Lorna James-Cervantes, President Miriam Benitez, Executive Director

Dr. Alain Bengochea, Secretary

Jamie Gonzales, Treasurer

Nicole Thompson, Officer

Dachresha Harris, Officer

Dr. Alee Moore, Officer

Astrid Angulo, Officer

Meli Pulido, Officer

**Strong Start Academy Elementary School Board Meeting Minutes**

**September 14th, 2023**

**5:00 PM**

**CLV Strong Start Academy Elementary Schools, Inc. Board Meeting – September 14th, 2023**

Lorna: Good evening, everybody. I think we've started the recording. This is a Lorna James-Cervantes. And we'll go ahead and call the meeting to order. Right now, it's 5:02. And we'll call to order the meeting of Strong Start Academy Elementary School Board. So thank you all for being here tonight.

At this time, I'll record the attendance. This is Lorna James-Cervantes. Jaime Gonzalez?

Jaime: Present.

Lorna: Astrid Angulo.

Astrid: Present.

Lorna: Meli Pulido. I think she's in the process of logging in. We'll come back to her. Alain Bengochea.

Alain: Present.

Lorna: Nicole Thompson.

Nicole: Present.

Lorna: Dachresha Harris.

Dachresha: Present.

Lorna: Alee Moore. Not present. And I know that Meli Pulido is right now currently in the process of logging in, so I'm sure she'll join us momentarily. All right, we'll go ahead to item number 1C, this is public comment. Comment during this portion of the agenda must be limited to matters on the agenda for action. If you wish to be heard, come forward and give your name for the record. The amount of discussion as well as the amount of time any single speaker is allowed will be limited to two minutes absent board approval. Public comment may also be given by calling 1-415-655-0001 and entering access code number 25996054045 followed by the hashtag.

Is there any public comment at this time?

Woman: No.

Lorna: I don't see any in the room. And was there any sent in electronically?

Woman: No, Lorna.

Lorna: Okay. Thank you very much. All right. At this time, we'll move to item... Is it possible for us to approve both sets of agenda...both sets of minutes from our last meeting and the board retreat as one item?

Colleen: Colleen McCarty, Board Counsel. That's fine.

Lorna: Okay, thank you. So I hope you all had the opportunity to review both sets of minutes from our last meeting on August 22nd, as well as our board retreat. And if that is the case and somebody would like to move that we approve those minutes as written, we'd appreciate that motion at this time. Or if there are any comments or needs for revision, please let us know at this time.

Jaime: This is Jaime Gonzalez for the record. I move that we approve the minutes for the last board meeting of August 22nd as well as the board offsite from August 22nd as well.

Lorna: Thank you. Is there a second to that motion?

Dacresha: Dacresha Harris for the record. I second.

Lorna: Thank you all those in favor?

Jaime: Aye.

Woman: Aye.

Woman: Aye.

Woman: Aye.

Lorna: Any opposed? Okay, that motion is passed. And at this time, both sets of those minutes are approved for posting. We'll move to item F at this time. This is our introduction of our official new board member, Astrid Angulo, who is the mayor's designee and was recently appointed at the Las Vegas City Council to a two-year term ending September 6th, 2025.

Astrid, we wanna welcome you to the board and thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this work. Would you like to just briefly introduce yourself to the group?

Colleen: Just tell us who you are, like, recording. Oh, just say your name for the record.

Astrid: Astrid for the record. Sure. Well, I'm Astrid, and I have my child in the Strong Start Academy. And I'm here to replace the past... What's it called?

Lorna: Board member.

Astrid: Parent member, which was Heather Nay. And thank you so much.

Lorna: You're welcome. Thank you, Heather. Sorry, I said Heather and I meant Astrid. I apologize. Astrid, we welcome you to the board and we know that you'll be a beneficial member to our group. So thank you for being here.

Our next item on the agenda is section two finance and it's a report by Kristin Dietz from EdTec on budget and financial reports, including the CSP grant. So, Kristin, we'll turn the floor over to you at this time.

Kristin: Okay. I think I...

Miriam: Miriam Benitez for the record. Kristin was... We were having a little technical difficulty getting her the information to log on right now. Oh, there she is. [crosstalk 00:05:29]

Kristin: I think I'm here. Yeah, for some reason I had a delay. I don't know what was going on, but I'm here now. So...

Lorna: You're right on time, Kristin. Thank you so much and we're ready for your report.

Kristin: Great. Thank you so much. This is Kristin Dietz for the record. And let me see here if I can share my screen. Here we go. Okay. So we have the financial report with the year-end actuals for last year and then I have a forecast update for you. Last month, I also showed the year-end financials, and this is just a bit of a repeat and a little bit more accurate information. So we finally did close the year and we've provided all of the information to the auditors at this point. So I just wanted to share with you all what was provided as the final numbers.

So then let me get to slide four. This is our year-end final net income for fiscal year '22,'23, and it ended with net income of $623,262. So quite a bit stronger than what we had originally budgeted and the main drivers of that were really just additional grant funding that came from the city.

And then overall, because it was our first year of operations, the entire budget that was approved originally was all assumptions. We really didn't know what things were going to look like until we got into the school year. So a lot of changes happened. We did have a couple of revisions during the year, but overall total expenses in several areas came in under what was budgeted. So we saw some nice savings there.

But we're going into this year with a really strong reserve of just over $1.4 million, which is about a 58% reserve. And you'll see that reflected in the balance sheet and the cash balance as being really strong at the end of the year.

