

APPROVED



City on a Hill Charter Public School

Minutes

April 2022 Finance Committee Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday April 7, 2022 at 3:00 PM

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.

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)

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 Thursday Apr 7, 2022 at 3:03 PM.

C.

Approve March 2022 Meeting Minutes

Andres Tejeda Soto made a motion to approve the minutes from March 2022 Finance Committee Meeting on 03-10-22.

Ted Gildea seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Ted Gildea Aye

Andres Tejeda Soto Aye

II. School Year 2022-2023 Budget Discussion

A. School Year 2022-2023 Budget Discussion

Sonya Pratt, Executive Director, shared that the documents that the Committee will be reviewing are the same documents that were presented at the April 2022 Board of Trustees meeting. Pratt opened the discussion for in-depth questions from the Committee.

The Committee first asked management about the enrollment number the School Year 2022-2023 budget is based on, specifically where enrollment numbers are at City on a Hill right now. Pratt shared that the SY23 draft budget is based upon 227 students, and currently in School Year 2021-2022, the enrollment is around 220 students.

Pratt shared that enrollment is calculated as it relates to tuition several times a year, including the October claim and February claim that occurs every school year, where City on a Hill turns in official enrollment numbers to the state of Massachusetts in order to determine the tuition amount.

The Committee asked what the current recruitment and enrollment process looked like for SY23. Pratt shared that all indicators for enrollment are trending positively, with COAH's Student Recruitment Coordinator bringing in over 100 more applications in the SY23 lottery than the SY22 lottery, improving conversion rates from SY22, as well as hosting the first in-person Open House in two years at City on a Hill. With these indicators, Pratt shared that the COAH team is confident that enrollment numbers will match the number that the budget is set on.

Pratt noted that even with the enrollment indicators trending positively, the enrollment plan for future years does need to be revised, as mentioned at the April 2022 Board of Trustees meeting. Pratt shared that the COAH team is in the process of comparing historical data, while considering the enrollment of the sending district (Boston), to work on a revised enrollment plan to turn into the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the coming months.

Jordan Pina, Chief of Staff, shared that while CoaH is currently chartered for 400 students and temporarily capped at 350 as one of the School's probationary conditions, this number was not determined by a growth model but rather was the number of seats DESE granted upon consolidation of City on a Hill Circuit Street and the former City on a Hill Dudley Square, which had each been chartered for 280 students.

The Committee asked about the affect of the global COVID-19 pandemic and what growth looks like for COAH after stabilizing enrollment. Pratt shared that efforts mentioned earlier, which include, but are not limited to, an increased budget for student recruitment, a full-time student recruitment coordinator, and a recruitment and engagement plan for new enrollees have all been put into place to increase the enrollment number in coming school years. Pratt noted that the SY23 budget indicates 280 as the goal number for enrollment after SY24.

Pratt also noted that COAH's sending district, Boston's, enrollment number is also down, which contributed to a lower than expected enrollment in the current school year (2021-2022). Pratt also shared that another challenge to enrollment are other charter schools that have feeder middle schools, as City on a Hill is a standalone charter.

The Committee asked management about the ACT program that a group of City on a Hill juniors and seniors engaged in this school year (21-22). Pratt shared that it was the first year of the program and around half of the students engaged very well with the program while the other half of students faced challenges.

Pratt shared that the point of challenge for that group of students was that the class was completely online outside of school time, as well as occurred on the weekend. Pratt shared that the COAH team has already began brainstorming for next year to find ways for more students to engage in the program to prepare for the ACT. These plans include, but are not limited to, shifting the program provider to allow for the course to occur during the school day, providing in class supports in classes such a junior and senior seminar, and using a provider that would instruct the course in person.

The Committee shared that opportunities like engaging with the ACT course make City on a Hill's program stand out. The Committee asked management what the value of the renovations is to City on a Hill's program becoming more attractive to incoming students as the COAH team plans for increased enrollment.

Pratt shared that the majority of the impact of the renovations, set to occur in Summer 2022, will have on COAH's program is to alleviate scheduling and allow for more classes to meet throughout the day by dividing classrooms. Pratt noted, however, that the ESSR III funding seen in the draft SY23 budget will be going into projects such as outfitting of Town Hall to host small theatre productions and upgrading chemistry labs at COAH, just two examples of plans to set the COAH program apart from other charters.

The Committee asked about plans for construction after the renovation occurs, specifically, if the COAH team knew the estimated cost to add on to the current building. Pratt shared that COAH's renovation/construction contractors do not yet have plans in place for further construction, as the focus has been on the renovations happening in Summer 2022. Pratt shared that because of this focus placed on phase one of renovations, the contractors have put a pause on the second phase on the construction.

Pratt shared that any plans to explore construction will be discussed at the May 2022 Board Meeting. The Committee shared that they had no other questions regarding the budget, and shared how impressed they were by the preciseness of the budget and the work that Central Source, COAH's finance contractor, and Pratt had put into it.

Pratt shared that because Central Source has experience with other charter schools, the draft SY23 budget was put together with charter school context and the contractor has gotten the COAH team to a place they can start to plan for what finances will look like beyond SY24.

III. Staff Recommitment Process Updates

A. Staff Recommitment Process Updates

Jordan Pina, Chief of Staff, shared that the School Year 2022-2023 recommitment process has been completed. Pina shared that only three unconditional offers were not signed, with all three staff members either moving out of state or leaving the education field.

Pina shared that recruitment is well underway for the open roles, with all open positions posted on the COAH site. Pina shared that there has been a lot of planning put into creating a clear system for hiring moving into SY23. Pina shared that interviews are already happening for many of those open roles and additionally, she is conducting weekly meetings with hiring managers in order to move the hiring process forward at an efficient pace.

Pratt shared additional details about streamlining the process for hiring SY23 candidates. These revisions include, but are not limited to, removing a cover letter to eliminate the opportunity for unconscious bias from the hiring manager, and moving to a three stage hiring process that includes a phone screen with HR, a hiring manager discussion, and a work simulation for finalists.

Pina shared that the COAH team has also created hiring blocks in schedules in order to protect time for interviews throughout the school day. Pina shared that with this system in place, the COAH team is confident to reach the goal of being 75% hired before the beginning of SY23.

IV. 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 3:49 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ted Gildea

Documents used during the meeting

- Charter School Auditor RFP.pdf
- Statement of Net Position2.28.2022.pdf
- FY23 Proposed Budget.pdf
- Budget Highlights.pdf