



## City on a Hill Charter Public School

### Minutes

#### August 2024 Board Meeting

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**Date and Time**

Tuesday August 27, 2024 at 5:00 PM

**Location**

<https://cityonahill-org.zoom.us/j/81315100800>

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**Trustees Present**

Alekz Hirschmann (remote), Brooke Fincke (remote), Danielle Canty (remote), Edelyn Contreras (remote), Gabriela (Gaby) DeLeon-Evora (remote), Jacqueline Bennett (remote), Kimberley Thai Small (remote), Melisa Lemire (remote)

**Trustees Absent**

Andres Tejeda Soto, Ted Gildea

**Guests Present**

Asha Ibrahim (remote), Diana Landry (remote), Jordan Lopez (remote)

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**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 Tuesday Aug 27, 2024 at 5:08 PM.

**C.**

### Approve February 2024 Meeting Minutes

Brooke Fincke made a motion to approve the minutes from February 2024 Board Meeting on 02-13-24.

Alekz Hirschmann seconded the motion.

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

#### Roll Call

Edelyn Contreras	Aye
Alekz Hirschmann	Aye
Danielle Canty	Aye
Andres Tejeda Soto	Absent
Kimberley Thai Small	Aye
Jacqueline Bennett	Aye
Gabriela (Gaby) DeLeon-Evora	Aye
Melisa Lemire	Aye
Brooke Fincke	Aye
Ted Gildea	Absent

### D. Approve June 2024 Meeting Minutes

Brooke Fincke made a motion to approve the minutes from June 2024 Board Meeting on 06-21-24.

Alekz Hirschmann seconded the motion.

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

#### Roll Call

Danielle Canty	Aye
Kimberley Thai Small	Aye
Ted Gildea	Absent
Alekz Hirschmann	Aye
Andres Tejeda Soto	Absent
Jacqueline Bennett	Aye
Gabriela (Gaby) DeLeon-Evora	Aye
Melisa Lemire	Aye
Edelyn Contreras	Aye
Brooke Fincke	Aye

## II. Team Building Activity

### A. Team Building Activity

Melisa Lemire, Chair, expressed her gratitude to the Board for their participation and contributions during the final year of City on a Hill. She emphasized the importance of board engagement throughout the school year and introduced a team-building activity that allowed members to share their personal motivations for serving on the board.

Lemire began by discussing her own motivation for joining the Board, stressing the significance of community involvement and reflecting on her experience as a First-Generation Graduate navigating the school system without guidance. She underscored the need for students to be aware of available opportunities and then invited others to share their thoughts and reflections.

Alekz Hirschmann shared that he enjoys being part of a system that offers meaningful alternatives to public schools. This experience highlighted for him the crucial importance of providing such valuable options to the community.

Brooke Finke, a long-time community member and former staff at City on a Hill, expressed her strong support for the mission of delivering high-quality, free public education. She views COAH as a unique community with which she has had a longstanding connection and feels privileged to contribute to its broader impact.

Gaby DeLeon-Evora emphasized the importance of giving back, recalling how Boston Public Schools educators, particularly her guidance counselor, provided essential support and opportunities during her time as a first-generation student. This experience significantly influenced her decision to join the City on a Hill Board.

Danielle Canty shared that, as a City on a Hill alumna, she felt a strong sense of responsibility to give back to the institution that played a crucial role in her success in college and her professional career. Her personal experiences with COAH were pivotal in shaping her achievements, and she views her board involvement as a way to support and contribute to the school's continued success and impact for future students.

Edelyn Conteras expressed profound gratitude for City on a Hill. She noted that Brooke Finke, who served as her counselor, was instrumental in guiding her through the college application process and securing her admission to Bentley, particularly as a first-generation student. Conteras also emphasized the significance of her siblings' attendance and graduation from City on a Hill, further deepening her appreciation for the institution. She remains deeply grateful for the experiences, friendships, and guidance she received during her time at City on a Hill.

Jacqueline Bennet, a former public school teacher with nearly 20 years of experience in education, conveyed that she joined the board to apply her knowledge and expertise to a school she deeply values and that significantly benefits students. She expressed appreciation for everyone's contributions and highlighted the recurring theme of giving back as a noble act that supports future generations.

Melisa Lemire concluded by thanking everyone for sharing their insights, emphasizing the recurring theme of giving back as a selfless act that benefits future generations. She expressed her gratitude for their contributions and then transitioned to discussing updates for the 2024-2025 school year.

### **III. School Year 2024-2025 Updates**

#### **A. School Year 2024-2025 Kickoff Updates**

Chief Operating Officer, Jordan Pina, reported that the Staff Orientation process was streamlined due to the lack of new staff members, although some new hires did have individual meetings with Taylor Riley, Director of HR. With returning staff already acquainted with the school's routines, the focus of the orientation was on addressing this year's specific needs rather than revisiting previously covered content. Pina highlighted that 40% of the orientation week was allocated to planning time for teachers, which was received positively.

Pina emphasized that the leadership team aimed to enhance staff morale by providing daily breakfasts and lunches, which resulted in overwhelmingly positive feedback. For students, particularly those in 11th and 12th grades involved in Dual Enrollment programs, there was a concentrated effort on both practical and soft skills, with collaborative support from RCC to ensure a seamless integration. Informative sessions for families were conducted, and robust connections were established with RCC's administration and safety office.

Looking ahead, Pina outlined additional orientation activities, including RCC field trips and the official commencement of classes on September 3, 2024. She indicated a commitment to a collaborative approach, embracing a trial-and-error methodology to refine strategies. The presentation of year-long goals is anticipated in September. Additionally, Pina noted that the school will host a Celebration on Thursday, August 29, 2024, to which staff, the community, families, and students are all invited. The event will feature food trucks and a voter registration drive, reflecting the school's dedication to civic engagement.

