

Professional Children's School
Board of Trustees Meeting
September 23, 2021

MINUTES

Present: Melanie Harris, Chair; Amanda Bhalla, Donald Brant, Marian Brown, Amy Crate, James Dawson, Lee Dieck, Stephanie Hull, Isaac Greaney, Diane Kenney, Erica Marks Panush, Erin Scanlon, William Villafranco and, by invitation, Reem Abu-Amara, Loryn Evanoff, Chris Haley, Lori Gigliotti Murphy, Dania Nauholnyk, Paul Kane, Alex Shaurette and John Tucker. Absent: Silas Farley and Michael Gleicher and Bob Musiker.

Commencement Speaker

Prior to the meeting, a video was shown of Tiger Zhou's (Class of 2021) commencement remarks. His remarks were recorded at Merkin Hall in May and shown on video during the commencement exercises at the Kaye Playhouse on June 10, 2021.

Approval of the Minutes

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of May 20, 2021 and August 4, 2021 meetings of the Board of Trustees were unanimously approved

Chair's Report

Book Discussion

Melanie Harris, Board Chair, thanked those who participated in the discussion of "Whistling Vivaldi," which took place from 4 to 4:30 p.m. prior to the Board meeting. Trustees had been encouraged to read the book over the summer.

Introduction & Welcome of Isaac Greaney

Melanie welcomed newly elected trustee Isaac Greaney. Following remarks from Mr. Greaney, those present introduced themselves.

2021-22 Goals

Melanie presented her goals for the year ahead.

1. Recruitment of New Trustees
2. Identify New Donors
3. Upcoming NYSAIS Accreditation Assessment

Head of School's Report

James Dawson explained that his written report had been sent in advance of the meeting, but shared a few highlights from the report at the meeting.

Personnel Changes

Jim said that a combination of voluntary and involuntary departures resulted in a one-third reduction in staff. A few of these positions were replaced with new hires, resulting in an overall 20% reduction in staff.

Enrollment

As of September 20, current enrollment is 111 students, representing 3+ students over budgeted enrollment. He thanked recently appointed Admissions Director Lori Gigliotti Murphy for building on Shari Honig's work since joining PCS in July.

Fundraising

Despite many challenges, advancement efforts surpassed by 60% (\$447,000) the budgeted goal of \$750,000. New dollars raised increased by 49% over 2019-20. Nonetheless, Jim cautioned that the smaller parent body for the 2021-22 school year will most likely impact fundraising efforts in the year ahead.

DEIA

Upper School science teacher Ernestine Byer-Tyre will co-chair this year's committee along with Alex Shaurette.

Impact of Covid on PCS

Dr. Dawson explained how the near total shut down of the performing arts as well as arts training programs in New York City had a major impact on our students and on our enrollment. In addition, travel restrictions impacted recruitment of new international students.

As reported earlier, current enrollment is down almost 40% from two years ago. Staffing was reduced by 20% through a combination of voluntary buyouts and the elimination of some positions. As could be imagined, this was a difficult period for a close-knit community like PCS. Some senior members of the faculty and administration retired or got other positions elsewhere. This fall, there are many new faces at PCS, with 3 new faculty members joining us and two new administrators, in addition to a new Assistant Director of Advancement.

Finance and Investment Committee

FY 2021 Budget

Stephanie Hull reported on the final results for FY 2021. She said that a deficit of \$60,000 had been projected as recently as May, but that a generous matching gift from Bill Villafranco had inspired gifts to close the gap, and we ended the fiscal year with a balanced budget.

FY 2022 Budget

Stephanie gave a brief overview of the FY 2022 budget as the school year began:

The Committee's original projection was a \$3 million deficit for the current year. Measures to reduce this deficit included the following:

- Cutbacks in staffing and other expenditures
- Applying the funds received for NY State mandated services (NB: Not all of the received mandated services funds were applied, as the Committee is conscious of the need to fund the facade work and building repairs over time.)
- Additional enrollment of three students

In addition, an endowment draw of \$253,000 will be applied to the FY22 budget; this was not in the original budget as the Committee finalized new management for the investments and reviewed the policies and practices. The combined effect of these measures reduced the deficit to \$1.4 million.