Here's the history of what happened with cash for fiscal year ended '22,'23. We ended with $1,405,000 in cash, which is 202 days cash on hand. So really strong. And it's just so nice to see a school that has strong cash reserves because it really does zap into the school leaders' energy when it's not strong and it takes a lot of effort to manage cash. And so I just am so happy that the school did not have to deal with that at all this last year. And hopefully won't have to this coming year either.

The balance sheet, we ended with $1,682,000 in total assets. And you can see the majority of that was cash at the $1,405,000. We had about $228,000 in accounts receivable, which includes those revenues that were earned, but not yet received as of the end of the year. And we had some prepaid expenses in there as well. We had some other assets, just some kind of small amounts there. And then we did have some liabilities, which represented expenses for last fiscal year that were not paid until after June. So really just timing issues there.

But overall, really strong balance sheet for the year. Does anyone have any questions before I move on to the forecast for the current year? Okay. So seeing that I will continue on with the presentation and talk a little bit about the current year that we are now in.

So this is just a little bit of an updated timeline of how things have been happening for the school. We had to do a preliminary budget back in March, April timeframe, and we submitted that to the authorizer in mid-April. And then we continued to refine the budget and we then had the board approve a final budget for fiscal year '24, in May. And that was presented to the authorizer by the June 8th due date.

And then after that point, the state approved their budget. So when we had the original budget, final budget approved, we still had many unknowns, including what the revenue rates were going to be from the state. So now that we have all of that information and the state has finalized the revenue rates for the year, we now are doing forecast updates each month as we move through the year.

So that's where we are right now and wanted to just go quickly over a couple of changes that you will see in the forecast at this point. So, in terms of enrollment, we originally budgeted for 180 students and our current forecast is at 155 and we will continue to refine that as we move through the year. We are waiting to see what the count day numbers are because those do influence the federal grant information that we get for the title funding and everything. It's all...the demographic numbers there will influence that. So, for now, we have 155 students in the forecast.

And then in terms of the state revenue rates, we had originally budgeted for $8022 per student for the base funding and the state approved a rate of $8966. So we got a nice increase there in our state funding, which is really good.

And then we did have a number of expenses and revenues related to the CSP grant and a couple of other grants that carried over into this year. So whatever we didn't spend last year, both the revenues and the expenses are carrying over into this new year. So we had an increase in CSP and a couple of other federal grants and then we have corresponding increases in expenses related to those grants.

In terms of other expenses, the staff adjustments that we're seeing, those were almost entirely grant-funded staff positions. So we do see an adjustment in payroll expenses that are tied to the grants that we have.

So, here is our current forecast and I did note here it's in draft form and we're still in the process of reviewing, but I wanted to get something to the board just so you could see some of the big changes that have happened since the board approved the budget back in June or May.

So right now, we are looking at total revenue of $3,592,000. While we had an increase in the revenue rates, the drop in enrollment created a reduction in state revenues. So we do overall have about a $60,000 reduction in state revenue. And then on the federal revenue side, this $385,000 is almost entirely the CSP and the other federal grants that carried over and we have related expenses included down below.

So we're looking right now based on very preliminary forecast results. We're looking at a deficit of about $106,000. But as I mentioned, Miriam and I definitely need to sit down and go line by line through this and it will be helpful to see what the final count day numbers are so that we can incorporate those changes as well. But even with this deficit here, we're looking at a very, very strong year and reserves of over $1.3 million.

And this next slide shows our grants that are included for the fiscal year '24 and what was spent to date on the big federal grant is included here. And then at the end of July, we had $121,000 in CSP expenses that were pending receipt. This still continues to take a little while to get this funding, but the other federal grants, the titles, and the AB495 and the ARP ESSER, those are all coming in a lot faster than they were previously, so that's really been helpful. But we are starting to see spending. And just today, I am submitting about $26,000 in expenses for items that were federal grant funded during the months of July and August.

And this next slide here just shows the summary of the CSP grant and we're spending on track. We've got $481,000 of the grant has been spent and we've got $269,000 or 36% of the grant remaining. And we do have until the end of the fiscal year to spend this money. So I don't see any issue with the school's plans to do so. And they do have the ability to move within the budget categories if it makes sense to do so.

So I think that is pretty much all I wanted to share today. If anybody has any questions, I'd be happy to try to answer them for you.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you, Kristin. We appreciate the report. Are there questions or comments from any of the board members at this time? This is Lorna. Kristin, you've already turned over all of the information to our auditors that they need based on the previous year, correct?

Kristin: Correct.

Lorna: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions or comments for Kristin? Okay, seeing none. Kristin, I really appreciate you being here with us and all of the help that you have given Miriam this past year, and will continue to do so in the coming year. And we do appreciate that. And appreciate you being here tonight.

And with that, we can move to finance item B, which is human resources consulting. And this item is for discussion and possible action to approve the retention of the human resources consultant to advise the executive director regarding human resource matters at a cost not to exceed $10,000 annually and to authorize the president to take all necessary actions related thereto.

I will just say that this item I brought forward based on the fact that we know that Miriam not having any HR services is not the best use of her time a lot of times. And also, she needs the assistance of somebody with expertise in HR services to help her with things such as staff discipline, family medical leave. She's got a couple of teachers right now who are expecting babies. So we need assistance with making sure all of the proper procedures are followed with regard to these items and also making sure that we are maintaining compliance with any federal or state laws with regard to human resources.

I put it on originally for $10,000. That may or may not be enough. So I think what I'd like to do is open the floor for any discussion from board members and ask what would we be comfortable spending in order to hire somebody to help Miriam with this work. Are we comfortable with hiring somebody to help her with this work? I'll open the floor at this time.

