

**Rockford Charter School Organization Board Meeting Minutes**

**December 15, 2022 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**Jackson Charter School, 315 Summit Street, Rockford, IL 61107**

**In Person Meeting**

1. Call to Order – 11:43 a.m.
  - a. Present: Carla Redd, Jacob Bradt, Tamir Bell, Kenneth Cunningham, Antonio Turner, Emily Wallen, Rick Aylward, Angie Smelter, and Attorney Roxanne Sosnowski
  - b. Absent: Anisha Grimmertt and Jay Ware
2. Approval of Agenda
  - a. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Jacob Bradt and seconded by Tamir Bell.
    - i. Roll Call:
      1. Kenny Cunningham: Aye
      2. Tamir Bell: Aye
      3. Antonio Turner: Aye
      4. Jacob Bradt: Aye
      5. Carla Redd: Aye
    - ii. Motion passed.
3. Approval of Regular Board Meeting Minutes of October 20, 2022
  - a. A motion to approve the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of October 20, 2022 was made by Tamir Bell and seconded by Jacob Bradt.
    - i. Roll Call:
      1. Kenny Cunningham: Aye
      2. Tamir Bell: Aye
      3. Antonio Turner: Aye
      4. Jacob Bradt: Aye
      5. Carla Redd: Aye
    - ii. Motion passed.
4. Public Comment
5. New Business
  - a. Discuss/Approve Resolution to enter into an Agreement with eLuma for school social work services at a cost not to exceed \$39,000.00.
    - i. Executive Director Emily Wallen stated that Jackson had been looking for a social worker all year and had been unable to find one. She stated that she was looking for approval to contract a social worker through eLuma for two days a week.
    - ii. Jacob Bradt asked for clarification on how long the contract would be for. Executive Director Wallen advised that the contract would be for the

entirety of the school year, or 26 weeks.

- iii. Antonio Turner asked if 12 students was the maximum number of students that the social worker would be able to help per week. Executive Director Wallen clarified that this was the minimum number of students that the social worker would need to see to be in compliance.
- iv. Dr. Kenneth Cunningham asked for clarification on if these meetings with students would be virtual or in person. Executive Director Wallen confirmed that the meetings would all be virtual.
- v. Dr. Cunningham asked if Jackson had the technology to accommodate virtual meetings with students. Executive Director Wallen confirmed that Jackson was technologically equipped to have virtual meetings.
- vi. A Motion to Approve the Resolution to enter into an Agreement with eLuma for school social work services at a cost not to exceed \$39,000.00 was made by Carla Redd and seconded by Jacob Bradt.
  1. Role Call Vote:
    - a. Carla Redd: Aye
    - b. Antonio Turner: Aye
    - c. Jacob Bradt: Aye
    - d. Kenny Cunningham: Aye
    - e. Tamir Bell: Aye
  2. Motion passed.
- b. Discuss/Retroactive Approval of HVAC work from Helm Group Mechanical/HVAC for services performed on November 28, 2022 and November 29, 2022.
  - i. Attorney Roxanne Sosnowski advised that there was not information in the Meeting Packet about these services. Attorney Sosnowski asked Executive Director Wallen if she knew what the invoices totaled to. Executive Director Wallen advised that she did not have a final number because the work was still ongoing.
  - ii. Attorney Sosnowski advised that the emergency purchases would need to be retroactively approved, and that the treasurer would need to be given authorization to pay the invoices once the work was completed.
  - iii. Executive Director Wallen advised that there had been a power surge that had caused a boiler failure. Rick Aylward further advised that because 3 boilers had been affected by the incident, Jackson would be filing an insurance claim.
  - iv. Carla Redd recommended that the Board find out how old the boilers were, because they would be extremely expensive to replace, and if they were old, the Board needed to come up with a financial plan.
  - v. A motion to retroactively approve the HVAC work from Helm Group Mechanical/HVAC for services performed on November 28, 2022 and November 29, 2022 was made by Jacob Bradt and seconded by Tamir Bell.
    1. Role Call Vote:
      - a. Kenny Cunningham: Aye

- b. Tamir Bell: Aye
- c. Antonio Turner: Aye
- d. Jacob Bradt: Aye
- e. Carla Redd: Aye

2. Motion passed.

c. Discuss/Approve Resolution to approve amended Bylaws to add Committees.