Stephanie said that while a projected \$1.4 million deficit was still substantial, it was a significant improvement over the original projection of \$3 million. She thanked Paul Kane and James Dawson for their diligent work in helping bring down that deficit.

Invitation to attend Finance Committee Meetings

Melanie Harris thanked Stephanie and the Finance Committee and invited trustees who are not members of the committee to attend Finance Committee meetings.

Lee Dieck, chair of the Governance Committee, said that the results of the trustee self-evaluation indicated trustees had a desire for more in-depth "financial education" and she promised to work on that.

Audit Committee

Committee Chair Don Brant reported that a decision was made this year to change accounting firms and so PKF O'Connor Davis, a larger firm with extensive independent school experience, was engaged to conduct the 2020-2021 audit.

The Audit Committee reviewed the draft audit and, after thorough discussion, approved the Financial Statements. The draft that was circulated to the Board prior to the meeting is considered the final draft, but if other than minor changes are made, trustees will be notified in writing of such changes.

Approval of the Audit

Therefore, upon motion duly made and seconded, the following motion was approved unanimously:

RESOLVED, that the Board hereby approves the Professional Children's School Audited Financial Statements for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021 as audited by PKF O'Connor Davis, in the form presented to this meeting, with such changes as the Audit Committee approves, provided that any material change be described in writing to the Board and copies of the final audited financial statements be provided to the Board prior to their being made public.

Institutional Advancement Committee

Committee Chair Erica Marks Panush introduced Meghan Blakeman, Assistant Director for Institutional Advancement, who will be working with Chris Haley in the advancement office.

Erica said the committee's goals for the coming year were "aspirational, yet realistic."

Crossover Meetings

The IAC will conduct a joint brainstorming meeting with the Governance Committee. Erica said these crossover meetings were a great way to share information and build more unity. Erica also invited trustees who are not members of the IAC to attend committee meetings if they are inclined.

Marketing

The committee is collecting examples of marketing approaches that "resonated with them," and she invited trustees to share with the committee effective appeals that may come their way.

Speaker Spotlight Series

IAC meetings will begin with 5-10 minute talks on pertinent topics and Meghan Blakeman will kick things off with a talk about social media and peer to peer fundraising.

2021-2022 Pledges

Chris asked that trustees submit their pledges for the coming year. The information, Chris said, will help the advancement team plan for the year ahead.

Day of Giving November 4

This year's public goal is \$125,000 and stretch goal is \$150,000.

Save the Date April 25

Plans are underway for an in person gala event at the Edison Ballroom on April 25, 2022. Erica said she was "hopeful" that this could take place. Despite the uncertainty, plans needed to be laid. Stay tuned!

Governance Committee

Lee Dieck and Don Brant, committee co-chairs, reported for the committee.

Trustee Self-Evaluation

Lee reported that 12 trustees responded. She thanked everyone for their thoughtful comments. Lee said that while trustees were genuinely pleased with their experience on the board, some helpful suggestions were made:

- Broaden the Board's diversity of experience and professional expertise
- Provide more Financial Education
- Schedule more Faculty/Student presentations

Trustee Profile

Don said that the Governance Committee, in keeping with good practice, is updating the board profile for PCS. This process helps us to identify areas of strength as well as areas for focused recruitment of new trustees. Please respond to the online survey when you receive it in the coming weeks.

Approval of Committee Assignments

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the roster of 2021-2022 committee chairs and committee members was unanimously approved.

Head Evaluation

The last order of business was the GC co-chairs summarizing the results of the 2020-21 Head Evaluation survey to the Board in executive session, followed by an opportunity for Board members to raise any questions with the Head.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John Tucker

John Tucker
Assistant to the Board of Trustees



Diane Kenney, trustee
Secretary, Board of Trustees