

TACONY ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

6201 KEYSTONE STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19135

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

LOCATION

ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL DUE TO ONGOING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

DATE & TIME

NOVEMBER 17, 2021

6:00 P.M.

Minutes

SECTION I: CALL TO ORDER

Opening Colloquy

This meeting of the Tacony Academy Charter School Board of Trustees is hereby called to order. The time is 6:12 p.m. My name is Barbara L. Saunders. I am the President of this Board of Trustees, and I will facilitate this meeting.

In order to protect the health, welfare, and safety of the school community, this meeting is being held via teleconference. This is a public meeting that was properly advertised in the Philadelphia Daily News and pursuant to the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act. The public notice included instructions for how the public could participate in tonight's meeting.

All members of the public are welcome to sit and listen to the Board of Trustees conduct its business tonight. Members of the public who have registered with the Administrative Office to participate in public comment by 5:00 p.m. on the day before this scheduled meeting may participate in public comment. At this time, I would ask that the Executive Administration submit the list of commenters to our General Counsel. Comments will be limited to three minutes unless the Board decides to grant additional time.

At this time, I will ask that Roll Call be taken.

A. ROLL CALL

Board Members Present:	By Invitation: Non-Board Members:
Barbara L. Saunders Jennifer Ragen Sandra Farmer Dr. Ronald Whitaker Lionel S. Archer, Jr.	Thomas Scheid Jessica Harron Stephanie Felder Scott Meltzer
Board Members Absent: Anita Vega-Kaiser	Ashley Redfearn Scott Kramer
	Peter Costa
	Dean Krebs, Esq. Jessica Bassett

B. DISCLOSURE: EXECUTIVE SESSION BY BARBARA L. SAUNDERS

I would like to state, for purposes of the Minutes of this meeting, that on November 17, 2021, the Board of Trustees met in Executive Session for the following purposes under 65 Pa.C.S.A § 708:

(x) Certain Employee Issues. To discuss any matter involving the employment, appointment, termination of employment, terms and conditions of employment, evaluation of performance, promotion or disciplining of any specific prospective public officer or employee or current public officer or employee employed or appointed by the agency, or former public officer or employee, provided, however, that the individual employees or appointees whose rights could be adversely affected may request, in writing, that the matter or matters be discussed at an open meeting. The agency's decision to discuss such matters in Executive Session shall not serve to adversely affect the due process rights granted by law, including those granted by Title 2 (relating to administrative law and procedure).

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION:
SANDRA FARMER
SECOND:
LIONEL S. ARCHER, JR.
VOTE:
[X] PASS
[] FAIL

R211117.01 Approval of the November 17, 2021 Agenda

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of Tacony Academy Charter School hereby approves the November 17, 2021 Agenda.

Notes of Discussion / Advance Regulatory and Financial Comment:

<i>Who</i>	<i>What</i>
<i>Board</i>	<i>General discussion</i>

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION:

JENNIFER
RAGEN

SECOND:

LIONEL S.
ARCHER, JR.

VOTE:

PASS

FAIL

R21117.02 Minutes of the October 20, 2021 Meeting

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of Tacony Academy Charter School hereby approves the Minutes of the October 20, 2021 meeting of the Board of Trustees of Tacony Academy Charter School.

Notes of Discussion / Advance Regulatory and Financial Comment:

