



**Minutes of Board of Trustees Annual Retreat Minutes**  
**Saturday, September 23, 2023**  
**4600 Livingston Road SE**  
**9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

**ATTENDANCE**

1. **Board Members Present:** Alicia Adams, Samantha Barbee, Satira Streeter Corbitt, Shawn Hardnett, Sandra McCoy, Ray D. McKenzie, Nicole Solomon Mitchell, Bisi Oyedele, Juan Pagan, Raymond Weedon, Bernie Woofley
2. **Guests and Staff Present:** Amanda Bloom (Director of Operations), Rictor Craig (Director of Instruction/Principal), Lenora Felder (Director of Special Projects), Romance Simpson (Middle School Dean), Charles Williams (Middle School Dean), Melvin Smith (Behavior Support Coordinator), Charles Moore (Consultant)
3. **Board Members Absent:** Greg Van Houten

**AGENDA ITEMS**

4. **Welcome**
  - a. Ms. Mitchell opened the meeting with comments recognizing the hard work and significant contributions of the Board, with particular thanks to the committee chairs (Ms. Adams, Ms. McCoy, and Mr. Pagan), Real Estate Task Force (led by Mr. Woofley), and pro bono counsel from Haynes & Boone, LLP. The Board will continue its focus on anti-racism. The Board will begin preparing to develop a strategic plan focused on executing the mission of the school notwithstanding lower enrollment than initially expected at founding. The Board will strive to have the strategic plan in place by January 2024.
  - b. Mr. Hardnett gave opening remarks recognizing the hard work and contributions of Ms. Mitchell as well as the school staff in doing good work despite unprecedented difficulties and challenges. The overseas trips was a significant highlight and accomplishment, a promise kept that has and will continue to have a substantial impact on the participants (and the communities visited). Developing staff means taking some star teachers out of the classroom to be in other positions. Mr. Hardnett recognized the hard work of the Real Estate Task Force for bearing the majority of the burden of managing issues relating to facilities.

In terms of “misses,” staffing still presents a significant challenge. Mr. Hardnett has returned to the classroom and is teaching multiple classes a day. He hopes to



cut down from five to two classes per day after a new teacher starts next week. There was flat performance on PARCC. Student proficiency continues to be an area of particular focus (in addition to growth).

Succession planning and parent communication will be additional focuses this year.

- c. Ms. Mitchell lauded the Board’s annual giving and reminded Board members of the goal of 100% participation, meaning pledges or gifts by December 2023.
5. **Approval of May 2023 Board Meeting Minutes:** Upon the motion of Mr. McKenzie, which was seconded by Ms. Barbee, and affirmative vote of all Board members, the Board unanimously approved the draft May 2023 Board Meeting minutes.
6. **Academic Data:** Mr. Hardnett discussed data through the end of the 2022–2023 school year, including demographics, enrollment, attendance, discipline, MAP scores, PARCC scores, and student surveys. The data generally show that the scholars improve performance while at the school. ELA scores outpace pre-pandemic levels. School staff will continue to review the data to identify areas of focus. The Academic and Program Excellence (“APEX”) Committee will continue to review data to inform the Board’s strategic planning. Mr. Hardnett responded to questions posed by Board members and noted that mental health continues to be a focus and services continue to be provided to students and staff.
7. **Financial Data:** Mr. Pagan discussed financial data through the end of the 2022–2023 school year. Though expenses were over budget by \$62K, there was a positive net income of \$450K above budget due to grants. The school ended the year with 154 days of cash, which exceeds PCSB requirements. Annual enrollment continues to be below levels initially anticipated. The school currently has a strong cash position and expected cash influx for next year but must plan to address elimination of COVID funding, increased staff costs, and increased facilities costs.
8. **Board Self-Assessment:** Ms. McCoy discussed the results of the Board Self-Assessment, which indicates the Board continues to maintain a deep commitment to the mission of the school and anti-racism. 100% of Board members participated in the survey. Responses indicate that the Board: (a) can improve its understanding of student academic data, (b) can better understand how and when input is sought from families and other stakeholders, (c) must develop a succession plan for the CEO and Board Chair positions, (d) clarify perceptions about the school leader evaluation process, and (e) strengthen fundraising and development.



