

Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School (TMA)
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
By Video Conference (Zoom)
February 11, 2021

Board Members in Attendance: Bruce Berman, Danielle Bierzynski, Jinah Bryant, Jerry Epstein, Regina Foshee, Dan Gordon, Mark Harrison, Aleisha James, Kenneth Jones, Richard Roe, Andy Rosenberg, Jonathan Stoel, Laurence Telson.

Staff in Attendance: Raymond Weeden, Executive Director; David Schlossman, Chief Operating Officer; Faith Oviedo, Director of Development and Communication.

Mr. Stoel called the meeting to order at 8:05 am. A quorum was present.

Mr. Stoel asked for a motion to approve minutes from the November 5, 2020, meeting. The motion was made by Mr. Epstein, seconded by Ms. Telson, and approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Mr. Stoel welcomed two new parent board members: Jinah Bryant and Aleisha James. The Governance Committee and Board had previously discussed the candidates and invited them to join the Board. Mr. Epstein made a motion to formally approve their addition to the Board. Mr. Rosenberg seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call vote. Mr. Stoel expressed appreciation for past and current parent board members.

Mr. Stoel announced that the TMA Board of Trustees now includes 13 members. Mr. Epstein made a motion to reinstate Richard Roe as a voting board member now that the Board has an odd number of members. The motion was seconded by Ken Jones. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Mr. Weeden presented the **Executive Director's** report. Highlights included the following:

- TMA is still primarily operating virtually, but some students are coming into the building in small groups. Some of these students have technology limitations at home or are struggling with online learning. Other students are coming as part of teams or clubs that want to work and practice together. This is helping TMA prepare for an eventual larger reopening.
- Some staff members are getting vaccinated, including Mr. Weeden, despite the challenges in vaccine rollout in DC. TMA has held sessions with physicians for both team members and families to encourage them to get vaccinated as soon as possible.
- TMA is in the process of planning for SY 2021-2022, which includes both recovery efforts and regular school year requirements. This has catalyzed an examination of the goals of the school. The school's mission is to prepare students for college and to engage

in a democratic society, but leadership wants to specifically define what success would look like. Mr. Weeden will share draft definitions with the team. Leadership is also considering how to refine and reintroduce TMA's culture when students return to the building. Leadership is also reexamining the school's grading and progress-monitoring philosophy, policies, and procedures.

- Members of the school community continue to have diverse experiences with the virtual environment. Some are thriving in remote schooling and others are struggling.
- Mr. Jones asked Mr. Weeden about the challenge of promoting the COVID-19 vaccine in light of the historical distrust in government-administered medicine because of past abuse of African-Americans. Mr. Weeden said he has emphasized to staff and families that they should talk with their physicians to ensure the appropriateness of the vaccine in individual health circumstances.
- Mr. Stoel said that recognizing the disproportionate impact of COVID on Black and brown communities, he and the board want to know how they can support Mr. Weeden and his staff in this effort.
- Ms. Bryant asked if TMA hoped to have all staff vaccinated before school reopens, and Mr. Weeden said that was unlikely. He said his goal is that everyone is informed about circumstances and risks and can take actions accordingly. He and his team are continuing to monitor the situation with the virus and how it may be changing.
- Ms. Telson asked what the positions of the Public Charter School Board and DC government are in terms of reopening. Mr. Weeden said there are currently no requirements from DCPCSB or DC government about vaccination or reopening. He indicated that it is ultimately up to the Board of Trustees to make those decisions.
- Mr. Harrison asked if there were insurance liability issues related to possible transmission of the virus when the school reopens. Mr. Weeden indicated that the school team will review liability responsibility with its insurer.
- Mr. Stoel expressed appreciation to Mr. Weeden and the leadership team and reiterated his offer to support Mr. Weeden on this issue.

Mr. Gordon introduced the **Education Mission Committee** Report, referred to the Committee's prior discussions, and asked Mr. Weeden to provide an update on how students are doing academically during virtual learning, and asked Mr. Weeden about staff retention for next year.

- Mr. Weeden said he and leadership already met one-on-one with non-instructional staff about their current well-being and future plans, and are now conducting similar meetings with instructional staff. Leadership is also asking teachers about their long-term goals. He said the variety of responses from staff have resulted in the possibility for more movement for staff members who wish to stay at the school but a transition to a different position and that leadership is currently reviewing resumes for positions that will be open for the next school year.

