

APPROVED



## City on a Hill Charter Public School

### Minutes

#### June 2023 Board Meeting

---

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

Wednesday June 21, 2023 at 5:00 PM

---

This meeting took place remotely pursuant to a supplemental budget bill which, among other things, extends the temporary provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2025 signed into law by Governor Healey on March 29, 2023.

---

##### **Trustees Present**

Alekz Hirschmann (remote), Andres Tejada Soto (remote), Brooke Fincke (remote), Danielle Canty (remote), Kimberley Thai Small (remote), Melisa Lemire (remote), Robyn Shahid (remote), Ted Gildea (remote)

##### **Trustees Absent**

Edelyn Contreras, Jacqueline Bennett, Michelle Allwood

##### **Ex Officio Members Present**

Sonya Pratt (remote)

##### **Non Voting Members Present**

Sonya Pratt (remote)

##### **Guests Present**

Jordan Lopez (remote)

---

## I. Opening Items

### A. Record Attendance

### B. Call the Meeting to Order

Melisa Lemire called a meeting of the board of trustees of City on a Hill Charter Public School to order on Wednesday Jun 21, 2023 at 5:03 PM.

### C. Approve May 2023 Board Minutes

Ted Gildea made a motion to approve the minutes from May 2023. May 2023 Board Meeting on 05-16-23.

Andres Tejeda Soto seconded the motion.

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

#### Roll Call

Ted Gildea	Aye
Alekz Hirschmann	Aye
Kimberley Thai Small	Aye
Brooke Fincke	Aye
Michelle Allwood	Absent
Edelyn Contreras	Absent
Danielle Canty	Aye
Robyn Shahid	Aye
Melisa Lemire	Aye
Andres Tejeda Soto	Aye
Jacqueline Bennett	Absent

## II. School Updates

### A. General School Updates

Melisa Lemire, Chair, directed the attention of the Board to the General School Updates. Sonya Pratt, Executive Director, shared that the final week of the school year currently ongoing, with current school-based priorities as 1) supporting students currently taking make-up final exams, 2) finishing out the spring administration of the NWEA MAP Growth Test, and 3) closing the building for the summer in preparation for construction. She also noted that part of these priorities including preparing for City on a Hill's in-house summer school, which gives students opportunities to gain credit in courses they did not pass in the school year. Pratt also noted that while a more extensive update would be given momentarily, the School is also continuing with its hiring efforts, with the most difficulty being finding Math and Science candidates.

### B. School Year 2023-2024 Enrollment Update

Next, Pratt confirmed that all enrollment and recruitment efforts were officially facing forward due to the end of the school year, and all future updates would be for school year 2023-24. She shared that as of the time of this meeting, 72 ninth grade applicants had accepted their lottery offer, in addition to 25 tenth grade applicants, for a total of 97 newly accepted students. She reminded the Board that the School's initial goal was 104 new students, but that it would continue its efforts even after reaching that number. Pratt also noted that the School is putting emphasis on ensuring the conversion rate from acceptances to enrollment remains high, as history has shown that families often receive competing offers from peer charters. She explained that the School's Student Recruitment Coordinators were working to ensure that all accepted students received some kind of contact from the school, whether a phone call, email or Open Houses, at least every other week throughout the summer.

The Board asked Pratt if the tenth grade number she mentioned was in addition to the rising ninth graders from school year 2022-23, and she confirmed it was. She also shared that this would be the largest number of new tenth graders that City on a Hill has seen, and she believe it relates to the direct marketing the school did to rising tenth graders. Trustees then inquired about the School's marketing in general, given the success of the campaign, and if advertising would continue over the summer. Pratt shared that it would, and City on a Hill plans to operate in a full-year recruitment cycle for the foreseeable future. Pratt also shared that the School would continue to diversify its marketing, and is also beginning to re-form partnerships with Boston charters who do not have their own high school. She noted that the School has seen great success in the transition of students from middle school to high school when City on a Hill has partnered with middle schools in the past, and she looks forward to sharing more updates.

### **C. School Year 2023-2024 Recruitment Update**

Next, Jordan Pina, Chief of Staff, began the School Year 2023-24 Recruitment Update. She confirmed that the School is continuing its hiring season into the summer, with openings in English, Math, Science and Special Education, as well as an open Dean of Civic Engagement, Mental Health Counselor and Human Resources Coordinator. She shared that the School is taking a strategy of moving folks forward as quickly as possible, while still ensuring all stages of interview, performance task, and references are being covered. She also noted that the School is coming to candidates with its best offer with the hopes that the process would allow for a shorter decision making window before the school would move on to the next candidate. She reiterated Pratt's point about the hardest to fill positions being Math and Science, but remains hopeful due to some recent traction with finding two science candidates.

