

HAMMOND URBAN ACADEMY, INC.
School Board Meeting Minutes Noted

January 22, 2015

In Attendance:

Board Members:

Kris Sakelaris (Board President)
Mark McLaughlin (Board Member)
Sheldon Cutler (Board Member)
Dave Ryan (Board Member)
Howard Cohen (Board Member)
Robert Lendi (Board Member)
Janet Venecz (Board Member)
Rita Brusca-Vega (Board Member)
Anne Herbert (Board Member)
Kevin Smith (Attorney)
Heather Garay (Board Member)

School Representatives

Dr. Sean Egan (School Leader)
Jeff Wood (Vice Principal)
Mahdee Iqbal (Business Manager)
La Tysha Sanders (Vice Business Manager)
Mira Projovic (Staff Member)

Not in Attendance:

Kris Kantar (City of Hammond, Legal Counsel)
Owana Miller (Board Member)
Heather Cook (Board Member)

Board meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m by Board president Kris Sakelaris.

Motions Approved by School Board

- *Motion to amend December 18, 2014 meeting minutes to reflect adding the proposal by Sheldon Cutler to create a credit card policy for HAST-* Sheldon Cutler motioned; seconded by Mark McLaughlin. All in favor motion approved 11-0.
- *Motion to approve December 18, 2014 meeting minutes-* Howard Cohen motioned; seconded by Anne Herbert. All in favor motion approved 11-0.
- *Motion to approve financial report-* Anne Herbert motioned; seconded by Mark McLaughlin. All in favor motion approved 11-0.
- *Motion to approve replacing Board Member Robert Lendi with Heather Garay-* Sheldon Cutler motioned; seconded by Dave Ryan. All in favor motion approved 11-0.
- *Motion to approve Robert Holzhauser as the new 10th grade Global Studies teacher-* Dave Ryan motioned; seconded by Anne Herbert. All in favor motion approved 11-0.
- *Motion to table the agreement from Barnes and Thornburg for legal services in monitoring DOE meetings-* Howard Cohen motioned; seconded by Sheldon Cutler. All in favor approved 11-0.

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New Correspondence

- Board received correspondence from Mayor McDermott to substitute Heather Garay, the new Hammond Controller, for Robert Lendi, the former Hammond Controller, as Board Member.

School Leader Report

Discussion Notes

- Heather Garay introduced herself to the Board. She's a lifelong resident of Hammond & recently took over the Hammond Controller position from Robert Lendi.
- In regards to the Chinese school partnership, Dr. Egan has received a proposal which he found to be very vague. He has been in touch with Tony Walker & is requesting a meeting where more information can be gathered. Howard Cohen inquired if there would be any cost for HAST in this proposed arrangement between the 2 schools. The proposal has no mention of cost and/or funding. Kris Sakelaris said its too early & there's simply not enough information currently for any decision to be made by the Board.
- Dr. Egan has sent an official letter to Ball State informing them of HAST's decision to accept the charter from CCSJ rather than Ball State. Kris Sakelaris reported that Ball State is trying to implement a new policy where schools would have to be released from their current charter before looking for another authorizer.
- Mahdee Iqbal reported the 2014 audit was completed last Friday where they finished the financial statement part but still are working on the compliance part. They issued a list of recommendations that Mahdee is now implementing. He will be adding the changes to his monthly financial report to the Board.
- La Tysha Sanders gave a complete fee collection report to the Board. Her presentation contained a breakdown of each grade with fees outstanding & collected.
- Barnes & Thornburg law firm gave the Board a proposal to monitor all DOE & Legislative meetings in Indianapolis & report back to HAST. For this, they are charging \$500 a month + all expenses. The contract would be for an entire year. Currently, HAST doesn't have anyone monitoring these meetings & are finding information after the fact. There are currently no organizations that monitor these meetings for charter schools. Kris Sakelaris thinks the service is needed, or at the bare minimum someone to go down & monitor these meetings for us. Dave Ryan questions how we will pay for this, Sheldon Cutler thinks we need to have more proposals from other firms & Dr. Egan wants to look into what other charter schools do for information. He also thinks Calumet College might offer this service to us as one of their charter schools.
- Alice Anderson, former Dean of Education at Purdue University Calumet has been assigned as the new coach for HAST & will be offering services, as well as working with teachers in the upcoming Spring 2015 semester.
- Dr. Egan reported that for past & future snow days, HAST would be implementing a new Virtual Day policy offered by the DOE.
- Dr. Egan brought up the current news reports stating Indiana Governor Pence wanting to increase funding to charter schools. He believes this could potentially be good news for HAST.
- In response to a recent Board member request to increase teacher pay by using some of the money HAST will be saving with the new bond refinancing, Heather Garay reported that HAST is

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only approved funding from the city for bond purposes only. Any other uses would have to be brought up before their board. Bobby Lendi inquired if there was any other area where funds could be diverted for teachers. Kris Sakelaris said Indiana can no longer give cost of living raises. The Board would have to come up with a proposal for merit based bonus's, but the current budget is still too thin for any extra payments. Rita Brusca-Vega, along with Bobby Lendi, stressed the importance of reducing staff turnover by retaining good teachers with higher salaries & potential bonus's.

- Kris Sakelaris would like to organize a Board member training retreat for the spring. She would also like to organize a faculty/admin/Board member mixer.
- Kris Sakelaris, speaking for the Board, thanked Bobby Lendi for his years of service to HAST.

Board Financial Inquiries

- Specific notes on finance report:
 - \$18.77 paid to Amazon as a late fee. The previous month's bill was small & Mahdee Iqbal paid that month along with the current bill.
 - \$50.00 paid to First Merchant's Bank as a monthly service fee.
 - Mahdee Iqbal explained the reason for the unusually high NIPSCO bill from March was due to a shift in the the calendar & billing dates. 1 week was added to another billing cycle, which already contained 33 days.

New Business

Public Comment

- Victor Lopez, HAST 11th grader, spoke as a representative of his class in asking for the Board's approval for their idea to take a 7-Day Caribbean cruise for their senior trip next year. Kris Sakelaris said the Board typically doesn't need to give their approval as long as there is sufficient liability insurance for each student traveling. The students are willing to actively fundraise all year to try & raise as much money as possible to offset some of the costs.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:45 p.m.