

April 23, 2020
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Trustees via Video Conference: Richard Bayles, Gretchen Pusch, Jonathan Stearns, Peter Low, Amanda Low, Susan Reid, Eileen Niedzwiecki, Justin Tolliver, Noel Acey, Tanya Hoffler-Moore

Staff via Video Conference: Dr. Nicole Garcia (CEO), Stuart Wolf (Director of Finance), Ms. Chesney (Harlem Principal), Ms. Singletary (South Bronx Principal), Matthew Tiwary (Data Manager), Natalia Perez (Director of Communications)

Mr. Bayles called the meeting to order at 6:07pm

I. Finance Meeting

Mr. Bayles reported there were no significant changes in finances for the month of March although new coronavirus virus expenses have accumulated and more are anticipated in the coming months.

Dr. Garcia noted that the 2020-21 budget must be approved and submitted to SUNY by June 30, therefore the May meeting should include discussion of predicted cuts in funding.

Mr. Bayles requested that Mr. Wolf take the current circumstances into consideration and provide a preliminary budget to be circulated to all Board Members in preparation for discussion at the May 21 meeting.

Dr. Garcia led a discussion of the advantages of having a counselor for every grade level and said she is adjusting class sizes and re-evaluating the number of teachers needed for next year. She noted that grades K and 1 need the most oversight to adjust to the school culture, but grades 3,4 and 5 can function well with a slightly higher student to teacher ratio. She may be scaling down the number of teachers in favor of more counselors. Mental health needs have become a high priority. SACS currently benefits from the service of two pro bono counselors.

Mr. Wolf raised the issue of the renewal of the employee benefits package. In light of a 12% increase in rates, board members will have to decide on how much the school will contribute or pass along to employees. He added that currently, the school covers the full cost of medical benefit packages.

Mr. Bayles proposed that the Board pass a resolution (attached) to renew the benefits package provided through Trinet and continue to cover the full cost of the package. The resolution was approved unanimously.

Mr. Wolf also reported that he submitted an application for \$1.07 million to the SBA for the Payroll Protection Plan funds and was informed that SACS falls into a favored class and should be among the first priority awards.

II. Approval of February and March Minutes

- A. Mr. Bayles called for a motion to approve the February minutes. The motion by Mrs. Pusch was seconded by Mr. Stearns and passed unanimously.
- B. Mr. Bayles called for a motion to approve the March minutes. The motion by Mrs. Niedzwiecki was seconded by Mr. Stearns and passed unanimously..

III. Board Committee Reports

Real Estate Committee

The Certificate of Occupancy for Harlem has been received. A leak in the Harlem building is being fixed. Dr. Garcia reported that attorneys have prepared a draft lease for the 611 building. Mr. Low, Mr. Bayles, and Mr. Tolliver have met to discuss the terms of the lease.

Development Committee

In April, SASC applied for a \$22,000 coronavirus stimulus grant from the state. Dr. Garcia reported that we are waiting to hear if our application is approved. We have made it to stage 3 of the process and are strong candidates. The funds will be used for student and non-academic needs. The grant can be used for new technology and the iReady platform. In anticipation of returning to school, any connections to sources or active fundraising for upgraded professional cleaning, masks, disinfectants, and similar materials would be greatly appreciated.

Academics Committee

Dr. Garcia spoke about the expected need for social distancing within the classrooms. The additional space in the 611 building will allow for the necessary spacing of students. She emphasized her concern about future government cuts to education budgets and the urgent need for our school to be prepared for this pandemic.

Since the stay at home order, the school has held a weekly Spirit Day that has helped to boost spirits and morale of students, teachers and parents. Dr. Garcia noted that teachers and volunteers have been taking the time to read online to students through Facebook. School rallies on Zoom have been fun, and one student even gave a short violin concert for everyone to enjoy! Student attendance was an issue in the beginning, but has been steadily improving.

Mrs. Low reported that she has been on the SUNY calls and Suzie Miller has been extra supportive during this time. She said that there will be a lot of forgiveness for students dealing with this crisis. SUNY is looking at other ways to gage student performance throughout the school year.

IV. School Report

Dr. Garcia, teachers and staff created learning packets which were sent home to students as soon as the crisis began. Teacher Reports have been fantastic and very clear. She has been careful to emphasize teacher accountability in light of these new and unusual conditions.

All staff are working harder than ever to convert to online teaching and be present to the students. Dr. Garcia said if she had to choose one word to describe her team, it would be "resilient". They are an amazing team that consistently rises to the occasion in adversity. Everyone has been so supportive despite their personal losses of family members, continuing to work every day.

Dr. Garcia expressed her concern that there will be a great need for supplementary learning next year and noted the need for funds to hire after school tutors.

The first online parent orientation meeting took place on April 17. Dr. Garcia spoke about the great relationship the school is building with the new parents. Enrollment is strong at both schools.

Mr. Bayles suggested that members of the board establish a fund for staff members who have lost close loved ones. So far two staff members have close relatives who have died recently. This Bereavement Fund would provide money to assist with any related expenses during this difficult time of loss. Ms. Singletary offered her opinion that it is greatly needed and would be a thoughtful gesture. All Board members were in favor of the idea. Mr. Wolf agreed to make arrangements for an active donate button on the SACS website.

Mr. Bayles asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Mr. Low, seconded by Mr. Stearns and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:12pm.