<i>Who</i>	<i>What</i>
<i>Board</i>	<i>General discussion</i>

SECTION II: REPORTS

A. COMMUNITY COMMENT

NONE

B. TACONY ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL CEO

a. *Thomas Scheid, Tacony Academy Charter School CEO*

- i. *Referring to materials provided to the Board in advance of the meeting, Mr. Scheid began his presentation for Tacony Academy Charter School ("TACS" or the "School") by detailing enrollment, which he said was stable. A few families, he noted, had moved out-of-state.*
- ii. *Mr. Scheid then discussed Human Resources matters, noting that there had been two new hires, one resignation, and one teacher on maternity leave. He further stated that he would be asking the Board to approve two new positions: one LA at the elementary school and one Special Education teacher.*
- iii. *Next, Mr. Scheid discussed attendance with the Board, which he said was stable at the elementary school.*
- iv. *Mr. Scheid then reviewed the Climate and Discipline Report for grades kindergarten through eight. He discussed cases in which students were out of school due to suspensions.*
- v. *Mr. Scheid then discussed events happening at the elementary school, including:*
 1. *The Mad Scientist Club;*
 2. *The first assemblies held since the beginning of COVID-19;*
 3. *Pajama Day; and*
 4. *An art project to paint the science and library room windows.*
 5. *He also commended the soccer team for their recent success.*
- vi. *Mr. Scheid discussed other events happening at the School, such as:*
 1. *Middle School basketball;*
 2. *Cross country team practices;*
 3. *Springboard sessions;*

4. *Mandatory progress report conferences, for which the School received positive feedback; and*
5. *Tag Day, a fundraising event for leukemia.*
- vii. *Mr. Scheid then turned to a discussion of the high school. He noted that attendance had declined slightly overall and that the School was monitoring those students struggling to attend.*
- viii. *Mr. Scheid reviewed the Climate and Discipline Report for the high school. Among other things, Mr. Scheid discussed students absent from school due to suspensions. Discussion ensued.*
- ix. *Next, Mr. Scheid discussed academic events at the School. He noted, among other things:*
 1. *Continuing learning walks conducted with American Paradigm Schools;*
 2. *College visits;*
 3. *Updates on School sports and clubs; and*
 4. *The launch of the school newspaper.*
- x. *Mr. Scheid then reviewed some steps taken as a result of positive COVID-19 cases at the School. One Teacher's Aid, he said, had been quarantined, and one class went virtual.*
- xi. *At the conclusion of Mr. Scheid's presentation, Ms. Saunders stated that she hoped attendance would continue to improve at the high school.*
- b. *Stephanie Felder, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Coordinator, Social Studies Teacher, Cheer Coach*
 - i. *Among other things, Ms. Felder updated the Board on events happening as part of the Caring School Community and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion ("DEI") initiatives. She discussed:*
 1. *The School Garden, which was tended to by about eight students over the summer. More students, she said, were interested in participating in the School Garden, and she hoped to expand the Garden. Each type of class, she noted, could learn from the School Garden.*
 2. *Ms. Felder then discussed a presentation she gave at Cabrini University about TAC's DEI initiatives and the School Garden. She said she hopes to tie the School Garden to DEI initiatives. She further explained her hopes that the School Garden would have a positive impact on the community.*
 3. *Dr. Whitaker complimented Ms. Felder on her presentation at Cabrini University and stated that the TACS family was well-represented.*
 4. *Ms. Farmer noted that, in addition to strengthening the community, the School Garden would provide students with something to take home and share with their family.*
 5. *Ms. Saunders thanked Ms. Felder for her presentation. She then discussed the need for the two new positions presented by Mr. Scheid. She noted that the Finance Committee had approved of the positions.*

