Board Meeting Minutes

Organization: Pride Academy Charter School Board Meeting
President: Mr. Mitchell
Time: **7:53 pm**
Place: Virtual Platform
Date: March 26, 2025
Minute Taker: Mrs. Dockery

Board Members Present: Mr. Moore, Ms. Brown, Ms. A. Taylor, Ms. D. Taylor, Mrs. Spence (left the meeting at 8:41 pm), Mr. Mitchell

Others Present: Ms. Dumenigo, Mr. Ofstad, Dr. Jones

Absent: Mr. Rosado

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:
Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 6:30 pm.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:53 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 February 19, 2025, Regular Meeting - Attachment 1

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

Motion Carried

BOARD VOTED: To Accept Agenda for March 26, 2025, Regular Meeting - Attachment 1

Resolution to Approve the minutes from February 19, 2025, Regular Meeting – Attachment 2

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

Motion Carried
BOARD VOTED: To Approve the minutes from February 19, 2025, Regular Meeting – Attachment 2

Financial Committee Report by School Business Administrator
FY26 Budget Presentation – Dr. Jones, SBA

Dr. Jones shared a comprehensive update regarding budget planning and school improvements, highlighting progress, challenges, and strategic goals for the upcoming year. Key highlights include:

Academic and Instructional Updates
- **Growth in both ELA and math achievement was noted.**
- **New ELA curriculum and supplemental instructional tools (like i-Ready and IXL) were implemented.**
- **A learning plan system was introduced to strengthen teacher oversight and academic performance.**
- **Professional development and mental health supports continued, reflecting teacher and student needs.**
- **Extracurriculars like gifted & talented programs and Math Counts received public recognition.**

Operational and Infrastructure Improvements
- **Upgrades included a new roof, heating system, and staff bathroom renovations.**
- **Chromebooks remain available to students in need.**
- **CDK online accounting system was launched, improving remote work capacity.**

State Aid and Fiscal Overview
- **Governor Murphy's school funding formula is now fully implemented, using three-year averages of income and property values to stabilize aid.**
- **Significant increases in state aid were reported, including a 14% increase for this campus, adding over $760,000 in revenue.**

- **East Orange, from which 75% of students come, received a 5.3% increase in aid, benefiting student services and potential staffing.**

Personnel and Compensation
- **Teachers will receive a 4.5% salary increase, aligned with regional standards.**
- **Contract comparisons across Essex County were conducted to ensure competitiveness.**
- **Several new positions, especially in special education, are anticipated.**

Federal Funding and Risk Mitigation
- **The school budget includes conservative estimates for federal grants (ESSA, IDEA) amid national funding uncertainties.**
- **A contingency fund has been set aside should federal aid be reduced or eliminated.**

Strategic Planning and Sustainability
- **A five-year financial plan was submitted to the state.**
- **Ongoing focus on clean audits, data reporting, and meeting performance benchmarks.**
- **Consideration of transitioning to Genesis as the student management system.**

Support for Staff and Students
- **Continued stipends, bonuses, and wellness incentives for staff.**
- **Expansion of summer training and return bonuses.**
- **Partnerships like Friends of Pride will support enrichment opportunities (e.g., field trips).**

Looking Ahead
- **Strategic planning is underway in preparation for charter renewal in fall 2026.**
- **The theme for the upcoming year reflects growth, empowerment, and abundance.**
- **Final budget submission to the state is due next Monday, with summaries already shared with the board.**

F1. Resolution to Approve the 2025-2026 Budgets that include the 108-Line Budget Summary, Budget Narrative and Cash Flow schedule by March 31, 2025 submission to the NJDOE Office of Charter Schools – Attachment F1

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

Motion Carried

BOARD VOTED: to Approve the 2025-2026 Budgets that include the 108-Line Budget Summary, Budget Narrative and Cash Flow schedule by March 31, 2025 submission to the NJDOE Office of Charter Schools – Attachment F1
F2. Resolution to Accept the February 2025 monthly Bills List for all funds including March 15, 2025 payroll, as outlined below - Attachment F2

General Funds Fund 10/11:
Special Revenue Fund 20:
Food Services Fund 60:
Student Activities:

Budget & Financials Overview

- **The updated budget stands at $5.496 million, with approximately $1.4 million encumbered for pending payments.**
- **The school's financials are current through February, and the treasurer's reports for January and February are completed and reconciled.**
- **Monthly federal reimbursement ("drawdowns") are being submitted for Title I, Title IV, and IDEA funds, in line with best practices to avoid end-of-year lump sum requests.**

Routine Fiscal Items

- **Monthly bill list, payroll records, and board secretary reports were reviewed, including budget transfers to cover overspent lines using surplus from underutilized ones ("robbing Peter to pay Paul").**
- **The FICA reimbursement report from the state was received and documented.**