Dacresha: Dachresha Harris for the record.

Lorna: Go ahead, Dacresha.

Dacresha: I understand that there's a urgent need. Do we recall how much we were paying the previous human resources consulting firm? Because $10,000 for a year just doesn't really sound like enough money.

Lorna: This is Lorna. I don't think it was much over the $10,000. However, they did very little to assist her, which is why we're no longer using them. We have looked into some other companies that have been highly recommended that are coming out closer to $30,000 a year. So I think we could provide a range of what would be a comfortable amount, or just say not to exceed a higher amount if we felt that that was necessary. But with it being over the $10,000 limit, this has to be a board action.

Dacresha: Dachresha Harris for the record. So was there any room for negotiation with those companies that had such... I wasn't thinking that much either.

Colleen: Colleen McCarty, Board Counsel. So I spoke to a woman who's got a company here in town that does this kind of stuff who came recommended me through another attorney I work with who does charter school work. And what they do is they initially come in and do an audit, which I think is great because I think we definitely need that. And just tell us where we are, what we need to have, what we don't have. And then she said, you know, for employers about the same size as us... What are we, Miriam, 17?

Miriam: We are right at about up to 20.

Colleen: So for employers about that size, they typically charge $2,500 a month flat rate. I don't think Miriam's going to need them all that often, which is what I told her. And she said, "Well, you know, we could come in and do the audit, and then we could try it on an hourly basis and see sort of where you land." But the hourly was, like, $250 an hour, which I think is high. So, you know, but that was just one company.

I think we need to identify maybe three so that we get an idea. The previous consulting firm that we contracted with, they were only $6,000 for the year, but they were awful, and they didn't do anything for us. So, you know, I want to make sure. And it's up to you guys obviously, but, you know, from the legal perspective, I'd like to have someone who has boots on the ground here in town.

Dacresha: Dacresha Harris for the record. Is that... I'm comfortable with, I don't know how much...if there was a breakdown of how much that audit costs, but $250 an hour doesn't sound like a lot to me, to be honest when you're talking about a consultant coming in to assist, and maybe it's something that we could try for a year. You know, again, I agree we need multiple companies to make sure that we're getting the best bang for our buck, but I know it's kind of been difficult, even when I've asked some of my peers, or some, you know, agencies that just do HR consulting work.

Most of the people I know are retired and travel, so they wouldn't be available to you like you would need them to be. But I understand, again, just the urgent need for, and the audit sounds amazing, because, after the retreat, I am a little concerned, you know, that there may be other areas where we may have slipped, and we want to make sure that we're in compliance with all legal regulations. So, yeah, that would be nice.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Dachresha, I thank you for your input on that and I agree with you that no matter what firm we would use that an audit of this type should be a part of the services that we request. So I think that should be one of our look-fors in whoever we hire and we should, you know, look at a few other companies, you know, two to three more companies to see where we would get the best benefit.

But with the urgency, I think it would be important for us to have the opportunity just to... You know, I could work with Miriam and, you know, if one of the other board members wanted to help out with that, we could, but we just want her to have the opportunity to look out for companies and I agree with everything that you've said.

Are there any other comments? And I noticed that Kristin is still on with us and I appreciate that. Because, Kristin, you know, looking at the financial impact, could you give the board any kind of advice as far as an amount that we could be fiscally responsible with within our budget as well?

Kristin: I can review it tomorrow with Miriam in our check-in and maybe take a look, but I don't feel comfortable coming up with something right now.

Lorna: No, not on the spot but if you could help her out with that, I think we would appreciate it. And this is Lorna, by the way.

Kristin: Yes.

Lorna: Yeah, thank you.

Jaime: Jaime Gonzalez for the record. Do we know what other charter schools, if they use and if so, who they use for HR services?

Colleen: I've got another attorney I can reach out to also and see who they're using. You know, many... Sorry. Colleen McCarty, Board Counsel. Many of the charter schools in town are under what they call charter school management organizations, and they have, you know, HR services and one hub for all the schools. So I don't know if any of them are using anyone local. I really like having someone here that, you know, could even just come, and walk the school and get an idea of what we do. But I've got another...I know another friend of mine who's on a charter board and I'll ask her who they're using too and see if we can get a couple more names.

Miriam: Miriam Benitez for the record. I have the name of another company or a resource, I should say. And the difference there that we had talked about is it's like almost a online and you're provided with documents and with everything you need, but still not a person to handle HR-type things. So that's why that's helpful, but we need someone that that's their wheelhouse.

Jaime: Sure. Jaime Gonzalez for the record. That sounds very transactional. It sounds like you need someone to consult [inaudible 00:24:41]. So, Jaime Gonzalez for the record. There's one firm that's been contacted, the one that was... Was it $2500 a month? So that's the 30k?

Colleen: Right.

Jaime: Is that, like, a full-time access to Miriam?

Colleen: Yeah, she can call whenever she needs something.

Jaime: I think 30k for an HR professional, if you just sort of work it out, I think that's cheap at half the price.

Colleen: Yeah, it's just a function of... Colleen McCarty, Board Counsel. I don't... You know, unless something drastically changes, in the last year or so, there really hasn't been a whole lot of this, right? So, you know, I can imagine maybe one phone call, two phone calls a month. So, you know, if you all decided to go with this firm, it might be worthwhile to try the hourly.

Jaime: Sure.

