

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

Minutes of HCCS Board of Trustees Meeting – February 23, 2022

In Attendance: Jay Breines (entered at 5:20, after approval of financials; exited at 6:25 pm, after enrollment discussion); Cynthia Dennis, Leona Florek; Li-Jun Ma; Lina Rivera; Rafael Rodriguez

Guests: Mahdi Kansou, Ryan Meek, Tom Paquin, Vanessa Pileggi, Sonia Pope, Maria Rodriguez

Not Present: Janine Kent; Jean Swinney

- I. Meeting called to order at 5:09 p.m. by Leona Florek.
Public comments/none.

Board Mail

None

- II. **Approval of Minutes**
Li-Jun Ma moved to approve the minutes of the January 26 regular meeting. Seconded by Lina Rivera. Each member voted by roll call. Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Ma – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

- III. **Finances**
Cynthia Dennis reviewed the financial reports for January and found no issues. **Cynthia Dennis motioned to approve the financial report for January. Seconded by Rafael Rodriguez. Each member voted by roll call. Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Ma – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.**

- IV. **Facilities**
Tom Paquin, HCCS Facilities Director, reported about the installation of safety glass and tinting of the windows in the Garden Room for increased safety. The project was originally part of the skylight project but was delayed due to COVID-19). Tom reported that the estimate was \$44,000 and could be rolled into the gymnasium/classroom construction project. Ryan Meek and the board discussed the ability of doing this (total estimated cost, project timeline, contingency, adding as a change order), and that the first step is to discuss with the OPM to get the logistics correct. Originally the cost was tied into the funding for the skylights, which was from the operational budget. Cynthia Dennis asked if the windows could not be put in with the construction project, could they be put in operational budget, in order to get it done sooner. The board discussed their two options: wait for change order process (through construction project contingency) or go out to bid (operational budget).

Tom updated the board on the timeline of the gymnasium/classroom construction project. Construction will begin on February 28 with the installation of a temporary fence. After that they will start grinding up the black top to install a new electrical line to separate HCCS'

electricity from Gillette's electric line. Dr. Sonia Pope, HCCS School Director, announced an event for official ground breaking on Tuesday, March 8 at 12:00. Board members, the mayor, parents, student ambassadors and local reporters will be in attendance. Tom reported that actual construction of the building is scheduled to begin in August.

V. **Old Business**

- **Teacher Recruitment and Retention/Funding of Teacher Salaries:**
Mahdi Kansou, SABIS Executive Director, reported that the requested analysis (new city and benefits/incentives package) is currently being finalized. He reported that there would be a review of ESSER II & III grants staff/teacher stipends. Mahdi stated he will be working with Cynthia to present to the board at the March meeting.

Jay Breines requested information about teacher/staff stipends. Maria Rodriguez, HCCS School Business Manager, reported that stipends were given for staff who were vaccinated for COVID-19 (\$500) and for retention (\$1000), as written into ESSER Grants. The board discussed the following: the commitment they want to make to recruit and retain teachers/staff even better than other schools; this time as a build-back process requiring the best possible resources; not being in the middle of the pack; locking in place a team that will be good for the school and the students; retention bonuses and achievement bonuses as a tool.

VI. **New Business**

- **Student Enrollment:**
Dr. Sonia Pope presented enrollment data to the board, both comparative to two local districts and internal over the past three years. Dr. Pope discussed the current marketing initiatives the school is taking and the number of applications the school has received. The board discussed the following in regards to student enrollment: need for aggressive marketing and better advertising to compete with local charter schools; re-engaging students who withdrew to attend virtual schools; need for a retention/outreach program; need for a strategic plan to meet the challenges/changes that COVID-19 has brought to the community. The board felt that this is an area in which discussion needs to continue.
- **Mask Mandate:**
Dr. Sonia Pope presented the DESE Commissioner's Memo on the discontinuation of a state-wide mask mandate in schools and the call for local decision making. She presented COVID-19 data for HCCS and the local community. The board discussed the current health metrics and the mask mandate. **Lina Rivera motioned to keep the mask mandate for HCCS. Rafael Rodriguez seconded. Each member voted by roll call. Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Ma – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.**

VII. **Administrative Reports/School Director**

Director's Report - Dr. Sonia Pope reported:

- Review of enrollment; reviewed recruitment efforts; enrollment lottery on March 4
- COVID 19 report: data on positive cases, at-home testing program
- Academic Update: Open positions reviewed; high-school transition meetings; targeted Parent/Teacher conferences; tutoring program in ELA, math, and Spanish; WIN intervention period; SPED/EL PAC meetings; SPED notice from DESE of HCCS meeting requirements

- Professional Development is ongoing
- Student Life Organization (SLO): Lions Read academic initiative; Black History Month
- Student Management (SM): reviewed suspensions
- Facilities: Tom reported earlier in the meeting
- Recent/upcoming events reviewed

Cynthia Dennis motioned to accept the Director’s Report. Li-Jun Ma seconded. Each member voted by roll call. Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Ma – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

As prepared by Elizabeth Pawlowski
Respectfully submitted,
Jean Swinney
Holyoke Community Charter School Board of Trustees

MEETING ATTACHMENTS

January 23, 2022 Meeting Minutes
Monthly Financial Report
Enrollment Data Presentation
COVID-19 Health Metrics Presentation