Excess Cash Finding in Food Services

- **A finding revealed excess cash in the food service fund due to cost savings from vendor pricing and high rates of state reimbursement (due to 80%+ free/reduced lunch population).**
- **A Corrective Action Plan has been created to address the surplus:**
    - **Purchase of a commercial dishwasher to support a return to reusable lunch trays (moving away from foam).**
    - **Purchase of 300 new reusable trays.**
    - **Reallocation of funds to cover the salary of a dedicated food service employee.**
    - **Possible lowering of lunch prices for families to reduce profit margin and support the community.**

Professional Development & Recognition

- **Staff members, including Ms. Dockery, were invited to present at a prestigious budget cohort conference.**
- **Emphasis was placed on recognizing their achievements and encouraging them to "claim" their success.**
- **The team is pursuing continuing education credits and QPA (Qualified Purchasing Agent) certification.**

Sustainability and Facilities Improvements

- **Investments in sustainability—like the dishwasher and reusable trays—align with environmental goals and reduce trash volume.**

- **These investments reflect a shift back to pre-COVID operations and long-term cost savings.**

Next Steps
- **Submit finalized 108-line budget, cash flow statements, and narratives to the state by the upcoming Monday deadline.**
- **Continue internal evaluations, policy revisions, and maintain strong fiscal stewardship aligned with strategic goals.**

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

Motion Carried
BOARD VOTED: to Accept the February 2025 monthly Bills List for all funds, including March 15, 2025 payroll, as outlined below - Attachment F2

F3. Resolution to Accept Payroll Expense for the current payroll period(s) ending February 28, 2025 ($169,395.29) and March 15, 2025 ($166,206.11) - Attachment F3

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

Motion Carried
BOARD VOTED: to Accept Payroll Expense for the current payroll period(s) ending February 28, 2025 ($169,395.29) and March 15, 2025 ($166,206.11) - Attachment F3

F4. Resolution to Accept the FICA Reimbursement Report through March 15, 2025 - Attachment F4

Motion to approve: Ms. D. Taylor
Seconded: Ms. Brown

__**Vote:**__
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor
Mr. Moore- in favor
Mrs. Spence- in favor

Motion Carried
BOARD VOTED: to Accept the FICA Reimbursement Report through March 15, 2025 - Attachment F4

F5. Board Secretary's Report & Certification – Attachment F5
Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.12, I certify that as of February 28, 2025, 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	**March 26, 2025**

F6. 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 F6

Motion to approve: Ms. D. Taylor
Seconded: Ms. Brown
__**Vote:**__
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor
Mr. Moore- in favor
Mrs. Spence- 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 F6

F7. Resolution to Approve Drawdowns of Special Revenue Funds for ESEA Title IA, and IDEA-B as follows for the period ending March 15, 2025: Attachment F7

- **Drawdown #6 – Title IA - $25,524 - Salary & Benefits Expenditures**
- **Drawdown #1 – Title IV-A- $3,750 - Operating Expenditures**
- **Drawdown #6 – IDEA-B - $11,867 - Salary & Benefits Expenditures**

Motion to approve: Ms. D. Taylor
Seconded: Ms. Brown
Vote:
Ms. D. Taylor- in favor
Ms. A. Taylor- in favor
Mr. Mitchell- in favor
Ms. M. Brown- in favor
Mr. Moore- in favor
Mrs. Spence- 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 March 15, 2025: Attachment F7

F8. Resolution to Approve attendance to the NJASBO annual conference and to accept waiver for reimbursement of SBA & ASBA travel to NJASBO conference in June 4-6, 2025 – Attachment F8

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

Motion Carried
BOARD VOTED: to Approve attendance to the NJASBO annual conference and to accept waiver for reimbursement

***ask Dr. Jones for R4, 5, and 6**

Board Vote

- **Approval of Financial Resolutions (F1 through F8):**
  - The board unanimously approved financial resolutions F1 through F8.

Facilities Report
Dr. Jones presented a comprehensive update on the school's facilities improvements, ongoing maintenance, and long-range infrastructure planning efforts. The discussion included both recent accomplishments and upcoming projects for summer and beyond.

Recent Improvements

- Ongoing cleaning and maintenance continues to ensure safe, sanitary conditions.
- The boiler room was upgraded to accommodate the newly purchased washer and dryer.
- Roof leaks and heating issues were resolved.
- Student bathroom repairs and improvements to common areas were completed.
- Space preparation is underway for the installation of a new dishwasher.
- Partnerships with architectural firms are ongoing to support future planning and design needs.