C. AMERICAN PARADIGM SCHOOLS

- a. *Ashley Redfearn, American Paradigm Schools (“APS”) CEO*
 - i. *Ms. Redfearn noted that the organization counts on a number of people at APS to keep pushing academic programs forward. She noted that, during unprecedented times such as the pandemic, it is easy to lose focus on academics; however, she said, APS has a strong Academic Team and looks to provide proper support for teachers, students, and families.*
 - ii. *She then introduced Scott Meltzer, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Math.*
- b. *Scott Meltzer, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Math*
 - i. *Mr. Meltzer began his presentation by echoing Ms. Redfearn’s statements: namely, that it is easy to back off from academic rigor and expectations with disruptions due to COVID-19, but it is important to keep pushing students forward academically.*
 - ii. *Referring to materials provided to the Board in advance of the meeting, Mr. Meltzer reviewed the Math Team’s activities. Among other things, he:*
 1. *Introduced the Math Team. He explained his role and that of Gabrielle Alfaro, Math Coach and Curriculum Specialist. The two work together, he said, to develop standards.*
 2. *Addressed the impact COVID-19 had on learning, explaining the concept of “unfinished learning;” that is, he said, when students may move to the next grade without learning the skills typically acquired from the previous school year. Math, he noted, builds on what students have already learned.*
 3. *While it caused many negative impacts to learning, Mr. Meltzer said, COVID-19 had allowed weekly meetings, cultivated a new focus on intervention, and increased coaching with the hiring Ms. Alfaro.*
 - iii. *Mr. Meltzer then outlined five major projects on which the team had been focusing, which included:*
 1. *Standards-based grading;*
 2. *Intervention reinvention;*
 3. *Content-focused coaching;*
 4. *Illustrative Mathematics; and*
 5. *Learning Walks.*
 - iv. *First, Mr. Meltzer discussed standards-based grading. Through standards-based grading, he said, teachers, parents, and students can track skills students have not yet mastered and have more opportunities to learn those skills. In grades kindergarten through fifth grade, he noted, reports cards were already based on standards-based grading. He explained that “meeting standard,” “exceeding standard,” and the like replaced letter/ numerical grades.*
 - v. *Second, Mr. Meltzer focused his comments on intervention, in which he discussed, among other things, tools teachers have been given to help assess at what level each student is performing academically.*

- vi. *Next, Mr. Meltzer discussed content-focused coaching. He noted that Ms. Alfaro had been, among other things, focusing on practices to make learning deep and meaningful.*
- vii. *Mr. Meltzer then discussed the use of Illustrative Mathematics. He explained that Illustrative Mathematics was being used with eighth and ninth grade students and that the program might be expanded because of its success. Discussion ensued.*
- viii. *Mr. Meltzer concluded by discussing Learning Walks. He noted that Learning Walks were taking place with administrators in School buildings. He further explained that, as part of the Learning Walks, those participating visit as many classrooms as possible, observe, and provide teachers with feedback.*
- ix. *After Mr. Meltzer's presentation, extensive discussion ensued regarding standards-based grading. Many topics were covered, including the Board's concern regarding possible parent and student confusion about the new grading system.*
 - 1. *Mr. Meltzer explained that, in grades kindergarten through fifth grade, students no longer received letter/numerical grades on their report cards, but rather a "grade" based on a standard (for example, the student is meeting, below, or exceeding the standard). Mr. Meltzer stated that this grading system is much more informative than the traditional letter/numerical-grading system because it provides more information about where the student needs to improve. Often times, he said, academic grades do not reflect actual learning. Standards-based grading, he said, is bias-resistant and rigorous. He explained that homework and attendance are not factored into whether a student meets a standard but are discussed elsewhere on the report card.*
 - 2. *The Board continued to express concerns that parents and students would not understand the new grading system or what the standards mean. Ms. Saunders noted that parents are accustomed to traditional grading systems, and it would be difficult for parents to support students if the parents do not understand the grading system. Ms. Saunders further explained that there was much confusion among students when "J"s and "K"s were added as assessments on report cards.*

TRUSTEE DR. RONALD WHITAKER DEPARTED THE MEETING.

- 3. *Ms. Redfearn noted that all APS schools, with the exception of one, had adopted standards-based grading for grades kindergarten through fifth grade. She agreed with the Board's concerns and noted that standards-based grading is rooted in research. By using standards-based grading, she said, parents will easily be able to tell what skills their students have and have not mastered. She further explained that each teacher receives rubrics and samples to assist in assessment.*
- 4. *Mr. Meltzer explained that APS had hosted a Town Hall for parents about one month prior to the Board meeting to discuss the*

standards-based grading system. He stated that between 30 and 40 families attended the Town Hall and that the families embraced standards-based grading. Mr. Meltzer emphasized that, with standards-based grading, a parent could look at a student's report card and understand what their student has learned and has not learned, whereas letter and numerical grades can be vague and a bit arbitrary (for example, he said, did attendance, good behavior, or extra credit factor into the letter or numerical grade, and how much does that communicate about what the student actually learned?). Mr. Meltzer also stated that motivating students with grades is more punitive than rewarding and, more specifically, accumulation and loss of points does not motivate learning, but motivates behavior. Whereas with letter and numerical grades students might do general, extra work to improve their grade, with standards-based grading, he explained, students can focus on particular skills where they are struggling. Mr. Meltzer stated that he believed families would understand the standards-based grading system quickly.

