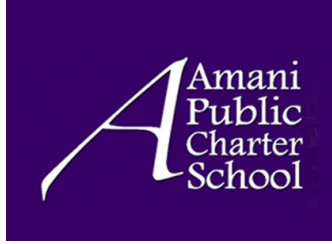


APPROVED



Amani Public Charter School

Minutes

Amani Board Meeting

Date and Time

Monday October 21, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Location

Hybrid

Directors Present

G. Sardi, J. Kuo (remote), M. Smith, P. Morenberg (remote), S. Edwards (remote)

Directors Absent

A. Spencer, L. Attis, S. WuDunn

Guests Present

B. Tanner, C. Stern, J. Ciavarella, Jackie Lee, MMB & CO. (remote), N. Thurman

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

M. Smith called a meeting of the board of directors of Amani Public Charter School to order on Monday Oct 21, 2024 at 6:03 PM.

C. Approve Minutes

G. Sardi made a motion to approve the minutes from August and September Amani Board Meeting on 08-12-24.

J. Kuo seconded the motion.

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

G. Sardi made a motion to approve the minutes from September 9, 2024 Amani Board Meeting on 09-09-24.

J. Kuo seconded the motion.

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

II. Chairs Report

A. Board Member Recruitment

Max stated that as board chair, he would focus heavily on expanding and recruiting new board members. He spoke to Board Lead (via Alex), an organization that can recommend potential board members across the country, to expand expertise in specific areas such as accounting/CPA, education, real estate. The goal would be make significant progress by the end of the academic year.

B. Meeting with Boys and Girls Club

In terms of expansion, Max noted that while Amani would be able to host the initial kindergarten and first grade cohort, efforts are underway to identify new facilities/grounds in the area and Mount Vernon vicinity. He and Charlie Stern, who leads the capital funding and capital campaign, met last Friday with the Boys and Girls Club of Mount Vernon to discuss the possibility of housing the school at the same location as the Club. The Boys and Girls Club is searching for a new facility, location concurrently.

Max stated the potential for this joint facility could provide great benefits to Amani and the Club, particularly as a recruitment and outreach tool (attend school during the day and then head down to the Club for afterschool programs in a new facility). The primary challenge, he noted, would be around logistics, financing, parking.

He noted that the Club, which has been in existence for 70 years, was targeting a 2026 launch date. This was just an initial discussion and that there were many other things to figure out but Max was very excited by the prospects.

Charlie provided more details about the Club's plans, that the Club was planning to buy a 30,000 sq ft building and then level it so it would be a brand new facility. But still many issues would need to be worked out, such as costs, financing, parking, operating agreements. He would be also looking at other similar organizations ie., YMCA around the country that co-host charter schools. He added that other possible partners with the club were not as aligned as Amani is.

Gina commented that providing a special services space within the building could be beneficial to the school as well.

Members continued to discuss this and praised the idea and noted many benefits to both parties involved. John said the idea to co-locate was interesting but cautioned that any reputational issues, organizational size and/or separate identities must be considered and worked through.

Charlie also noted that one of the greatest benefits of co-locating would be access to a fantastic Club gym. However, he said Amani would continue a tri-partite approach: 1. explore Boys and Girls Club; 2. expand the existing facility; and 3. search for other buildings for sale....until a contract is signed.

On a separate note, Max updated the board on discussions with the PTA around hosting an athletic competition fall event, called "Amani Games." He said they are exploring locations such as local parks, the Amani gym or city block. This sort of event might also be for the Spring time too. Max also said they were considering a big gala, one that would be the biggest fundraising event for the year.

In addition, he noted that more parents seemed engaged and that elections for the PTA would happen next month. The newly elected president of the PTA would be a non-voting member of the board. It was noted that the school By-Laws would need to be updated to reflect the PTA president as a non-voting member.

Lastly, Max said Amani was hosting the Black Legislative breakfast and that Amani Charter School will be honored at this breakfast.

C. Outreach

III. School Report

A. ED Report

Debra provided an update on the PTA meeting, noting that 25 to 30 parents were present at the meeting. She mentioned that Colleen, the parent coordinator, was doing an excellent job at facilitating the parent association. The Sing for Hope Choir also performed for the Attorney General.

Debra said the school was fully staffed but that two teachers were planning to take family medical leave so she is looking for substitute teachers to fill in..