- Mr. Weeden indicated that careful planning of staff will enable TMA to improve its 9th-grade program.
- Mr. Weeden reported that 75% of seniors have already been accepted to two or more colleges, which is a significant improvement over last year at this time (55%). Mr. Weeden credited Mr. Mitchell and his team for this success.
- TMA also has a higher percentage of students who are on track to be promoted than last year at this time, but also there is a large number of 9th-grade students who are failing several classes. In 11th and 12th grade almost all students are on track.
- TMA has piloted interventions with 9th graders, including hiring contractors to work one on one with struggling students. This has been successful so Mr. Weeden plans to continue to invest in it.
- Mr. Weeden said that TMA is considering adding a fifth quarter or extending the school year to ensure that students are prepared to be promoted. TMA is also considering offering the opportunity for students who are on track to take accelerated classes or tutor or mentor younger students. The school is trying to tie these programs into the Summer Youth Employment Program so students do not have to make a choice between “learning and earning.”

Mr. Gordon invited other committee members to comment or ask questions.

Ms. Telson cited news reports that during the pandemic incidents of domestic violence and child abuse have increased nationally, and asked if that was an issue in the TMA community. Mr. Weeden said that he did not know of domestic violence or child abuse cases, but that there has been an increase in neighborhood gun violence. A former TMA student who was unenrolled in school last school year was killed. Mr. Weeden said many TMA students are friends or family members of individuals who have been victims of gun violence. He also said students have reached out during mental health crises and the school did whatever was needed to help. Mr. Weeden said that, while he is concerned about learning loss, he is just as concerned about the grief and trauma that students and team members have experienced due to the pandemic. He said TMA is partnering with the MedStar WISE Center to develop ways to support the community.

Mr. Gordon asked about TMA’s upcoming meetings to review the definitions of school goals, restoring climate and culture, grading, and graduate profiles and Mr. Weeden said all these are coming up.

Mr. Stoel asked what adjustments might be needed for the summer session. Mr. Weeden said summer plans would look different than previous years and may include a 10th-grade prep because that cohort of students has not been in the building, as well as remote learning for accelerated students, and some way of supplementing students’ summer income if possible.

Ms. James asked about the school’s plan for the class of 2021. Mr. Weeden said TMA is looking for an outdoor site for graduation, with certain attendance limitations, which is contingent on current crowd requirements being lifted.

Mr. Epstein presented the **Governance Committee** Report.

- The board modified its bylaws to comply with new open meeting requirements, based on pro bono advice from the Crowell & Moring law firm. Changes to bylaws are in the live binder.
- Mr. Epstein made a motion to approve the change in bylaws to accommodate the Open Meetings Act. Mr. Berman seconded the motion. All Trustees currently serving on the Board were present for the vote. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Mr. Jones introduced the **Finance Committee** Report, which was vetted prior to the meeting by the Finance Committee. Mr. Schlossman presented the school's financial report, which demonstrates sound finances with reasonable shifts due to the pandemic. See COO_Financial Report FY20 and FY21YTD_2020-09-17.xlsx. He also mentioned that the audit of the year ended 6/30/2020 has been approved and submitted to the DC Public Charter School Board. The audit is also included in the live binder. Mr. Schlossman said he would be distributing a survey to board members to assess potential conflicts of interest and provided a status update on the school's PPP loan.

Mr. Jones thanked Mr. Schlossman for his work and recognized the school leadership for using resources wisely to support TMA students and families.

Mr. Stoel asked about how the challenge of recruiting students for the next school year will affect TMA's budget. Mr. Schlossman said that although TMA--like all other organizations--is still navigating the crisis, TMA has a good cash position and will be using funds to implement the reopening strategy. Mr. Weeden said the planned summer programming will provide an opportunity to retain current students.

Mr. Rosenberg presented the **Development Committee** report. The committee, based on prior discussions, has arrived at three options for the annual gala.

- Hold an online spring gala event like last year focused on the 20th anniversary and hold a bigger event the following year.
- Hold a fall event instead--possibly a small in-person event--which could potentially reach new donors and expand the current base, but may or may not interest traditional donors. This option could be challenging for staff because of "back to school" timing.
- TMA could also do a version of both events--an online spring event and fall in-person event. Would that be too much?

Mr. Weeden said he prefers an online spring event.

Mr. Stoel said that if the school can enlist an excellent speaker for the event, that would make a compelling event. He suggested some possibilities.

Mr. Rosenberg agreed that recruiting a prominent speaker would be a great draw and invited the board to contribute other ideas.

Mr. Harrison said if TMA conducts two separate events they should be separate and distinct in character and content. If they are different and successful they could be continued in future years. For example, the fall event could be more focused on the legal community or an educational opportunity.

Mr. Rosenberg said his firm created a speaker series, and he can see the value of TMA serving as a convener of professional gatherings.

Mr. Stoel invited public comments, in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. There were no public comments.

In compliance with provisions of the Open Meetings Act, Mr. Stoel made a motion to go into the executive session in order to discuss sensitive personnel matters. Ms. Bierzynski seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Mr. Stoel adjourned the public portion of the meeting at 9:37.

Mr. Stoel began the executive session at 9:38.

The executive session was adjourned and the meeting adjourned at 9:48.