

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

Minutes of HCCS Board of Trustees Meeting – November 15, 2023

In Attendance: Leona Florek, Jean Swinney, Rafael Rodriguez

Guests: Diana Abdel Samad, Sonia Correa Pope, Mahdi Kansou, Dan Pallotta, Tom Paquin, Vanessa Pileggi, Maria Rodriguez, Haley Saltares, Rob Todisco, Omar Zohaily

Not Present: Janine Kent, Li-Jun Ma (leave of absence), Lina Rivera

I. Meeting called to order at 5:03 p.m. by Leona Florek.

II. **Approval of Minutes**

Jean Swinney moved to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2023 regular meeting. Seconded by Rafael Rodriguez. Each member voted by roll call. Florek – Aye, Swinney– Aye, Rodriguez – Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

III. **Board Reports**

Board Mail/Folder

None

Public comments/none.

IV. **Facilities**

Dan Pallotta and Rob Todisco provided updates on the gymnasium project to the board:

- Dan addressed the HVAC issue with the designer and would like to schedule a meeting with a representative from the school and the designer. He stated that he believes there is a compromise with Kastle Boos, but needs to have a meeting take place.
- Dan shared his screen with the board and went through the total project budget. He reviewed the amount of changes (2.68% of total project cost) and explained that the ductwork design error is at .5%. Total expenditures to date puts the project at \$382.96/sq foot, very positive when compared to other public schools in the state.
- Dan continued to review the budget summary and total pending claims. Rob Todisco reviewed outstanding items for punchlist claims. He reported that the biggest claim is some small parts with bleachers due to lower section not fully retracting; the distributor will be sending new parts; despite this the bleachers are still useable.
- Rob reported that the school has received full occupancy certificate from the city building department. Some warranty and other documents are still being received and will be sent over to Tom Paquin as they come in.

Leona Florek inquired about the lighting claim; Dan reported it was due to the need to relocate a few light fixtures around a divider curtain. Jean Swinney asked about the ductwork redesign error and how the negotiation takes place; Dan answered that an agreement would need to be made with the designer and the designer wants to have a meeting to talk with a school

representative. Leona stated she and Dr. Pope will identify the person from the school to attend this meeting and get back to Dan. Dan and Rob exited the meeting at 5:24 pm

V. **Finances**

Board members reviewed the financial reports for October and found no concerns.

Rafael Rodriguez motioned to approve the financial report for October. Seconded by Jean Swinney. Each member voted by roll call. Florek – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye, Swinney - Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

Board members reviewed the financial reports for November and found no concerns.

Rafael Rodriguez motioned to approve the financial report for November. Seconded by Jean Swinney. Each member voted by roll call. Florek – Aye, Rodriguez – Aye, Swinney - Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

Net Surplus/Metrics:

Maria Rodriguez reported on the cash reserves. There is an intent to bring this to the finance subcommittee to discuss capital improvements, staff recruitment/retention, etc. The subcommittee will bring the conversations to the full board retreat meeting. The finance subcommittee will hold its meeting on December 13, before the full board meeting.

VI. **Old Business**

403 B Plan:

Maria Rodriguez reported in the budget for FY24, there was a small amount allocated for a 403B Plan as a tool to recruit/retain high quality staff. She presented the board with an overview of the 403B Plan which included what a 403 B plan is; current HCCS retirement plans available; survey responses; Non-ERISA vs. ERISA plan differences; proposed change to HCCS 403B Plan. She explained that the next steps were to meet with the finance committee and 3rd party administrator. The finance committee will recommend and report to the full board, who would then have the ability to ask questions before voting. The goal is to have this approved no later than February so that the budget can be impacted. The board discussed the benefits and value of offering to employees and expressed that they look forward to seeing the results from the committee.

VII. **New Business**

Sign-on Bonus:

Maria Rodriguez and Sonia Pope reported to the board that the idea of offering a sign-on bonus came from a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education webinar on recruiting new teachers and retaining highly qualified teachers. They would like the board to begin thinking about this ahead of next year's budget.

VIII. **Director's Report** (for October and November)

- Enrollment: reached 702 students, recruitment was due in much part to the new gym. The gym ribbon cutting is scheduled for December 2 at 8 am; with basketball game to follow at 9:15; school choir will be part and cheerleaders as well.

- Academics: DESE report requires the school to have an active finance committee and an academic dashboard, with presentation to the board at every other month's meeting. Diana and Sonia are working to put together a dashboard/academic report to provide to the board. The first use of the dashboard is included on page 2 of the November Director's Report. Sonia reviewed the dashboard with the board, summarizing averages of term 1 for grades 1-8. A recent meeting was held with the HCCS academic team and SABIS academic team to work on meeting MCAS targets.
- Professional Development: ongoing
- Student Life: reviewed recent initiatives – book character day, Lions Bucks program is continuing successfully; Random Acts of Kindness week; Gold Slips initiative; Pajama Day
- Student Management: no suspensions to report, more usage of Saturday school and after-school detention; a new table to report student management data was introduced to the board
- Facilities: Tom Paquin has announced his retirement at the end of December

The Board inquired about reading support for 3rd and 4th graders. Dr. Pope reported there is a reading specialist working with these students; Deputy Director of Academics (DDA) is working with the early literacy program development. Diana reported the cumulative average for 3rd and 4th graders and the difference in the "fast track" and "regular" track programming. Diana and DDA are reviewing DESE "amplified" MCAS reports and assessing in terms of the SABIS curriculum and these two tracks; will be revisiting the fast track pacing to begin closing the reading gap. Dr. Pope mentioned the school will also be inviting lower level reading students during summer "reading" academy.

Rafael Rodriguez motioned to approve the Director's Reports for October and November. Jean Swinney Seconded. Each member voted by roll call. Florek - Aye, Rodriguez - Aye, Swinney - Aye. The motion passed unanimously.

Leona reminded everyone about the finance committee and executive committee meetings from 5:00 - 5:30 pm on December 13. The full board meeting will begin at 5:30 pm on December 13. She also reminded board members to respond to the Doodle Poll for selecting a retreat date in February.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

As prepared by Elizabeth Pawlowski

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Swinney

Holyoke Community Charter School Board of Trustees

MEETING ATTACHMENTS

November 15, 2023 Meeting Minutes

403B Plan Overview Presentation

School Director's Education Providers Report (Oct/Nov)