

Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School (TMA)
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
By Video Conference (Zoom)
September 30, 2021

Board Members in Attendance: Bruce Berman, Danielle Bierzynski, Jinah Bryant, Jerry Epstein, Dan Gordon, Mark Harrison, Aleisha James, Kenneth Jones, Richard Roe, Andy Rosenberg, Jonathan Stoel, Laurence Telson.

Staff in Attendance: Raymond Weeden, Executive Director; David Schlossman, Chief Operating Officer; Faith Oviedo, Director of Development

Mr. Stoel called the meeting to order at 8:00 am. A quorum was present.

Mr. Stoel asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June and July meetings. Mr. Epstein said some board members could not read the minutes because of technical issues and suggested deferring a vote until board members could review them. Mr. Schlossman asked for an expedient review because of auditor requirements. The board members agreed to approve the minutes by email.

Mr. Epstein suggested an addition to the July minutes indicating that board members had requested more time to review the retirement plan materials and obtain legal advice.

Mr. Jones and Mr. Schlossman gave the **Finance Committee Report**. Mr. Jones said the committee had discussed the retirement plan and is also working on an investment strategy. Mr. Schlossman said a staff member is setting up meetings with retirement plan providers, to which board members will be invited.

Summarizing the year ended June 30, 2021, Mr. Schlossman said the school will have a substantial surplus because of COVID-related funding and that money will be used this fiscal year for essential school needs. Financial statements for the prior fiscal year are currently being audited.

Mr. Stoel said that the board is excited to have renewed Mr. Weeden's contract for three years.

Mr. Jones said that as part of completing the school's IRS Form 990, the finance committee needed to ensure that the executive director was appropriately compensated and that the percentage of the school's overall budget allocated to the executive director's salary is appropriate.

Mr. Schlossman described the IRS requirements for executive compensation determination. In coordination with the board, Mr. Schlossman prepared a Rebuttable Presumption document that memorializes the board's decision-making concerning the executive director's compensation. The document complies with IRS requirements that board consideration of executive pay be conducted by persons independent of the executive, that those independent board members review data comparing proposed executive pay to the market as part of the board's decision-making process, and that these steps be documented contemporaneously with approving

the new executive compensation package. Mr. Stoel asked for a motion to approve the chair's signing of the Rebuttable Presumption for the executive director's 2021-2024 contract on behalf of the board. Mr. Jones made the motion. Mr. Berman seconded the motion. Mr. Stoel took a roll call vote, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Weeden gave the **Executive Director's Report**.

Enrollment

- Enrollment is 343 students at present (the official enrollment is established in early October)
- Currently, 279 students are on track to graduate in four years, including new 9th graders who may not all be on track by the end of the year
- 51 students one year off track
- 5 students 2 years off track
- 4 students 3 years off track
- Pandemic barriers account for the off-track statistics: students now significantly off-track were among the most difficult to engage meaningfully in distance learning despite a consistent effort by the school
- 97th graders are new to the school, 31th graders are repeating the grade for the 2nd or 3rd time (also largely a function of pandemic challenges)
- A new school policy requires students to repeat only courses they failed—if they passed a credit, they keep a credit. As a result, some students are able to get back on track with night or summer school credit recovery--a step the school expects will motivate students who might otherwise stagnate

COVID

- Many students are missing school because they are unvaccinated and have been in close contact of people who have tested positive. Many families are still not comfortable getting their children vaccinated, or students themselves are vaccine-hesitant. All athletes must be vaccinated as of November 1. Until the vaccination rate increases, students may still be missing school due to exposure when DC Health guidance would permit vaccinated students to attend
- 90% of staff is vaccinated
- The school tested more than 150 people in three weeks and only one test was positive, indicating transmission in the building is nearly very low

Ms. Bierzynski asked about the possibility of a student vaccination mandate. Mr. Weeden said the student-athlete mandate is helpful and he hopes that the Mayor will push an overall student mandate. Ms. Bierzynski asked what the school is doing to support students who are required to stay home. Mr. Weeden said the first concern is ensuring students ill with COVID-19 get well. He said the students under quarantine are still using the Canvas course management software, so they can communicate with teachers and download assignments. The school is not encouraging hybrid instruction because experience is showing the approach does not work well when most of the student body is learning in person.