- i. Dr. Cunningham stated that the proposed Committees were as follows: Executive Committee; Finance Committee; Marketing Committee; Academic Committee; Community Engagement Committee. Dr. Cunningham further advised that each Committee would consist of 2 Board Members.
- ii. A Motion to Approve the Resolution to approve amended Bylaws to add Committees was made by Jacob Bradt and seconded by Antonio Turner.

1. Roll Call:

- a. Kenny Cunningham: Aye
- b. Tamir Bell: Aye
- c. Antonio Turner: Aye
- d. Jacob Bradt: Aye
- e. Carla Redd: Aye

2. Motion passed.

6. Executive Director's Report

- a. Executive Director Wallen stated that enrollment had remained steady at 232 students.
- b. Executive Director Wallen stated that the former Student Support Manager, Ms. Black, had stepped back into the role of full-time Student Support Manager. Executive Director Wallen advised that Ms. Black was working with Ms. Sledge, to assist with various behavioral and disciplinary tasks. Executive Director Wallen also advised that Ms. Black was working to implement more restorative interventions within Jackson.
- c. Executive Director Wallen stated that Ms. Zimmerman, a classroom teacher, had accepted a position as an MTSS specialist/interventionist to help Jackson close the achievement gap seen in their data analysis, specifically in second and third grade students. Executive Director Wallen stated that a former teacher, Mrs. Jao, would be returning to Jackson to take over Ms. Zimmerman's classroom.
- d. Executive Director Wallen stated that the school also had two new hires in the month of November: Ms. Jodi Davis, a paraprofessional, and Ms. Kenna Hightower, a new in-house substitute.
- e. Executive Director Wallen advised that a first-grade teacher had submitted her resignation the day before, indicating that her last day with Jackson would be Friday, December 16.
- f. Carla Redd asked if there was any explanation as to why the teacher had elected to resign from Jackson. Executive Director Wallen stated that the teacher had explained that she did not think teaching was her strongest area, and that she wanted to pursue a career in IT and technology.

- g. Attorney Sosnowski asked if Executive Director Wallen had any initial impressions about the NWEA and MAP data. Executive Director Wallen advised that she and Angie Smelter had not had the opportunity to analyze the data in depth yet. Attorney Sosnowski asked if Executive Director Wallen could send an analysis with the data when it was circulated to the Board, and Principal Wallen confirmed.
- h. Executive Director Wallen stated that on November 9th and 10th, Jackson had their Charter Renewal Visit (CRV). Executive Director Wallen advised that there had been two representatives from SchoolWorks and two representatives from Rockford Public Schools. Executive Director Wallen stated that the representatives had not sent a formal report back, but that they all had a meeting to discuss preliminary thoughts.
- i. Executive Director Wallen advised that there were four “bucket areas” where the representatives would actually score the school: Instruction; Opportunities to Learn; Professional Development (Teacher Opportunities to Learn); and Leadership & Governance. Executive Director advised that the representatives had given draft findings for all four areas in the meetings she had with them.
- j. Executive Director Wallen stated that the scores for Instruction, Opportunities to Learn, and Professional Development were Developing, and that in the past they had been scored as Not Effective.
- k. Executive Director Wallen stated that the score for Leadership & Governance was Effective, and that the representatives had enjoyed meeting the Board.
- l. Attorney Sosnowski stated that she had the SchoolWorks report from 2019 so the Board could compare the results once they received the formal report.
- m. Carla Redd asked for clarification on the ranking system that was used in these reports. Attorney Sosnowski and Executive Director Wallen clarified that it was a 4-level ranking system. Attorney Sosnowski stated that the four levels were Not Effective, Developing, Effective, and Highly Effective.
- n. Executive Director Wallen reminded the Board that the boiler had broken on November 28th, and that the heat had stopped working throughout the entire building, which greatly affected the students’ focus and ability to learn in the classroom. Executive Director Wallen stated that students had been sent home that day because it was too cold to remain in the building with no heat. She stated that they had been able to get the heat fixed the following day and school continued as normal.
- o. Executive Director Wallen informed the Board that a single bedbug had been found in a kindergarten classroom on December 1st. Executive Director Wallen stated that as a preventative measure, all blankets, pillows, etc. had been removed from the rooms, and families had been notified. Executive Director Wallen advised that an exterminator had been called and did a thorough inspection of the entire building, and no other bedbugs had been found.
- p. Executive Director Wallen stated that Astute Web Group had been given notice of termination of services in November, and that they had not yet shared any working files with Executive Director Wallen. She stated that she would be following up with Astute Web Group to hopefully obtain the files soon. Executive Director Wallen stated that other providers had been considered, as well as keeping marketing in-house by utilizing Facebook and Class Dojo.
- q. Executive Director Wallen went over all school events in the months of November and December.

