**Board Meeting Minutes**

**Organization:** Pride Academy Charter School Board Meeting
**President:** Mr. Mitchell
**Time:** **7:15 pm**
**Place:** Virtual Platform
**Date:** January 15, 2025
**Minute Taker:** Mrs. Wilson

**Board Members Present:** Mr. Mitchell
Ms. D. Taylor
Ms. A. Taylor
Ms. M. Brown

**Others Present:** Dr. Jones, Mr. Ofstad, Mrs. Dockery, Mr. Zabor

**Absent:** Mr. Moore
Mrs. Spence
Mr. Rosado

***IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:***
***Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 6:30 pm.***

****Please note there was a presentation from the Gifted and Talented PAWS Scholars prior to the meeting***

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm and Roll Call was taken.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF PUBLICATIONS:** The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this act, The Pride Academy Charter School Board of Trustees has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time, and place thereof posted in the Star-Ledger and on NJ.COM under Legal Notices and posted on the school website.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA FOR THE BOARD MEETING: Resolution to Accept Agenda for January 15, 2025, Regular Meeting - Attachment 1**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**Vote:**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: To Accept Agenda for January 15, 2025, Regular Meeting - Attachment 1**

**Approval of Board Meeting Minutes**

- **Resolution to Accept Board Meeting Minutes from November 4, 2024 – Attachment 2**
- **Resolution to Accept Board Meeting Minutes from November 21, 2024 – Attachment 3**
- **Resolution to Accept Board Meeting Minutes from December 18, 2024 – Attachment 4**

*** MINTUES will be amended to reflect discussed changes**

**Financial Committee Report by School Business Administrator**

**The 2023-2024 Financial Audit is complete, with no findings, and submitted to the NJDOE pending board approval. The Audit included compliance audits for purchasing and payroll, a federal single audit of federal grants funded, and the financial statements, with metrics data.**

**The audit process was quite comprehensive, with only a few minor edits needed. Overall, it meets the required standards for submission. Thank you to the team for their hard work in ensuring everything was upgraded. Included in your packet are the management reports, which provide a summarized financial overview. There are no significant findings—just a few minor comments.**
**Mr. Mitchell: "This is a great accomplishment, and I want to congratulate everyone on their efforts!"**

**Mrs. Dockery: "Dr. Jones dedicated an incredible amount of time and effort to this process. At times, it felt like we were done, only to be asked for additional documentation—sometimes 40 more items—requiring extensive pulling and uploading of information. It was a long and detailed process, but it paid off."**

**Dr. Jones: "Coming from our previous auditor, this experience felt different—perhaps more collegial in some ways but also more demanding. Since this was our first time working with them, they had to build everything from scratch, which took longer. Hopefully, next year will be more efficient as they will already have our data in their system. There were multiple sub-audits, including a compliance audit for payroll, where even small discrepancies—such as a $2 variance—required justification. Fortunately, we were well-prepared with records for stipends, approvals, and timesheets. Additionally, a new area of focus was space auditing, where the business office had to provide documentation related to services and facility use. This seems to be an emerging requirement moving forward. In total, the audit report was over 100 pages, which is typical."**

**Mr. Mitchell: "Again, a huge thank you to everyone involved. Your dedication and hard work made this a success!"**

**F1. Resolution to Accept and Approve the Final Audit, Audsum data and Management Letter for the FY24 fiscal year – Attachment F1**

**Our headcount has dropped by two students for the reported date, but we still have a total enrollment of 300 students. The per-pupil funding amount has now been updated, which means our funding from the districts has increased slightly. Last year, due to a lack of state aid, we received $214,000 in micro state aid to help level out the funding. However, with this year's updated district-level funding, the state removed that additional $214,000, adjusting our per-pupil allocation accordingly. Initially, we thought we had $57,000, but after adjustments, we now have our rightful full allocation of funding.**
**Across New Jersey, all charter schools received an increase in funding, except for a few that remained at flat funding levels. With this finalized budget, we are now in a position to move forward with initiatives we were previously uncertain about.**
**In terms of fund allocation, we are planning to:**

- **Allocate $208,000 back into the Instructional Center line.**
- **Add $45,000 to the Purchase Services line, which includes funding for aides and other support services.**
- **Adjust funds for communications and operational expenses, particularly increasing the phone bill allocation (which will be reflected in the transfer report).**

**Overall, we are in good financial standing, and the funds will be distributed accordingly. For F2, you will find the bills list included in the packet—there are two pages.**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: To accept and Approve the Final Audit, Audsum data and Management Letter for the FY24 fiscal year – Attachment F1**

