engaged in this is that we see this is important. We see ourselves in the early days of this work that will be an ongoing part of our school community. There is no expiration or end date, it will become a permanent part of what we do. As a result, we have this task force that helps to monitor and holds leadership accountable to make this work happen. The task force put together a memo for the Board and want to thank Margaret for doing that. We are now ready to circulate something to the school community and express where we stand as a Board and how we want to treat this work.

Jim noted that the Board went through its own training and the next step is engaging with the staff working group. Jim also shared highlights from the consultants' report including recommendations to the School.

Johan shared that the idea of embedding this work as part of the overall curriculum that will define the learning experience for students at the School is a really powerful one. Our students will not only be people with better language skills but also become ambassadors and change agents for a more inclusive community and society as well.

Margaret noted that the DEIB work is really complex and nonlinear; it requires everybody to lean into discomfort. She expressed gratitude that the work is proceeding and that it is a priority of the School even if it is at a slower pace. It is the connecting tissue of the school, its values, how it lives them, and learns and grows. Vilma agreed that we can learn from each other as a diverse immigrant community. Patricia recognized that it is not an easy process and you cannot speed it up. Hector also noted that sometimes in this work people can grow impatient, and it is important to communicate clearly the vision and plan, and so that people understand the progress that is being made. Jim summed up by saying there is no destination here, rather we are on a long complex journey and there will be different roads, we will back up and turn around, back the other way. He also noted that our school presents an amazing opportunity as a multicultural, multiethnic, community that can create an environment that not only benefits the school but benefits the larger Washington community.

Allison also noted that the senior leadership team is guiding and driving the DEIB work, and the Board needs to hold the team accountable for it along with the CEO. Allison shared that there are staff who are knowledgeable and have lived experiences, and are ready, willing and able to be part of this work, and that she believes that they will be crucial in this work and will help us move forward more quickly. There are ways of doing that, as the DEIB facilitators recommended that it be done together; up, down and meet in the middle so that this work can be integrated. Organizations that are doing this in the most sustained way have done it this way. The second point she made was that we had focus groups with students as part of the DEI consultants' planned work. She wanted to emphasize that it is crucial to involve the students, in particular student government and facilitators, as we move forward, and help them roll up their sleeves too in this work.

Governance & Nominating Committee

Committee Chair Vilma Rosario shared that Board member Francisco Ferrufino has resigned from the Board to focus on his small business and family. We will miss Francisco very much. He has been an active member of the Board and will continue to be a much-loved member of the School community as an alumnus of the School. There was recognition of Francisco's service to the School, including as a Board member. Francisco will be receiving a plaque commemorating his service for the School. Allison also shared pictures of Francisco's work with the School. She also shared his message of appreciation to the Board and regrets that he could not join the meeting today to deliver them in person.

Vilma shared that the Committee will be going through the process of nominating a board member to fill Francisco's vacant seat. The seat will be filled by a student consistent with the School's Bylaws, which means a current student. The Committee will soon be sharing

information with School leadership and student government on the nominations process. Ultimately the Committee will bring to the full Board a nomination for consideration.

The Committee is also finalizing a proposal for having a public comment period at future board meetings. They hope to implement it later this year.

Lastly, the Committee has a draft of standard operating procedures for reviewing conflicts of interest. The Committee will review the draft standard operating procedures and bring them to the full Board for consideration.

Patricia thanked all of the committees for their reports and recognized their hard work as a volunteer board.

Closed Session (ROLL CALL VOTE)

The Board did not hold a closed session as had been indicated in the Planned Agenda.

New Business

No new business was raised by Board members.

Adjourn

Patricia Sosa adjourned the meeting at 8:09 PM.

Minutes prepared by Karla Vasconez, Executive Assistant to the CEO.

Respectfully submitted by Margaret Yao, Board Secretary