



Essence Preparatory Public School
Board of Directors Meeting
April 19, 2023
Meeting Minutes

Board Member Attendance

The following board members were in attendance:

Brian Dillard	Jackie Gorman
George Pedraza	Mike Frisbie
Henrietta Muñoz	Kanwal Sumnani-Lopez

The following board members were not in attendance:

Kim Abernethy	Kanwal Sumnani-Lopez
Mary Gradney	Marques Mitchell

Staff Attendance

Akeem Brown, CEO & Superintendent
Jennipha Ricks, Chief Learning Officer
Deja Derry, Executive Assistant to CEO
Ikeida Manning, Director of HR & Finance

Guests (via Zoom)

Stephanie Rodriguez, Charter School Success
Justin Gustafson, Highmark Schools

1. The meeting was **called to order** by Presiding Chairwoman Jackie Gorman at 5:12 PM with a quorum.
2. Superintendent Akeem Brown introduced the **Mission Moment**, which entailed student presentations:
 - a. 4th and 5th Grade Scholars presented on their experiences engaging with USAA, the Commercial Real Estate department, and having lunch with the Managing Director of the Spurs, Peter J. Holt Jr. Images of the activities were displayed, and 4th-grade math teacher Trishawn Clarke-Taylor summarized the experiences as being a part of the Essence model and how impressed both entities were on how prepared our scholars were to engage in dialogue/Q&A.
3. Superintendent Brown provided the **Superintendent's Report** entailing the following topics:
 - a. **Cash Flow:** Mr. Brown summarized that the leadership team is working with CSS and the finance committee to begin to look at ways to make cuts for the remaining FY 22-23 and how we prepare the 23-24 FY budget. There are two grants in the pipeline that could be of great support: Ewing Hassell and Brackenridge Foundation.
 - b. **School Safety Grants:** Mr. Brown presented the Fund Development Tracking Spreadsheet:
4. **Consent Agenda:** The February board meeting minutes were approved.

5. The **Facilities Committee Report** was presented by committee chair Mike Frisbie and Justin Gustafson with Highmark Schools. Mike discussed the progress that has been made since our last board meeting and how he remained impressed with how Butler Cohen is keeping everything within schedule. Justin presented the layout pertaining to security and safety systems, including glass, doors and door hardware, cameras, and more. He mentioned working closely with Mr. Lutz, the operations director, on these items and making much progress these past few weeks.
6. The **Audit Engagement Letter** was presented by Mr. Brown; he reminded the board that this was the 2nd step in this process; at the previous board meeting, the Board voted to approve the scope of services and cost proposal from Schriver and Carmona. After a brief discussion, the **Motion to approve the engagement letter and to allow Mr. Brown and Mr. Dillard to execute the agreement as presented; was made by George Pedraza and Seconded by Brian Dillard. The motion passed with all members voting in favor.**
7. The **FY- 22-23 Budget Amendment** was presented by Stephanie Rodriguez of CSS. Debt Service and Bonds have been funded and are included in this budget amendment. As presented in last month's financial report, net assets are positive, which is hard to do in the first year, 240 CNP have been added, and a discussion was held regarding the adjustment/decrease in 420 funds. Mr. Brown mentioned the delicate balance of cutting back on expenses while staying prepared for growth; more students anticipated in Cycle 5 and Cycle 6 submissions than in the previous PEIMS submissions. The motion to approve the budget amendment as presented was made by George Pedraza and seconded by Mike Frisbie, the motion passed unanimously.
8. The **Transportation RFP** was presented by Mrs. Ikeida Manning, Director of Finance and HR; The scope of services, schedule of activities, and financial and insurance obligations were presented. Mr. Brown spoke about the difference between this year's RFP and last year's. Mike Frisbie asked if we were certain we get a response based on the timeline; was it too short? Mr. Brown responded that he believes that if there are no responses, it won't be due to our timeline but a smaller number of students/needs compared to other districts. **The motion to release the RFP as presented was made by Brian Dillard and seconded by George Pedraza; the motion passed unanimously.**
9. Mr. Brown and Mrs. Manning **presented the updated Fiscal Manual**; George Pedraza commented that the Finance Committee has reviewed this document and believes all necessary revisions have been made and encourages the board to vote to approve it. Mr. Brown apologized that he included the wrong document in the board packet instead of the updated Fiscal Manual; he committed to getting the revised manual to the board by email. **George made a motion to have this item on the consent agenda during the next board meeting; it was seconded by Mike Frisbie. The motion was passed unanimously.**
10. The **23-24 Academic Calendar** was presented by Jennipha Ricks, CLO & Principal. Ms. Ricks discussed school hours (7:45 AM-4:30 PM); she highlighted the importance of trying to align our calendar to other area school districts to decrease negative impacts on families with multiple kids who maybe enrolled elsewhere. Ms. Ricks took the time to discuss the assessment calendar and the calendar adjustments to accommodate the IB program. Board Vice Chair, Kanwal Lopez, asked Ms. Ricks if there was any concern around the 4th quarter and its ending date; Ms. Ricks committed to looking at that and bringing it back to the board if she believed an amendment would be needed. Dr. Henri Munoz asked if there were any adjustments due to the CRISMI Pilot specific to hours mandated by the pilot participants. Ms. Ricks ensured Dr. Munoz that Essence Prep has surpassed the

required minutes and will be in compliance with the CRIMISI expectation. **The motion to approve the academic calendar was made by Board Vice Chair, Kanwal Lopez, and Seconded by Dr. Munoz.**

11. Ms. Ricks presented the **23-24 Strategic Planning Update**; she discussed planning sessions that have been held, facilitated by Dr. Chawana Chambers to help department leads to create mission-aligned goals and look at outcomes for the 22-23 school year and ways to improve for the next academic year. Ms. Ricks presented the teacher staffing plan and the layout of classrooms within the temporary building for next year. Ms. Ricks underlined the change around having teachers be responsible for two grade levels within one content area, i.e., 2/3 grade math. Mr. Brown commented that this is a part of the cost savings for next year's budget. This item was for information only.
12. The board went into an executive session at 6:12 PM to discuss a personnel matter; the statement was read by the Presiding Chairwoman, Jackie Gorman, and anyone without executive session privileges was asked to step out of the room until the board resumed in general session.
13. Presiding Chairwoman Jackie Gorman called the meeting back to order at 6:23 PM; read the statement regarding the executive session.
14. The meeting was **adjourned** at 6:25 PM by Presiding Chairwoman Jackie Gorman.