



## City on a Hill Charter Public School

### Minutes

#### April 2020 Board Meeting

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##### **Date and Time**

Tuesday April 7, 2020 at 2:00 PM

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This meeting took place remotely pursuant to the March 12, 2020 Baker-Polito Administration announcement of an emergency order temporarily modifying the state's open meeting law.

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##### **Trustees Present**

Andres Tejeda Soto (remote), Cara Stillings-Candal (remote), Jacqueline Bennett (remote), Jeff Jablow (remote), Melisa Lemire (remote), Sarah Griffin (remote)

##### **Trustees Absent**

Gary Morton, Karin Wall

##### **Guests Present**

Elizabeth Dignan (remote), Jack Gearan, Jackie Hayes (remote), Jordan Lopez (remote), Sonya Pratt (remote)

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#### **I. Opening Items**

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

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

Cara Stillings-Candal called a meeting of the board of trustees of City on a Hill Charter Public School to order on Tuesday Apr 7, 2020 at 2:12 PM.

### **C. Approve March 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Cara Stillings-Candal made a motion to approve the minutes from March 2020 Board Meeting. March 2020 Board Meeting on 03-02-20.

Andres Tejeda Soto seconded the motion.

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

#### **Roll Call**

Gary Morton	Absent
Cara Stillings-Candal	Aye
Karin Wall	Absent
Jacqueline Bennett	Aye
Jeff Jablow	Aye
Sarah Griffin	Aye
Melisa Lemire	Aye
Andres Tejeda Soto	Aye

## **II. Consent Agenda**

### **A. Vote to Approve Updated Enrollment Plan**

Jackie Hayes, Chief of Staff & General Counsel, provided an overview of the purpose of an Enrollment Plan, as it relates to the consolidation of City on a Hill Circuit Street ("CoaH CS") and City on a Hill Dudley Square ("CoaH DS") to one charter, as a policy which outlines cohort size and procedures for enrolling students into City on a Hill. Hayes shared that under the conditions of the CoaH CS charter renewal on probation, enrollment for the consolidated school in school year 2020-21 will be capped at 350 students and management is examining how to best allocate cohorts per grade. Hayes stated that due to management's prioritization of COVID-19 response and preparation for Distance Learning, the updated Enrollment Plan is not yet completed, but is on track to be ready for review and vote approval by the Trustees at the May 2020 Board Meeting.

## **III. COVID-19 Response and Distance Learning**

### **A. Academic Action Plan Update**

Cara Stillings-Candal, Chair, next directed the attention of the Board to City on a Hill's response to COVID-19. Stillings-Candal shared that she and Kevin Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, have continued meeting with consultants to meet and exceed the conditions of CoaH CS' probation during this time, and announced that two consultants had been selected to support in the creation of an Action Plan to address academic results at City on a Hill. The consultants include Bellwether Education Partners, who are providing pro bono consulting to schools during COVID-19, and an individual vetted by leadership.

Stillings-Candal also shared that while the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) communicated that they are willing to be flexible with the original condition deadlines, at this time, she and Taylor believe that the City on a Hill and the consultants will be able to complete the Action Plan on the original timeline despite COVID-19.

## **B. COVID-19 Response Strategy**

Jordan Pina, Deputy Chief of Staff, then announced that the Senior Leadership Team has prioritized community communication during the initial phase of City on a Hill's extended closure due to COVID-19, which began on March 13, 2020 and currently extends through May 4, 2020 in compliance with Governor Baker's directive to close all schools in the Commonwealth. Pina shared that the Senior Leadership Team prepares letters to families and staff twice per week to share information received from Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) or other state entities, and to answer any questions surfaced by any community members. The majority of this information has been related to Distance Learning and Chromebook distribution, but will continue through the end of the extended closure.

## **C. Distance Learning Update & Discussion**

Elizabeth Dignan, Chief Operating Officer, next provided an overview of Chromebook distribution to students, which included a Network-wide survey to assess access to internet and devices at home. After collecting this data, the Operations Teams across schools purchased additional Chromebooks to provide connectivity, and with the help of staff volunteers, distributed over 100 Chromebooks to students across three pick-up days. During these pick-up days at the Circuit Street campus, precautions were taken to ensure the health and safety of the community, including creating sign-up time slots to prevent crowds, 6-foot distance markers to remind community members to socially distance, and providing no access to the building. Dignan also stated that advisors will be following up with students who indicated they needed technology, but did not pick up a Chromebook in anticipation of a fourth and final pick-up day.

Jackie Hayes, Chief of Staff & General Counsel, then shared that City on a Hill and the five bargaining units represented by the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) have come to an agreement around working conditions during Distance Learning. Hayes expressed gratitude to everyone who bargained and that the process was productive. She also explained that in "Phase 1" of Distance Learning, which was the initial two week period of closure before the Governor directed schools to close through May 4, 2020 and when Operations Teams were preparing student technology infrastructure, teachers and school administrators worked to create robust packets for students. These packets included materials from all subjects for all grade levels, and were available for download on the City on a Hill website, in addition to an option to have the packet mailed.