#### **B. School Year 2024-2025 Board Calendar & Committee Assignments**

Pina then presented the Board Calendar and Committee Assignments for the 2024-25 School Year. Lemire inquired if any members had conflicts with the scheduled meeting dates. With no conflicts reported, Pina proceeded to provide updates on financial matters.

### **IV. Finance Updates & Discussion**

#### **A. General School Financials Update**

Pina transitioned to presenting the School's most recent financials, noting that the Year-to-Date results as of July 31, 2024, show City on a Hill is in a strong financial position. She explained that early expenditures are high due to strategic large purchases and the use of ESSER 3 funds, which must be utilized by September 30th. The 225% expenditure of the July budget is intentional, reflecting planned asset acquisitions. Pina highlighted

that such spending patterns are typical for July and September. The financial management team is effectively coordinating with Central Source, and the overall financial situation remains robust. Pina invited questions about the current and projected financial status.

#### **B. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Audit Update**

Pina noted that the audit is progressing smoothly, thanks to Central Source's efficient systems that have minimized time involvement. She mentioned that the Finance Committee will review the audit in October and that no major issues are anticipated due to previous corrections in MTRS compliance and payroll.

### **V. Consent Agenda**

#### **A. Consent Agenda Overview**

Next, Melisa Lemire directed the Board's attention to the Consent Agenda and asked Pina to provide an overview of the process. Pina explained that while many votes are taken throughout the year in separate meetings, a consent agenda is used for routine votes, such as policy approvals and term affirmations, like those on today's agenda. When using a consent agenda, each vote is discussed individually but approved collectively in a single action.

#### **B. Vote to Approve the FY25 Fiscal Policies and Procedures**

The FY 25 fiscal policies and procedures have undergone two main updates:

**1. Chief Procurement Officer Certification:** The policies now reflect that Pina is the Chief Procurement Officer, certified by the state following extensive procurement training. This change also incorporates new DESE language and updated procurement law.

#### **2. Signatories and Payroll Approvals:**

- **Signatories:** Asha, Chief of Staff, was added as a signatory, alongside Pina, Sonya, and Ted. The change aimed to provide coverage during Sonya Pratt, Executive Director, sabbatical and offer additional flexibility.
- **Credit Card Holders:** The updated policy clarifies the individuals authorized to hold school-level credit cards, including the Executive Director, Chief Operating Officer, Chief of Staff, Principal, and Director of Operations.
- **HR and Payroll Approvals:** Under the new HR structure, Taylor Riley, Director of HR, will input payroll data, with oversight from the third-party consultant and, if needed, Central Source. Pina, Chief Operating Officer, will approve regular payroll, while Sonya Pratt, Executive Director, will act as the secondary approver for any

unusual payments. Out-of-the-ordinary payments will be documented via MOU, with Pratt also serving as the second approver for any additions made by Pina.

**C. Vote to Approve the School Year 2024-2025 Staff Handbook**

Pina noted the Staff Handbook has been streamlined from 198 pages to 88. Pina noted key updates include the removal of outdated content, such as references to COVID and the ninth-grade academy, as well as the separation of legal documents. Legal agreements, including anti-harassment policies and mandatory reporting training, have been moved to the HRIS system (ADP) for individual acknowledgment, making the handbook more user-friendly.

**D. Vote to the Approve School Year 2024-2025 Student and Family Handbook**

Pina noted that major changes to the Student and Family Handbook include the removal of outdated references to ninth and tenth grades, the addition of detailed information on dual enrollment expectations and processes, and the introduction of a formalized meal substitution plan to accommodate various dietary needs, such as allergies, veganism, and halal requirements. Additionally, a more explicit family compact has been included to clearly document conversations and expectations between families and the school. She mentioned the handbook will be translated into Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese for broader accessibility.

**E. Vote to Re-Appoint Officers**

Finally, Pina shared that although officer positions are held throughout a Trustee's term, it is best practice to annually reaffirm the Board's leadership, which also serves as the Governance Committee. She reminded the Board of the current slate of Officers:

- Melisa Lemire, Chair
- Ted Gildea, Vice Chair & Treasurer
- Brooke Fincke, Clerk

Pina then invited any questions or concerns regarding this slate of officers or any other votes mentioned in the consent agenda. Attendees expressed their appreciation for the Officers' leadership and raised no concerns.

**F. Vote to Approve Consent Agenda**

Melisa Lemire made a motion to Approve Consent Agenda.

Alekz Hirschmann seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

Jacqueline Bennett	Aye
Alekz Hirschmann	Aye
Kimberley Thai Small	Aye
Ted Gildea	Absent

**Roll Call**

Gabriela (Gaby) DeLeon-Evora	Aye
Brooke Fincke	Aye
Melisa Lemire	Aye
Edelyn Contreras	Aye
Danielle Canty	Aye
Andres Tejeda Soto	Absent

**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 5:54 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Brooke Fincke

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**Documents used during the meeting**

- SY25 Board Calendar.pdf
- COAH\_ActvsBud\_7.31.24.pdf
- COAH\_BS\_7.31.24.pdf
- CoaH\_Policies\_and\_Procedures\_August2024\_DRAFT\_TrackChanges.pdf
- City on a Hill 2024-2025 Employee Handbook\_Aug2024Update.pdf
- Professional Development Policy (1).pdf
- Student and Family Handbook 24-25.pdf