

APPROVED



## City on a Hill Charter Public School

### Minutes

#### February 2022 Finance Committee Meeting

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

Monday February 7, 2022 at 3:00 PM

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This meeting took place remotely pursuant to An Act Extending certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency signed into law by Governor Baker on June 16, 2021.

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##### **Committee Members Present**

Andres Tejeda Soto (remote), Ted Gildea (remote)

##### **Committee Members Absent**

*None*

##### **Guests Present**

Jordan Lopez (remote), Maddie Collins (remote), Sonya Pratt (remote)

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

##### **A. Record Attendance and Guests**

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

Ted Gildea called a meeting of the Finance Committee of City on a Hill Charter Public School to order on Monday Feb 7, 2022 at 3:02 PM.

##### **C.**

### **Approve December 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Andres Tejeda Soto made a motion to approve the minutes from December 2021 Finance Committee Meeting on 12-02-21.

Ted Gildea seconded the motion.

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

#### **Roll Call**

Andres Tejeda Soto Aye

Ted Gildea Aye

## **II. Year to Date Results**

### **A. Year to Date Results**

Sonya Pratt, Executive Director, shared with the Committee that the contractors that City on a Hill is working with, AAF, is currently still working on reforecasting for City on a Hill. Pratt shared that AAF spend most of December working on completing a financial report that was due to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and because of that, Year to Date results are not currently finalized.

The contractors are now in the process of simultaneously reforecasting where the school stands financially in the current school year and creating a draft budget for FY23. Pratt noted that this process has taken longer than expected on AAF's side.

Pratt shared that the contractors now have access to every document and system needed in order to complete the reforecast and budget process. The Committee asked what the current timeline of both deliverables was.

Jordan Pina, Chief of Staff, shared that the COAH Team met with AAF and the contractor responsible for Accounts Payable at City on a Hill last week to align on timelines and discuss responsibilities. Pina shared that according to that meeting, both the draft FY23 budget and the current reforecast should be completed by AAF at the end of this week.

Pratt shared that she is waiting for the reforecast in order to begin posting for a dedicated role for the finance functions at City on a Hill. This role would ideally start in the Spring and continue to work at City on a Hill through next school year (2022-2023). Pratt shared that she and the COAH Leadership Team will use the reforecast to take next steps in hiring this role, as again the contractors have been less than satisfactory in timeliness and meeting deadlines.

Pina reminded the Committee that AAF was recommended by COAH's former Business Manager, who transitioned off the team in October. AAF was recommended because the organization has handled COAH's audit in the past and knows the school's context well. The Committee asked about the timeline of posting for a finance role at COAH. Pratt

reiterated that the team must receive the current reforecast from AAF, expected this week, in order to know the budget for the role to post it.

The Committee asked more specifically about updates to the Department and whether the lack of information from AAF has affected reports. Pina shared that the COAH team is still in an ongoing conversation with DESE regarding the FY21 Audit, but that looking for a dedicated finance role in the near future will ensure that deadlines are met. Pina noted that the COAH team has expressed their concerns to AAF about timeliness in reporting to the Department.

The Committee asked management specifically about the Department's comments regarding the COAH FY21 Audit. Pratt shared that the recent communication with the Department was the COAH team sharing more clarification on a plan in place address the MTRS, the Massachusetts Teacher Retirement System, non-compliance notation in the FY21 Audit management letter.

Pratt shared that next school year (2022-2023) there will be built in time in staff orientation sessions to enroll teachers into MTRS and allow for better outcomes in the next audit. Pratt shared that the plan is to incorporate the MTRS registration into an orientation session where it must be completed alongside other trainings. Pina noted that COAH is no longer hiring for academic roles this school year (2021-2022), so this non-compliance does not need to be addressed further this year, as current teachers are already enrolled.

Pina shared that the City on a Hill team is also currently in the process of drafting the enrollment plan for next school year (2022-2023) to turn into DESE in the coming months. This plan will reflect the enrollment adjustment that City on a Hill made for enrollment numbers at the beginning of SY 2021-2022 due to attrition at the beginning of the year. Pina shared that as the Committee knows, this plan has a large indication for the school's budget as well.

The discussion concluded with the Committee agreeing to meet in both March and April in order to discuss the incoming documents from AAF.

### **III. Overview of Budget Process**

#### **A. Overview of Budget Process**

Sonya Pratt, Executive Director, shared a presentation with the Committee that outline what the budget drafting and approval process will look like for SY23. Pratt shared that historically, the school team would have already received the budget for next school year around this time. Due to the previously discussed timelines with COAH's finance contractors, this process has been delayed.

Pratt noted that because of the delay, the draft SY23 budget will be ready for the Board to discuss and approve or reject at the May 2022 meeting. Pratt noted that AAF manages the overall numbers process and publishes the master budget that will be based on the COAH Leadership Team's proposed pupil numbers in alignment with COAH's enrollment plan.

Pratt shared that in her ED role, she will ensure the proposed budget meets the parameters of COAH's probationary measures, as well as makes final decisions about what is cut and included in the draft and final budget presented to the Board.