Colleen: Because, you know, even if she spent two hours on the phone with them a month, that's still a lot less than the $2,500. So, you know, I think we can get a couple more sort of ballpark quotes, then we can decide. But I think, you know, my recommendation for you all would be maybe, you know, setting some sort of amount that everybody is comfortable with tonight, even if it's a six-month amount and then we could maybe revisit it just so we don't have to wait another month to vote. Or, you know, we can always call a quick emergency meeting, but I think she needs to get somebody in-house as soon as possible, particularly with the employees she has right now who are expecting.

Lorna: This is Lorna, I would agree with that recommendation, Colleen, that we would be better off to try to come up with an amount that everyone's comfortable with tonight. We could even consider the idea of saying up to a certain amount per hour or blank per year in that recommendation.

And if we are more comfortable with it, we could even include in the motion that it would be pending budget review by Kristin and Miriam if that would make us feel more comfortable as well.

Is there any further discussion or is there a member of the board who would like to make a motion for the amount that we would be comfortable setting aside for HR services?

Dacresha: Dacresha Harris for the record. I would like to make a motion for maybe not to exceed $20,000 or I like Colleen...I like Counsel's recommendation for a six-month period, you know, just to get the audit and possibly maybe that retainer or hourly rate, excuse me, you know, to make sure that Miriam gets what she needs in the meantime. And that'd give us a little bit more time to find a reputable company maybe and compare what we would be paying to those companies.

Lorna: Thank you. Just make sure... This is Lorna Cervantes. Just make sure I have the motion correct. So you've moved that we allow Miriam to look at the HR firm not to exceed $20,000 for the year with services including an audit and a possible hourly rate to be reviewed after six months period. Is that correct?

Dacresha: Yes.

Lorna: Thank you. Is there a second to that motion?

Jaime: Jaime Gonzalez for the record, I'll second it.

Lorna: Thank you. All those in favor?

Alain: Aye.

Jaime: Aye.

Nicole: Aye.

Lorna: Any opposed? Thank you for that motion. And I will work with Miriam over the next few weeks and days to make sure that we have looked into the firms. And if the firm that... We will get the names of a couple of firms that fit into these parameters, and then we can bring a report back at our October meeting as to where we've come with the HR information.

Sorry. Was somebody speaking?

Sorry. Was somebody speaking or was that just feedback on the computer, I think, right?

Alain: Yes.

Miriam: Yes.

Lorna: Okay. Just making sure. All right. Thank you, everybody, for that work. This is Lorna Cervantes, again, for the record and we'll move now to the executive updates. The first update is from Miriam Benitez on a report of the status of ongoing marketing efforts, open enrollment, recruiting, and other work. Including student population demographics and student retention. Miriam.

Miriam: Thank you, Lorna. Miriam Benitez for the record. And so we have moved our recruiting and advertising phase into a maintenance phase. I met with Grafika and they're in the process of developing this maintenance phase of the campaign where they're trying to stretch our message during our more inactive months. So I guess in these more dormant months, it's more like branding. And then we'll pick up again right before December when open enrollment opens up.

So Edgar's putting together a package to present because obviously we ran. Our campaign our first day of school was August 7th. He continued to run it through August so that we could get any students that were either still searching for another school and looking at our enrollment that has slowed down. So he's coming up with a presentation as to what he recommends, how much we would be spending from now to December just to keep our name out there and not go away completely. And then around late November, early December, pick it up again. And little by little, a gradual increase as enrollment starts to pick up for the new year.

Our current enrollment, we're at 142 students. And the breakdown in each grade level, kindergarten 53 students, first grade 47, second grade 20 students, third grade 22 students. And then last time we met, we were asked to provide our demographics and the breakdown of our demographics is about a little over 2% Asian, 19% black, almost 67% Hispanic, almost 8% multiracial, and white, we have 4%.

And then our retention rate of all of our students enrolled last year in the '22, '23 school year, almost 90% of our students returned for an overall 49.30% of our current enrollment is made up of returning students.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you, Miriam, for that report. Any questions or comments for Miriam at this time? Hearing none, we'll move to item B. This is a discussion regarding the results of the enrollment audit conducted by the Nevada State Public Charter Authority. And this is by Miriam again.

Miriam: So at the beginning of the year, we had an enrollment audit. And as you could see towards the end, the bottom of the page, it says there were no exceptions that they reviewed. So we didn't have anything out of the ordinary. And we just wanted to share the results of that audit. There were nothing out of the ordinary, no findings.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you for that, Miriam. Any questions or comments regarding the attendance audit? Okay. Thank you. Hearing none, we'll move to item C. This is a discussion regarding the results of the 2024 risk assessment designation based on data from fiscal year 2023 conducted by the Nevada State Public Charter Authority. And this is again by Miriam.

Miriam: Miriam Benitez for the record. So if you see on the top of the second page, it gives an explanation and I'll just read it. Each year, every school is assessed and assigned a risk level. If there are automatic indicators of high risk, the school will receive on-site monitoring, but monitoring will be targeted towards the automatic indicators that are flagged as high risk.

So overall, we received a low-risk designation. And this was also an audit that they come in and they look at how well we are complying with all the mandates of these different funding sources. IDEA, Title I, the grants, and we scored low, we were low risk on everything except where you see key program personnel turnover. And that has to do with it's no secret there's a huge shortage in special education, whether it's speech pathologists, school psychologists. And we do subcontract that work out with a company. But even with them, there was turnaround and we probably had three different speech pathologists last year and so it's been a struggle.

And then in the summer, even that company sent us a letter saying they didn't have the personnel to provide us services anymore. So they told us that all they can help us with this year is physical therapy. And what was it? Oh, and our nurse. And so then we had to go with a new company, trying to find a speech pathologist, a psychologist, what have you, so on and so forth. But luckily, we have found another company and Colleen has already looked over our contract.

