

# Charter School of Inquiry

## Regular Monthly Board Meeting Minutes



### February 2, 2021

#### 1. Call to Order:

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (the “Board”) of the Charter School of Inquiry (the “School”) was called to order by Mary Jo Pfeiffer, the presiding officer, a lawful quorum being present, on Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at 5:01p.m. The meeting was held via Zoom videoconference (Meeting ID 85907756585), in accordance with Executive Orders by the Governor of the State of New York,

Trustees Present: Melvin “Trey” Bankhead III  
Peter Dow  
Nichelle Gray  
Latise Hairston  
Richard “Bruce” Haydon  
Anne Nguyen Henry  
Janet Peters  
Mary Jo Pfeiffer

Excused: Helene Kramer  
Deborah Porter

Final Trustee Candidate: Valerie Nolan

CSI Staff: John Sheffield, Head of School

Board Counsel: Steve Polowitz

#### 2. Proof of Public Notice:

Pursuant to the Open Meetings Law, Mary Jo Pfeiffer announced that Helene Kramer had a notarized affidavit listing the places where the Notice of Meeting held on February 2, 2021 were posted and a list of media outlets asked to publicize the meeting on their community calendars, in their print notices or broadcasts. This notarized affidavit will be kept on file.

#### 3. Conflict of Interest.

Ms. Pfeiffer reminded board members that anyone with a potential conflict of interest concerning a subject under discussion by the Board has an obligation to disclose the potential conflict and, if deemed a conflict, recuse themselves and leave the room during any discussion and vote on the subject. *No such declarations were made at this time.*



#### 4. Approve Minutes:

- a. Minutes of Business Meeting – January 5, 2021

A motion to approve minutes of the business meeting on January 5, 2021 was made by Peter Dow, seconded by Melvin Bankhead III and approved unanimously by the trustees. Motion passed.

Ms. Pfeiffer reminded the trustees that minutes of the Academic Committee (December 19, 2020), Finance Committee (December 22, 2020) and Governance Committee (December 22, 2020) were included with the board packet and will be posted on the web site.

#### 5. Announcements / Updates

- a. Happy Birthday, Nichelle Gray – February 22. The board wished Ms. Gray a happy birthday.

#### 6. Academic Committee Report – Mary Jo Pfeiffer (standing in for Peter Dow, Chair)

- a. Presentation: David Hetherly, ELA & Math Academic Goals 2020-23.  
David Hetherly, CSI's RtI-Data Coordinator, reviewed academic goals in ELA and Math for the 2020-21 academic year as well as the next two academic years (through 2023).

CSI's original academic goals were based on NYS assessments which were not administered in the 2019-20 academic year due to COVID19. They are not expected to be administered in 2020-21 either. Consequently, CSI's goals were set using the STAR Renaissance testing program, which is considered predictive of State assessments.

Mr. Hetherly explained that the CSI goals were in line with those that had been reviewed by NYSED, they were ambitious, and they were comprehensive in that they didn't look at student achievement in just one way. He explained absolute goals and percentile rank and how they were set over the course of the next 3 academic years. He also explained growth goals and the rationale for setting the 2020-21 goals at the student growth percentile of 40 for ELA and 35 for Math with growth built in for subsequent years.

Mid-year assessment results will be presented at the next Board meeting in March.

- b. Report from Peter Dow, Academic Committee Chair

*Remote learning.* No formal decision yet about when CSI will reopen, although there are plans to bring Kindergartners back into the building five days a week starting March 1.

*Quantitative progress.* Marie Giancarlo is working to collect and present more quantitative data regarding academics.

*Professional development.* NYSED wants to know how we're measuring the results of professional development. BOCES will give us a full report on what they are doing and results.

*Surveys.* NYSED's Charter School Office is conducting parent and teacher surveys of all charter schools in February. CSI will conduct its own annual survey of parents, teachers and students in mid- to late May.

*Strategic Plan.* CSI is on track with completing the goals by the timelines in the plan.

However, in order to fully implement Goal V: "History, Heritage and Culture of People of African Descent," CSI will organize a task force with outside professional expertise and input from the community. This is a high priority. Mr. Dow will report progress to Board as the task force organizes and develops plans.



*Community Engagement.* CSO wants to show value of charter schools, not just related to academics, but also with how they are involved with the community. Latise Hairston suggested conducting a Stakeholder Analysis to identify essential community partners.

**7. Parent Association Report: Nichelle Gray, Parent Representative.**

Ms. Gray asked parents to respond to a few questions about parent involvement. Although those who responded seemed satisfied with the ability to communicate with their child's teacher(s) through Zoom, they felt there was not much going on because the building is closed due to COVID. There have been no in-person events and it's hard to get motivated, Ms. Gray reported that parents did not know about the STAR assessments or what they measured, although they are aware that material about black history is being presented. Ms. Gray felt that CSI could do a better job of reaching out to parents one-on-one to see how they are doing. Mr. Sheffield said he would work with Ms. Gray to reactivate the Parent Association.

