

ST. COLETTA SPECIAL EDUCATION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
1901 Independence Avenue, SE
Washington, DC
Board Meeting Minutes
6:30 pm

In Attendance for this Hybrid Session:

In-person at school Attendance- Frances Slaughter, Michael Rodriguez, Peggy O'Brien, Janel Brown, Kaiheem Mason, Michael Olivarri and Shanta Bryant

Zoom Attendance- Carla Ware-Easterling, Josh Lewis, Francis Campbell and Chip Henstenburg.
Meeting Minutes

Welcome, roll call, and call to order.

Meeting Called to order by Peggy O'Brien at 6:32 PM

Approval of the minutes of previous board meeting (March 8, 2023) Motion to accept the minutes was made, a second and the meeting minutes were passed.

A Period of open comments and questions from members of the public.

A hand was raised by J. DeCarlo- commenting on behalf of the Speech/Language, group of highly specialized therapists, support classroom teachers, supporting assistive technology, only 18/28 classrooms have stable teachers, therapists are acting as primary providers and not secondary supports for speech services as teachers have left the school. Device repairs have been delayed, noticeable loss of leadership and guidance as a result of a termination in the department. Advocating for the students is the purpose of voicing these concerns. Proper channels have been enacted, limited action and follow-through are the reasons to address the board. Who spearheaded the literacy program, IEP compliance, education of students and compliance are of concern.

Dr. McKenzie Lillia- provided comments related to the sentiments expressed by Ms. DeCarlo.

Administrative decisions made have impacted the momentum of the team, mentor to the staff was lost, and advocate to the students. Another loss of the team was an Assistant Principal from the team where the students are Black and Brown. Tangible vision to the school has been lost, other faculty may be lost that have been a part of the school for ten plus years.

Rhonda Palmer- provided a statement (physical therapy) regarding firings and forced resignations, concern of endangerment of students, impact of loss of staff have greatly impacted every student that requires high level assistive technology devices. Therapists have challenges with the loss of personnel due to a difference of opinion. Other staff members have made the decision to leave the school.

Jamarr Surratt returning staff person working with Principal introduced himself to the Board.
Conclusion of public comment closed at 6:52PM

Update and next steps on long-term funding – Mike Rodrigues, CEO

Building the gap with funding from SPSF, Fiscal year budget from DC includes one million dollars of gap funding for the next year. Budget process is with the Mayor/Council has produced a response in a public meeting last week, first Council vote is May 16th, next vote May 31st. Other advocacy objectives, activate family member network with strong public testimony, what the school means to the families and District, advocated to be included in the Adequacy study, looking to make new friends in this process, introducing others to the school to express the importance of what we do at the school. As a result, we have seen growth to the school in relation to waitlist for entrance. Strengthened connection with DC Education Alliance Study. Next steps (2) establish timeline for options for best long-term solutions and work to prepare for advocacy study. The organization has lost four million dollars over the past years.

The State of the School: Highlights and Challenges (Amy Warden, Principal)

Programming, planning and enrollment- Programming- instructional meeting for the upcoming school year, implement a balanced functional life skills program for students, more robust living skills programs to continue implementation occurring.

Planning- Getting back into the community, accessing vocational sites and classroom planning for students. Review of data to determine what works and does not work. Feedback forms teachers- ability to work with students in the classroom. Members of the leadership Team have focused on long term goals health and safety, student engagement, communication strategies, management and accountability, developing school wide value system, view of self as members of community.

Enrollment- determined to reach 250 students, C. Decker provided an update of waitlist of 120 students, 50 applications for kindergarten, 13 graduating students, small number of students that will leave the program and (26) vacancies for the next school year.

Headlines from School—Amy Warden, SCSEPCS Principal

Staffing and Recruitment- the need is for ten teachers, five new teachers have been hired for the upcoming school year, six para educators, social workers, and others are pending.

Current Cases one complaint filed with PCSB- student left the campus.

Transportation- improvement in wait times, ride times improved, communication with parent resource remains an issue, consistent feedback provided.

State Board of Education Ombudsman Office- collaboration transition services due to gap in eligibility for Adults with cognitive impairment, connection with Legal Aide for guardianship issues and other related barriers. Reviewed by PCSB typically an observation, due to charter renewal, however, a virtual meeting was held.

Suspension(s)- One since the previous meeting.

Teacher Appreciation pizza luncheon.

Financial Report—Michael Olivarri, CFO

Draft copy sent out of the tax return, form 990, the Conflict-of-Interest Statement via DocuSign will be prepared and forwarded to all Board Members. Currently, 3.5 million dollars on cash on balance sheet, moved to an interest-bearing money market account, generating 3.3% (115, 000 to be used for the school), have not received extended school year payment (expected in October). On page 4 of the financial report- total revenue 13.3 million, 5.9 budgeted increase from last year. Expenses have increased (salaries and related contract services, 1.2 million increase). An increase from the adequacy study is needed. Revenue is on target, per student funding, for the (250) students) currently enrolled. Expenses are on target, with the exception of utilities and maintenance costs (open spaces in classrooms) and an expectation of budgeted net loss requires a need to find other sources of income.

Additional comments—Mike Rodrigues, CEO

Change of investment strategy- management fees brought in house due to minimal tasks completed, saving 40, 000 plus. Financials- last fiscal year, salary and wage increase to rectify loss, average of one million dollars. Another avenue of funding relates to the Washington Teachers Union contract, Mayor's budget is a 50% gap in DCPS, and charter school pay, allows for increased to school staff providing equivalent salary funding to staff. An Influx of funding is needed to continue addressing the needs of the staff need. Impact on the organization, per the strategic plan- grant expert (conducting research of awareness and perception of St. Coletta) engagement of both boards.

2022-2023 LEA Board Update (received from DCPCSB on March 8, 2023)

Peggy O'Brien reported on the extensive report of data included- Chronic absentee rate is currently at 10% due to transportation (bus issues) and ongoing issues with COVID.

Board Development Status

Nominating and Governance Work--Shanta Bryant and Adele Robey
Working with Shereen Williams (formerly Education Board Partners) and Peggy regarding formalizing the committee, working on rules, position of Co-Chairs (Roby and Bryant), flyer for recruitment to add two more board members. Types of organizations that have specific areas for employees to volunteer their time and focus on specific needs. Suggestion of two committees (By Laws and Governance), developing mission and vision added to the By Laws. A chart will be sent with updates (succession and terms of board members). Currently creating an Onboarding process, Nominating and Governance Committee.

Summer board meeting? —Peggy O'Brien

Elections, Nominating and Governance issues need to be determined. Consideration for June/July 2023 as possible months for the next meeting.

New board members

Compliance for DCPSB, must have an odd number of board members and the need is for additional parents to participate in the Board process.

The next meeting will be the last for the current Board Chairperson Peggy O'Brien.


A call to go into a closed session was made in order to discuss personnel matters (in accordance with DC Official Code 2-575).

A motion to go into a closed session was made and confirmed at 7:46 PM. A call to adjourn the public meeting was made with a motion to adjourn the public meeting was made with a second at 7:47 PM

Call to adjourn closed session a motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 8:51 PM

Next Board Meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 2023.

This meeting is governed by the DC Open Meetings Act. Please address any questions or complaints arising under this meeting to the Office of Open Government at opengovoffice@dc.gov.



Carla Ware-Easterling
Secretary