APPROVED

Amani Public Charter School

Minutes

Amani Board Meetings

Date and Time
Monday April 8, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Directors Present
A. Spencer (remote), G. Sardi, J. Killoran (remote), J. Kuo (remote), M. Smith, P. Morenberg (remote), S. Edwards, S. WuDunn (remote), T. Houston (remote)

Directors Absent
L. Attis, P. Smith

Ex Officio Members Present
D. Stern

Guests Present
B. Tanner, J. Ciavirella, K. Johnson (remote), L. Marshall, N. Thurman, S. Parande

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

D. Stern called a meeting of the board of directors of Amani Public Charter School to order on Monday Apr 8, 2024 at 6:00 PM.

C. Approve Minutes

II. Capital Planning Committee

A. Presentation - Carlo Schiattarella - Schoolhouse Project

Facilities Planning Committee Update (presented by Charles Stern & Carlos from Schoolhouse):
The committee is doing exploratory work on construction and financing for potential expansion to grades K-4
- No decisions made yet, in the early planning stages
- Carlos presented his experience with charter school facility projects in the NYC area
- Discussed the process of determining space needs, finding sites, managing design and construction
- Emphasized the need for comprehensive planning, not a piecemeal approach
- Reviewed some past projects as examples
- Community relations are important when constructing new charter school building
- Potential issues with unions, and prevailing wage requirements that can increase costs
- Typically use the same architects/engineers/contractors when possible

III. Finance

A. Financial Update

Finance Report (presented by Kim Johnson):
- Operating cash balance as of Feb 29: $238,000 (additional $500,000 in money market account)
- Total revenue YTD: $4,618,000 (slightly less than budgeted)
- Total expenses YTD: $4,762,000 (under budget of $4,797,000)
- Net operating deficit of $144,000 as of Feb 29 (budgeted surplus was $27,000)
- Projecting total revenue of $7,356,000 for the year (vs budget of $7,091,000)
- Projecting total expenses of $7,409,000 for the year (vs budget of $7,050,000)
- Projecting deficit of $52,000 for the full year (budgeted surplus was $40,781)
- Have cash to cover projected deficit, not a cash flow issue
- Discussion of putting aside funds as a "rainy day fund" - no decisions made

B. Finance Department

- State auditor mama du Barry has been auditing the school since August 2022
- Met with Finance Committee members John Kuo and Jim Killoran to discuss preliminary findings

- Issues noted: 1) Policies & procedures not always followed, lack of internal audit function 2) Need for better segregation of duties for expenses/payments 3) Inconsistent awareness of policies & procedures among staff
- Plan to update financial policies & procedures (last updated in 2017)
- Will look at options for checks & balances/internal audit functions through combination of CSBM, external auditors, in-house staff
- Changes in personnel (CFO leaving, etc.) cited as contributing factors, not placing blame

IV. Educational Accountability

A. ELA and Math Mock Data

Academic Accountability:
- ELA mock exam results reviewed - grade level proficiencies range from 51% to 67%
- Math mock exam results concerning - grade-level proficiencies range from 4.8% to 16.1%, much lower than last year especially in 8th grade
- Urgent action plan being put in place with targeted small group instruction leading up to state math exam on May 8-9
- Investigating new math curriculum, the current one is not rigorous enough
- Examining teacher-level data to make staffing decisions for next year

B. NYS Assessment Dates

V. Operations

A. Marketing and Recruitment

Enrollment & Recruitment:
- Current enrollment holding steady at 343 students
- 52 applications for 5th grade so far, below the target of having grade filled by April 1
- Extending outreach efforts - billboards, social media ads, in-person recruitment events
- Priority to fill 5th grade, then can offer additional spots in grades 6-8 which are currently oversubscribed based on waitlists if needed
- Enrollment drives the school's revenue, $19K per student from the district of residence
- Challenges with enrollment declines seen across the charter sector
- Maria leading enrollment efforts with support from the leadership team
- Discussion of expanding recruitment efforts to neighboring areas like Bronx, New Rochelle, and Yonkers to boost enrollment
- But requires change to charter which currently prioritizes Mount Vernon residents
- Takes time to get material charter revision approved

- Decline in enrollment citywide impacting charter schools' ability to meet targets

VI. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Next Steps:
- Continue enrollment push especially for incoming 5th grade
- Implement academic action plan for math
- Update financial policies & procedures, research internal audit options
- Plan Teacher Appreciation Week activities
- Promote upcoming school events
- Consider longer-term plans for material charter revision to expand recruitment area

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Stern

Documents used during the meeting

None