The Board asked Pina how they could be helpful in the recruitment efforts. Pina shared that the best way to help the School in this effort would to be to re-share the School's social media posts about open positions or connecting the Human Resources team with any leads they believe could be a good fit.

### **III. Strategic Plan Discussion & Vote to Approve**

#### **A. Strategic Plan Presentation & Discussion**

Next, Pratt shared her excitement for the completion of City on a Hill's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan and her gratitude for the effort of the entire School community, including students, staff, administrators and Board members. She then reminded the Board of the overall purpose of the plan as providing a vision for what the "new" City on a Hill would be, while acknowledging its values and mission. The School did this by first bringing on Prospect Leadership Group as a consultant to perform a full programmatic review of the School, including interviews with all stakeholders to have a state of the School, and generate a report.

That report was shared with both the Board and the wider community in early spring, and was then used by the Strategic Planning Committee to begin the process of creating a plan. She confirmed that the criteria for joining this Committee was being a returning student, staff member or Board member interested in participating in conversations on how to improve the School. This Committee met weekly, and had discussion ranging from reviewing the School's mission to integrating student-generated school values. She shared the final product was the plan, which lists major strategic focus areas as:

1. Academic Achievement
2. Climate and Culture
3. School Reputation and Community Connections

She also noted that in addition to these focus areas, the Committee also evaluated the School's mission for alignment with the direction the School is taking. She explained that through discussion at this Committee and beyond, the School had decided to update language related to "Citizenship" to "Civic Engagement." This change has been proposed to better encapsulate the goal of empowering civically-minded leaders that City on a Hill has always strived for without excluding those who may not have United States citizenship. Pratt noted that this change would be an amendment to the School's charter, and shared the proposed updated language as:

City on a Hill graduates responsible, resourceful and respectful scholars prepared to thrive in an ever-evolving world and to advance community, culture and commerce. We do so by emphasizing academic achievement, civic engagement, teacher leadership and public accountability.

Pratt then shared the student-generated values the School strives to consistently embody:

- Courage
- Respect
- Engagement

- High Expectations
- Growth
- Inclusivity

Next, Pratt began reviewing each focus area. She shared that she had wanted to ensure that these goals synergized with the School's Academic Action Plan, Accountability Plan, and Governance Action Plan so that there could be one unified vision of where the School should focus its efforts. Pratt then invited the Trustees who had participated in the process, including Andres Tejeda, Danielle Canty and Alekz Hirschmann, to share any other information they felt was important. The members agreed with Pratt's excitement for the future of City on a Hill to be set up by this plan, and shared that the conversations had with the Committee were rigorous and they believe got the plan to a stronger place. Pratt thanked the Committee members again, and invited any final comments or questions.

Trustees agreed they appreciated having Board-specific goals, and looked forward to having additional engagement opportunities with the School. Lemire confirmed that the Governance Committee, Pratt and Pina were working together to identify more of those opportunities in school year 2023-24.

#### **B. Vote to Approve the School Year 2024-2028 Strategic Plan**

Andres Tejeda Soto made a motion to to approve the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan and to direct management to submit the amendment request to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to update the School's mission.

Ted Gildea seconded the motion.

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

#### **Roll Call**

Jacqueline Bennett	Absent
Robyn Shahid	Aye
Brooke Fincke	Aye
Michelle Allwood	Absent
Edelyn Contreras	Absent
Ted Gildea	Aye
Alekz Hirschmann	Aye
Andres Tejeda Soto	Aye
Danielle Canty	Aye
Melisa Lemire	Aye
Kimberley Thai Small	Aye

### **IV. Circuit Street Campus Updates & Discussion**

#### **A. Circuit Street Loan Update**

Pratt confirmed that the School and the City on a Hill Foundation are at the end of the process of closing the refinance of the mortgage of Circuit Street campus, which is owned by the Foundation, by June 30, 2023. She shared that there was an additional vote

needed relating to the signing of a new lease, but that next steps were primarily the Officers of the School Board of Trustees and Foundation Board of Directors to sign various assurances. Pratt also confirmed that the School had successfully completed the process to pursue a tax-free bond backed by Mass Development Corporation, which allowed the Foundation to save roughly \$150,000 in interest over the 10-year term of the loan.

## **B. Circuit Street Construction Update**

Next, Ted Gildea, Vice Chair & Treasurer, began an update on the Circuit Street Construction Project set to begin this summer. Gildea shared that the School is awaiting proper permits from the City of Boston to begin construction, and is monitoring the process closely to ensure that the project would be able to begin on time.