Upcoming Summer Projects
- Kitchen renovation.
- Installation of a new electronic sign in front of the school.
- Leveling the rear school yard to address a known safety issue.
- Installation of protective glass along the Shepard Avenue side.
- Exploration of vending machine options.
- Renovation of the vestibule to enhance front entrance safety.

Long-Term Facility Goals (Pending Quotes & Feasibility)
- Construction of new fencing.
- Addition of modular classroom space.
- Possible playground upgrades and improved interior common spaces.
- Finalization of panic button installation for school safety.
- Electronic document storage and modernization of the administrative offices.

The team also emphasized the importance of a long-range facilities plan, including:
- Zoning considerations and collaboration with the neighboring church regarding boundary lines.
- Coordination with contractors and electricians to assess costs, utilities, and feasibility.
- Acknowledgment that some projects may not be feasible depending on land use restrictions or costs.

Next Steps
- Water testing must be completed before June per biannual requirements.
- Continued engagement with the church and zoning officials to avoid encroachment issues.
- Site surveys and in-person assessments are pending to determine placement for modular classrooms and fencing.
- Updates will be provided monthly as quotes are finalized and timelines solidified.

Principal report:

Enrollment & Calendar
- The school expects to begin next year with approximately 300 students, reflecting increased interest and strong retention.

- **The 2024–25 calendar will include 188 days (more than the 183 required), with unused days potentially returned to students and staff. Adjustments were made to upcoming half and full days based on testing and professional development needs.**

Academics & Assessment

- **Network-wide assessments are underway and include both academic and climate surveys.**
- **Interim assessments have concluded, and student growth was celebrated with T-shirts and recognition ceremonies.**
- **Teachers are wrapping up curriculum units and beginning the VT (vital thinking) unit across subjects.**

Discipline & Climate

- **Only one suspension was issued for a false 911 call.**
- **A peer conflict involving inappropriate comments led to a restorative peace circle rather than suspensions.**
- **School climate initiatives include new expectations for all grades regarding participation in year-end celebrations based on positive behavior.**

Staffing & Evaluations

- **Third round of observations is underway.**
- **Staff evaluations are expected to be completed by mid-April as part of performance reviews and renewal decisions.**

Community Events & Celebrations

- **Staff hosted a successful Skate Night and Girls' Night In, promoting family bonding and student empowerment.**
- **Fifth-grade leaders volunteered at a sensory-friendly event organized by a local autism nonprofit, raising nearly $400 and presenting about inclusion.**
- **Parent engagement has been strong in recent "Greatness Parent Zooms," offering families guidance on behavior and academic support.**

Student-Led Initiatives

- **March Madness 3-on-3 tournament finals are happening soon.**
- **Student Council is planning a movie night and appreciation event.**
- **A school dance (Denim & White) is scheduled for April 10, with funding from successful student-led fundraisers like the Valentine's Day bake sale.**

<u>Academic Reports:</u> N/A

<u>HIB/Student Discipline Updates:</u> N/A

<u>Professional Development/Staffing Updates:</u> N/A

<u>Community & School Events</u>: Ms. Dumenigo provided an overview

R1. Resolution to approve the school calendar for 2025-2026 – Attachment R1

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

Motion Carried
BOARD VOTED: to approve the school calendar for 2025-2026 – Attachment R1

R2. Resolution to approve the new ESL curriculum plans – Attachment R2

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

Motion Carried
BOARD VOTED: R2. Resolution to approve the new ESL curriculum plans – Attachment R2

R3. Resolution to Approve the monthly HIB report as presented – No Attachment

During the meeting, there was a discussion regarding the next steps in finalizing a Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) policy. It was noted that while internal conversations are still ongoing about the exact structure and implementation, Mr. Mitchell emphasized the legal requirement to draft and adopt a formal HIB policy. Additionally, written HIB reports must be submitted and included in the board packet, in compliance with state law. All HIB documentation for 2024-2025 must be completed and on file by the end of the school year.

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

Motion Carried
BOARD VOTED: to Approve the monthly HIB report as presented – No Attachment

*ask Dr. Jones for R4, 5, and 6

New Business

- **Upcoming Events (Ms. Dumenigo)**
- **Annual Financial Disclosures – April 30th Deadline to Submit Disclosures (All)**

9. Old Business

- **Policy Update: Next Steps:**
- **Board Strategic Planning Update- present on 4/23**
- **Board Training – Gov I (I.R.), Gov II (MB), Gov IV (AT, RM, JS)**

10. Comments from the Public

11. Motion to Adjourn the meeting at 9:19pm

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

Motion Carried
BOARD VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 9:19pm

The next Regular Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 23, 2025
The Board may adjourn to Executive Session to discuss personnel or individual student concerns.