As for enrollment, she said enrollment initiatives for the current were complete and the team was now shifting focus to marketing and outreach for next year, including students for kindergarten. Much of the new marketing materials and updated website would be released next week.

In an effort to collect more data from families, she said that the Amani Elementary review survey conducted last year would continue this year, noting that the 76.9% of the 52 respondents viewed the establishment of an Amani elementary school as positive. Additionally, all the new marketing materials/outreach for kindergarten prospects will include a QR code that will help with outreach and communications going forward.

Debra shared a quote from one of the parent respondents who said her daughter's previous experience at a different school was 'horrible' but now that her daughter is at Amani, she's doing so much better. "Staff is welcoming, her grades have improved a lot..she comes home excited to tell me about the book she's reading...I'd like a better school community to send my younger children to in Mount Vernon," she said, (in praise of an Amani Elementary School).

She continued to speak about creating a school to keep people in this community attending public school. Her vision is to create a child-centered community, with or without the Boys and Girls Club. Debra said she would be putting great efforts to tell the story of Amani and her vision.

From now through April 23, she will be focusing on outreach. Debra said she plans to update the application for Amani's expansion (adding 50 new students for the elementary program for next year) and have it completed by Nov. 25.

Gina said she reviewed the prospectus and said it was solid. She asked if some of the information Debra shared could be included in the prospectus, such as "child-centered" education and testimonials from parents. Debra said it was being incorporated in everything Amani would be doing.

The board discussed the expansion and marketing outreach further. Paul asked what capacity for the current layout is. Bruce answered 400 right now. If more space is needed, Debra has already spoken to nearby church to incubate space prior to full expansion of an elementary school.

B. Finance Report

Niamh provided an update of the school finances. She said Amani has 2 months of operating expenses in the bank, or \$1.1 million, which she is very happy about. Moreover, there are non operating funds of another \$200K which brings the amount to 5X the FDIC limit. She said the school was in a good position for mature cash sweep at the bank.

As for financials, she said there is a variance right now for actual versus vs. budget but she isn't worried since this is still early days of the school year.

IV. Educational Accountability

A. Instructional Goals

Jennifer provided an update of the various activities happening at the school, including celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month, PTA meeting, Unity Day, Picture day, flag football, soccer, step team, basketball tryouts, etc...

She also noted that Student Intervention/Student Support Services had begun and that 40 students are receiving intervention student support services, She said Amani is working with the NY State Charter school association advocating for special ed services and how to build it properly. Currently, there's a gap in service needs but she said Amani is making headway in getting the appropriate services needed.

She shared special education numbers and will continue to update on a monthly.

Jennifer also that on Nov 2, Amani would be hosting a dance clinic, among other activities.

As for education accountability, Jennifer said the committee met October 7. She provided an update of the meeting and also said professional development was heavily underway.

Finally, she reviewed the map diagnostic data and explained it was an adaptive test. For reading, we are in the 47th percentile for the school as a whole. For math, we are 33rd percentile for math as a whole. She further provided data by grade. However, for those tested for algebra, we scored in 80th percentile.

Jennifer spoke about the Ritz score and explained its use and how we might utilize the scores. She went on to explain the scores and how Amani is setting growth goals for the students, such as improving math proficiency. These scores will help determine the path forward for the students regarding intervention program.

V. Finance

A. Auditors Report

Niamh introduced the audit team, Jackie Lee, partner of MMB & Co. Jackie said she met with the school finance committee and the audit process went very smoothly. One finding was on special education but overall a good result.

Jackie gave an overview of work performed and found all looked good. She noted that there was a \$317K cash decrease this year used for operating purposes although better than the previous year. Rate of use asset (used for lease accounting) applied and should decrease as you use the building... Overall payroll decreased slightly as expected.

Enrollment was up slightly. Government grants decreased, about \$400K, (was higher during Covid but have come down or gone away). So there were reductions in revenue but there were also reductions in expenses. Mostly due to staff related cuts being down as well. Overall things came down.

Jackie pointed out the footnote in the lease improvements. She also noted internal controls related to finance and the financial statement adjustment for special education of \$55,000. Niamh noted that improved standards and procedures have been implemented regarding controls around this area.

There was some discussion on IEPs and the process at the school vs. the city on how services are determined.

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 7:43 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
M. Smith

Sondra provided these minutes after reviewing the Otter AI recording. She was not present at this board meeting Oct. 21