

**New Dawn Charter Schools Board of Trustees**

**May 1, 2024, Board Minutes**

**10:30 a.m.: Full Board of Trustees Meeting**

**New Dawn Charter High School  
242 Hoyt Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11217**

**New Dawn Charter High School II  
89-25 161st Street  
Jamaica, NY 11432  
547-505-9101**

**Board Members present:** Mr. Ronald Tabano, Chairperson, Ms. Jane Sun, Vice Chairperson, Mr. Brian Baer, Secretary, Ms. Katharine Urbati, Treasurer

**Board Members Absent:** Mr. Daniel Lewis, board member.

**Staff Members/ Visitors Present:** NDCS: Dr. Sara Asmussen, Executive Director; Mr. Steve Ramkissoon, Director of Finance and HR, Mr. Jose Obregon Director of Operations, Dr. Lisa DiGaudio, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Mr. Ashish Abraham, NDCHS: Donna Lobato, NDCHS II: Muhammad Bilal

**I. Resolution: April 2024 Agenda— Mr. Ronald Tabano**

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the April 2024 Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

**Motion:** Mr. Brian Baer motioned to accept and approve the April 2024, Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

**Motion Seconded:** Ms. Katharine Urbati seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the April 2024 Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

**II. Resolution: March 2024 Minutes—Mr. Ronald Tabano**

Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there was a motion to accept and approve the March 2024 Board of Trustees meeting minutes.

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the March 2024, Board of Trustees meeting minutes.

**Motion Seconded:** Mr. Brian Baer seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the March 2024 Board of Trustees meeting minutes.

**III. Financials—Mr. Steve Ramkissoon**  
**Benchmark 4: Financial Condition**  
**Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

Mr. Ramkissoon reported to the board that at the Brooklyn school, student enrollment is currently at two hundred thirty-eight (238) students. He further stated that Mr. Ashish Abraham will cover student recruitment in greater detail including connections that are being established and strategies that are being implemented to bring in more students. Mr. Ramkissoon also stated that the financial situation at the Brooklyn school remains on par with previous months and the school continues to have a positive income. The school is on track to meet its financial objectives for the month of June 2024. Mr. Ramkissoon asked the board members if there were any questions regarding the Brooklyn financials. The board members did not have any questions.

Mr. Ramkissoon then informed the board members that interest income is doing well especially pertaining to the funds that the school has invested at Mellon Bank and Vanguard Corp. The funds at JP Morgan Chase are also doing well.

At the Queens school, Mr. Ramkissoon reported that there are three hundred twenty-nine (329) students enrolled. These enrollment numbers allow the school to comfortably pay Barone Management rent which is based on a three hundred fifteen (315) student enrollment number. Mr. Ramkissoon then asked the board members if there were any questions regarding the Queens school financials. There were no questions. Ms. Urbati subsequently stated that it is encouraging to have a positive income available to address any needs that the school may have in the future. Mr. Ramkissoon further elaborated that the financial investments for the Queens school are also doing well as they are in the Brooklyn school. Finally, Mr. Ramkissoon stated that overall, both schools are in a good financial position.

Mr. Tabano then asked the board members if there was a resolution to accept the March 2024 financials.

**a. Resolution: March Financials**

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the March 2024 financials.

**Motion Seconded:** Mr. Brian Baer seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the March 2024 financials.

**VI. Contracts—Mr. Jose Obregon**  
**Benchmark 1: Student Performance**  
**Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning**  
**Benchmark 5: Financial Management**  
**Benchmark 6: Board Oversight & Governance**

Dr. Asmussen asked Mr. Brian Baer to speak about the upcoming kitchen project at the Queens school and the conversation that the school had with Barone Management regarding Barone Management taking the lead in obtaining construction contractors for that project. Mr. Baer stated that Ms. Urbati, Ms. Sun, Dr. Asmussen met on Monday to discuss contractual issues including obtaining contractors for the upcoming kitchen project in Queens. It was agreed that there will be a conversation with Barone Management on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2024 to discuss Barone Management taking the lead as Construction Manager for the kitchen renovation with the idea that a guaranteed maximum price (GMP) will be in effect. The idea is to have Barone Management use their pool of contractors, or subcontractors, to obtain two to three bids for each construction line item. Mr. Baer stated that he feels that this will be a more expeditious way to achieve the use of the funds by the end of September 2024. This will prevent the school from losing the grant monies. Mr. Baer further stated that the meeting concluded positively.