- 9. Strategic Planning:** Mr. Hardnett introduced the consultant assisting the Board with developing its next strategic plan, Charles Moore. Mr. Moore engaged the Board and staff present in considering survey results which demonstrated areas of overlap and disconnect between staff and Board concerns. This was a preliminary discussion to help scope out the contours of the strategic plan. The plan will be a three year, living plan that can develop as more data is learned.
- a. Academic Rigor and Quality Teacher Talent
    - i. Goals, which are rigorous, should reflect the ongoing discussion.
    - ii. Finding/recruiting quality instructors is difficult, so building/developing quality instructors is the current strategy.
    - iii. Instructor feedback is aligned to improving instructional quality. How do we think about this strategically?
    - iv. What support can the Board provide, without delving into operations v. governance?
    - v. APEx can continue to monitor dashboard data, engage in instructional observations, and loopback for feedback to/from families.
    - vi. Increased capacity and higher teacher quality could reduce costs for outside services.
    - vii. Do we have a clear perspective on what is necessary/essential to deliver consistently (must have v. nice to have)?
    - viii. Can we develop slide showing what is necessary and what is even better in terms of student services? This could be a resource to use in development efforts as well.
    - ix. Is there a disconnect between elements of the “Statesmen Way” that we believe are most important to drive student outcomes (e.g., Exposure Opportunities v. College Readiness Curriculum)?
  - b. Financial Sustainability, Development, Fundraising
    - i. How do we define “financial sustainability”?
    - ii. Can we get student services into 95% of the funding available and use extra funds raised through development (currently dependent on Mr. Hardnett’s efforts) to focus on other projects?
    - iii. Can the Board engage funding sources in earlier discussions and build relationships and bring in Mr. Hardnett for later discussions?
    - iv. Can the Board help build out documents/materials to provide potential funders?
    - v. Overspending often comes from a lack of planning.
    - vi. Funder spreadsheet is being developed.
    - vii. Is there a way for cash on hand to generate revenue?
    - viii. The Board needs to develop an investment policy.
    - ix. What do we do that could be revenue-generating?



- c. Student enrollment and reenrollment.
  - i. This is closely connected with financial sustainability.
  - ii. Can the Board support with parent engagement?
  - iii. Where in the system is the provision of dashboard data that can be used to improve reenrollment?
  - iv. Sixth grade reenrollment presents the greatest challenge at present.
  - v. Is there a way to create an individual student dashboard that can be leveraged for student reenrollment purposes?
  - vi. How do we get feedback data from families?
  - vii. How do we develop pride of belonging/remaining at an elite school that shines.
  
- d. Leadership Succession and Board Succession
  - i. The Governance Committee will need to align Board membership with strategic plan.
  - ii. Often difficult to have a Board that focuses both on development and academic achievement. How can we do both?
  
- e. Facilities
  - i. Hopeful to get into a license and then sublease for approximately 5 years.
  - ii. What's next?
  
- f. Other/Closing Considerations
  - i. How do we foster different groups (parents, quality teachers, current staff) appreciating what other groups care about?
  - ii. We will want to lay out more assumptions (than included in the handout) to develop our strategy.
  - iii. The Process: Scoping → Development → Agreement  
By February, we want to be able to synthesize and come to an agreement.
  - iv. Part of the conversation will be how to monitor going forward.
  - v. We will need to put a stake in the ground to test the idea of "What is Statesmen"?
  - vi. Next steps before the next Board meeting
    - 1. Engage staff to understand responses to consultant's survey.
    - 2. Meet with Mr. Pagan to discuss the definition of "financial sustainability."
    - 3. Meet with APEx to help lay out pieces of the Statesmen program that are codifiable.

**10. Adjourned:** The meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.