

MINUTES OF TRUSTEE MEETING
OF
PROPEL CHARTER SCHOOL – NORTHSIDE

Held The
22nd Day of March 2021
at
Propel Schools Administrative Offices
3447 East Carson Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

Trustees Present: Bernie Carter, David Fair, Brendan Surma, Don Huber (via phone), Dr. Evon Walters (via phone), Heidi Bartholomew, Bryan Lewis (via phone), Bill Axtman (via phone).

Also in Attendance: Tina Chekan, Jaclyn Hoover, Rich Snyder, Alan Shuckrow, Kathy Clark, Pat Coyle, Sandy Madden, Sonya Toler, Theresa O’Neill and Beth Wright.

The meeting was convened by David Fair at 6:30 p.m.

I. Meeting Opening

David Fair announced there was an Executive Session held on March 12, 2021 to discuss a personnel matter.

Public Comment

None.

Review of School Board Meeting Minutes of January 25, 2021

The Board reviewed the meeting minutes from January 25, 2021. No changes were noted.

II. Matters of Note

Superintendent’s Report

Recovery and Revitalization Overview

Dr. Tina Chekan welcomes all of the senior team members who are present and who will assist with discussing the recovery and revitalization plan. Dr. Chekan began with a brief history and the current context of Propel. She reminded the board that four years ago a strategic plan was created which included the partners in wellness, teacher residency program, K-2 literacy initiative and scholar opportunities. Propel wants to continue these initiatives and continue to serve scholars well. Dr. Chekan asked Sandy Madden to present information on the pandemic response of Propel. Ms. Madden reviewed Propel’s introduction of 1:1 devices to all scholars by

the 3rd day of the 2020-2021 school year; the writing and updating of the health and safety plan; and the 3-month of hybrid in-person instruction offered to this point.

Pat Coyle reviewed information on learning loss and attendance. Beth Wright discussed the available funds from the federal government including the ESSER I and ESSER II. In addition, Propel has been collecting data from stakeholders to define the goals moving forward. Ms. O'Neill reviewed the board strategic planning process and asked the board members to describe their experience as part of the committee.

Ms. Hoover reviewed the highlights from the staff surveys and noted that 92% of staff indicated they were proud to work for Propel. The Board discussed staff concerns about the Covid-19 vaccine (at this point many have been vaccinated) as well as the learning loss noted. Ms. Madden reviewed the results of the scholar and family surveys in which 229 parents/guardians participated. Overall the response was appreciation for the work that the educators are doing along with interest to return to in-person learning and noted challenges experienced with the virtual environment.

Ms. O'Neill reviewed the sources of data and the major themes for the recovery and revitalization plan so that the funding will address all of the needs identified. Dr. Chekan presented some of the strategic threats including the political landscape – the governor's proposed budget and cuts to special education funding; academic and scholar achievements – the noted learning loss and the PA Keystone graduation requirements; persisting community health and safety issues such as the pandemic as well as eviction issues that impact families; enrollment issues for families who prefer cyber over in-person learning, and finally a work-life balance and staff concerns.

The discussion surrounded the priority to successfully close the achievement gap while improving outcomes for all scholars. This includes MTSS (multi-tiered system of supports), attendance, DEI (culturally relevant curriculum and foster an anti-racist school culture), staff and operations. Moving forward there will be action teams to review each pillar and bring it back to both the school board and the foundation board and to submit a final plan for approval in June.

Update – Learning Protocols, Trimester 3

Dr. Chekan noted that there are some health and safety plan transitions and the proposed change is on April 19, 2021 to transition from A/B weeks to full 4 days per week M-Th while keeping Friday remote for all learnings to ensure deep cleaning; will also continue offering full remote learning protocols to families who would like to continue with remote learning; CDC's new guidance now allows for 3 feet social distancing instead of 6 feet. Dr. Chekan also noted that at this point 80% of the staff will be vaccinated within 2 weeks, and cases throughout Propel remain low with little to no transmission in school.

Update: Educator Covid-19 vaccinations

Dr. Chekan noted that in Allegheny County, almost 12,000 school personnel have been vaccinated.

