APPROVED

New Heights Charter School Board of Trustees

Minutes

May 7th (formerly the April Mtg) Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday May 7, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Location
1105 W Chestnut St
Brockton, MA 02301

OR

Zoom

New Heights Board of Trustees
Starting Time: 5:00pm
Location: 1105 W Chestnut Street
Brockton, MA 02301
Join Zoom Meeting

ZOOM Meeting:
Description:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8981912806?pwd=WHJ2dE1sTHNYVlVmNUsvTkxEaW1JZz09

Trustees Present
G. Phillips, G. Swaby (remote), J. Charnel (remote), J. Radzevich (remote), M. Sullivan (remote), N. Christ (remote), S. Bernard (remote), V. Marturano, W. Lyttle

Trustees Absent
G. Bengen, G. Gibson Sheffield, S. Jackson

Trustees who arrived after the meeting opened

G. Swaby

Ex Officio Members Present
O. Walker

Guests Present
J. Geier (remote), K. Kendrick, M. Fernandes, M. Jean (remote), Nicole Jones, R. Lewis (remote), S. Graham (remote), T. Chin, W. Libby (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

G. Phillips called a meeting of the board of trustees of New Heights Charter School Board of Trustees to order on Tuesday May 7, 2024 at 5:07 PM.

B. Approved Board Members List

C. Roll Call

D. Reading and Approval of Minutes

N. Christ made a motion to approve the minutes from March Board Meeting on 03-26-24.
M. Sullivan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Executive Director's Report

A. Enrollment/Lottery Report

- Lourdes presented the current enrollment numbers
  - 727 students enrolled
  - 610 Brockton, 38 Randolph, 48 Taunton, 31 Out of District
- Lourdes presented the lottery and waitlist information
  - 399 applications for the March 1st lottery
  - 3 waitlisted in 6th grade (from Randolph), 280 total waitlisted from 7-11th grade
  - 163 new applications have come in since the March 1 lottery

B. Spotlights

- The following spotlight presentation was given: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1LW9oX24l6dsfgZXsvmfOuhC0Y9Q9tbAlbRIzgyUl9JQ/edit#slide=id.g2d20fd
- How many students are ELL?

- approximately 100, but the majority of our students have been part of the ELL program at some point.
- What is the majority language?
  - Haitian Creole is the majority, Cape Verdean Creole is the second.

- Do the staff and students spotlighted receive anything or are they just spotlighted?
  - Currently at the meetings and in front of the full staff. Haven't formalized any other form of recognition for this year. Maria Fernandes will work with Dr. Jones to make something happen by the end of the year.

C. State Budget Update

- The House passed a budget that was close to level funded for education however there were some concerning amendments that would be harmful to charter schools. This language was removed and we're now waiting for the Senate to release their budget. There wasn't an increase in the Facilities rate but it has remained level funded in the budget.

D. Spring Events

- May and June are busies two months for events:
  - May 16th - 6pm Lift Every Voice at MCC to honor Black graduating students
  - May 23rd - 11am MCC Commencement, Fish Fry to follow at NHCSB
  - May 30th - Prom
  - May 31st - Annual Senior BBQ, at NHCSB
  - June 3rd - Senior Awards Night, at NHCSB
    - Scholarships are awarded this night, are still accepting donations for scholarships
  - June 6th - 6pm NHCSB Graduation, Bridgewater State University
  - June 7th - Heights vs. Heroes Basketball Game

E. FY25 Early College Space

- Maria provided an update on the Massasoit and Canton spaces. MCC is allowing us to use the third floor of the Canton space and they will have access to the full campus amenities. Once the plans are finalized a team from New Heights will visit the campus to plan how to use the space.
  - How many students will go? How many days a week?
    - Planning for about 140, 5 days a week. Students will leave NHCSB at 8am and come back from Canton around 1:30pm for dismissal.

