

Professional Children's School
Board of Trustees Meeting
May 20, 2021

MINUTES

Present: Melanie Harris, Chair; Michele Barakett, Amanda Bhalla, Donald Brant, Marian Brown, Kristin Kennedy Clark, Amy Crate, James Dawson, Lee Dieck, Silas Farley, Michael Gleicher, Stephanie Hull, Diane Kenney, Erica Marks Panush, Erin Scanlon, William Villafranco and, by invitation, Loryn Evanoff, Chris Haley, Shari Honig, Lizbeth Johnson, Dania Nauholnyk, Alex Shaurette and John Tucker. Absent: Susan Pappajohn & John Murray.

Approval of the Minutes

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the April 15, 2021 and the April 29, 2021 meetings of the Board of Trustees were unanimously approved.

Student Presentation

James Dawson introduced Chloé Bryan, a student in the 10th grade. Chloé is a busy actor/singer who came to PCS in the 7th grade when she was in the cast of "School of Rock." She is also very engaged in the school community and serves as president of the Gay Straight Alliance. Chloé talked about her experiences as a busy performer and how PCS enables her to pursue her career.

College Admissions Report

James Dawson introduced College Advisor Bill Hirt. Bill said this year's senior class had earned "outstanding" college acceptances and he congratulated them for their hard work. He said that covid had brought about many changes in the college admissions process, and mentioned that most of this year's seniors had never visited the colleges they will be attending in the fall.

Twenty-six college representatives met with PCS students this year via Zoom and he predicted that Zoom will be a permanent feature of the admissions process.

A copy of Mr. Hirt's report is attached.

Chair's Report

Melanie Harris thanked Chloé and Mr. Hirt for their reports, adding that, "hearing their comments today was a strong reminder of why I serve on the Board of Professional Children's School."

Departing Trustees

Melanie said that this time of year was always bittersweet, as trustee terms came to an end and friends left the board.

John Murray has been “very instrumental as a PCS trustee,” a distinguished architect, he shared his expertise and the resources of his architectural firm to help renovate the first floor business and admissions offices, and then steered the board through the complicated process of replacing all of the windows at 132 West 60th Street. Melanie thanked John and said she was extremely grateful for his help over the past 8 years.

Susie Pappaiohn has been very helpful sharing her insight as an alum, a dancer and from her broad experience in a variety of disciplines and practice. Melanie said that “we are very grateful for the support she has shown over the last 6 years.”

Michele Barakett accomplished “a great deal in only 3 years” not just as a hardworking member of the Governance Committee for three years, but as the founding chair of the DEIA Task Force which she led with “quiet strength.” Her leadership produced the DEIA’s Report, which will serve as our guide in the years to come. “We are so grateful,” Melanie said.

Kristin Kennedy Clark approaches “every task with passion,” and just this spring tackled the virtual spring benefit and “almost single-handedly” produced the film that was the heart of the evening. Kristin led the Governance Committee “with great energy,” and has been a tireless friend and fundraiser. Melanie thanked her for “7 years of hard work on the school’s behalf.”

Head’s Report

Commencement

James Dawson reported that Commencement on June 10, 2021 was going to be held live, at the Kaye Playhouse before a limited audience. The performances had been videotaped earlier and would be shown at the ceremony. A copy of the entire event will be made available afterwards.

Goals

Jim noted that a written report, including a review of his 2020-2021 Goals, had been sent in advance of the meeting.

Finance Committee

Stephanie Hull, Chair, reported for the committee. She thanked Don Brant for his invaluable help with the investment management search process.

DEIA

The committee approved a document that advises the school to request from vendors, whose engagement must be approved by the Finance Committee, a statement regarding the vendor’s DEIA work/policy.

Budget 2020-2021

A projected \$650,000 deficit has been reduced to \$60,000.

Bill Villafranco immediately pledged \$30,000 toward a matching gift to raise \$60,000 to close the deficit by year end.

Melanie thanked Bill for his generosity and encouraged trustees to meet the challenge.

Budget 2021-2022

The committee will make its final budget presentation in September 2021.

Endowment

Given that current NYSAIS best practice encourages nonprofits to draw down from endowment, the Finance Committee has determined to take a 4% annual draw based on a trailing average of twelve quarters of endowment returns.

James pointed out that NYSAIS had urged PCS during the last two accreditation processes to take a draw from the endowment, as this was a best practice. The understanding is that when an organization receives donations through a tax-advantaged program, there is an obligation to make use of the endowed funds according to accepted principles.

Governance Committee

Don Brant and Kristin Kennedy Clark, Co-Chairs, reported for the committee.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the following trustees were unanimously elected:

Amanda Bhalla	Regular Trustee, Class of 2024
Donald Brant	Regular Trustee, Class of 2022
Lee Dieck	Regular Trustee, Class of 2022
Silas Farley	Alumni Trustee, Class of 2022
Melanie Harris	Regular Trustee, Class of 2024

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the following trustee officers (one year terms) were unanimously elected:

Diane Kenney	Secretary
Stephanie Hull	Treasurer
Lee Dieck	Trustee Emeritas

Head Evaluation

The executive committee would undertake the annual performance review.

Alumni Outreach

Kristin said that the gala provided “a great tool for reconnecting with alumni. “ The committee hopes to continue cultivating an “alumni pipeline to trusteeship.”

DEIA Task Force

Michele Barakett reported that the committee met today, the morning of the Board meeting (Sept. 20, 2021). Amanda Bhalla, Kristin Clark and Silas Farley attended. Michele thanked everyone who had helped with the work this year.

Mission Review

Michele said that the next logical step was for the school to undertake a review of its mission statement. She added that Board Chair Melanie Harris and Head of School James Dawson will determine how best to do this.

Summer Book Read

The Task Force suggests that the Board read “Whistling Vivaldi” by Claude Steele and discuss it at the September Board meeting.

Noting that Michele’s term was ending, Melanie thanked her for generously sharing her expertise with the school and for her leadership in creating the school’s DEIA plan of action.

Institutional Advancement

Amy Crate, Chair, reported for the committee.

She thanked Chris Haley and Noël Soisson for all their help during “a difficult year.” Despite the difficulties, Amy said, Covid “made us think differently and we learned a lot.” Some of what was learned, Amy said, was very helpful and will remain with us long after Covid has passed.

Spring Gala

Amy said that community engagement was a major goal for the event and the committee was very pleased with the results. Alumni were engaged in numerous ways and “going virtual” allowed the committee to reach a wide geographic audience. The breakout rooms were largely hosted by alumni and links to view them are available.

The event netted \$189,000. Amy gave “special thanks” to Kristin Kennedy Clark for producing the film that was the highlight of the evening, and to Kristin and John Clark for underwriting it. Amy said that there is plenty of “great material” that can be used on the website and other marketing purposes.

Large Number of New Donors

Chris Haley noted that the event attracted 51 new donors, and added that those were "mostly friends of trustees." The gala's percentage of new donors was 44% which was "very high" for a PCS event and he thanked the Board for bringing in most of these new friends of PCS.

Faculty/Staff Gift


Amy reported that the faculty, administration and staff were going to be given small monetary gift cards, from the Board of Trustees, in gratitude for everything they had done this year.

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
Trustees



Diane Kenney, Trustee
Secretary, Board of