So we've been able to secure the people we need, but it definitely has not been easy and that is reflected in this high-risk status on that line item.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you, Miriam, for that report. Are there any questions or comments for Miriam regarding this report? Thank you. We just wanted to make sure the board was aware of the report. And next, this is an item D, alternative calendar. This is discussion for possible action to approve the Strong Start Academy alternative academic calendar for the 2023, '24 school year. Miriam?

Miriam: Okay, so back in the summer, or maybe it was way back in May, the board approved a calendar. We submitted it to the state. They were a little bit behind. And almost right before school started, the calendar was rejected and the reason it was rejected is they said we were short, that our calendar had 179 days and we needed 180.

So I explained to them that our calendar was just like CCSD's. So I wasn't quite sure how their calendar was approved and ours wasn't. They explained that it's because CCSD followed an alternative calendar and not a traditional one. So then I had to quickly shift gears and create an alternative calendar.

And when we created the alternative calendar, what I learned was so an alternative calendar counts the hours instead of the days. So at a minimum with an alternative calendar, we need to be offering 43,200 minutes of instruction per school year for kindergarten through second grade and a total of 54,000 minutes for third grade.

And if you look on the bottom of this calendar, you will see that our total instructional minutes is 70,800. So we well surpass their minimum. So once we figured that out, I went back, and I consulted with some of the parents. Because remember, CCSD offers one parent-teacher conference day and we offer three, but only one of them was full day, and the other two half days. Well, the teachers obviously prefer all full days because you can't get through 20 parents in a half day. So it makes for a long evening.

And then when I reached out to parents for their feedback, teachers and parents both said they preferred a full day because for working parents, it's harder to find care for a half day and get your kid picked up in the middle of the day if they're at work.

So when I submitted this alternative calendar, I had gone ahead and moved those two half days to full days, knowing that we have all of these instructional minutes, we almost double. So I went ahead and did that, and it got approved. And so I wanted to come back and make sure that everyone was aware of the changes that we made.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you for that report, Miriam. Are there any questions or comments from any of the board members at this time?

Alain: Alain Bengochea for the record. Do we happen to know what CCSD's total hours are? Just out of curiosity.

Miriam: No, that I don't know. Yeah. So you know what? CCSD, it would change because every school is different. There's some schools that have extended day and so it's probably... But overall as a district, they must meet this minimum because as a district, they got that alternative calendar approved, which I never knew.

Alain: I just wanted to know how much we would exceed.

Lorna: This is Lorna. You could probably go on the district calendar and get that information. Any other questions or comments for Miriam? It's a good question, Alain. If not, this is an item where I believe we need to just vote to adopt the calendar as approved.

Alain: Alain Bengochea, I'll make a motion or move to approve, rather, the calendar.

Lorna: Thank you. A second for that motion?

Nicole: Nicole Thompson, I second that motion.

Lorna: Okay. All those in favor?

Nicole: Aye.

Woman: Aye.

Lorna: Aye. Any opposed? All right. Thank you. That motion is passed. Thank you, everybody. All right. At this time, we will go to section number four on our agenda. This is the governance section, and we will start with discussion for possible action to approve the updated student lottery application policy and lottery date. Miriam?

Miriam: Miriam Benitez for the record. So in this updated registration process lottery, we went ahead, we talked at our retreat last time about moving up the date, so we moved it up to December. We added the children of military personnel have preference. And I believe other than the dates, we changed those things.

And the one thing that I do wanna mention that I'll probably add to this, it just so happens that we had a phone call today of a parent who's moving from Arizona. And Arizona's age to start kindergarten, they don't have to be five until I think December. So they're moving and we've already had a few phone calls. And so, we've contacted the Charter Authority as well as Nevada Department of Ed, and they have said that it doesn't matter, even if a child completes eight months of school and they move to Las Vegas and they didn't turn five by August 1st, they have to redo kindergarten. They have to complete.

So this parent that just called happens to be military. And he said that he was under the understanding that there's a military exception and he sent us a little blurb and we did double check it with Charter Authority and Nevada Department of Ed. And there in fact is a military exception. So I think we'll put that in here where it says students have to turn five by August 1st to clarify that. So that's the only thing that came to light today that I would be adding to this just to make sure everyone's clear.

Colleen: I've got one other little minor tweak. Colleen McCarty, Board Counsel. On the first page, the end of the first paragraph where it says NRS 388a.4561e, that's probably, well it is going to be tweaked because there was the additional change in children of military personnel being added has not yet been codified the statute and on this bill. So we should probably just take the E off and it'll fall under that section one.

Miriam: Okay.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you for that recommendation, Colleen, and we'll make sure that gets changed. Any other questions or comments regarding the policy?

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris for the record. So basically under no circumstances, it sounds like, other than military, if a kid turns five on August 5th, they have to wait, sit out that whole school year.

Lorna: That's correct. This is Lorna.

Miriam: Miriam Benitez for the record. The part that's really difficult is if someone moves here from another state and that child has attended kindergarten for half a year, then we have to... I kept calling different people because I couldn't believe that. This child, we can't admit them and they have to wait a whole year and basically redo kindergarten.

Lorna: This is Lorna. I think that's a pretty recent change in the legislation. I know that this was the start date for...the start age for kinder was under discussion in this last session. So I think that's pretty new because we used to enroll kids if they had been in a school in another state. Other questions or comments? I know that we will need to vote to approve the lottery policy and date if we are in favor of it.

Jaime: Jaime Gonzalez for the record. Just for clarification then, the lottery date will move from Monday, January 15th, 2024, to what date in December?

