

Charter School for Applied Technologies

Board Meeting Minutes

June 11, 2024



Public Comments (5 minutes)

Minutes (5 minutes)

- Minutes from May 14, 2024
 - Motion to approve – J. Berti
 - Second – Steve Kottakis
 - Minutes approved.

Mr. Berti talked about graduation – June 28, 2024.

Presentation

NONE

Administrative Report

- Mr. Loveria discussed the senior parade through the building and its success, especially with the video “reel” that was produced for social media. Kara Oliver-Perez discussed this video that was presented on our social media to tie in branding, recruitment, and marketing.
 - Reel titled “Optimistic” was produced to help enhance our social media presence. The board watched the video and Ms. Oliver-Perez pointed out some key elements to the reel, including the cover page.
 - 1.5k likes, 128 comments, over 700 shares, and 77K plays which makes this video “viral”.
 - Most viewers 58% are in the NYS area, especially with the zip codes we are looking to attract. This video was intentional to promote our brand. These students were chosen to be the centerpiece – *no matter where you come from – you have the power to create change and be a visionary.*
- Student images from both featured students will be our billboards “*start here, grow here*” – connecting the community. Ms. OliverPerez also discussed commercial spots happening during the NBA finals. CSAT Flyers are now available in Spanish, Arabic, Burmese/Karen, Russian, Swahili. We are moving into the space of inclusive communications, and our website, materials, and advertisements will be available in multiple languages for the members of our community.
- Mr. Berti asked if we are measuring costs and the dollar value of advertisements. How does the “cost” of attaining a student (ex a kindergartner) increase or decrease?
 - Ms. Oliver-Perez discussed approach to marketing “guerilla marketing” – some of which is free - and that the types of marketing we are doing is reflective of the community we serve, and that advertisements are reflective of what is happening politically and events-wise throughout the country. Suggested a “movie night” for the summer to encourage new families to come in and meet us, and some other events to increase recruitment efforts among other efforts to continue to sell our brand.
- Mr. Loveria stated that Mr. Lyle is at the awards dinner for the NFL (sports). He discussed the Office of Foundation Aid and its impact on all schools in NY. A letter was sent on behalf of the charter schools in WNY regarding fair and equitable distribution of funding for all public schools.
- Mr. Berti discussed the visit with Susan Gibbons and its positive impact. The highlight was Benchmark 9 – which includes the recruitment efforts for special education students and ENL students. Ms. Gibbons was enthusiastic about the visit and stated to the board that she had no issues with the school. There were mentions about completing board paperwork and some other minis trivia. She will be back in late October or early November. Some discussion about the realistic idea of a 5-year renewal.

Permanent Board Committees

- **Quality Assurance - none**
- **Career Readiness - none**
- **Finance – (Budget)** – Mr. Cinquino remarked on the 2024-2025 budget, which is “bottoms up” – meetings with principals and try to build that into the focus of the budget. We have made a conscious

decision not to lay people off. This budget reflects that to keep the resources we need to keep our students their resources we need. Ms. Moore discussed that the way we conduct business has helped to frame this budget and it continues to address loss of learning for at least another additional year, because the belief is that it will pay dividends in the long run. Budget narrative was emailed to board members. Ideal to see more of what is within the numbers.

