

**Westinghouse Arts Academy Charter School
Board of Trustees**

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 7, 2021, 6:00 P.M. EDT

Present:

Bill Pricener, Board President/Treasurer (Zoom)
John Hisiro, Trustee (Zoom)
Bernadette Gibson, Trustee (Zoom)
Greg Jakub, Trustee (Zoom)
Don Marinelli, Trustee (Zoom)
Gloria Rayman, Trustee (Zoom)
Matt Racunas, Solicitor (Zoom)
Rick Fosbrink, WAACS CEO (Zoom)
Betsy D'Emidio, WAACS Principal/CAO (Zoom)
Debra Lehew, WAACS Dir. SpEd (Zoom)
Elizabeth Speed, WAACS Faculty & Dir. of Marketing (Zoom)
Nadine Dunn, WAACS Business & HR Admin/Brd Recording Secretary (Zoom)

Excused:

Dexter Hairston, Board Secretary
JP Hernandez, Trustee

Guests:

Westinghouse Arts Faculty, Staff and Parents attending via Zoom

The Meeting of the Board of Trustees began at 6:05 p.m.

Roll Call of Board Members:

Bill Pricener, Board President, welcomed Bernadette Gibson, our new board member to her first official meeting and all parents, community, faculty and staff attending via Zoom.

Public Comment:

Kari Handa, parent, spoke concerning the potential of Westinghouse Arts Academy returning to full in person instruction. Ms. Handa stated some of her concerns with regard to the recent rise in Covid cases in our area and several other school districts that send to Westinghouse Arts Academy. She was unsure if we would be able to continue the successful Covid mitigation efforts that we have been doing this year, especially the social distancing. Ms. Handa asked the Board to vote to delay in person instruction until September as a better and safer plan for our students.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Bill Pricener, Board President, presented the Minutes from March and asked if anyone had corrections or comments. Hearing none, Mr. Pricener called for a motion to accept the minutes from the 3/3/2021 meeting.

Motion made: To accept the minutes from 3/03/2021 - Greg Jakub , 2nd: Gloria Rayman

Vote: All in favor: ALL Yea; 0 Nay; 0 Abstaining- Motion Carried.

Board Governance:

Rick Fosbrink, CEO, stated that it was time for the Board to approve the meeting dates for the 21-22 school year. By approving the dates now, Mr. Fosbrink can get the meeting notice to the newspaper and have them posted on the website. Mr. Fosbrink continued by asking if the Board would like to continue with Zoom meetings or return to in person meetings. There was a brief discussion regarding the meeting style and Mr. Pricener proposed a blended idea of Zoom and in person. However, they will table that final decision for June and by then we will have more information on Covid levels and mitigation efforts. Mr. Pricener called for a motion.

Motion made: To keep the Board Meetings to the first Wednesday of the month for the 21-22 school year- John Hisiro , 2nd: Don Marinelli

Vote: All in favor: ALL Yea; 0 Nay; 0 Abstaining- Motion Carried.

TASK: Mr. Fosbrink will send out the list of SY 21-22 Board Meetings to the newspaper and post them on the website.

School Programs & Policies:

Dr. Betsy D’Emidio, Principal, presented the 21-22 School Calendar. The calendar for 21-22 has a teacher start date of 8/17 and student start date of 8/23. The calendar has a total of 182 student instruction days and 193 active teacher days. Of the 193 teacher days, 11 of which are for professional development through In-Service.

Motion made: To approve the 21-22 School Calendar - Gloria Rayman , 2nd: John Hisiro

Vote: All in favor: ALL Yea; 0 Nay; 0 Abstaining- Motion Carried.

Dr. D’Emidio presented the proposed change to the instructional model for the last 9 weeks of the school year. This decision, Dr. D’Emidio continued, was discussed with Mr. Fosbrink and Dr. Lehew, our Director of Special Education. The plan is to return to full in person instruction on Monday, April 12 and remain so through the 4th quarter. We felt the best course of action was not to change the schedule and keep the 5 period, 6 day rotation. In doing so, we have the option for families to stay hybrid or entirely virtual, as well as return in person. With this model, students will stay in their CORE rooms and only change classrooms when they have an academic subject. The only other time students will be in the hallways would be prior to Advisory, going to the Common Area for lunch, and at dismissal. To facilitate the set up of classrooms for the Monday start, Westinghouse Arts will have an asynchronous instruction day, while the teachers and staff will report to set up classrooms and go over last minute details. Dr. D’Emidio stated that this plan is in the best interests of the student’s social, emotional, and academic wellbeing.

Rick Fosbrink, CEO, followed up by addressing some of Ms. Handa’s concerns. Specifically the Covid irrigation efforts and desks. Mr. Fosbrink stated that 250 desks were arriving Thursday, April 8 to be set up in academic rooms on Friday, April 9th. The Facilities team will continue to deep clean the building each night with the special cleaning fog machine, and each classroom will have cleaning wipes for students to use on their desks before and after class.

Board members commented that they liked how we incorporated the flexibility for families to choose an education model for their student (in person, hybrid, virtual) and they were glad to hear that about 95% of our faculty and staff had received vaccinations. Once comments well concluded, Bill Pricener, Board President, called for a motion.