Miriam: No. So Miriam Benitez for the record. It already has. This is the updated date.

Jaime: January 15th, 2024.

Miriam: So the actual if a lottery takes place, it will be January 15th.

Jaime: Jaime Gonzalez...

Lorna: And, Miriam, when was the previous date then? I think is the question.

Miriam: Yeah, so the previous date was January 2nd through February 16th, I believe, and then the lottery was February 17th. So we moved this up a month because the sooner we have the lottery, the open enrollment, the quicker parents know if they're in and then they could just count on, okay, my kids are in, I don't have to worry about open enrollment for 45 days. So that's why we decided just to move it up. So as of January 15th, they'll know if they're in versus having to wait.

Jaime: Thank you.

Miriam: Yeah.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Are there any other questions or comments for Miriam? Okay, hearing none, I move that we approve the revised lottery process, the lottery application, the policy, and the lottery date as presented and I should say as amended during the meeting tonight. Is there a second to that motion?

Jaime: Jaime Gonzalez for the record. I'll second that motion.

Lorna: Okay. All those in...

Nicole: Aye.

Man: Aye.

Lorna: Aye. Any opposed? Okay, that motion carries. If it's okay with all of you, I'd like us to go ahead and go now to item C, which is our restorative justice policy, and then come back to item B pending, you know, as we look at how our time is moving for the night.

The restorative justice policy is a policy that's required by law, and as presented in the information that Colleen gave us after our board retreat, every school year we have to review the policy, and the board has to vote to approve this policy. You should have a copy in front of you of the restorative justice policy. And, Miriam, do you have any other information to add to that?

Miriam: Yes. Miriam Benitez for the record. I did share it with my team of parents that's on my Family Engagement Committee and they made minor recommendations. They just wanted to add when we look at our tier one restorative practices, they suggested we add verbal apology to that. And then, the pages aren't numbered, but on one, two, three, on the fourth page under discipline limits for special education students, there is a bullet with a number 11-plus and an asterisk, and the little asterisk fell off. It should be on there explaining what that 11-plus limited discipline days for special education students, that fell off so we wanna make sure to bring that back.

And then on top of that, the guidance document that Colleen had shared with us, there are some things, as Nicole had recommended, that in order for us to be in compliance with the new law, we would have to remove some of these pieces about suspension, I believe, or expulsion, just because of the age of our students. And I'll let Colleen talk to that.

Colleen: Well, Colleen McCarty, Board Counsel. I don't have that in front of me.

Miriam: Okay, the guidance.

Miriam: But yeah, there are limits as to the age of the child that you can suspend or expel. So we have to approve this by the end of the month. Is that right?

Miriam: Is this the one that?

Colleen: Or do we have...

Lorna: Yes, that's correct, Colleen. This is Lorna.

Colleen: This is September 30 or this September 15.

Miriam: Yeah, so it's supposed to be with stakeholder input. And I know that I've presented it to the parents, to the staff, and we talked a little bit about it at our retreat, and Nicole gave input. And so I'm thinking that at this point, would it be just you and I making sure that now what we have complies with the law?

Colleen: Yeah, I think that's... I definitely wouldn't want to send this off without sitting down with everything in front of me.

Lorna: Thank you.

Colleen: Yeah, so maybe what we do is approve it as it is right now with the understanding that in the event there are additional adjustments that need to be made for legal compliance that we'll bring it back at the next meeting for that.

Lorna: This is Lorna. I think that's a great recommendation. And one of the things I remember reading in the guidance document was that expulsion, children, I think, I believe it was eight years or younger, cannot be expelled. And currently, we don't have any children over that limit in the school. However, in the next year and the year after, we will have children of that age. I think this has to be an annual review. So it might be worthwhile to make that change now or to know in the policy itself, maybe next to the word expulsion, maybe in parentheses, only for children over blank years old. And that may help us to be in compliance as well. So that's just a thought I had.

So, Colleen, your recommendation was just for us to not necessarily vote to approve this or shall we vote to approve a pending final review by board counsel?

Colleen: Yeah, I think the latter.

Lorna: Thank you. So could we have a motion at this time to approve the restorative justice policy pending final board counsel review?

Jaime: Jaime Gonzalez for the record. I move that we approve the restorative justice policies pending our board counsel's final review.

Lorna: Thank you. Is there a second?

Alain: Alain Bengochea, second.

Lorna: All those in favor?

Nicole: Aye.

Lorna: Aye. Any opposed? Okay, so that motion passes. At this time, let's go ahead and go to our facility reports and then as we look at our time, we can go to the last item which would be discussion of our possible board goals. And part of the reason I was thinking we could push that down is we may need to bring it back to our next meeting anyway. So my thought was we could maybe have a preliminary discussion tonight and then bring it back around again, pending the preference of the board.

So let's go to facilities item A. This is a report by Angela Rose for the City of Las Vegas regarding the status of renovations and new construction at Strong Start.

Angela: Angela Rose for the record. I feel like a broken record every time I come, but I think it's still important that I provide the update. So we still have three construction projects going on at the school. First being the church building with the flooring that has a slab replacement. That is set to begin Monday, the 18th. It was originally last Monday, 09/11, but they had a delay weather permitting. So they're starting on Monday, 09/18.

In that slab replacement, they've had to turn over property to the construction team and so we will no longer have access to that building. In an emergency, obviously, we could, but that's going to be their building. So there's no mixing or commingling of construction workers and school staff. There's been a fence. And if it's not up by today, it will be up over the weekend.

