

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

Minutes of HCCS Board of Trustees Meeting – May 25, 2022

In Attendance: Jay Breines, Cynthia Dennis, Leona Florek, Janine Kent, Lina Rivera, Jean Swinney

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

Not Present: Li-Jun Ma, Rafael Rodriguez

I. Meeting called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Leona Florek.
Public comments/none.

II. **Approval of Minutes**
Janine Kent moved to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2022 regular meeting with two edits. Seconded by Jean Swinney. Each member voted by roll call. Breines – Aye, Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Kent – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Swinney – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

III. **Board Reports**

Board Mail

None

Finances

The board reviewed the financial reports for April and found no issues. **Cynthia Dennis motioned to approve the financial report for April. Seconded by Jean Swinney. Each member voted by roll call. Breines – Aye, Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Kent – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Swinney – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.**

Janine Kent opened discussion of net surplus. Ryan Meek reported on last year’s financials, the school’s net position with the Massachusetts requirement of a restriction on 12.5 mil. The board then discussed the available 4.5 mil and long-term goals for that cash. Cynthia Dennis mentioned that this money has been used for unexpected/emergency facilities cost; Ryan Meek reported the available funds represent five-months cash flow and could possibly be used to pay off the loan sooner. Janine suggested that a trend analysis could be done, since this surplus has been maintained for 8-9 years, to start thinking about using it for other needs of the school such as teacher salaries.

The board further discussed current building contingencies, past use of surplus for facilities expansion, flexibility with enrollment and teacher salaries, and the need to create a long-term strategic plan and acceptable target metrics.

Janine Kent made a motion for the board to discuss “net surplus and target metrics” twice a year, adding it to the board agenda in October or November 2022 and then every six months after. Seconded by Jay Breines. Each member voted by roll call. Breines – Aye, Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Kent – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Swinney – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

Facilities

Tom Paquin reported the school received a grant from the state for eight new water-bottle filling stations for students. He reported on the gymnasium construction, which found asbestos in the Verizon line; 80% has been abated already, the rest will be done tomorrow. This will result in a change order for \$22,000. Concrete pouring for the foundations is scheduled for this Friday morning. Jay Breines asked if Verizon would be responsible for the asbestos; Tom stated that because it is on our property, the school is responsible. Tom asked if the board could give either Leona Florek, as Chair, or Cynthia Dennis, as Treasurer, the authority to approve any change orders that are immediate/emergency. The board members discussed calling emergency board meetings, forming a building committee, the need to minimize delays, and appointing decision makers to approve change orders below a certain dollar amount. **Jay Breines motioned for the board to approve the treasurer and president acting together as a building committee to approve time sensitive change orders for gymnasium construction project not exceeding \$50,000. Seconded by Cynthia Dennis. Each member voted by roll call. Breines – Aye, Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Kent – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Swinney – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.**

Tom Paquin reported that the contingency balance is \$192,027; a discussion could be had in July or August with P3 to overlay the back driveway which would be about \$150,000. Tom stated that this wouldn't be the same as repaving, which would require a new permitting process.

IV. **Old Business**

None

V. **New Business**

- **Approval of Education Service Provider (ESP) Evaluation:**
Leona Florek presented the evaluation to the board members for approval. Cynthia Dennis asked for clarification about data from the 2021-2022 school year being used for the 2020-2021 evaluation. The board members expressed that a lack of clarity surrounding difference in the data being used in ESP vs. the School Director's evaluation and requested further time to close read the documents. Jean Swinney asked Sonia Pope for her input. Sonia explained that the ESP evaluation used data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for 2020-2021, where for director evaluation data from 2021-2022 was used particularly in enrollment targets. Jean Swinney stated the need to ensure the evaluation was a document that is clear and precise. The board decided to move the vote to approve both the ESP Evaluation and the School Director's evaluation to the June 2022 meeting. Final drafts will be sent to each board member, to ensure all are reading the correct version of the document.

VI. **Administrative Reports/School Director**

Director's Report - Dr. Sonia Pope reported:

- Review of enrollment; reviewed recruitment efforts and the Hoop It Up event
- COVID 19 report: data on positive cases

- Teacher/Staff Intention form return data: 96% took survey; 98% indicated they plan to return to teach for the next academic year; 42 staff available for summer school.
 - Jean Swinney asked Sonia Pope to include a question asking “what you like teaching at SABIS and what you don’t” to the end-of-year interviews.
- Academic Update: May staff meeting; MCAS participation is 99%, one student not yet completed and one medical excuse; tutoring program in ELA, Math, and Spanish
- School Annual Report timelines reviewed
- Student Life: Prefect trip – Sonia opened a discussion with the board for a proposed overnight trip to a local hotel with a waterpark. The board discussed safety in terms of the closed environment of school vs. the public space of a hotel and the need for an overnight trip. The board would like for the Prefect Trip to be a more quality event in a kid-friendly environment that is not overnight.
- Student Management: Suspension data reviewed
- Upcoming events reviewed: Washington DC trip, Summer School

Janine Kent opened a discussion with Sonia Pope regarding her feelings on the return to the classroom post-pandemic for students academically and socially. Sonia spoke about how the support from the SABIS network provided much for students than many of the surrounding districts. She also discussed the social-emotional toll and the academic gap for students from this community and its expected impact on MCAS results. Sonia reported that it is still uncertain how DESE will use this year’s MCAS results and how she has been working with SABIS to create a program based on the academic data to address serious academic gaps. The program targets learning loss/gaps and accelerated the students to where they need to be. WIDA/English Learners scores are coming in and MCAS results are expected by the end of July – Sonia stated she will be working with the Academic Deputy to analyze these results.

Janine then asked Sonia about any reverberations from the events in Texas yesterday (school-shooting). Sonia reported that some parents called to inquire about safety procedures and the school has also ensured all doors and gates are locked, camera systems in effect, etc. She discussed the school’s safety plans and measures and the societal need for mental health services and the mental health services available in our community.

Jean Swinney motioned to accept the Director’s Report. Seconded by Lina Rivera. Each member voted by roll call. Breines – Aye, Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Kent – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Swinney – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. **New Business (continued)**

Cynthia Dennis reported that DESE has send notification to the Board of Trustees that the contract with SABIS has not been approved. The notification contained feedback on the contract along with a few other examples of charter school contracts. Cynthia told the board that three board members met with Alyssa Hopkins from DESE, the Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer. She stated that DESE is requiring detailed changes to the contract, more than board can handle on their own, and would like to hire an attorney familiar with charter schools to help navigate through this along with SABIS. The board and guests discussed the DESE findings and the possible impacts this could have at the time of charter renewal.

Jean Swinney motioned for the Board to hire a law firm to assist through the contract review/revision process with DESE findings. Seconded by Janine Kent. Each member voted by roll call. Breines – Aye, Dennis – Aye, Florek – Aye, Kent – Aye, Rivera – Aye, Swinney – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

The board continued with the conversation surrounding school-shooting in Uvalde, Texas and the needs for social/emotional and mental health funding for schools. The board will add student mental health to the agenda for the June board meeting.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

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

MEETING ATTACHMENTS

April 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes
Monthly Financial Report
ESP Evaluation
School Director's Evaluation
School Director's Education Providers Report