**F2. Resolution to Accept the Bills List current period: December 19, 2024 – January 14, 2025, including payroll, as follows. - Attachment F2**

**General Funds Fund 10/11: $231,114.94**
**Special Revenue Fund 20: $21,942.51**
**Food Services Fund 60: $599.82**
**Student Activities: $1,721.25**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**

Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: To Accept the Bills List current period: December 19, 2024 – January 14, 2025, including payroll, as follows. - Attachment F2**

**F3. Resolution to Accept Payroll Expense for the current payroll period(s) ending December 31, 2024 ($166,705.48) and January 15, 2025 ($162,871.47) - Attachment F3**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to Accept Payroll Expense for the current payroll period(s) ending December 31, 2024 ($166,705.48) and January 15, 2025 ($162,871.47) - Attachment F3**

**F4. Resolution to Accept the FICA Reimbursement Report through December 31, 2024 - Attachment F4**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to Accept the FICA Reimbursement Report through December 31, 2024 - Attachment F4**

**F5. Resolution to Approve and Submit the revised 2024-2025 Budget based on October 15, 2024 enrollment count to the NJ Department of Education Office of Charter Schools with an increase of $268,053 – Attachment F5**

**These documents provide an overview of our enrollment and budget status as of October 15th. Our official enrollment stands at 298.1 students, and our total state aid is $5,496,999.**
**Funding Overview:**

- **Federal sources: $205,037**
- **ESSA funds: $72,737**
- **Total expenditures: $5,566,848**
- **Fund balance: $106,725**

**This represents our new budget for the year, and the details are outlined in the attached budget narrative, which is based on October 15th enrollment figures. The following pages include our line-item budget, where any additional funds will be reflected.**
**Instructional Spending Breakdown:**

- **70% of the budget is allocated to instructional expenses, surpassing the required 60/40 split (60% instructional / 40% support & administrative).**
- **$200,000 was added back into instructional lines, further reinforcing our commitment to student learning and academic success.**
- **Achieving 70% instructional spending is a significant accomplishment, given the challenges in prior years to meet even the 60% minimum requirement.**

**Budget Compliance & Fund Management:**

- **Certification Secretary Report confirms that no line item is overextended and that budget transfers have been made to keep all lines in compliance.**
- **Special revenue drawdowns were processed, totaling nearly $30,000 in federal grant funds (Title I, II, IV, and IDEA).**
- **The summary of grant drawdowns is included in your packet under Section 8, listing the amounts for each grant type.**
- **Moving forward, the goal is to continue drawing down funds monthly to maintain fiscal responsibility and maximize resource utilization.**

**Overall, we are in a strong financial position, and these updates reflect efficient fund allocation and budgetary management.**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**Vote:**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to Approve and Submit the revised 2024-2025 Budget based on October 15, 2024 enrollment count to the NJ Department of Education Office of Charter Schools with an increase of $268,053 – Attachment F5**

**F6. Board Secretary's Report & Certification – Attachment F6**
**Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.12, I certify that as of December 31, 2024, that no major budgetary line-item account expenditure exceeds the amount appropriated by the district Board of Trustees and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year.**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Charlene Jones, SBA** | **January 15, 2025** |

**F7. Resolution to Approve Budget Transfer(s) for 2024-2025 school year, Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-8.1 and N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-13.3 listed budget transfers are needed to reclass expenditures from original budget approved by the board. The amount and account information are provided in detail in the attachment. - Attachment F7**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to Approve Budget Transfer(s) for 2024-2025 school year, Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-8.1 and N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-13.3 listed budget transfers are needed to reclass expenditures from original budget approved by the board. The amount and account information are provided in detail in the attachment. - Attachment F7 in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.12 and N.J.S.A. 18A:17-36 – Attachment F7**

**F8. Resolution to Approve Drawdowns of Special Revenue Funds for ESEA Title IA, and IDEA-B as follows for the period ending December 2024: Attachment F8**

- **Drawdown #4 – Title IA - $12,920 - Salary & Benefits Expenditures**
- **Drawdown #2 – Title IIA - $8,100 - Operating Expenditures**
- **Drawdown #4 – IDEA-B - $9,300 - Salary & Benefits Expenditures**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to Approve Drawdowns of Special Revenue Funds for ESEA Title IA, and IDEA-B as follows for the period ending December 2024: Attachment F8**

