

**Holyoke Community Charter School
2200 Northampton Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
Board of Trustees**

Minutes of HCCS Board of Trustees Meeting – January 26, 2022

In Attendance: Jay Breines (joined at 5:12 pm, after approval of minutes and financial report); Cynthia Dennis, Leona Florek, Janine Kent (joined at 5:16 pm, after approval of minutes and financial report; exited at 7:00 pm before Academic Presentation); Li-Jun Ma; Jean Swinney; Lina Rivera; Rafael Rodriguez

Guests: Kyle Callender, Mahdi Kansou, Ryan Meek, Tom Paquin, Vanessa Pileggi, Sonia Pope, Maria Rodriguez, Christi Seiple-Cole, Benjamin Torres, Amy Wesley

Not Present: N/A

- I. Meeting called to order at 5:07 p.m. by Leona Florek.
Public comments/none.

Board Mail

None

- II. Approval of Minutes
Jean Swinney moved to approve the minutes of the December 15 regular meeting and the December 15 retreat meeting. Seconded by Lina Rivera. Each member voted by roll call. Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Ma – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye, Swinney - Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

- III. Finances
Cynthia Dennis reviewed the financial reports for December and found no issues. Cynthia mentioned that some staffing had been moved to the ESSERIII grant, to offset lower tuition payment due to student enrollment. **Cynthia Dennis motioned to approve the financial report for December. Seconded by Jean Swinney. Each member voted by roll call. Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Ma – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye, Swinney - Aye. The motion passed unanimously.**

- IV. Facilities
Tom Paquin reported that construction materials have been delivered to the school campus; prepping of the parking lot it currently taking place with plans to break ground by March (or as soon as the ground thaws) to begin installing pipes and electrical wiring underground.

Tom presented the board with a temporary emergency contract amendment request from the school's food service company, K-12 by Elixir. The amendment request is an effort to mitigate recent inflation and supply chain issues while still providing healthy nutritious meals to the students of Holyoke Community Charter School. The amendment request will not exceed June 30, 2022 and is effective January 1, 2022.

V. **Membership**

Cynthia Dennis moved to renew Janine Kent's term for an additional three years. Seconded by Rafael Rodriguez. Each member voted by roll call. Breines – Aye, Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Kent – Aye, Ma – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye, Swinney - Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. **Old Business**

- **Vaccination policy:**

Dr. Sonia Pope presented the results of stakeholder survey on student vaccination and vaccination mandate to the board. The board discussed vaccination clinic options with Holyoke Health Center and to continue education about vaccination (question/answer session for parents with Doctor; sharing survey results with parents, videos, incentives). The board also discussed the local community, child vaccinations in Holyoke, and possible resistance to vaccination.

- **Access and authority to ADP:**

Mahdi Kansou, Executive Director for SABIS, presented clarification requested at last meeting about school- and SABIS-level access control to ADP. He described the levels of administrator, SABIS control of parent account, and restrictions to school-level access to some features as overseer of fiduciary/financial responsibility as contract with board. HCCS is requesting to add new salary codes, which needs to go through an approval process to create consistency/uniformity among the SABIS schools and responded to board questions about ADP access. Maria Rodriguez reported she had received temporary request for access and hopes she can keep it; she reported that it helped greatly with allocating the recent grant monies. Mahdi reported that SABIS will look into why any requests were not handled efficiently and will look into additional ways to handling school-level requests more efficiently.

Leona Florek inquired about issue with IRS/tax notification and mislabeling of the school as a non-governmental agency. Cynthia Dennis reported that that issue had been resolved and does not relate to this particular situation. Cynthia Dennis discussed the need for consistency from and amongst other SABIS schools as it relates to ADP.

- **School hours/Teacher Recruitment and Retention/Funding of Teacher Salaries:**

Dr. Sonia Pope reported to the board that she has been in discussions with Mahdi Kansou/SABIS regarding ways to recruit and retain teachers, besides reduction in teacher hours. Mahdi reported that he would like to combine the discussion of recruitment/retention with the future funding of teacher salaries and challenges of teacher funding and recruitment nationwide. He would like to make suggestions to the board after a full review of the situation to look for full-scale solutions. The board discussed creating a finance sub-committee to work with SABIS and the School Director but decided that Cynthia Dennis as treasurer will work with them individually to bring suggestions/options to the board.

