

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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PARENT REPRESENTATIVES

Dana Espinosa, Secretary
Jessica Garcia, Member

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MEETING MINUTES

Location: Zoom.us – Meeting ID: 89930681815

Monday, October 16, 2023

Board Members Present: Dr. Nelson Flores, Dr. Joseph DuCette, Donna Nuccio, Dana Espinosa,, Ashley Feuer-Edwards, Jessika Garcia

Board Members Absent: Hector Guzman, Caroline Gorman

Quorum Established: Yes

Others Present: Dr. Darcy Russotto, CEO; Wendy Jackson, Assistant Principal; Robin Eglin, President, Omninvest, LLC; Evaleen DeMarco, Director of Strategic Initiatives; Dr. Joshua Fineberg, Director of Student Services; Karen Keppel, Teacher Representative; Renee Burgos, Teacher Representative

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 4:36pm.

Public Testimony

No Public Comment

School Connection

Keppel discussed the first School Advisory Committee meeting of the year, which was spent outlining formalities. There are new members on the committee this year. The Committee highlighted the new addition of CARE team staff, which support students that require extra support in behavior management. The CARE staff provide assistance with students that tend to elope from class, help students regulate their behavior, at times, de-escalating issues – ultimately, providing a helpful transition for such students back into the classroom. Espinosa inquired on how helpful is SAC in giving teachers’ a voice. As her second year serving on SAC, Keppel responded that the Committee is helpful in resolving school-wide issues and is still in the process of navigating what items should and should not be discussed as a Committee. While staff members do reach out with concerns, Keppel adds that it would be a great idea to have a method that keeps inquiries anonymous – as some staff members would be more inclined to share anonymously. Flores would like to see a strategic plan on how teacher voices are incorporated.

Governance

MOTION to APPROVE meeting minutes for 9/18/23 by Flores, seconded by DuCette. Garcia abstains.

Governance Committee Update: The Board will be using the BoardonTrack platform to support board management and governance coaching. BoardonTrack was chosen as the best platform as it is tailored to support Charter Schools. Flores was able to negotiate a discount as well.

Flores shares that a list for potential candidates has been created, but the Board will be taking a pause to fill member vacancies in order to allow time for a diverse pool of candidates. Flores thanks the Board members for their recommendations and continues to ask them to send candidates keeping diversity in mind. In thinking about preparations for the High School, preliminary discussions to expand the Board have been held. Additional board positions may be needed and such vacancies will need to be filled sooner than later. Referring to a robust list of candidates will support immediate fill-ins.

Audit and Finance Committee Update: Team members met to discuss what the financial section of the meetings should look like, which will include monthly reviews as usual and deep dives for quarterly reviews – aiming for reporting that is thought-provoking. Currently working on staff projections – several positions are ESSER funded, which will be impacted when the funding ends.

Staff Engagement Committee Update: Espinosa and Garcia met with Mason and Elzy Muñoz, DEIB Co-Chair to discuss current and future engagement activities. The school currently does monthly mailbox treats, coffee carts on Mondays and Thursdays, birthday shoutouts, bulletin board employee recognition and monetary awards for good attendance. In addition, monthly staff meetings always make time for gratitude and shoutouts. Mason would love the support in managing the coffee cart and perhaps a monthly treat of pastries along with the coffee cart. Ideas brainstormed: personalized k-cups, onsite massages, grilling (Espinosa volunteered her husband), help with teacher appreciation, providing lunch on PD days – next one on November 27th (Garcia is reaching out to a contact for La Cocinita, a food truck specializing in Puerto Rican/Mexican Cuisine), letters of appreciation by Board members for individual staff members to be shared in all-staff meetings, etc. The school is also hoping to receive support with its parent engagement group, which started last year called PEAK. PEAK recently held its first independent fundraiser and the school is currently working on assisting them with an email and bank account.

Finance

Review of the September financials provided by Robin Eglin. Current Ratio: 5.04; Cash on Hand: 84.21(PASS) Debt Ratio: 0.75; Total Margin: -48.39%; Lease Coverage Ratio: .65 – FAIL. Special Education Tuition was below budget by \$320K. Omninvest is working on reconciling the special education counts as tuition enrollment was not up to date and did not include special education students in Kindergarten. If requisite reports are not updated on a regular basis, SDP will not provide payment.

