

**Polaris Charter Academy
Board Meeting Minutes**

Dial In: 212-798-088

PIN: 58366422#

Date:	Tuesday, December 6 th , 2016
Time:	6:30pm (at the school)
Topic(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key State of the School Updates • Marketing Strategy/Efforts • Finalize Board Seats

ATTENDANCE CATEGORY	BOARD MEMBERS & FELLOWS	SCHOOL STAFF
Attending in Person	Arun Bhatia (Chair) Joel Pomerenk (Treasurer) Tina Yarovsky (Secretary)	Michelle Navarre (**Board Ex Officio) Roel Vivit Linda McEvoy Elizabeth Whiting
Attending by Phone	Daniel Epstein Ben Brenton Lauren Wein Nancy Curby	
Unable to Attend	Sam Bottum Melanie Domer Mary Hicks Chip Longenecker (Board Fellow)	Tammy Vance

EXPECTED GUESTS & VISITORS
None

Arun Bhatia called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the October 18th meeting were reviewed. Joel moved to approve; Michelle seconded; all approved.

General Board Notes

- The Board welcomed new Board member, Ben Brenton.
- The Governance Chair position remains open. Responsibilities include tracking board member pipeline, general board compliance, etc.
- In the February meeting, we will finalize committee assignments for Ben Brenton and Melanie Domer.

State of the School

Enrollment Update: (Roel)

Current enrollment is 448 students, which is very strong.

Charter Renewal Update: (Roel)

Since submitting the charter renewal...

- Polaris has only had to follow up with some very minor additions.
- Roel represented the school at a public forum/hearing to explain why our charter should be extended.
- The Office of Incubation and Innovation visited the school on November 30.
- Polaris has been recommended for a five-year renewal, with a few small conditions.

- On December 7, the Board of Education will vote on all charter renewals.
- Polaris will meet with the Office of Incubation and Innovation in January to discuss any final follow-up items.
- We will discuss progress/status in greater detail at the February meeting.

Academics: (Roel)

- There is a school-wide focus on facilitating and supporting student discourse (listening and speaking) to encourage engagement, critical thinking, and understanding. This included a November professional development event focusing on discourse and conversations. In December and January, teachers will work in triads to provide feedback on what's working and where to improve.
- Students will be conducting *Voices for Change* work to engage in discourse around the country. Polaris is talking with *Think It Up* to support funding for future field work to get students in front of people to interview, listen, and lead positive conversation.

Student Updates: (Roel)

- We are waiting to hear results of students' high school applications.
- Eighth grade student Nina Escobar is the recipient of the Daniel Murphy Scholarship, which provides financial assistance (up to \$25,000 per year) and educational support to attend and thrive at a parochial or independent school of the recipient's choice. This is the third year in a row Polaris has had a student receive this esteemed scholarship.
- Drama teacher Georgette Verdin and First Grade teacher Mike Matlock, as well as Michelle and Roel, presented at the EL Education National Conference in October in Detroit. The 2017 EL Education National Conference will be held in Chicago in late October. Polaris will host a pre-conference day on October 26, which will be a good opportunity for friends of Polaris to visit, engage, and learn.

Legal Review: (Michelle)

- Polaris was named in its first-ever lawsuit by an employee of the food service provider Gourmet Gorilla. The lawsuit cites an accident and injury in the Polaris kitchen, which was subsequently settled out of court. Note that Polaris does not currently have legal counsel.

Action Item: Board members should reach out to their networks to help identify legal representation for the school for the future and provide names to Arun and/or Dan. Dan has suggested talking with Mayer Brown.

- Polaris was notified that the school was out of compliance with the Office of Civil Rights, as it pertains to sexual harassment policies. We have submitted all necessary information to ensure compliance.

