

**MEETING MINUTES  
OF  
CATALYST ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL  
January 5, 2021**

**Held Both in Person at Catalyst Academy Charter School and Virtually Via Zoom**

Trustee Attendees: Rachel Amankulor, Carey Harris, Erin Stiling, George Childs, Carl Cooper, Allison McCarthy, Tom Walenchok

Other Attendees: Brian Smith, Darren Gray, Alan Shuckrow (Strassburger McKenna Gutnick & Gefsky), Dr. Carrie Potter-Murray, MaLisha Scott

Rachel Amankulor called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Public Comment--None**

**Approval of Minutes of December 1, 2020 regular meeting.** Tom Walenchok *made a motion to approve the minutes for November 2, 2020, seconded by Erin Stiling and carried unanimously.*

**Financial Update.** Brian Smith reviewed the financial picture and position. The overall position has not changed much but they have revised the projected cash position at the end of the fiscal year to be 25 days of cash which is higher than previously projected but still low. Enrollment has been steady but there will still be a need for cash over the Summer.

**Payments of Bills/to Vendors.** Brian reviewed the bill list that the board had been presented. Brian reviewed some of the other higher expenses for the month, all of which were standard and in line with budget. *Carl Cooper made a motion to approve the payments of bills, seconded by Tom Walenchok and carried unanimously.*

**Consideration of Amended Health and Safety/COVID Plans.** Brian reviewed suggested changes to the School's COVID plan/health and safety plan. These include: modifications to the COVID exposure guidance in terms of when and for how long quarantines need to take place. The County Health Department has updated its guidance and we are going to follow that; modifications to the face covering requirements; and addition of our school nurse into the plan. Brian requested that the Board approve the amended plan as presented. Carl Cooper made a motion to approve the amended health and safety plan, seconded by Allison McCarthy and carried unanimously.

**Return to in-person learning.** Brian explained that due to the safety of our environment, what we now know about the lower transmission risk at schools and the lower case counts in the communities that we serve, it is prudent to go back to in person learning soon. Remote learning will continue to be offered to those families who want that. The City of Pittsburgh, East End and African American communities in these areas have seen lower case counts and this is particularly so among children. There are some reservations by staff and Brian believes we can address their concerns. The Board engaged in significant discussion about this issue and concluded that a return

to in person learning as of January 11 was prudent. *George Childs made a motion to authorize return to in person learning on January 11, 2021, seconded by Carey Harris and carried unanimously.*

**Enrollment/Marketing Update.** Brian reviewed the anticipated marketing efforts in order to increase enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year. It is critical to increase enrollment. In order to receive help on the marketing side, Brian is recommending that Catalyst enter into a contract with Charter School Capital (CSC) whereby they would assist in our marketing efforts and receive a “success fee” of \$1,000 per student enrolled up and above current enrollment. CSC would develop materials including a video and commercials on WAMO. The Board agreed that this was important to the School and that entering into such a contract was acceptable, subject to legal review of the terms. *Tom Walenchok made a motion to authorize entering into a contract with CSC for marketing assistance, subject to review by legal counsel, seconded by George Childs and carried unanimously.*

**Parental Leave Policy.** Brian reviewed a proposed expanded parental leave policy for staff. This would provide up to 12 weeks of leave upon the birth of a child. Catalyst would pay up and above what is provided by disability insurance up to 6 weeks of paid leave. The additional up to 6 weeks are unpaid. *Carey Harris made a motion to approve the parental leave policy, seconded by Allison McCarthy and carried unanimously.*

**Parent Survey.** Darren Gray reported on the results of the parent survey. There was a response rate of over 50% which is good. The results are positive including happiness with choice, safety of the COVID plan and willingness to return to in person learning. It was also significant that our parents are willing to recommend Catalyst to other parents. The Board commended the administration for these results and for the culture they are developing at Catalyst.

**Legal Compliance Update.** Alan Shuckrow updated the Board that Act 55 Training needed to be accomplished for each member by June 30. He and Kathy Clark will be presenting a training through the Charter Coalition in the Spring. The Ethics Act Statement of Financial Interest forms are due on May 1. Alan will have them available for Board members at the next meeting. Finally, by law, board member emails will need to be posted on the School’s website by April. It will be best to have email addresses in the Catalyst email system for board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.