We did a lot of work on the backend since the last meeting, making sure that all construction team members knew the requirements of our safety guidelines and that there would be, again, like, no way for them to access the school and vice versa, to the point where we have separate alarm codes and things that would ensure that kids' safety is of a priority.

That project will go on for approximately five months with another 30 days for last incidentals and last-minute things to be done. So we're hoping by the beginning of March that to be completed. When that's completed, that will give us greater access to our specials rooms again, to the multipurpose room to use for lunch as well as an additional office space for meetings and our special education resources as well.

So I'm really bummed that it's taken this long but know that it's going to be good when it is done. And just technical delays and permitting happened and that's kind of what the delay was for. But I'm excited to have that officially starting finally on Monday.

The second expansion project is the second floor. So that was the one that we were slated to do this last summer again, if you remember. And then the project scope got extremely large and expensive. And so we had to go out to bid for that. We are in the final design phases for that. It didn't change much from the last design phase. We've got a lot of the prework and kind of backwards mapped a schedule to ensure that permitting goes according to schedule.

And then we've laid out additional safeguards to make sure that we have no concern with delays. We have stressed to the architect and the city that we cannot have, we can't do that, another delay. We don't have space for our next year students. And so from our new city manager all the way down, it's been made clear that we cannot have another or any more surprises. So we feel really good that we've done all of the infrastructure work to know what we need to know the scope of the work to know the cost of the work and put it out to bid at an appropriate time. So that is scheduled to begin the day that school gets out next summer.

And then the third is the whole new building where the current Pastor House sits. That will be demoed at some point in the back half of the year once the slab is done and we have access to the rest of the building again. Once that is demoed, then the plan would be to have a 18-month to two-year build of a two-story building to fit six additional classes to fit for the fifth graders. So that is in the beginning design phases.

We had our first construction planning design meeting with 30 or so city representatives from different departments to make sure that from DPS to public works to planning to the engineers knowing what is needed. Traffic was also there because we know that there's a traffic study that needs to happen with current parking as well as what we do when we have new additional expansions. So let me pause there and ask any questions.

Alain: Could you remind us what's happening on the second floor, more classrooms or something?

Angela: So the second floor has the hallway in the middle with the two rooms. So the plan is to take the middle wall down and make it into three rooms. So square footage is really large, and it allows for that. However, what we thought was going to be, oh, like, take a wall down, it's not a supporting beam, take a wall down and then put up two new walls, it now is a supporting beam and then there's ductwork and HVAC systems up there that require additional securing and with that, costs some additional money.

And the city has a limitation of where they can provide the direct work on that. We can do city facility rehab or tenant improvement projects, but over a certain dollar amount threshold, we have to go out to bid per [inaudible 00:59:36] statute. So unfortunately, we were thinking we were good until we got into the ceiling and realized we were not good.

So, but eventually, we're going to have...it would be nice to have a whole grade level, you know, on one side. So the intent would be to have all first grade, all second grade. That way, and they'll have sliding door panels. They'll be able to kind of go in and out and provide a different co-teach environment as well. So it'll be awesome when it's done.

Lorna: Thank you, Angela. I have a question. This is Lorna Cervantes. Did I misunderstand the number of rooms that were going to be in that new building? I thought originally it was going to be nine rooms so that it would house third through fifth grade. Is that not correct?

Angela: That is. Did I say six?

Lorna: Yes.

Angela: I definitely meant nine. But thank you for asking. See, I just get talking on all the expansions and I didn't read my notes. I was like, I got this. No, it'll be nine for third, fourth, and fifth grade.

Lorna: Okay, thank you. I just wanted to make sure that I was on the right track with that.

Angela: Yeah, I'm on public record, thank you for clarifying.

Lorna: Sure. Sure. And just the timeline on that, you said it was going to start as soon as that slab is completed in the new place. So that 18 months to two years, I know we're supposed to increase to fourth grade next year.

Angela: That includes right now. Like, that's part of the 18 months. So part of the design phase, we have to contract that with an architect to do the design work and to do all the, like, testing the soil, like, looking at all the preliminary permitting work. That's all part of it. So that's included in the 18 months.

Lorna: Okay, thank you. That helps me feel a little bit better. Other questions or comments for Angela? Okay, hearing none. Angela, would you also be able then to go ahead and give us the report regarding the status of security improvements at Strong Start Academy and maybe if you could include in your report just if we have any word on the security grant that we had applied for?

Angela: Angela Rose for the record. We do not have an update on that grant yet. I mean, we got preliminary word because they were asking additional questions of us over the summer, so I thought we would get word before October 1, but they've assured us October 1 is the time that we'll definitely hear by, so we're a couple weeks away.

We felt good about the submission that we sent in, as well as the questions we were getting back, that we'd at least get funded for part of it. And so we asked for the full $500,000 maximum limit but felt confident that even if we got half of a portion, we could then work with city facilities as well as the board on how to prioritize the work. So just waiting to hear back on that.

Just a reminder for the group, that had a lot of infrastructure funding in the application. It was for a lot of security enhancements to support new cameras, new door locks. Right now, the door locks are key, and we went through a whole security walkthrough with our Department of Public Safety to look at what key access or badge access, how to lock down certain rooms and have dual authentication, and things like that.

And so a lot of that funding would go to that one-time investment of the infrastructure of making sure we had enough security cameras, key badge or badge access, the stuff that's not sexy behind the walls to make sure that everything is supported by the new technology. And we felt like we had a pretty robust application that had current technology with the understanding that if we were to be awarded and things have changed, we have a really good IT and Department of Public Safety, like, security crew that would be able to advise us on what vendors to use, on what they've seen, similar to what we've seen in other large urban school districts.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Thank you, Angela, for that update. And I was just wanting to make sure, too, that with the design of the new two-story addition building and the new work that we're doing, that work, or the initial design of that work would include those security upgrades so that it's going to be matching security with the existing building.