- r. Executive Director Wallen informed the Board that she received notice from the Illinois Board of Education had selected Jackson for field testing. She stated that there were no details as to what it would entail, but she stated that it would be another unit added onto the IAR and would not count against Jackson's performance level. Angie Smelter added that Jackson had been selected in the past for this type of field testing.
  - s. Executive Director Wallen stated that Dr. Jarrett from the Rockford Public Schools District was supposed to visit Jackson in November, but had to reschedule. She advised that he rescheduled his visit for January 3, 2023.
  - t. SIP Plan
    - i. Executive Director Wallen advised that there had been confusion about what a SIP Plan is, and she clarified that it is a School Improvement Plan. Executive Director Wallen stated that in the past, Jackson had many different plans and goals, and she wanted to condense it all into one SIP Plan.
    - ii. Executive Director Wallen advised that by law, every school should have a SIP Team, but that Jackson had never had a SIP Team until Executive Director Wallen established one.
    - iii. Executive Director Wallen stated that there was not a draft of a current SIP Plan yet, but that it would be available next month.
    - iv. Antonio Turner asked who was on the SIP Team. Executive Director Wallen advised that it was only teachers. Carla Redd asked if the law stated that the SIP Team should only be made up of teachers. Executive Director Wallen stated that the law did not explicitly state who needed to be on the SIP Team, but that it was typically school employees.
    - v. Antonio Turner stated that he thought parents should be included on the SIP Team because the Board was working to make things more inclusive with the families of Jackson. He further stated that if parents were kept on the outside, it may look like the employees are only looking at things that they want, as opposed to what the families may need from the school. Executive Director Wallen stated that she would love for parents to be involved on the SIP Team, but she didn't think it was feasible at the current moment because parent involvement was already so low.
7. Finance Committee Report
- a. Rick Aylward gave the Financial Committee Report. Rick Aylward stated that the amount projected for Per Capita Tuition, based on the number of students that would enroll, had been very conservative, and Jackson surpassed it by about 30 students. He also advised the Board that they were currently under budget for expenditures. Rick Aylward stated that he anticipated that the school would continue to be over-budget in revenue in the new semester.
  - b. Rick Aylward stated that normally in the December Board Meeting, the Board reviewed the annual audit report. He advised that the school had not yet received the report, but he stated if the Board had an extra meeting in January they would be able to go over it then.
    - i. Attorney Sosnowski stated that she had received a letter from Sikich, LLP that was dated for November 9, 2022, but it had not been sent to her office until last week. Attorney Sosnowski stated that the letter was concerning initially, but that she had received an email from the representative at Sikich

which stated the letter was simply protocol. Attorney Sosnowski stated that she and Tamir set up a conference call with the representative at Sikich to hopefully clarify why they had been sent the letter. Attorney Sosnowski asked the representative from Sikich if these would be findings reflected on the formal audit, and the representative clarified that they would not appear on the annual audit.