Motion made: To approve the change in instruction model to in person, hybrid, or virtual for the 4th quarter - Greg Jakub , 2nd: John Hisiro

Vote: All in favor: ALL Yea; 0 Nay; 0 Abstaining- Motion Carried.

School Personnel:

Rick Fosbrink, CEO, referred the Board to the list of personnel for March. We had no terminations or resignations. We had hired 5 new employees; a studio arts teacher replacement, a building sub and three additional day to day substitutes to help with the creation of more art core sections. The additional sections are to help with class size as we return to in person instruction. Bill Pricener, Board President, called for a motion to approve the personnel report.

Motion made: To approve the personnel report - John Hiriso; 2nd: Greg Jakub

Vote: All in favor: ALL Yea; 0 Nay; 0 Abstaining- Motion Carried.

Report on Facilities:

Rick Fosbrink, CEO, reported that the graffiti issue was brought to the attention of the Allegheny Police and we have fixed the lighting issue in that area of the building. We also installed a fence with a panic bar exit in case of fire. Mr. Shopes, one of our maintenance personnel has been taking advantage of the warmer temperatures and our power washer to remove the graffiti. Mayor Jakub commented that Officer Joe is now a Community Officer and he will make sure that Officer Joe is aware of the issue as well.

Mr. Fosbrink confirmed that 225 desks were arriving tomorrow. When asked how we got the delivery so quickly, Mr. Fosbrink stated that the furniture company suggested another item similar to the one we looked at but with a quicker delivery time. Mr. Fosbrink continued to state that another big investment the school made to help with the new instructional day model was the purchase of 10 wall mounted SMART BOARDS. The money for this purchase came from a Federal program we received.

Mr. Fosbrink shared with the Board that he has started to look at some building remodeling projects for the summer. One area is a space at the end of the Dining Commons. We would add a wall and create another large general instruction room that could also be used for in-person board meetings. He is also looking at some safety improvements around the boiler room and a possible renovation of the second floor student center.

Also happening this summer, Westinghouse Arts Academy will be hosting a musical theater summer camp run by our Musical Theater teachers, Jarrett Reiche and Lindsey Carothers. Mr. Reiche has secured grant money from AMDA to help fund the project. AMDA has also agreed to send two of their professors to work with Mr. Reiche and Ms. Carothers. From what Mr. Fosbrink is allowed to tell us at this point, several other Broadway Stars will be working at the camp as well this summer.

Lastly, Mr. Fosbrink informed the Board of the building lease discussion with our landlord, William Malloy and Charter School Capital. He hopes to have more information on this for the May meeting.

Report on Finance and Business Services:

Rick Fosbrink, CEO, confirmed that we have contracted with a grant writer Maureen Ryan of Write Connections. She has already started looking at funding opportunities. Next, Mr. Fosbrink reviewed the finance reports that were sent to the board members. The reports showed a cash-on-hand balance of \$726,527 and a \$406, 727 operating surplus. His hope is if we can continue to keep this surplus going into the summer, we may not need the assistance of Charter School Capital this year. When the report review had concluded, Bill Pricener, Board President, called for a motion to retroactively approve payroll, contracts, and bills for March.

Motion made: To approve the contracts, bills and payroll for March - Gloria Rayman, 2nd: Bernadette Gibson/Don Marinelli

Vote: All in favor: ALL Yea; 0 Nay; 0 Abstaining- Motion Carried.

Report on Marketing and Enrollment:

Elizabeth Speed, Faculty and Director of Marketing, reviewed the dashboard for the month of March. Ms. Speed announced that 59 students have already accepted for the Fall. She stated that the goal of 120 students is in reach at this rate. Our main area of interest currently is studio and digital arts. Ms. Speed commented that our Director of Admissions, Susan Maskarinec, has had 20 tours in March and is scheduling more tours by the day. Ms. Speed has observed the interest and excitement in the faces of the students touring the building. The postcard mailing is still prompting people to contact us and visit our website to find out more. She said we are very close to having enough students to warrant an East bus and we still have strong interest in obtaining a South bus as well.

Miscellaneous Comments:

Bill Pricener, Board President, wanted to follow up on the landscaping he proposed last meeting. Now that the weather is starting to act like spring, he has a group of volunteers to do the work. Mr. Fosbrink and Mr. Pricener will communicate next week to plan time for this event.

Don Marinelli, Board Member, commented on the wonderful article about our Spring Musical, You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown. Many are looking forward to seeing our show over the next two weekends.

Bill Pricener, Board President, asked Dr. D'Emidio if we had confirmed the location for graduation. Dr. D'Emidio said that the location at the school has not yet been determined as we await more information on Covid guidelines for the summer months. However, Mr. Fosbrink mentioned that Ms. Kacie Kubitza, Westinghouse Arts Faculty, has confirmed the location of our Prom. It will be held at the Steel City Rowing Club in Verona. More information will be given in the next few weeks.

Executive Session:

Bill Pricener, Board President, stated that the Board Members will now go into the Executive Session to discuss personnel matters and the public portion of the meeting has concluded. Mr. Pricener called for an adjourn motion.

Motion made: To adjourn the public meeting and enter into the Executive Session - Gloria Rayman , 2nd: John Hisiro

Mr. Pricener thanked everyone for attending. The Board went into the Executive Session and the public meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm.

Next Meeting: May 5, 2021 at 6:00 pm

Date:

Board Secretary