

APPROVED



# New Heights Academy Charter School

## Minutes

### Board of Trustees Meeting

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#### **Date and Time**

Thursday October 30, 2025 at 7:00 PM

#### **Location**

1818 Amsterdam Avenue  
New York, NY 10031

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#### **Trustees Present**

A. Vasquez, N. Sunshine, N. Weiss, R. Zumaya, W. Council

#### **Trustees Absent**

A. Cummings, D. Ortiz, M. Vargas

#### **Guests Present**

Fred Givens, Frederica Fernandez, K. Valbrun, L. Garcia, Lily Cabrera, Melissa Ransome, W. Ramos (remote)

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### **I. Opening Items**

#### **A. Record Attendance**

#### **B. Call the Meeting to Order**

A. Vasquez called a meeting of the board of trustees of New Heights Academy Charter School to order on Thursday Oct 30, 2025 at 7:00 PM.

#### **C.**

## **Approve Minutes**

A. Vasquez made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 09-25-25.

N. Sunshine seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

## **II. Human Resource Update**

### **A. Staff Survey Data**

**Presented by:** Meredith Hosey, HR Consultant

#### **• Staff Climate Survey Results:**

- Strengths: Staff commitment to students, collaboration, and resilience.
- Areas for Growth: Communication, accountability, documentation consistency, and role clarity.
- Concerns included over-meeting, lack of clear follow-up systems, and perceived micromanagement.

#### **• Recommendations:**

- Establish clearer structures for communication and accountability.
- Develop a **process library** for documentation and standardized procedures.
- Review staffing models, particularly for Special Education and EL services.
- Enhance onboarding and career pathway development.
- Prioritize respectful and professional communication as a cultural expectation.

#### **• Leadership Response:**

- Dr. Valbrun and Ms. Hosey noted legacy challenges predating current leadership.
- Steps taken include shifting meetings to Zoom for documentation and improving professionalism, and instituting more structured agendas with clear follow-up actions.

#### **• Board Discussion:**

- Trustees emphasized the urgency of addressing workplace culture and ensuring respectful communication across all levels.
- Acknowledged progress made but noted the need for ongoing monitoring and professional development.

## **III. Finance Update**

### **A. Financial Review of Q1**

**Presented by:** Li'Esha Garcia, CFOO

- **Quarter 1 Overview (Ending September 30):**

- Total revenue: \$3.7 million, reflecting a \$149K increase from the prior year, primarily due to an increased per-pupil funding rate.
- Actual enrollment is 604 students, compared to the budgeted 683, resulting in a projected \$1.4 million revenue shortfall if enrollment remains unchanged.
- Expenses: \$3.2 million, down from \$3.5 million last year due to cost reductions in salaries, fringe benefits, and facilities.
- Net position: \$403K surplus for Q1; however, this is expected to adjust downward as actual enrollment data replaces budgeted figures.

- **Cash Position & Liabilities:**

- Approximately \$700K in cash as of September.
- Accounts receivable have decreased following receipt of ERC funds.
- The leasehold improvement related to long-term lease obligations is now reflected on the balance sheet, per new accounting requirements.

- **Fiscal Concerns and Mitigation:**

- Ongoing efforts to cut costs and control expenditures due to under-enrollment.
- Exploring opportunities to secure private or federal grants through development consultants to offset state aid shortfalls.

**Board Discussion:**

Trustees discussed the potential long-term impact of under-enrollment and corresponding budget cuts on staffing, programming, and student services. It was noted that reductions have already affected teaching supports, programming, and staff morale.

## IV. Student Recruitment

### A. Addressing Under Enrollment

**Presented by:** Dr. Karen Valbrun, Executive Director & Leadership Team

- **Current Enrollment:**

- 604 students enrolled (down from 613 in the prior month).
- Sixth grade has 41 students, highlighting a critical need for recruitment in middle school grades.
- High school enrollment remains stable.

- **Challenges Identified:**

- Declining middle school enrollment continues to impact revenue.
- Enrollment losses attributed to families relocating, student transfers, and a few disciplinary or health-related withdrawals.
- Exhausted waitlist for key grades.

- **Recruitment Efforts and Strategies:**

- Increasing staff and leader participation in weekend and community canvassing.
  - Exploring a parent ambassador program to engage families in recruitment efforts.
  - Strengthening marketing through social media, open houses, and community events.
  - Expanding after-school and summer programs (STEAM, robotics, debate, cosmetology) to attract families.
  - Highlighting success stories, cultural responsiveness, and one-to-one technology access in outreach messaging.
- Parents expressed both appreciation for the school's academic quality and concern about communication gaps and safety incidents
  - Leadership agreed to follow up directly and schedule appropriate discussions outside the public session to maintain privacy and compliance.
  - Board members encouraged collaborative problem-solving and consistent storytelling to rebuild trust and enhance the school's public image.

## **V. Closing Items**

### **A. Community Comments**

- Parents expressed both appreciation for the school's academic quality and concern about communication gaps and safety incidents.
- Leadership agreed to follow up directly and schedule appropriate discussions outside the public session to maintain privacy and compliance.
- Board members encouraged collaborative problem-solving and consistent storytelling to rebuild trust and enhance the school's public image.

### **B. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:06 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
W. Ramos