**F9. Resolution to Bid on a new Food Services contract for the 2025-2026 school year commencing January 24, 2025 – Attachment F9**

**Resolution F9 pertains to the bidding process for a new food service contract. Included in your packet is a timeline outlining key dates and steps over the next few months. In preparation, we reviewed the previous bid process from 2022 and identified the necessary steps for securing a new food service provider, as the current contract expires on June 30th.**

**Following board approval tonight, we will advertise the bid and publish the technical specifications this week. The advertisement will be posted in New Jersey bid networks, our school website, and on an RFP platform used by vendors seeking school contracts. Additionally, word-of-mouth and networking from industry conferences may generate interest.**

**Our current vendor, Karson, will likely submit a bid, but we anticipate interest from new vendors as well. This time, we plan to hold a meeting to discuss necessary improvements in food service based on student feedback and concerns. These requested enhancements will be clearly outlined in the bid specifications.**

**Regarding Karson, they have been a reliable provider, but following COVID-19, the company was sold by its previous owners, Bob and Robert Moran, to a new entity. While many of the same staff members remain, it is unclear whether the new ownership structure will affect service quality. Given this, we believe it is essential to explore all available options and ensure the best possible food service experience for our students.**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to Bid on a new Food Services contract for the 2025-2026 school year commencing January 24, 2025 – Attachment F9**

**F10. Resolution to submit Quarterly Financial Report including Treasurer Report & the Annual Fiscal Questionnaire to the NJODE Office of Charter Schools – Attachment F10**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**Vote:**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to submit Quarterly Financial Report including Treasurer Report & the Annual Fiscal Questionnaire to the NJODE Office of Charter Schools – Attachment F10**

**Board Vote**

- **Approval of Financial Resolutions (F1 through F10):**
  - The board unanimously approved financial resolutions F1 through F10.

**Facilities Report**
**Currently, we are finalizing our fire inspection and ensuring compliance with all necessary regulations. The statement of insurance assurance is due on the 31st, and I have a scheduled meeting with Mr. Guido next week to review the extensive 10-page facilities checklist before finalizing the process.**

**The fire inspector noted seven minor violations, all of which have been resolved. These were simple issues, such as missing cover plates. Additionally, Mr. Ofstad is still learning the process for handling the fire alarm system. The board in his office needs to be placed in test mode to conduct a fire drill, and he discovered that it wasn't properly reset when the fire inspector arrived. Today, he contacted the alarm company for documentation proving the system was operational during the inspection.**

**Another new development is that fire inspectors are now asking for additional documentation on the control panel. Previously, this wasn't required, but now we must ensure that all related documents are up to date.**

**On the facilities side, we recently received $39,592 from the state. Mr. Ofstad and Dr. Jones discussed potential uses for the funds, including converting the space above the common room into storage or office space. This area could also serve as a teachers' lounge or an additional student resource space. We are in the process of obtaining quotes to determine the feasibility of these upgrades. Additionally, we are considering using some of the funds to refresh the kitchen, possibly with new paint or small renovations. The goal is to complete these projects over the summer so they are ready for the new school year. We will submit a report to the department detailing how the funds were utilized.**

**<u>Walk On Resolution:</u> to approve the creation and distribution of flyers within 30 days (before the next board meeting in February)**
**-Mail-out of postcards, flyers**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to approve the creation and distribution of flyers within 30 days (before the next board meeting in February)**

**<u>Principal report:</u>**
**Since December 18th, there haven't been many updates. We currently have 300 students enrolled, and there have been no significant calendar changes. Our first playback session was held on Thursday, January 2nd, with a full day of professional development (PD) for staff, organized by the Friends of Pride. On Friday, January 3rd, we resumed classes after the break. Last week, we conducted interim assessments, followed by Data Day yesterday.**

**Student Discipline Updates**
**There have been minor updates to the suspension data since December. Initially, we reported 34 out-of-school suspensions, but the correct number is 38. These are broken down as follows:**

- **21 suspensions related to general behavioral incidents.**
- **3 suspensions tied to bullying cases.**
- **22 suspensions involve students who have been enrolled at Pride for less than 12 months. Since December, there has been only one additional suspension, which was categorized under general incidents.**

**Staffing Updates**

- **Mr. Brown has officially joined as a full-time teacher for the remainder of the year.**
- **Miss Porter, who was filling in as an interim teacher between Mrs. Gornish and our final hire, has completed her role.**