Dr. Asmussen asked Mr. Baer to explain if the school has the option under guaranteed maximum price (GMP) of choosing the different vendors. Mr. Baer responded that the way a guaranteed maximum price (GMP) works is that the school sets the ceiling of what the cost of the construction is going to be based on typical and historical data that the construction manager has. The job is then placed out for bidding and the best and most responsible bidder is selected that stays within the GMP guidelines and budget. This will prevent change order after change order from occurring. Mr. Baer also stated that under these guidelines, the school can pre-purchase a labor and materials prior to the September 30<sup>th</sup> end date. This method is different than using a lump sum approach, which many times turns out to be costlier and goes over-budget. Mr. Ramkissoon stated that he liked this concept because Barone Management would be more responsible and available. Mr. Tabano agreed that this was a good approach. Mr. Baer stated that he would inform the board members how the meeting on the sixth with Barone went.

Mr. Jose Obregon informed the board members that there are three (3) proposals for a new copy machine contract for the Queens school. The copy machine contract that the Queens school currently holds will expire in September 2024. Subsequently, the school obtained bids from three (3) different vendors. The goal is to obtain a better and more reliable product and better pricing. All three proposals obtained include the specifications required, including the paper cutter program, which controls the number of copies allowed and reduces paper waste. Mr. Obregon stated that after reviewing the three proposals, he believes the best bid comes from Toshiba. Toshiba is offering superior machines compared to the other two bidders, namely TGI and Reliable Office Solutions. Toshiba is offering the school the better copy machines at a lower price which is about \$400 per month. This is approximately \$250 less than what the other vendors propose. Mr. Obregon further stated that TGI was the contractor that the school wanted to go with originally since it is a local vendor. Mr. Obregon also stated that Dr. Asmussen, Mr. Ramkissoon, and he went to see TGI's presentation; however, they are still \$250 monthly higher than Toshiba. Mr. Obregon also stated that Dr. Asmussen and he discussed approaching TGI and asking them to re-submit their bid, so they are more competitive. Mr. Tabano agreed with this idea. Mr. Tabano then asked the board members if there was a motion to accept the contract proposal from Toshiba pending a discussion with TGI.

**a. Resolution: Copier for Queens**

**Motion:** Ms. Katharine Urbati motioned to accept and approve the contract proposal from to Toshiba pending a discussion with TGI.

**Motion Seconded:** Mr. Brian Baer seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The board voted unanimously to accept and approve the contract proposal from to Toshiba pending a discussion with TGI.

**VII. Staff/Student Recruitment—Mr. Ashish Abraham**

**Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning**

**Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

**a. Status of Current Hiring**

Mr. Ashish reported that New Dawn had at least two staff recruiting affairs since the last board meeting. He was able to obtain some resumes and has passed them on to HR. Mr. Ashish also mentioned that he has started to work with a recruiter, and he has obtained many applicant's resumes although some of them are not qualified. He also stated that there is a recruitment open house on May 14, the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, June 5, June 10, and June 13. Mr. Ashish informed the board that he is working on getting the flyers ready and posting positions on the job boards.

**b. Status of Student Recruitment**

Mr. Ashish reported to the board that both schools have reached the targeted student recruitment numbers. He also stated that he will stay connected with the schools he is working with and will continue to build on those relationships. Mr. Ashish stated that this year, he is speaking with school counselors to identify potential student recruits for enrollment in summer school at New Dawn. Mr. Ashish stated that this effort applies to both the Queens and Brooklyn school. Mr. Ashish stated that he had counselors from Grover Cleveland High School visit the Brooklyn school so that they could see the building and see the programs and how the school operates. Mr. Ashish further stated that he has an event with Abraham Lincoln High School on May 9 where New Dawn's outreach team, which includes Ms. El and Mr. Dunbar, the Community Outreach Workers, will be at that school to identify potential recruits. Mr. Ashish further stated that he is also working with Utrecht High School to obtain new student recruits and that it looks very promising.