G. Swaby arrived at 5:35 PM.
V. Marturano made a motion to accept the Executive Director's report.
W. Lyttle seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

III. Old Business

A. Additional Transportation Needs

- Tim presented the attached analysis of purchasing a new bus to transport additional students to Canton campus.
  - How many seats does the bus have?
    - It can fit 52 people.
  - Financially speaking it makes more sense to lease it for 4 years than to buy it.
  - What are the terms of the lease?
    - Haven't gotten into that with the leasing company yet
    - Commercial banks tend to have better rates so you might want to try to go through there.
  - The bus is part of the FY25 budget which will be presented. Additionally, there will be cost savings tied to MCC allowing us to use Canton which will assist with the costs of the bus.

J. Charnel made a motion to approve with the caveat that the Board will receive lease terms before any final decision is made.
N. Christ seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

IV. New Business

A. SY24-25 Calendar

- Renee presented the draft FY24-25 Calendar
  - There were some updates to the attached calendar:
    - Added an in service day to October 15.
    - Changed March 17 from a day off to in service day. March 18 will be a normal school day.
    - November 21st is an early release day for Parent Teacher Conferences

W. Lyttle made a motion to accept the 24-25 calendar with the discussed changes.
J. Radzevich seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

- Maria presented the attached 24-25 Early College calendar

W. Lyttle made a motion to accept they 24-25 Early College Calendar.
V. Marturano seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. FY26 to FY29 Expansion Proposal

- Jess presented an update to the expansion proposal based on Brockton moving out of the bottom 10%. Because they are almost at the 9% cap it is unlikely that additional seats will be approved and we cannot submit this year for expansion.
- Is this for FY25 or FY26?
    - The proposal would be in FY25 and the expansion would be in FY26. If we try next year it would be for FY27.
    - This would only be if they drop below the 10%?
        - Yes.
    - What does this mean for our enrollment?
        - If a district is in the lowest 10% they are subject to 18% of their seats going to charters, if they are above the 10% they're only subject to 9% of their seats.
        - This is a good thing for Brockton?
            - Yes it is, and we will still be allowed to enroll Brockton students as they are part of our region.
    - Should there be further discussion on possibility of expansion for next year?
        - That would be up to the board, but would recommend waiting until the data for the following year is released in February/March next year.
    - Is the letter of intent off the table?
        - Yes.

V. Academic Excellence Committee

A. Principal Update

- Dr. Jones gave an update on her two months at New Heights.
    - Personal goal is to make environment culturally, emotionally, and intellectually safe.
    - Expectation is for high quality teaching and learning which involves identifying and bringing in qualified, certified teaching staff. Also expecting culturally responsive and restorative practices in the school.
    - Hosting a recruitment and information fair on May 18 to build a pool of candidates for future expansions.
    - The standard is the standard, once they're set everyone has to fit in those standards at all levels.
- Do you have anything presently that you're using as a measurement?
    - One of the things put into place is an employment assessment form. Begins with a conversation about observations, followed by expectations, and finishing with what is needed to meet those expectations. This will be followed with an inspection of the expectations. The process will continue to repeat if needed and lead to an improvement plan.

- What happens if after a certain length of time an expectation isn't met?
  - RTI, works on a 4-6 week of inspection before a decision is made. This is different in a case of egregious conduct.
- Who will be on the team?
  - Renee Lewis, Kandice Sumner, Shana Cunningham, Maria Fernandes, Omari Walker. Everyone should be inspecting their teams and ensuring they meet the standards. These will be presented on May 31st.
- Will the board have a role in anyway?
  - Would love the Board to inspect the standards when they're in the building.
  - The Governance committee will have to vote on new policies and procedures as changes are made.

VI. Finance Committee

A. YTD Finances

- Nicholas presented the year to date finances. Everything is in line and there is no material change to note. Important to note is that Brockton has not certified their finances since quarter one. There hasn't been any sign of cut spending or layoffs so we don't think it will impact finances but want to make sure the board was aware. Recommendation of the committee is for the Board to approve the March finances as presented.