**8. Board Professional Development**

**9. Head of School Report – John Sheffield**

- a. Consolidated Dashboard Report – December. Student enrollment, attendance and staff diversity percentages are stable. Lost one ENL student who moved out of the area; there are three children who were referred to the BPS Committee on Special Ed whose IEP's are pending. Mr. Sheffield reviewed the professional development sessions conducted in January 2021.
- b. Benchmarking ELA & Math. Conducted week of January 25. Compiling results.
- c. Strategic Plan. On track with timeline.
- d. Status of virtual teaching/learning. School's COVID numbers are problematic. Five staff tested positive, although no one contracted the virus at the school itself. CSI has implemented all precautionary measures, including hand sanitizing stations and upgrading air filtrations system.

Sent letter to parents about issues related to reopening. CSI has set March 1 as a target date to bring all Kindergartners whose parents elect in-person instruction into the School every day. (Half of parents want to continue remote learning, while approximately half want in-person instruction.) Bringing back other grades will be hybrid because of distancing requirements. Conditions for reopening change 'by the second' as State designations change. Staff vaccinations: only 3 or 4 staff have had first dose with others on waiting lists. Bussing: BPS will bus CSI children, even though most parents want to arrange their own transportation because of concerns about distancing on school buses.

**10. Finance/Audit Committee Report – Bruce Haydon, Treasurer**

- a. Financial Statement & Narrative for period ending December 31, 2020.
  - Net financial position is solid with increases in net assets and favorable current ratio. Reimbursement from BPS is being paid, although about 3 weeks late.
  - NYS is signaling that tuition and rates will be reduced for the 2021-22 school year.
  - Evans Bank has opened their portal to request forgiveness of PPP loans. Kirisits & Associates will work with Evans Bank on forgiveness application.



## 11. Governance Committee – Jan Peters, Chair

- a. Head of School Evaluation for 2020-2021: Will use Danielson rubric, CSI's strategic plan and academic goals as basis of Head of School evaluation.
- b. HOS Succession Planning: Assistant Principal. Mr. Sheffield is still reviewing candidates he wants to consider for the Assistant Principal position. If not successful, he agreed to use a search firm to identify candidates.
- c. Board Succession Planning: Committee reviewed job descriptions from Education Board Partners for Board Chair and Vice-Chair and made minor edits. Committee will review Treasurer and Secretary positions next and will share with full board when complete.
- d. Administrative Assistant position: Job description drafted. May use temporary employment agency to hire someone with potential for long-term employment. Continuing discussion.

## 12. Old Business.

- a. Website RFP. Mr. Bankhead reported that the RFP for development of a new CSI website went out Monday, February 1. Received two responses so far and expecting more.

## 13. New Business.

- a. Resolution to Select Valerie Nolan as Final Trustee Candidate.

A motion to approve a resolution to select Valerie Nolan as a final trustee candidate was made by Janet Peters, seconded by Melvin Bankhead III, and approved unanimously by the trustees. Motion passes.

- b. Charter School Office (CSO) Town Hall Meeting with David Frank. Mary Jo Pfeiffer attended a Zoom Town Hall meeting on January 25, 2021 called by David Frank, executive director of the CSO. She reported that CSO is asking both new charters and renewing charters to incorporate a “community responsive design,” i.e., charter schools should enrich and be involved in the communities in which they are situated. It was suggested that a stakeholder analysis would help to define what encompasses CSI’s “community.”

CSO is sending data report cards in mid-February. They will primarily reflect benchmarks 1 (student performance) and 9 (enrollment, recruitment, and retention).

CSO’s performance monitoring team has developed a remote monitoring plan for schools. It will require us to complete a self-evaluation and post-report action plan on all 10 benchmarks to outline strengths, challenges, and strategies for improvement or maintenance. CSO will conduct site visits remotely and will look at our benchmark responses to guide the review.

- c. Confidential Personnel Issues. Ms. Pfeiffer asked for a motion for the board to go into executive session with Valerie Nolan (final trustee candidate), John Sheffield (HOS), and Steve Polowitz (Board Counsel) to discuss two confidential personnel issues.

A motion to move into executive session was made by Peter Dow, seconded by Anne Henry, and approved unanimously by the trustees. The board went into executive session at 6:20pm.

A motion to move out of executive session was made by Melvin Bankhead III, seconded by Jan Peters, and approved unanimously the trustees. The board came out of executive session at 7:05pm.



Ms. Pfeiffer reported that the board discussed two confidential personnel items in executive session. One item was to award a bonus to the Head of School in recognition of an excellent evaluation in a very difficult year. She asked for a motion to approve the bonus.

A motion to approve the bonus for John Sheffield, Head of School, as discussed in executive session, was made by Peter Dow, seconded by Melvin Bankhead, III and approved unanimously by the trustees.

**14. Other / Open Discussion.** None

**15. Next Meeting:** Tuesday, March 2, 2020, 4:45 pm

**16. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Janet Peters, seconded by Anne Henry, and approved unanimously by the trustees. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 7:08pm.

Respectfully submitted by:



Melvin Bankhead III, Board Secretary

March 4, 2021  
Date