- Mr. Cinquino highlighted the change from year to year. Excellent work on managing general expenses, and personnel is up. There has been a negotiation with Union staff, along with 5% increase for non-Union staff. The “ask” is for two areas: continue to address loss of learning and staff retention.
 - Addressing loss of learning: cause is related to COVID, which generated “new norms”. Impact was in the tier 3 area, social-emotional changes. Another major change was “work/life balance” – which has impacted classroom coverage, use of staff members for other areas, would like to refocus and realign this so we can use staff as expected. Another change was in formative learning years – students coming in at lower levels than in years past. Looking at continued class size reductions and use of aides in other areas.
 - Staff retention: efforts tied in with student recruitment. Poaching of teachers has resulted in the shift to more competitive teacher salaries and new CBA, but also non-union staff. A second level is cost of living increase – healthcare, retirement contributions, etc.
- Discussion of overall summary of key drivers and comparison to years past. See budget narrative sent to board. Some changes to health insurance plans. Increases to pension and retirement.
- Enrollment levels have not changed. We are stable with enrollment, the number of seats, so we are staying the same. Revenue per pupil was discussed. This budget includes the higher rate provided by NYS. Mr. Cinquino cited that due to us managing well with our other operating expenses, we end up helping ourselves as opposed to other districts who do not manage their budgets in the same way. The formula is based on 3 years prior operating expenses (which right now is the COVID years). We will see how that impact is over the next few years.
- Summary of revenue – details of the various revenue streams. ESSR dollars will only be through July, August, and September. Other areas in alignment with previous years.
- Expenses – refer to the budget narrative sent to the board for greater detail. Discussed “employer’s costs”. Majority of expenses is personnel salaries and employee benefits – this is pretty consistent with percentage for operating the school. \$42 million to \$43.5 million as in increase of 1.3% overall.
- Asking the board to approve the deficit budget being presented. Utilization of contingency dollars. Because we are looking at one year at a time, we are not going to tighten up at this point. No intent to run at this level on any consecutive basis over a long period of time. Mr. Berti pointed out that it is a tough ask on the board, but success and growth is showing for the money being put in, to keep momentum going with the elementary students and the growth and progress of all grades.
- Mr. Kottakis asked if the budget was reviewed with the staff.
 - Ms. Moore responded that the information is a collaboration with the principals and the staff of each building. The staff involvement should have happened with the principals and their involvement to have help in building each building’s needs. No new material needs to add to how we operate. Some discussion about whether the staff understands the intricacies of the budget to help support it. Mr. Banas responded that he communicates with union staff about the budget and the impact of their jobs on the budget and the need to show results. There is an understanding that eventually, some tough decisions may have to be made. But conversations with Union leadership and members do happen.
- Ms. Moore stressed to look at the documents from the audited balance sheets and the current budget narrative to help understand the budget and focus on this deficit budget. Mr. Cinquino stated that the finance committee is very comfortable with this budget, which does show conservative stewardship even in the face of the decisions about costs for it. All of the information is public knowledge and accessible by the public.
- Ms. Gentry asked if we received Foundation Aid, would that make a difference? The response was yes, but it will not be this year.
 - **Motion – John Cinquino**
 - **Second – Jina Gentry**
 - **MOTION PASSED.**

Ad Hoc Board Committees

- Appeals – Mr. Donnelly
 - One appeal under review, and Mr. Cornacchio had one, with as student under probation for drug abuse and came into school under the influence and with drugs. She was appealing but is not walking but is having a special private ceremony at FSC.

Old Business

- Transportation – Mr. Loveria – reached out to Nate Guzman to see what the landscape looks like in terms of proposing a new contract – the board does not want to take a negative stance on our transportation. No material changes, will keep current bell schedule, maintain status quo. 5-year contract. Mr. Cinquino asked if it would be a new extension and the answer is yes, a 5-year extension on our current contract which ends in 2026. Will reach out to Buffalo board.

New Business

- **Board Calendar** – Mr. Loveria presented an updated board calendar. No vote needed. Yaritza will send out invites for new board meetings.
- **Enrollment** – Mr. Loveria – no increases at this point because we are not accepting students after April 1. We are at about 140 for new kindergartners.
- **Personnel Report** – Mr. Loveria presented the personnel report. Discussed replacement of science teacher at the MS, and current rehires for technology – one new person and one part-time person. Substitutes and a few resignations, a position replacement. List of terminations and can discuss in executive session, non-renewals and leaves of absence. Mr. Cinquino asked if there are patterns to the resignations, and there are not.
- **Vote:**
 - **Motion** – John Cinquino
 - **Second** – Kevin Cornacchio
 - **Personnel report approved.**

Board is going into executive session

Agenda Setting

Next meeting is June 25, 2024

- - motion to end the meeting
- - second

Next Meeting – June 25, 2024

Attendance in person: Joseph Berti, John Cinquino, Ian Donnelly, Steve Kottakis, Kevin Cornacchio, Jina Gentry

Others: Tanya Moore, Garrick Loveria, Bob Shannon, Brett Lutterbein, Sue Jurewicz, Tara Jefferson, Lindsey Gress, Chris Bigouette, Dara Seeley, Ann Morgante, Kara Oliver-Perez, Tara Puff, Dan Scholze, Nicole Killion, Shane Lynch, Keith Banas