- x. *In response to a question from Ms. Farmer regarding future family trainings, Mr. Meltzer explained that the Town Hall had been recorded. He added that, per Ms. Farmer's suggestion, a simple letter would be distributed explaining how to interpret report cards. Ms. Saunders suggested that APS remind parents that the Town Hall was recorded and stated that it is going to take parents a few report cards to understand the new grading system.*
- xi. *An extensive discussion ensued between Ms. Ragen and Mr. Meltzer regarding specifics about standards-based grading. Mr. Meltzer explained that standards-based grading was currently being used for Math and ELA and that the academic team hoped to expand its use to other subject areas. He also noted that there are ten standards for Math and explained student evaluation in more detail.*
- xii. *In response to questions from the Board about how standards-based grading would translate when students moved from fifth to sixth grade, Mr. Meltzer explained that the team was hoping to expand standards-based grading to older grades.*
- xiii. *More discussion ensued regarding parent and student confusion about standards-based grading. Ms. Redfearn stated that the topic deserved more extensive discussion.*
- xiv. *Ms. Redfearn also noted that screening tests show that students have experienced a lot of learning loss and that many students are several grades behind. Part of the purpose of using standards-based grading, she said, was to focus on learning rather than achievement on a test. Mr. Meltzer added that the vast majority of educators he has worked with believe standards-based grading is sensible and equitable.*
- xv. *Ms. Redfearn and Mr. Meltzer were grateful to the Board for their questions, as some had been previously considered, and some had not.*
- xvi. *Turning to Illustrative Mathematics, Ms. Saunders asked about data regarding the use of Illustrative Mathematics as compared to Eureka, the program that had been used previously. In response, Mr. Meltzer stated that*

the team analyzed data from outside organizations, such as Ed Report. He added that students had stagnated with Eureka and that he believes more students can be reached more effectively through Illustrative Mathematics than through Eureka. Ms. Redfearn noted that there was more continuity between eighth and ninth^b grade courses using Illustrative Math.

- xvii. *Mr. Scheid added that the School had recently received PSSA scores, which will be analyzed and shared with the Board.*
- xviii. *Ms. Redfearn assured the Board that their questions would be shared with the rest of the Academic Team and that all of the Board's questions would push the Team forward in their efforts to improve.*
- xix. *Ms. Ragen noted that she would be looking at standards-based grading more extensively with the Academic Committee. Ms. Saunders requested that the Board be informed when the Academic Committee meeting occurs.*

D. BUSINESS CONTROLLER

- a. *Peter Costa, Santilli & Thomson, LLC*
 - i. *Mr. Costa reviewed the Business Controller's report, which was previously disseminated to the Board.*
 - ii. *Mr. Costa discussed the October Financial Summary with the Board. He noted that he had reviewed the financials with the Finance Committee the previous week.*
 - iii. *Mr. Costa then stated that all revenues had been received on time. He also noted that federal money would soon be disbursed.*
 - iv. *Next, Mr. Costa discussed enrollment, which he noted was better than anticipated.*
 - v. *He then reviewed the School's cash on hand, which, as of October 2021, was approximately \$4.9 million, or 104 days.*
 - vi. *Mr. Costa discussed disbursements for the month of October, particularly highlighting those disbursements over \$10,000.*
 - vii. *He then reviewed the Profit and Loss Statement with the Board.*
 - viii. *Mr. Costa reported that this school year had thus far been very good for the School financially in large part because of enrollment.*
 - ix. *Mr. Costa then addressed ESSER II funding provided to the School, which totaled \$1.5 million. Discussion ensued regarding how the ESSER II funds may be used.*
 - x. *Mr. Costa noted that the audit was in its final stages and that he would likely receive a draft the following week. He also explained that the auditors would be in attendance at the December Board meeting to review the audit report with the Board.*
 - xi. *Mr. Scheid complimented the School Team on its participation in the audit.*