Mr. Epstein asked about lower enrollment than in previous years. Mr. Weeden said the school has no more ninth-grade seats available and there is a waitlist of about 20 for ninth grade. This suggests the decline is pandemic-related and the school can build toward greater enrollment in the future. Mr. Weeden said the school has changed its enrollment policy to accept students after November 1 if seats open up. He tentatively predicted that the 10th and 11th grades will grow because of the school's new way of managing credit recovery.

Ms. Bryant asked if vaccination for staff is mandatory and whether staff attrition will result. Mr. Weeden said vaccination is mandatory and so far, one staff member has left voluntarily. Other staff may be terminated if they do not comply, but the number is expected to be low.

Mr. Gordon asked for a comparison of grade-level enrollment and asked if students who were not engaged during the pandemic had become re-engaged. Mr. Weeden said attendance is very high this year for in-person learning among students who were less engaged during distance learning.

Mr. Gordon asked what the school is doing to encourage student vaccination. Mr. Weeden said mandating student-athlete vaccination is helpful. The school is also considering incentives, is asking some students to develop PSAs and is trying to figure out how to make data public to encourage parents to get children vaccinated. Thurgood Marshall Academy also served as an official DC vaccination center from late August through September (the duration of the DC program). Nevertheless, Mr. Weeden estimates that only about 15% of students are vaccinated, but they are just starting to collect data. Ms. Telson asked about incentives for vaccination. Mr. Weeden said DC has given students gift cards and Apple air pods and entered them in a drawing for college scholarships. TMA has provided its own gift cards and earbuds. Mr. Weeden said incentives have not been particularly effective and that the real incentive is keeping students in school so they can learn.

Ms. Bryant expressed appreciation of Mr. Weeden and the school staff for their work to reopen. Mr. James added her appreciation and said her daughter is happy to be back at school in person.

Academics

- Parent-teacher conferences coming up soon via Zoom
- Wednesdays TMA is dismissing students at 12:30 for staff professional development
- Four Wednesdays per quarter will have a modified schedule with afternoon programming including college prep tailored for all grade levels as well as individual and small group tutoring and academic support
- Credit recovery opportunities will begin in the afternoon so students can get back on track sooner

Mr. Gordon asked about how to support staff. Mr. Weeden said leadership is working to check in on the mental health of staff and encourage staff to get outside, leave early when possible, and take advantage of other supports. A staff survey is forthcoming.

Mr. Weeden reported on the status of the grading-for-equity process. For example, instead of 0-100 scale, grades are now on a 0-4 scale. A tailored grading-for-equity approach will be implemented next year.

Ms. James said Canvas has been useful for her daughter when she has missed school. Mr. Weeden said Canvas has been great for the whole school. Ms. Bryant commended the leadership on increasing opportunities for students to take AP and college-level classes and on encouraging students to take honors and AP classes who might not otherwise consider them.

Ms. Telson and Mr. Epstein said there were no developments to report from the governance committee. Mr. Stoel expressed appreciation for the board members' attendance and participation, and he asked board members to recommend people for board recruitment.

Mr. Rosenberg said TMA's Development and Communications Manager left in August, and the school is reconfiguring the position before advertising for a new employee. Mr. Rosenberg said the 21st CCLC grant was reviewed by OSSE and given no negative findings. Other grant applications are pending. This fall, the department is working on a donor-relations notecard to send to donors. The process for the annual appeal is beginning. Mr. Stoel encouraged board members to reach out to donors and prospective donors.

Noting other opportunities for board and volunteer involvement, Mr. Weeden said Law Day for ninth graders was scheduled for October 1. He said TMA needs mentors. Prospective mentors can complete an application at tma.fyi/mentor.

Mr. Harrison encouraged Mr. Weeden to ask for support from the board as needed.

Mr. Stoel adjourned the meeting at 9:39 am.