



The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School
Board of Trustees meeting
June 26, 2021. 10:00 a.m. By video conference.

Board members on call:

Sarah Navarro
Kiva Zytnick
Richard Pohlman
Donice Leak
Emily Hedin
Jonathan O'Connell
Craig Robinson
Atalie Jacobs
Wendy Pugh

Board members absent:

Marlena McWilliams
Caroline Hill

Staff on call:

Justin Lessek

The meeting started at 10 a.m. with an icebreaker.

Orders of Business

1. Approval of minutes from April 25 meeting .

Sarah made motion to approve minutes. Rich seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Announcements

Truth has some board changes coming. Sarah will be stepping down as board chair. Craig, Emily and Marlena will be leaving the board. Justin and the board thanked the departing members for their service.

3. Budget

Craig presented the proposed 2021-2022 budget. In advance of the meeting, Justin held three budget sessions with stakeholders that were incorporated into the proposal. The finance and audit committee approved the proposal in advance of it coming to the full board. Craig said Truth is hitting on key indicators and keeping an eye on possible future expenses such as facilities. Sarah moves to accept the budget. Atalie seconded. The budget passed unanimously.

4. Governance

a. Proposed changes to bylaws.

Rich presented a proposed change to a provision of the bylaws concerning the board's executive committee. The provision says that no executive committee member may serve more than two consecutive, one-year terms in the same position. Jonathan has been secretary since November 2019 and could not be extended under current provision. Rich proposed either deleting or modifying the clause. Kiva and Donice suggested deleting it. Atalie raised the idea of some type of a cap. Craig said he might also like a cap or limit of some kind. Kiva said she prefers consistency and expressed concern that people may feel expected to stay three years. Atalie and Craig said that maybe a cap is not needed. Rich proposed deleting the clause. Atalie seconded. Vote to delete clause passed unanimously.

b. Adding new board members

Atalie presented the governance committee's work identifying gaps in expertise on the board: accounting, finance, fundraising, latinex representation and others. She presented two board candidates. John Kenchelian, EdOps, advised Truth for the past two years and is now at an executive search firm. He has worked with Craig and Justin, has time and is committed to the mission. John is interested in the Treasurer role and could start July 1.

Rachel Kimboko, head of school at Lee Montessori, has social justice and DEI expertise as well as finance expertise. She is on another board but could start in the near future. She could be on the finance and audit committee.

Craig endorsed John. Justin and Atalie endorsed both candidates. Rich said we are not required to have an ex officio member. Atalie moved to add John to the board. Sarah seconded. The board voted unanimously to approve. Sarah moved to add Rochelle to the board. Atalie seconded. The board voted unanimously to approve.

c. Other board changes

Sarah announced that Marlana will be leaving the board and said she will follow up as to whether her departure will be a formal resignation. Rich proposed making Marlana a non-voting board member should she decide not to resign. Sarah seconded. Unanimous vote to approve.

d. Slate of officers for the executive committee.

[Secretary Jonathan left the meeting and did not take minutes at this time.]

The secretary returned to the meeting 15-20 minutes later. Sarah announced that the new executive committee will be Wendy as chair, Rich as vice chair, Jonathan as secretary and John as Treasurer.

5. General updates

Justin provided updates. During the final days of school students completed and presented projects on architecture and design, plus enjoyed Field Day. He provided an update on student demographics. Atalie asked if recruitment was different for year 2. Justin said concerned that some Ward 8 families may drop out once school starts in person out of concerns about the pandemic. Truth will be applying for at-risk preference in the lottery and advocated for that preference to be created in the first place. Justin presented the latest survey of families. 98 percent of families strongly agree or agree that they are having positive experiences at Truth, with two-thirds of families responding. Justin presented student achievement data. Donice said her son had been concerned about being on campus.

[THE SECRETARY'S WIFI CUT OUT FOR ~5 MINUTES]

Regarding facilities, Justin said it is unlikely Truth will be building a new building for 2022-23. There are still options. Truth may try to sign a multi-year extension at 1800 Perry Street if we can find some classrooms nearby. The possibility of partnering with DCPS, which has complex implications, remains.

Justin presented an update on strategic goals. Truth is seeing strong progress on returning staff, attendance, budget, compliance. There has been less strong progress on high level parent engagement. Academic data is still outstanding. Truth is expecting to lose 9 of 93 families next year. Biggest reason for departure has been leaving D.C. altogether. Sarah suggests using Panorama for survey data.

5. Committee updates

a. Governance

Atalie provided an update. We will shortly have 11 board members but can have 15 so need to continue recruitment efforts.

b. Development

Kiva provided an update. All board members contributed to Truth financially. The end-of-year showcase met goals for creating that tradition. Event brought in \$900 but built community. There have been weekly meetings to support a citywide Montessori event for August.

c. Academic Achievement

Justin presented since Caroline and Emily were not on call at this time. Made some good progress in most goal areas. End of the year data analysis is underway. Citybridge provided a modest grant for some tutoring that Truth will do over the summer.

d. Ad hoc facilities.

Justin said getting to know pastors in the area. Trying to bridge gap with a few classrooms to stay in the neighborhood if possible.

e. Finance

No additional updates

7. Next steps

- a. Atalie said Truth needs chairs of development and student academic achievement committees
- b. Justin presented a proposed calendar for 2021-2022 board meetings. He will send out meeting dates poll.
- c. Truth needs start dates for when new officers will begin.
- d. Facilities needs to be nailed down.
- e. Sarah said the DC Charter School Alliance is looking for a Truth board member to participate in a half hour focus group online July 1. Wendy volunteered.

Materials:

Justin slideshow

Closing

Meeting adjourned at 12:29 p.m.

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