**VIII. School Updates**

**a. Brooklyn—Donna Lobato**

Ms. Lobato reported that she and HR met with all staff and had "stay" meetings. Staff was informed that contracts will be offered in June 2024. Ms. Lobato stated that she anticipates that most staff will return. Ms. Lobato also informed the board that she is focusing on student

attendance. Ms. Lobato reported to the board that this year there were several disciplinary incidents in school resulting in suspensions. She also reminded the board members that Regents exams are scheduled for June 2024 and staff is working diligently to prepare those students who are taking the Regents. She also mentioned that PLC groups are still meeting and mentors are still reaching out to students. Mr. Tabano asked the board members if there were any questions for Ms. Lobato and there were no questions.

**b. Queens—Mr. Muhammad Bilal**

Mr. Bilal reported to the board that he is also working on employment contract renewals with Mr. Ramkissoon. He further stated that he will be having contract renewal meetings tomorrow and Friday and that he will be focusing with Mr. Ashish on filling staff vacancies. Mr. Bilal also informed the board that teachers who have a Regents prep class did do a practice regents exam before the break. He will be meeting with those teachers this week, to look at the data, and to help teachers produce some pacing guides. Mr. Bilal also stated that his goal is to give teachers specific guidance so they can provide students specific support. This will ensure that teachers are covering all the components they need to cover well before the students take the Regents exams. Further, counselors are working on creating an instructional support team to try to help students who have low achievement levels and who are struggling with attendance. Mr. Bilal stated that he will work with counselors, SPED teachers, and students' mentors to produce a plan to give those students laser focused support to with the goal to help those students improve their attendance and their achievement levels.

**c. Curriculum & Instruction: Dr. Lisa DiGaudio**

Dr. DiGaudio reported that the Queens school is administering the NYSESLAT Test now. She informed the board members that there is a greater number of ELL students at the Queens school than ever before. Over the summer the schools will be re-evaluating the ELL program and look at all the components and support that will go into that program to ensure that students receive the best instruction that supports their needs. Dr. DiGaudio also stated that she will be analyzing Regents results as well and determine what adjustments need to be made to improve upcoming Regents exams.

Mr. Tabano asked Dr. Asmussen if the school calendar for next year had to be adjusted. Dr. Asmussen replied that she is inquiring if she can switch Holly as a day off for the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December which falls on a Monday. She stated that she would get back to Mr. Tabano.

**VII. Facilities—Mr. Jose Obregon**

**a. COO Update**

Mr. Obregon informed the board members that the Brooklyn school does have a renewed temporary certificate of occupancy and that it is valid until the ninth of July. He also stated that Metropolis Group is still working on getting the paperwork done for the public assembly permit, which is the last piece of what is needed to get a permanent COO.

**b. Kitchen**

Regarding the Kitchen project at the Queens school, Mr. Obregon stated that he did verify with John Garcia from Barone that next week Wednesday contractors will be on site to begin the asbestos removal project. Mr. Obregon also stated that the school has a requirement to move all that is stored in that room out of that room. Mr. Obregon further stated that he will make sure that this is accomplished.

**c. Roof**

Mr. Obregon reported to the board that he is still waiting to get word when the school can start purchasing materials and labor for the roof project in Brooklyn. Dr. Asmussen stated that she is working with Kayla and Metropolis Group to allow them access to the DOB account so they can proceed in getting the final COO. Dr. Asmussen stated that she is also working with Scott Barone to get a land use attorney to help with the roof project.

**V. New Business**

Dr. Asmussen reported to the board that it does look like the school will start the Stronger Connections Grant. Dr. Asmussen received an email this morning from the SED stating that she was authorized to start the grant. Dr. Asmussen also informed the board that under the Stronger Connection Grant, LATINMART just received their minority women owned business certification from the State. Dr. Asmussen confirmed that this can start in September 2024. Unfortunately, the Queens school did not receive the grant, but the Brooklyn school did. Subsequently, Dr. Asmussen stated that the school will be able to hire someone to oversee the PBIS program and to integrate it into the program. This grant will allow the school to place all academic, social, and emotional learning under one umbrella. The grant will pay for this. Dr. Asmussen stated that this will require another staff person to be hired.

**VI. Public Comment**

No public comment was made.

**VII. Adjournment**

The board agreed to meet again on May 28, 2024, at 11:00 A.M. The board meeting was adjourned at 11:05 A.M.

**VIII. Executive Meeting—Mr. Ronald Tabano**

**a. Evaluation of Board**

**b. Evaluation of Executive Director**