Then, Pina shared that the School and Foundation would also need to enter into a new lease agreement. Pina shared that the School would pay the exact amount of the Foundation's mortgage as monthly rent, through the end of the 10-year loan. She explained that following the full payment of the mortgage in 2033, the School would cease paying rent to the Foundation while retaining tenant rights so long as it continues to operate as a charter public school. She explained this would put the School in a very unique position as a Boston charter, and would allow for much lower annual facilities costs.

Ted Gildea made a motion to consent hat the School enter into a Lease by and between the School and The City on a Hill Foundation, Inc. with respect to the approximately 56,360 square foot parcel of land with all buildings and improvements thereon off Regent, Hulbert and Circuit Streets, Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts upon such terms and conditions as the Board of Trustees of the School shall approve.

Brooke Fincke seconded the motion.

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

### **Roll Call**

Jacqueline Bennett	Absent
Melisa Lemire	Aye
Brooke Fincke	Aye
Danielle Canty	Aye
Andres Tejeda Soto	Aye
Ted Gildea	Aye
Alekz Hirschmann	Aye
Edelyn Contreras	Absent
Robyn Shahid	Aye
Kimberley Thai Small	Aye
Michelle Allwood	Absent

Ted Gildea made a motion to consent that the Executive Director of the School is hereby authorized to sign, seal, execute, acknowledge and deliver the Lease and such other agreements, instruments, documents and certificates required pursuant to the terms of the Lease or otherwise in connection with the transactions authorized by the foregoing

vote, as she deems necessary or appropriate to accomplish the intent and purposes of the foregoing vote.

Brooke Fincke seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

Ted Gildea	Aye
Danielle Canty	Aye
Michelle Allwood	Absent
Andres Tejeda Soto	Aye
Robyn Shahid	Aye
Alekz Hirschmann	Aye
Brooke Fincke	Aye
Jacqueline Bennett	Absent
Kimberley Thai Small	Aye
Melisa Lemire	Aye
Edelyn Contreras	Absent

**V. Board Committee Updates**

**A. Governance Committee Update**

Next, Lemire shared that the School had received its Summary of Review following the February 2023 Targeted Site Visit. She noted that there had been positive improvement across the Board, and the School was excited to build upon those successes.

Additionally, she confirmed that the School would have an opportunity to respond with both factual corrections and a general statement to put on record to be entered into the School's body of evidence for renewal. The Board thanked Pratt for the efforts, and agreed this was a positive review with opportunities to continue to improve.

**B. Academic Excellence Committee Update**

Pina explained that due to the rescheduling of this meeting, final grades and updates were not yet submitted and ready to present, but confirmed that Leadership has begun reviewing all program results and would present results at the August 2023 Retreat.

**C. Executive Director Support Committee**

Gildea, ED Support Committee Member, shared that the Committee met to review Sonya Pratt's goals as Executive Director, and based on her presentation and the subsequent discussion of the Committee, they are recommending a satisfactory performance evaluation for the 2022-23 school year. Gildea also confirmed that based on the completion of her goals, the Committee recommended full payment of her \$10,000 bonus potential for the spring semester.

**D. Vote to Accept the Recommendation of the Executive Director Support Committee**

Ted Gildea made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Executive Director Support Committee to approve the satisfactory results of the school year 2022-2023 Executive Director Evaluation for Sonya Pratt and full payment of her bonus potential. Andres Tejeda Soto seconded the motion. The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

Melisa Lemire	Aye
Alekz Hirschmann	Aye
Andres Tejeda Soto	Aye
Brooke Fincke	Aye
Kimberley Thai Small	Aye
Ted Gildea	Aye
Edelyn Contreras	Absent
Michelle Allwood	Absent
Jacqueline Bennett	Absent
Danielle Canty	Aye
Robyn Shahid	Aye

**E. Finance Committee Update**

Gildea, Finance Committee Chair, confirmed that the Finance Committee met earlier in the month and discussed the School's current financial position. He confirmed that the School does not currently carry any debt, as the School's mortgage is in the name of the Foundation, and that the School continues not to use any of its current line of credit. Gildea also confirmed that the School remains in a strong financial position, with the School ending the year slightly under budget.

**VI. Organizational Goals Dashboard**

**A. Organizational Goals Dashboard**

Pina reaffirmed that this data would be ready and presented at the August 2023 Board Retreat.

**VII. 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 6:32 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Melisa Lemire



---

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

- CoaH Strat Plan Development and Monitoring Process.pdf
- CoaH Strategic Plan SY 2024-2028.pdf
- Redline of Lease (A8334059x7A575).docx
- May Balance Sheet.pdf
- May Activity Report.pdf