E. GENERAL COUNSEL

- a. *Dean Krebs, Esq., Sand & Sidel, P.C.*
 - i. *None*

SECTION III: OLD BUSINESS

NONE

SECTION IV: NEW BUSINESS

A. RESOLUTIONS

MOTION:
SANDRA FARMER
SECOND:
LIONEL S.
ARCHER, JR.
VOTE:
[X] PASS
[] FAIL

R211117.03 Report of the Business Controller

RESOLVED, the Board of Trustees of Tacony Academy Charter School accepts the Financial Report of the Business Controller and all documents submitted thereby, which shall be incorporated into the record of this meeting.

Notes of Discussion / Advance Regulatory and Financial Comment:

<i>Who</i>	<i>What</i>
<i>Board</i>	<i>General discussion</i>

MOTION:
JENNIFER RAGEN
SECOND:
SANDRA FARMER
VOTE:
[X] PASS
[] FAIL

R211117.04 Human Resources Resolution

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of Tacony Academy Charter School ratifies the Human Resources changes, modifications, and additions, as presented.

HIRES/RATE/POSITION CHANGE		
NAME	TITLE	EFFECTIVE DATE
Sarah Gaston (New Hire)	Instructional Assistant	11/15/21
Carron Ankiel-Kohn (New Hire)	ELA 6 th Grade Teacher	11/8/21

TERMINATIONS / RESIGNATIONS		
NAME	TITLE	EFFECTIVE DATE
Claire Cunningham (FMLA)	Teacher	11/5/21
Dorothy O'Donnell (Resignation)	SPED Teacher	10/29/21

Notes of Discussion / Advance Regulatory and Financial Comment:

<i>Who</i>	<i>What</i>
<i>Board</i>	<i>General discussion; specifics regarding Human Resources issues were discussed in Executive Session.</i>

MOTION:

R211117.05 Professional Services Contract/s Resolution

SANDRA FARMER

SECOND:

LIONEL S. ARCHER, JR.

VOTE:

[X] PASS

[] FAIL

RESOLVED, that the Professional Services Contract/s and associated reports listed below are hereby accepted and ratified;

FURTHER RESOLVED, the CEO, Business Controller, and General Counsel are hereby authorized and directed to negotiate contract/s for the professional services described below;

FURTHER RESOLVED, the President is authorized to execute any document or delegate any task necessary to effectuate this resolution.

Contractor	Amount	Comment: Terms and Conditions
Blackney Hayes	\$52,083.63	Amendment to Phase II Cafeteria contract, previously approved by R210527.03. Additional services, including interior and exterior renovations with scope and change in MEP engineer

Notes of Discussion / Advance Regulatory and Financial Comment:

Who	What
Board	General discussion

R21117.06 Purchase Contract/s Resolution

RESOLVED, the Purchase Contract/s and associated report/s listed below are hereby accepted and ratified;

FURTHER RESOLVED, the CEO, Business Controller, and General Counsel are hereby authorized and directed to negotiate the terms and conditions for the Purchase Contract/s described below;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the President is authorized to execute any document or delegate any task necessary to effectuate this resolution.

Contractor	Amount	Comment: Terms and Conditions
CDW-G	Promethean ACTIVpanel Nickel 65" LED-backlit LCD display: \$1,850/Unit x 48	LCD Displays and Mobile Stands Three quotes obtained.

MOTION:

LIONEL S. ARCHER, JR.