Development

DeMarco provides an update on grants, partnerships and developments. Currently working on a food service grant to replace kitchen equipment and continuing work on the playground equipment grant.

Our partner, TFA, held a celebration for Reading Promise Week, which was open to the public and our school community. It was well attended and successful.

\$7300 has been fundraised through various activities. The school will be hosting charitable events to support Breast Cancer Awareness, Homelessness Awareness and the school's Annual Angelitos de Cristal to support families in need during the holidays.

School Report

Russotto presents the Comprehensive Plan, which is due to the State. PDE has reviewed the plan prior to its submission and has provided feedback. A quick overview of the goals were provided. The school will be working with Innovageous for MTSS and Jounce for its Math curriculum as well as Great Minds to support the overall implementation of curriculum. Virtual tutoring such as Hey Tutor is also being explored to support student learning and maximizing WIN periods for student growth. In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, other plans to be reviewed and provided are the Induction Plan and the Professional Development Plan, which has to be based on the Danielson framework. The school's requirements for Academic Standards and Assessments and Student Services must also be submitted. The Comprehensive Plan must be posted for 28 days for public opinion.

Espinosa asks for more information on how the school will work on its SEL goal. DESSA will be used as a screening tool to measure emotional wellness throughout eight domains. Students in middle school will be using Navigate360 which provides lessons on how to to help them understand and improve emotional wellness.

High School Planning

Russotto provides a quick overview of the high school planning process. The school has an allotted budget and is researching what areas consultants can support in the planning process. A timeline has been established – board members are asked to review the timeline and areas where they can lend support. The letter of intent will be due within a year and the application will be due November 2024. A kickoff meeting will be held to share the application process with staff. Russotto is working on IB Programme needs as well. The school will host engagement activities and other opportunities specifically for parents to provide feedback and support with signatures.

The first draft will be presented July 2024, with rewrites August through September. SDP is hosting informational sessions in September, which will be followed by the submission of the letter of intent in October. Public hearings will be held in December 2024 and January 2025. Given the approval rate by SDP, the school has a backup plan in the event an approval of the high school application is not granted.

Guzman is excited about the potential in workforce programming and partnering with Congreso to support the connection. Espinosa can provide perspective as a parent with children that have graduated from the school. Espinosa and Garcia also have children currently enrolled at the school who can potentially attend the high school. Flores asks Russotto to tag board members to specific areas they can participate and contribute to the process. Espinosa would love to hear more about the vision and goal and Flores adds that understanding the vision and goal will help in building support and momentum.

Entered into EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 6:05 PM to review and discuss personnel, compensation matters, and student disciplinary matters. Returned to REGULAR SESSION at 6:36 PM.

Action Items

- MOTION to APPROVE New Hires (Terrell Williams, Jade Robbins, Brenda Valles, Jeilyn Mariano Castro, Glorimar Green, Sarah Martinez, Sharra Hamric) by Flores, seconded by DuCette. Motion passed.
- MOTION to APPROVE Personnel Salaries by Flores, seconded by Feuer-Edwards. Motion passed.
- MOTION to APPROVE Stipend Agreements by Flores, seconded by Nuccio. Motion passed.
- MOTION to APPROVE Salary Adjustments by Flores, seconded by Espinosa. Motion passed.
- MOTION to RATIFY Employee Termination by Flores, seconded by Ducette. Motion passed.
- MOTION to APPROVE ScanTek Proposal by Flores, seconded by Feuer-Edwards. Motion passed.
- MOTION to APPROVE BoardonTrack Agreement by Flores seconded by Espinosa. Motion passed.
- MOTION to RATIFY Exude Contract for Employee SEL Training by Flores, seconded by DuCette. Motion passed.
- MOTION to RATIFY Exude Contract for HR Support Services by Flores, seconded by Feuer-Edwards. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:32 PM.

Minutes recorded by: Lisandra Kelly