8. Discussion about Marketing Services

- a. Attorney Sosnowski advised that when the school was first formed, there was no language regarding the ability of Board Members to enter into contracts with the school. She explained that after the 2015 Charter Renewal, RPS expressed concern about 2 Board Members who had various contracts with the school directly. After this issue, RCSO agreed that they would put language in the charter agreement that no more than 1 Board Member at any given time could receive compensation from the school.
- b. Attorney Sosnowski stated that because of this language, any proposal for a joint contract for both Jacob Bradt and Tamir Bell would not be feasible, because only one Board Member could be compensated at a time. Attorney Sosnowski stated that if this was something that the Board felt strongly about, either Jacob Bradt or Tamir Bell would need to resign from the Board.
- c. Carla Redd asked what the best practice is. Attorney Sosnowski stated that she would advise against any Board Member entering into an agreement directly with the school in which they served on the Board.
- d. Dr. Cunningham clarified that this was not an item for Executive Session, and Attorney Sosnowski confirmed that this was an Open Session discussion. Dr. Cunningham also advised that, as a Board Member in the medical field, he had to frequently testify that he had no business with or in the hospital, so he was hesitant to enter into a contract with a Board Member of the school.
- e. Dr. Cunningham asked for Tamir Bell and Jacob Bradt to clarify what their opinions were now that they knew the language of the charter agreement. Jacob Bradt stated that he was working for Jackson on a project-based schedule long before he was a Board Member. Jacob Bradt stated that while he loved being on the Board, more time to focus on his area of expertise may lead to a better overall product and bigger impact. Jacob Bradt stated that he thought that he and Tamir Bell could create a better product and image for the school than Astute Web Group had done in the past. Tamir Bell stated that he, Jacob Bradt, and Executive Director Wallen had been meeting for the past three or four months to discuss marketing strategies. Both Tamir Bell and Jacob Bradt stated that they understood that there was a conflict of interest, and did not fault the Board for this decision.
- f. Attorney Sosnowski stated that the Board needed to decide if this was something that they were interested in, because if so, one of the Members would need to step down. Jacob Bradt stated that he had discussed this with Tamir Bell, and that Jacob Bradt would be the one to step down from the Board. Jacob Bradt further stated that he would still participate on the Marketing Subcommittee, but it would be as a vendor, not as a Board Member.
- g. Tamir Bell clarified that they had begun discussions about the Marketing Subcommittee before the Board had elected to terminate services with Astute Web Group, but that it didn't make sense to have a Marketing Subcommittee if there was not a company to facilitate it.

- h. Dr. Cunningham stated that the Board needed to make sure that they did everything in the proper order so that there could be no questions about impropriety.
  - i. Attorney Sosnowski recommended that the Board consider also discussing this decision with Jay Ware and Anisha Grimmertt because they were not present at the meeting.
  - j. Attorney Sosnowski recommended that if the Board wanted to entertain this idea, they should gather quotes from other marketing companies to show that they had looked at all the options before deciding on Tamir Bell and Jacob Bradt's proposal.
  - k. Dr. Cunningham suggested putting out a request for bids. Antonio Turner agreed that the Board should put out a request for bids, and that the conversation should be tabled until Anisha Grimmertt and Jay Ware were present.
9. Executive Session (if needed)
- a. Go into Closed Session to Review Closed Session Minutes and to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or specific volunteers of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or a volunteer of the public body or against legal counsel to determine its validity.
  - b. A Motion to enter Executive Session was made by Carla Redd and seconded by Tamir Bell.
    - i. Roll Call:
      - 1. Kenny Cunningham: Aye
      - 2. Tamir Bell: Aye
      - 3. Antonio Turner: Aye
      - 4. Jacob Bradt: Aye
      - 5. Carla Redd: Aye
    - ii. Motion passed. The Board went into Executive Session at 12:38 p.m.
  - c. A Motion to exit Executive Session was made by Carla Redd and seconded by Jacob Bradt.
    - i. Roll Call:
      - 1. Kenny Cunningham: Aye
      - 2. Tamir Bell: Aye
      - 3. Antonio Turner: Aye
      - 4. Jacob Bradt: Aye
      - 5. Carla Redd: Aye
    - ii. Motion passed. The Board went back into Open Session at 12:58 p.m.
10. Adjournment
- a. A motion to adjourn was made by Carla Redd and seconded by Jacob Bradt.
    - i. Roll Call:
      - 1. Kenny Cunningham: Aye
      - 2. Tamir Bell: Aye
      - 3. Antonio Turner: Aye
      - 4. Jacob Bradt: Aye

5. Carla Redd: Aye
- ii. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:59 p.m.

**Next Board Meeting: January 19, 2023 at 11:30 a.m. (Meeting will be held in-person at Jackson Charter School, 315 Summit Street, Rockford, IL 61107)**