Sonya Pratt, Chief Schools Officer, continued upon Hayes' explanation by adding that in "Phase 2" of Distance Learning. Hayes added that while this discussion primarily focused on CoaH CS and CoaH DS (collectively "CoaH Boston"), this was due to the fact that CoaH NB's blended learning model better prepared the school to transition to Distance Learning.

Following the updates, Board members thanked the Senior Leadership Team and all teachers for their work, and inquired how the CoaH Community was doing as a whole. Pratt shared that most community members are as well as can be during this time, but that CoaH has continued any interventions, such as mental health counseling and advisor check-ins, to support our students.

Board members next inquired about the Senior classes at all schools. Pratt confirmed that while saddened and concerned about cancellation of Senior traditions, such as Field Day and Prom, the Senior Leadership Team is working to assure students of their abilities to graduate. Pratt specified that the school Academic Committees, which consists of the Principal Team and Lead Teachers, will be meeting in the coming weeks to discuss students who were on support plans to graduate and how to best support them.

Finally, Board members probed on COVID-19's possible long-term effect on enrollment for school year 2020-21 due to social distancing practices, including the 6-foot radius currently recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Pratt and Dignan shared that while we do not yet have guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) around what protocols will be required upon return to school, the Senior Leadership Team will continue to update the Board as additional information becomes available.

#### **IV. Committee Updates**

##### **A. Governance Committee Update**

Melisa Lemire, Committee Chair, shared that the Governance Committee currently has three potential Board members in the pipeline, including Jack Gearan, who is in attendance today. Lemire shared that Gearan has met with the Governance Committee and Kevin Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, and that the Committee recommends a vote to approve Gearan as a member at the May 2020 Board Meeting. Gearan then shared his background as an employment lawyer, and expressed his excitement to join the Board.

Lemire also announced two committee assignment changes, which included the movement of Jacqueline Bennett from the Academic Excellence Committee to the Finance Committee and the naming of Andres Tejeda Soto as Chair of the Finance Committee.

##### **B. Academic Excellence Committee Update**

Due to the previous COVID-19 Distance Learning & Chromebook update, there were no additional updates from the Academic Excellence Committee.

### **C. Development Committee Update**

Jeff Jablow, Committee member, shared that due to COVID-19 the Development Committee, Board Leadership, and Senior Leadership decided to postpone the 25th Annual City on a Hill Gala until 2021. Cara Stillings-Candal, Chair, LAO assured the Board that this decision was made with City on a Hill's current financial situation in mind, and that the lack of fundraising will not effect CoaH's ability to operate.

### **D. Finance Committee Update**

Andres Tejeda Soto, Committee Chair, shared his excitement to take on the role as Committee Chair, and asked Elizabeth Dignan, Chief Operating Officer, to provide an update on the Year-to-Date spending of schools and the FY20 Forecast.

Dignan shared that revenues in Boston are based on higher than budgeted enrollment (394 forecasted vs 364 budgeted), but that of City on a Hill New Bedford ("CoaH NB"), revenues are based on lower than budgeted enrollment (90 forecasted vs 120 budgeted). Dignan added that Q3 estimate of per pupil decreased due to lower school spending my districts, and that there may be further reductions due to continued decreases in spending related to COVID-19. Dignan also shared that COVID-19 introduced unexpected costs, including purchasing 100 new Chromebooks to support remote learning during City on a Hill's extended closure.

Cara Stillings-Candal, Chair, also confirmed that Boston Private and City on a Hill were continuing to meet bi-weekly to discuss financials and the state of the Forbearance Agreement discussed in previous meetings.

### **E. CEO Support Committee Update**

Cara Stillings-Candal, Chair, announced that after negotiation with the CEO Support Committee, Kevin Taylor's contract as Chief Executive Officer was extended for an additional two years. Stillings-Candal confirmed that the terms shared in the previous meeting were confirmed, and the contract had been signed.

## **V. The COAH Effect**

### **A. The COAH Effect**

Jordan Pina, Deputy Chief of Staff, introduced the purpose of The CoaH Effect as a management-produced dashboard to update the Board of Trustees on key metrics of success as set at the beginning of the school year. Pina shared that while the majority of the data presented was as of March 1, 2020, the ability to present some data, such as Quarter 3 academic results, was disrupted by COVID-19.

Jackie Hayes, Chief of Staff & General Counsel, then walked the Board through the dashboard, focusing primarily on enrollment for all schools, waitlists for City on a Hill Circuit Street and City on a Hill Dudley Square charters (collectively "CoaH Boston"), and operational updates.

Board members inquired about college admissions, and staff shared some of the acceptances to date and resolved to share those updates more widely.

## **VI. Closing Items**

### **A. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 3:38 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Cara Stillings-Candal