Janine Kent asked Mahdi when the board would be provided a salary review/comparison data. Mahdi clarified that there were two types of data available, one for the Holyoke Public School District, and the other with three surrounding districts (Westfield, Northampton, and Hadley). Janine asked for data on Chicopee, and Mahdi responded that he would provide that as well.

The board discussed the continuity of teachers and retention and looking at ways that the board can put more funding for teachers out of the operational budget. The board discussed future expansion opportunities, incentivizing teacher retention, low enrollment effects, and long-term vs. short-term solutions for retention. Dr. Sonia Pope discussed school hours and teacher desires. Cynthia Dennis reported that she would hope to bring solutions/options to the board for teacher recruitment/retention to the next board meeting.

VII. **New Business**

- **Donations to community:**

Maria Rodriguez reported that the board would be unable to use any school funds for donations; any donations would need to be from individual board members. Jean Swinney recommended that each member sends in what they can for the three impacted school community members; Dr. Pope will provide the board members with the impacted individuals contact information.

- **Academic Presentation:**

Benjamin Torres, Academic Deputy, presented the board with “Holyoke Community Charter School Internal Performance” comparing Term 1 data prior to COVID-19 (Academic Year 2019-2020) to Term 1 data from Academic Year 2021-2022. The presentation displayed academic performance by grade level (passing vs. failing) in ELA, math, and Spanish-language and then for grades 1-8 overall. Benjamin and Dr. Sonia Correa Pope discussed the impact of remote learning on building-block concepts and how the academic team has been talking with SABIS to create pacing to address these foundational skills. The presentation highlighted the following foundational skill deficiencies:

- Grade 1 & 2: phonics and basic reading skills
- Grade 5 & 6: multiplication and division
- Grade 7 & 8: Spanish curriculum too advanced

Dr. Pope discussed the following factors contributing to academic performance:

- 21-22 enrollment was impacted significantly; many new students were brought in over the past two years
- Academic impact of remote learning
- State-wide trends

Dr. Pope and Benjamin Torres presented the following action steps for addressing gaps:

- Working with SABIS on adjusted pacing to focus on foundational concepts that allow students to perform well on MCAS
- SABIS and HCCS academic team are currently working on adjusting pacing guides for special education students
- Using grant funding to have an after-school tutoring program with possibility of transportation in ELA, Math, Spanish (content below grade level)
- SABIS and HCCS academic team restructuring the academic component of the SLO
- Targeted parent/teacher conferences scheduled in February to create a plan for students who are currently failing
- Adjusted re-teach and retakes to target periodic exams
- Use of IXL and Preplist to target below grade level academic gaps

- MCAS focused questions are released weekly in SDP

Kyle Callender, Student Management Coordinator, and Dr. Pope presented the board with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) supports being provided at the school in response to the behavioral/SEL challenges brought on by remote learning, trauma, and issues from the pandemic.

- Expanding extra-curricular activities for students
- Using grants to creatively bring in supports for SEL
 - Key program: counselors on call; in-home therapy; family supports
 - Additional staff with counseling backgrounds to support Student Management and current counseling staff
- Athletics: basketball, cheerleading, introduction of soccer (possibility of 3-4 teams at grade 2-8); Academic performance component as incentive for school performance/behavior
- Discipline: reducing use of suspension, instead using a Saturday program where support services are provided (academic/testing/counseling)

Mahdi Kansou wrapped up the academic presentation by discussing with the board the importance of recognizing challenges and seeing progress; SABIS has a “No excuse” approach and emphasizes using a plan so the school can continue to make progress.

Administrative Reports/School Director

Director’s Report – reviewed by members individually before the meeting. Cynthia Dennis asked about the Special Education Academic Coordinator positions; Dr. Pope reported the candidate passed on HCCS’s offer for a higher offer from another district.

The report on Student Enrollment will be moved to the next meeting.

Cynthia Dennis motioned to adjourn the meeting. Jean Swinney seconded. Each member voted by roll call. Breines – Aye, Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Ma – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye, Swinney - Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

As prepared by Elizabeth Pawlowski

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Swinney

Holyoke Community Charter School Board of Trustees

MEETING ATTACHMENTS

December 15, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

Monthly Financial Report

K-12 by Elinor Temporary Emergency Contract Amendment Request

HCCS Internal Performance Presentation