SECOND:

SANDRA FARMER

VOTE:

[X] PASS

[] FAIL

	Promethean Fixed-Height Mobile Stand for ActivPanel Interactive Display: \$430/Unit x 2	
	TOTAL: \$89,660	

Notes of Discussion / Advance Regulatory and Financial Comment:

Who	What
<i>Barbara L. Saunders</i>	<i>Ms. Saunders noted that the Purchase Contract above had been previously discussed by Mr. Krebs, General Counsel to the Board. The Purchase Contract was also forwarded to and reviewed by the Finance Committee.</i>

MOTION:

JENNIFER
RAGEN

SECOND:

SANDRA
FARMER

VOTE:

PASS

FAIL

R21117.07 Approval of Instructional Assistant and Special Education Teacher Positions

RESOLVED, the Board of Trustees of Tacony Academy Charter School, upon recommendation by the Chief Executive Officer, hereby ratifies and accepts the creation of the following two additional positions at Tacony Academy Charter School, effective immediately:

- Instructional Assistant at Elementary School
- Special Education Teacher at Elementary School

FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board of Trustees of Tacony Academy Charter School hereby directs the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Business Controller, to make allowances and adjustments for compensation for these positions in the current budget, in amounts reasonably determined appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer.

Notes of Discussion / Advance Regulatory and Financial Comment:

Who	What
<i>Barbara L. Saunders</i>	<i>Ms. Saunders noted that the Finance Committee reviewed and approved the two additional positions. She added that the School could afford to create the two additional positions because of the additional funds supplied by the ESSER grants.</i>
<i>Thomas Scheid</i>	<i>Mr. Scheid discussed the Special Education teacher position and noted that the schedule for that position would be flexible. He stated that the School might look for candidates to work part-time, although full-time would be preferable.</i>

MOTION:

SANDRA
FARMER

SECOND:

LIONEL S.
ARCHER, JR.

R21117.08 Adoption of the Philadelphia Intermediate Unit's Policies

RESOLVED, the Board of Trustees of Tacony Academy Charter School hereby adopts the Philadelphia Intermediate Unit's policies and procedures under the federal requirements of 34 CFR Part 300.

Notes of Discussion / Advance Regulatory and Financial Comment:

VOTE:

PASS

FAIL

Who	What
<i>Dean Krebs, Esq.</i>	<i>Mr. Krebs reviewed the purpose of the resolution with the Board; namely, to ensure the School could move forward with obtaining Special Education funding. Mr. Krebs explained that the School's policies are consistent with the Philadelphia Intermediate Unit's policies. Mr. Krebs then explained the purpose of the Philadelphia Intermediate Unit's policies and noted that it is a state requirement to be in line with these policies to receive funding under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.</i>

MOTION:

R211117.09 2021-2022 Holiday Bonus for TACS Staff Members

SANDRA FARMER

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of Tacony Academy Charter School shall offer a Holiday Bonus in the amount of net \$500 to full-time staff and net \$350 to part-time staff.

SECOND:

JENNIFER RAGEB

Notes of Discussion / Advance Regulatory and Financial Comment:

VOTE:

Who	What
<i>Barbara L. Saunders</i>	<i>Ms. Saunders explained that School staff had been working exceptionally hard during COVID-19. She noted that the School was in a financial position to offer a larger holiday bonus than the previous year, in part due to ESSER funds, and that the School may not be able to offer the same bonus in the future. This, she said, would be communicated to staff. Ms. Saunders also noted that the increased holiday bonus was up for approval across all American Paradigm Schools.</i>
<i>Thomas Scheid</i>	<i>Mr. Scheid explained that he had drafted an email to staff regarding the holiday bonus. He then read the email to the Board.</i>

PASS

FAIL

B. DISCUSSION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

MR. SCHEID UPDATED THE BOARD ON THE PROGRESS OF THE PLAYGROUND, NOTING THAT CEMENT WOULD BE POURED THE DAY FOLLOWING THE BOARD MEETING.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: DECEMBER 15, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT AT 7:33 P.M.

MOTION:

SANDRA FARMER

SECOND:

JENNIFER RAGEN

VOTE:

PASS

FAIL

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211117

TACS BOARD MEETING MINUTES

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