Angela: Yes. Angela Rose for the record. A good question. We did try to estimate what that new work would look like. I think what our security team felt confident in is that when you're retrofitting a current building or current infrastructure system, then it costs more, you're digging into walls, whereas when you're building from the ground up. You're able to build that into the walls. You're building the data. You're building the wiring. We weren't able to physically walk when we did the security walk-through for this grant application. We were able to physically count the number of doors and key access points and offices and closets. We don't have that full layout, but we were able to guesstimate with the number of classrooms we were expecting, the number of offices, the number of restrooms.

We were able to get a pretty good guesstimate of what to add in there. And then should additional funding be needed again, we would kind of resurface that again after this initial funding gets awarded. Because it will get awarded, right? Yes. So put it out there.

Lorna: Thank you, Angela. Are there other questions by any other board members or comments for Angela at this time? I don't hear any. So I appreciate it. Angela, thank you so much for that report and for all the work that you and the city have done. We appreciate your support.

At this time, we can go back to section 4, governance, item B. And this is a discussion for possible action to review our Board on Track assessment to determine board priorities, goals, and committees. Remember at the end of the retreat, we all agreed that we would take a look at the Board on Track assessment results on our own time. And then come back with what we thought maybe would be some priorities that we as a board should look at. Maybe these could be priorities for committees or priorities for goals that we should set as a group moving forward.

So I'd like to open the floor at this time for your recommendations as board members with regard to what we should possibly set as our priorities in this coming year and any work that we need to do within that governance work.

[01:06:39]

[Silence]

[01:06:56]

Dachresha: Dachresha Harris for the record.

Jaime: A game of chicken.

Lorna: Thank you, Dachresha.

Dachresha: Okay, I think I recommend that we table this until next month and provide a little bit more time to review it. You know, with such a short turnaround from the retreat and everything, I think, you know, maybe we need a little bit more time.

Lorna: This is Lorna. I was wondering if that was the case, which is why I pushed it to the end of tonight's agenda. Are there others who agree that we should table this to the next meeting? Or should I say... Let me ask that question a different way. Is there anyone who disagrees that we should table this item till the next meeting?

Jaime: This is Jaime. Gonzalez for the record. Thank you, Dacresha, for breaking the ice on it. Because my comment was, I tried to do my due diligence and look at it. So maybe I was a little unclear as to where I was finding the board assessment. So I went into Board on Track, and I found the assessment page and the recommendations.

And so my question is, is that where we needed to be looking? And if so, I agree with Dacresha that there was a lot more there to go through in terms of, it says the recommendation is based on nine participants. But if you did [crosstalk 01:08:19] each one of these, it's quite a bit of reading. So I would agree that we should still move forward, unless somebody disagrees, and come back with our top two recommendations to move forward with and discuss at our next meeting.

Lorna: This is Lorna. Okay. I would agree with that. And yes, Jaime. So in Board on Track, when you look on the assessment, you'll find the board assessment that we all took and the results. And you can compare your results with where all the other board members sat with regard to their results. Though, I think they were pretty consistent when I looked at it. And then you can take a look at the recommendations that they gave from Board on Track. But remember, we don't necessarily have to specifically follow only those recommendations because we need to do what's right for us.

For example, some of the items on there really were for boards that have been in place a lot longer than we have or schools that have been in place more than one year. So, if we could all just agree to do that, look at those results, come back with our top one to two priorities at the next meeting, I would appreciate that. And we will table this item to the next meeting.

Jaime: This is Jaime Gonzales for the record. I think maybe to help facilitate that at the next meeting, Angela is it... And throw it out to the group, in discussing recommendations of the recommendations, can we have the Board on Track recommendations available to be projected? So if we need to go into them and look at them specifically, that, you know, we're not mixing in matching or whatever. That we have the gold source information [inaudible 01:10:07]. Could we just have it projected here or have it available here?

Lorna: This is Lorna. We'll make sure also that we relay that request to Amanda as well. And because it is several pages long and having it projected, I think would be a great way of doing it. We can share this screen as well for anyone who has to be on remotely for the next meeting. And/or those who would have to follow along, could follow along on their computers at home as well. So that's a great recommendation. Any other discussion or recommendation?

And, Astrid, I think I have your email address now. So I'm going to send out to you, within the next week, a link to Board on Track, now that I have your email address. And then that will give you the opportunity to go in there on your own time. You can review those results there as well. And if you need help, you could reach out to any of the board members or to Miriam or Marisol at the school itself. And we can help walk you through that.

Astrid: Perfect. Thank you.

Lorna: You're welcome. All right. So given that decision tonight, we can at this time move on to the second set of public comment. This is public comment during this portion of the agenda. It must be limited to matters within the jurisdiction of the board. No subject may be acted upon by the board unless the subject is on the agenda and is scheduled for action.

If you wish to be heard, come forward and give your name for the record. The amount of discussion as well as the amount of time any single speaker is allowed will be limited to two minutes absent board approval. Public comment may also be given by calling 1-415-655-0001 and entering the access code number 25996054045 followed by the pound sign. And with... Is there any public comment? I don't see any at this time.

So with that, we will adjourn the meeting and I would appreciate it if somebody in the room could stop the recording at this time.

Miriam: [inaudible 01:12:40] twice. Hold on. Let me stop this one.