**Community & School Events took place today.**

- **Progress Reports: Scheduled for Thursday and will follow a new structure. In past years, progress reports were distributed to all students at once. This semester:**
    - **Only students requiring intervention will be invited.**
    - **Teachers will schedule meetings (in-person and via Zoom) with parents of students who need additional support.**
    - **A staff dinner will be held before the event from 3:30 to 4:15 PM to allow teachers to unwind before parent meetings.**
- **Scholastic Book Fair starts Friday and will run for a full week.**

- **Hygiene Day (February 14th, Valentine's Day):**
  - **This will be a half-day event.**
  - **Planning is underway for fitness instructors and a cyberbullying seminar to address online behaviors affecting student interactions.**

**Strategic Planning**

- **Student Recruitment:**
  - **Moving forward, we will provide monthly updates to the board on recruitment efforts.**
- **Teacher Evaluation:**
  - **Dr. Jones has been asked to take part in the process.**
- **Professional Development (PD):**
  - **More external vendors have been included in PD sessions this year.**
  - **The January 2nd PD day provided five hours of training.**
  - **Staff surveys indicated a preference for less PD on that day and more planning time for the second semester.**

***Board requested for the Principal Report to be printed**

**R1. Resolution to approve contract for Camille Oates, rehire as part-time Main Office Coordinator and Building Substitute Teacher Effective January 1, 2025 – No Attachment**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to approve contract for Camille Oates, rehire as part-time Main Office Coordinator and Building Substitute Teacher Effective January 1, 2025 – No Attachment**

**R2. Resolution to hire Messiah Brown, Dance Teacher, for the 2024-2025 school year – Attachment R2**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**

**BOARD VOTED: to hire Messiah Brown, Dance Teacher, for the 2024-2025 school year – Attachment R2**

**R3. Resolution to Approve the monthly HIB report as presented – No Attachment**
****Tabled till next meeting**

**R4. Resolution to Approve the Grade 5 – 8 schoolwide Field Trips to the American Museum of National History on June 4th – 5th, 2025, from 8:00am to 3pm, including up to 300 scholars and 20 adults – No Attachment**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to Approve the Grade 5 – 8 schoolwide Field Trips to the American Museum of National History on June 4th – 5th, 2025, from 8:00am to 3pm, including up to 300 scholars and 20 adults – No Attachment**

**R5. Resolution to Approve the Grade 8 Field Trip to Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom, Allentown, June 2025. – No Attachment**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to Approve the Grade 8 Field Trip to Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom, Allentown, June 2025. – No Attachment**

**R6. Resolution to Approve the Girls Basketball team transportation to KIPP Team Academy, 85 Custer Avenue, Newark, NJ for a basketball game on Thursday, January 16, 2025 – No Attachment**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor

Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to Approve the Girls Basketball team transportation to KIPP Team Academy, 85 Custer Avenue, Newark, NJ for a basketball game on Thursday, January 16, 2025 – No Attachment**

**R7. Resolution to approve employee stipends in the amount of $500 for retention purposes – No Attachment**

**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**<u>Vote:</u>**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to approve employee stipends in the amount of $500 for retention purposes – No Attachment**

**New Business**

- **Upcoming Events (Ms. Dumenigo)**
- **Mrs. D. Taylor suggested theme of "Love Your Body, Love Yourself" for the Hygiene Day on Feb. 14th**
- **Principal Feedback (Mrs. D. Taylor) – Closed session**
- **Annual Financial Disclosures – February 1st Listing Due, and April 30th Deadline to Submit Disclosures (All)**

**9. Old Business**

- **Policy Update: Student Conduct & Discipline**

**The 10-step process: are we following it? Is it documented**
**Show compliance for HIB cases**
**Is there a template or a form that can be used for the reporting?**
**We need to meet with Ms. Brower**
**Start with cases from last year**
**Our current policy needs to be updated**
**Next Steps: meet with Ms Brower**
**PD is really important**

- **Board Strategic Planning Update**

**10. Comments from the Public**

**11. Close/Adjournment to Executive Session**

**12: Open/Return from Executive Session**

**14. Adjournment from Regular Meeting**
**Motion to Adjourn the meeting at 9:45pm**
**Motion to approve: Ms. A. Taylor**
**Seconded: Mrs. D. Taylor**
**Vote:**
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor

**Motion Carried**
**BOARD VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 9:45pm**

***Note: Please complete survey for the Student Presentation today***

**The next Regular Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 19, 2025**
**The Board may adjourn to Executive Session to discuss personnel or individual student concerns.**