W. Lyttle made a motion to accept the recommendation of the finance committee.
M. Sullivan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. FY25 Budget Draft

- Nicholas presented the proposed budget for FY25, must be submitted to DESE by June 30.
  - Recommending a slight surplus for FY25 that is relatively flat. There is a revenue loss statewide and grants are down after the pandemic. Acknowledgement of the school team for presenting a budget with a slight surplus.
  - Total revenue is anticipated at roughly $16 million and total expenses are just below that. Anticipating a surplus of around $8,000. Most important item to point out is $14.2 million from our per pupil allotment, a blended rate of our tuition from various cities. The total in the grants has been awarded to be spent in FY25, there may be additional grants throughout the year that will increase this line.

    - Personnel costs are relatively flat, important to note that every effort was made to keep full time employees level and the change is due to salary increases that were put in place by the Board.
    - Nothing material to point out in Instructional costs. There is a slight increase in nutrition costs due to a new food vendor.
    - Nothing material to address in Operational costs. Important to note that there is a significant savings in our line item for additional rent due to MCC allowing the use of their Canton campus, we are budgeting for possible office rentals.
- On personnel costs it is slightly down from last year but includes raises. How was this done?
    - There is a reduction in staffing. Important to note that we are fully staffed in FTE from year's past. There will not be any teacher position reductions but there is a reduction in staff to achieve the flat funding.
        - If teacher's received conditions and didn't meet them they may be non-renewed but the position will remain.
- Did we approve a potential $500,000 loss in the year for FY24? Why is this not reflected in the FY24 budget?
    - The board provided the leverage of having a $500,000 deficit. However, we cannot pass a budget with a deficit. It had to be a level budget with the board being aware that we may enter a deficit. We revised the budget and in June the board passed a level budget with a passing motion that we could go $500,000 in the red. This year we made the hard decisions to create a budget in the Black and we are not asking for the additional funds this year.
- Is it premature to pass the budget as the Senate hasn't passed their budget yet?
    - The basis of the budget comes from DESE, they have a formula to figure out tuition based on different cities and towns across the State.
    - The rationale for the board approving the budget now is to begin having conversations with staff regarding reductions in positions with an approved budget behind them. Would be okay with the board allowing hiring and reductions based on the current budget, to be finalized in June.
        - Mike Sullivan states he is comfortable with that until the final tuition is released.
- There appears to be some substantial swings between FY24 forecast and FY25 proposed budget. Is there anything that stood out in terms of the significant swings on the expense side? Anything worth describing?
    - Supplies & Materials - IT is reduced due to purchases of computers this year that we won't be doing next year.
- Some of the percentages comparing the budgets didn't make sense. Are they accurate?
    - Will have the percentages double checked but don't believe it affects the overall budget. Some of them might appear as high as the number is low.
    - Suzanne states there is an issue with the formula and she will fix this.

- The personnel costs appeared to be slightly up from FY24, how are they presented as down?
- Suggestion of a footnote for major swings in budget for a quick explanation of the change.
- Recommendation of the Finance committee that the Board accept the proposed FY25 budget.

M. Sullivan made a motion to Approve the FY25 budget as presented.
S. Bernard seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

VII. Governance Committee

A. Updates

- Committee is going to begin the process of the annual review for ED. There is an instrument available on Board on Track. Some final questions need to be settled on and then it will be electronically sent to the various audiences who respond. Will provide a one week turnaround for responses.
- Two members attended a meeting with the MCPSA on Student Success. Big takeaway was that there should be regular presentations on accountability plan and progress throughout the year. Not sure where the responsibility falls in committees but it should be done on a regular basis.

VIII. Good of the Order

A. Scholarships

- All donations should be made to Friends of New Heights or through the donation link on the website. Donations can also be made to the Pres. Di Pasquale Memorial Scholarship, this will just need to be stated on the donation.
- Encouragement made to the Board to make donations towards the scholarships. Information will be sent to the Board on how to make those donations.

IX. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

V. Marturano made a motion to adjourn.
W. Lyttle seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:53 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

G. Phillips

Documents used during the meeting

- FY25 House Ways and Means Budget.pdf
- Van Purchase Analysis - New Bus.pdf
- 2024-2025 School Calendar (Draft).pdf
- 2024-2025 Early College School Calendar (Draft).pdf
- Board March 2024 Financial Reports.pdf
- FY25 Budget analysis.xlsx - Final Budget Comparison.pdf