In May, the Board of Trustees accepts or rejects the final budget based on its adherence to the parameters set and its ability to ensure that the school adheres to its mission and meets the metrics in COAH's accountability plan. Pratt shared that because this process is behind schedule due to the contracting of AAF, this may mean pushing back recontracting staff. Pratt shared that the COAH team is working hard to prevent this hiring delay from happening.

The Committee asked more specifically which staff would be affected by a re-contracting delay. Pratt clarified that this would mean all staff's contracts - both academic and operations roles.

The Committee asked about for more details about the current timeline for re-contracting staff. Pina shared that she would go over further details in the next agenda section, but the current plan in place is to send out offer letters to staff with staff members accepting or declining their offer by mid-March. Pina shared that this timeline closely aligns with the timelines of other charter peers as indicated by a Massachusetts Charter Public School Association Survey that was released.

The Committee asked about when the next Finance Committee meeting should occur in order to align with the current budget timeline. Pina shared that with the planned COAH recommitment timeline, the already scheduled early April 2022 Finance Committee meeting should work well.

Pratt also shared that the overarching goal of the budget is to build a financially sound budget that meets COAH's missions and meets the goals of the school's accountability plan.

The Committee asked about enrollment as it pertains to the budget for next school year. Pratt shared that the COAH Student Recruitment Coordinator has been working hard to increase applications and the application number is similar to numbers this time last year. Pratt noted that the challenge in enrollment this school year (21-22) was not the new enrollee number, but the loss of current students due to attrition.

Pina shared that the COAH team uses a formula that takes in account a combination of churn rates, historical data, and current enrollment trends to plan for an enrollment number. Pratt shared that this number will continue to set the tone for a conservative budget for this coming school year (2022-2023).

Pratt shared that the Union negotiations do have bearing on the final budget number as well. Pratt shared that she is still working closely with Kevin Taylor, Senior Advisor, to plan for upcoming union negotiations.

The Committee asked if retention bonuses are a part of the staff's contracts. Pratt shared that if decided upon, a bonus would just be for this school year, so it would not be added to the SY23 budget.

#### **IV. Staff Recommitment Process Updates**

##### **A. Staff Recommitment Process Updates**

Jordan Pina, Chief of Staff, shared the five step process of recommitment at City on a Hill with the Committee. Pina noted that there are slightly different cycles for academic personnel and operations based personnel.

Pina shared that all mid-year reviews for academic roles are lead by COAH's principal, while the mid-year reviews for operations roles are lead by herself as Chief of Staff.

Pina shared that in these meetings are happening right now and that all reviews are due by mid-February. Following staff conversations, all supervisors share their recommended renewal offers (unconditional offer, conditional offer, non-renewal) based on the mid-year review with the HR department at COAH by the end of February.

Following the recommendations, the Finance and HR department review the recommendations of supervisors to ensure they align with budgetary restrictions, personnel policies and Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) requirements.

Pina shared that HR then sends finalized letters for all Unconditional and Conditional offers and letters expressing Coah's gratitude for their service for staff who will not be renewed. The COAH team is prioritizing the academic role and operation role offers out at the same time for SY23 in early March 2022.

Following, all staff will be required to accept or reject their offer and HR will post for all roles where staff either rejected or did not sign their offer.

Pina shared that the in the interim of a full time HR staff member, there has been some challenges in the past hiring cycle to move work forward at a quick pace. Pina shared that

she has worked in the past few months to tighten and structure the hiring process in order to avoid these challenges while recruiting for next school year.

Pina also shared that COAH's Director of Compliance and Teacher Development, Michael McGean, has worked to relaunch the COAH Associate Teacher Program (ATP) for SY23. This program will allow for new teachers to work towards a Massachusetts teacher certification while working at City on a Hill in a teaching role.

This purpose for re-launching the ATP is to cast a wider net of applicants and incentivize a diverse pipeline of new teachers to be trained and stay at COAH to educate the school's students.

## **V. Union Negotiation Updates**

### **A. Union Negotiation Updates**

Sonya Pratt, Executive Director, shared that there are no current Union update as negotiations have not yet begun for next school year (2022-2023). Pratt noted that the draft budget is not yet ready and the COAH team anticipates the Union conversations to revolve around salary increases for next year.

The Committee asked management if they had found someone to contract in order to manage Union negotiations, as discussed at a previous Finance Committee meeting. Pratt shared that she has been in ongoing discussions with COAH's counsel to formulate the best strategy for managing negotiations, including hiring a paralegal, bringing Pratt into negotiations for specific questions, or having an alternative COAH Leadership staff member managing the negotiations alongside counsel.

The Committee asked if negotiations have not yet begun, will there be a risk if Union negotiations go past July 1, the date that new contracts are set to begin. Pina clarified that when staff are sent recommitment letters in March, any language related to union negotiations is taken into account and outlined in that letter.

## **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 4:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ted Gildea

### **Documents used during the meeting**

- Board Budget Presentation 22-23.pptx.pdf
- SY23 Recommitment Process.pdf