Governor Rauner & Chicago Board of Education Notes: (Michelle)

- Governor Rauner has denied \$215,000,000 in the State of Illinois budget for CPS. This must still go through the Senate. CPS is requesting that supporters reach out to their State Representative to support overriding this veto. If passed, this veto could negatively impact Polaris' current budget due to reduced per-pupil funding.
- The Chicago Board of Education will be voting tomorrow on the use of TIF money to support teacher salaries and additional charter funding.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee: (Joel)

- A final budget was submitted to CPS on November 7, which was aligned with the Board's approval from the October meeting. The budget continues to assume an enrollment of 445 students.
- During the recent Finance Committee meeting, the team reviewed financial statements and built out a five-year financial summary. Note that FY16 finished in the red – the first time since FY12.

- On the income side, this year's financial risks include a reduction of approximately \$40,000 in special education funding, a reduction of approximately \$20,000 in student activity fees, and a gap of \$36,000 in contributions and grants. On the expense side, we estimate saving \$20,000. Note that this risk assessment does not include risk introduced by the recent in Governor Rauner memo.
- The audit came through with a clean opinion.
- We continue to have \$3,800 in uncollected funds from the Spring Event.
- Giving Tuesday resulted in donations of \$3599.
- Recruiting efforts continue for a Director of Finance & Operations. Joel has pre-screened two candidates, with whom Michelle will meet in the near term.

Governance Committee: (Joel)

- At present, we have one person in the Board pipeline, with whom Sam will follow up.
- Arun will send links to the FOIA and OMA training to all new Board members.
- Joel reached out to Ben Burnham, who is not ready for Board membership, but is interested in staying involved with the school.

Development Committee: (Lauren)

- The Development Committee met in November and discussed marketing collateral needs and building out an overall marketing/development plan for the year. The Committee also continues to focus on ways to revitalize the Associate Board.
- We still do not have a date for the spring fundraiser. Michelle/Joel will reach out to the Madigan Family to discuss honoring them for their ten years of support. Once their availability is determined, we will plan around those dates.
- Current grant opportunities include:
 - Impact Chicago (\$100K) to fund expeditions
 - OSA and McGowan Foundations, both of which require an invitation to apply
- We are looking to plan a Board social/offsite event for 2-3 hours in January/February to strengthen Board relationships, discuss school message/mission, outline Board responsibilities, and conduct training.
- Elizabeth will issue the end-of-year giving appeal on Friday, after which she will work on producing a work plan for marketing materials.
- The Board outlined some important topics/talking points that should be developed:
 - How data/metrics provide compelling support for the good work at Polaris.
 - Value of expeditions in the Polaris experience
 - Impact of the current financial crisis on Polaris and the resulting needs for the school
 - How character is a defining characteristic of Polaris
- According to Michelle, the top development/marketing priorities are (a) website redesign; (b) annual report production; and (c) materials/collateral.

Action Item: Board members should look at their networks to identify people/companies who can assist with achieving these goals and building out a marketing strategy.

Board Topics

Dashboard Observations: (Michelle, Joel)

The Board reviewed the latest dashboard and made the following notes:

- The Level 1 rating greatly assisted with the Charter Renewal.
- We need to keep a close eye on grant submissions.

Technology Needs: (Linda, Michelle)

The school has the following immediate technology needs which are not in the budget but cannot wait until next school year:

- We need to replace old laptops (missing keys; software cannot be updated) for 5th/6th grade, as students cannot learn to type, take online assessments, research, etc. with these aging devices. Linda is suggesting purchasing 100 Chromebooks and carts/locks to store devices:
 - \$18,918 for 100 Chromebooks (\$137 per device plus add-ons for updates, education software)
 - Approximately \$3,000 for carts/locks to store devices
- Wireless upgrades are required, largely due to the thick walls and metal chalkboards in an old building. The spotty Wi-Fi can be address by adding hubs in the classrooms for \$4,500 (parts and labor).

These are capital expenses (not hitting operating expenses).

Board Recommendation: Polaris should move forward with the \$4,500 wireless spend and purchase/evaluate one Chromebook to ensure it will be sufficient.

IMPORTANT DATES

December 21, 2016	Staff Holiday Party at Fat Pour
February 21, 2017	Board Meeting at 6:30 PM
April 25, 2017	Board Meeting at 6:30 PM

At approximately 8:55 PM, Michelle moved to adjourn the meeting; Joel seconded; all approved.