Update – Andrew Street High School Project

Alan Shuckrow described the zoning case and reminded the Board it was mainly about parking and the school worked with the neighbors to reach a settlement. Propel re-designed the building to move it back further from the neighbor's property and also put up screening. Propel also worked with the borough who recently approved a resolution that allows us to use a lot we own on Andrew Street as a parking lot (25 spaces) and have our employees park there. The altered building design plan has been approved by the Borough. We are asking the Board to approve the settlement agreement and then it will go to the Court to approve.

III. Matters for Discussion

Board Working Group Updates

Governance working group recommends adding Bryan Lewis to the school board and Dr. Evon Walters to transition to the Board Secretary position.

Finance Report

Beth Wright presented the Board with the finance report and reviewed the January financials. At the finance committee meeting the Governor's budget was discussed as well as the refinancing of bonds; Ms. Wright noted that there is a potential deficit in the food service fund due to not having scholars in the building. In addition, the self-insured health care fund may need additional funding because people who put off seeing a physician due to the pandemic are now scheduling appointments for deferred health care. Ms. Wright noted there are no issues with receivables. Penn Hills has notified Propel that it should look directly to the state for payment.

Review of 2021-2022 Draft School Calendar

The Board reviewed the draft calendar which provides 190 days for scholars and 220 days for educators.

IV. Matters Recommended for Board Action

- A. Approval of School Board Meeting Minutes of January 25, 2021
- B. Approval of Resolution to appoint Bryan Lewis to the Propel Schools Board and Evon Walters as School Board Secretary
- C. Approval of Finance Committee Meeting Minutes from March 16, 2021
- D. Approval of Recommendation to transition from "A/B Alternating Week Hybrid Protocol" to a Four Day Per Week Non-Alternating Hybrid Learning Protocol (scholars attending school 4 days every week with every Friday as a Remote Learning Day for all scholars. 100% Remote Learning Protocol will remain in place for families who have chosen that option for their scholars

E. Approval of 2021-2022 Propel Schools Calendar

F. Approval of Hires and Departures

G. Approvals of Leases and Contracts

H. Approval of Payroll and Vendor Payments

I. Approval of Settlement Agreement in the Andrew Street High School matter

ACTION: Item A, approval of the School Board Meeting Minutes of January 25, 2021, was approved upon motion by Brendan Surma, second by Bernie Carter, and carried unanimously.

ACTION: Item B, approval of the Resolution to appoint Bryan Lewis to the Propel Schools Board and Evon Walters as School Board Secretary, was approved upon motion by Brendan Surma, second by Bernie Carter, and carried unanimously.

ACTION: Item C, approval of the Finance Committee Meeting Minutes from March 16, 2021, was approved upon motion by Heidi Bartholomew, second by Don Huber, and carried unanimously.

ACTION: Item D, approval of the recommendation to transition from “A/B Alternating Week Hybrid Protocol” to a Four Day Per Week Non-Alternating Hybrid Learning Protocol (scholars attending school 4 days every week with every Friday as a Remote Learning Day for all scholars. 100% Remote Learning Protocol will remain in place for families who have chosen that option for their scholars, was approved by Heidi Bartholomew, second by Evon Walters, and carried unanimously.

ACTION: Item E, approval of the 2021-2022 Propel Schools Calendar, was approved upon motion by Bernie Carter, second by Evon Walters and carried unanimously.

ACTION: Item F, approval of Hires and Departures, was approved upon motion by Brendan Surma, second by Heidi Bartholomew, and carried unanimously.

ACTION: Item G, approval of Leases and Contracts, was approved upon motion by Bernie Carter, second by Heidi Bartholomew, and carried unanimously.

ACTION: Item H, approval of Payroll and Vendor Payments, was approved upon motion by Brendan Surma, second by Bernie Carter, and carried unanimously.

ACTION: Item I, approval of the Andrew Street settlement agreement, was approved upon motion by Don Huber, second by Brendan Surma, and carried unanimously.

Executive Session

At 7:48 p.m. the Board went into executive session to discuss a personnel issue.

At 8:02 p.m. the Board exited Executive Session

Meeting Finalization

The Board was reminded that the next Board meeting is on May 17, 2021

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

5-17-21

Date



Secretary