**MINUTES**

Excel Academy Charter School Board of Trustees

December 8, 2015

Marsh and McLennan Agency, Boston, MA

Board Members Attending In Person: Chris DeLorey (Chair), Tom Ellis (Treasurer), Minnie Joung, Matt John Casais, Susan Passoni, Lauren Kushman

Staff Present: Owen Stearns, CEO; Shane Dunn, Managing Director of Strategic Growth and Development; Andrew Solomon, Managing Director of Finance and Operations; Rebecca Cass, Managing Director of Network Programming  
Members of the Public Present: Liz Swerz (Friends of Excel Academy Board), Megan Preiner (Friends of Excel Academy Board)

Chris DeLorey, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 am and presided over the meeting. Shane Dunn kept the minutes of the meeting. Chris DeLorey ascertained that sufficient Trustees were present at the meeting, and that, accordingly, a quorum existed.

1. **SLATE OF VOTES**

The board voted to approve the following votes. Tom Ellis moved, Minnie Joung seconded. Unanimous approval.

1. Meeting Minutes from October 27, 2015
2. Renewal of the Boston Compact
3. Approve School Enrollment Policy
4. **FINANCE AND HIGH SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION UPDATE**

Andrew Solomon reported that our quarter one financials ended up where we expected. School operating expenses are trending on or slightly under budget, and we are pleased with the financial performance of our middle schools. The high school budget went over in Q1 which was not unexpected due to our inexperience opening a high school. The Network Team and Graduate Services are underspending on salaries, with some one-off variances relating to contractual work.

We brought in less than expected in fundraising income, mainly due to the timing of when expected pledge payments were realized.

Liam Brenner (by phone) updated the board on the high school construction project. Construction is on or slightly ahead of schedule. Including contingency money, the project is close to $1 million under budget with the potential for more savings. These savings may go back into the project budget to increase FF&E expenses for the school. Owen reported that we will also hire a moving consultant to help move our existing high school to the new building.

1. **GOVERNANCE UPDATE**

Susan Passoni presented a re-launch of the Governance and Nominating Committee. The group was created to ensure the board is able to navigate the new realities of charter schools and Excel as a larger network of schools. The GNC will create a pipeline of candidates for all boards, help identify new board committees, and review by-laws on an ongoing basis.

There was a question regarding what the ideal size of the board is. The existing by-laws state a maximum of 15 members and the consensus was that the board should not grow beyond that size.

The Governance and Nominating Committee will meet in January to discuss its next steps.

1. **PARCC OVERVIEW**

Rebecca Cass presented the board with an overview of the middle schools’ performance on the PARCC exams in Spring 2015. Overall, Excel’s students performed well across the board, although not in the top 5 as we have been for many years. What is impressive is that all schools and all grades performed at a high level, which is a testament to our network alignment investments. Additionally, Excel’s special education students out-performed city and state averages by a wide margin.

Rebecca highlighted that we as an organization and the board need to re-visit what’s important to us from a performance perspective and how we talk about our outcomes. We used to have clear goals around performance expectations, but have moved away from that now that we have a new test and a high school.

1. **CEO UPDATE**

Owen reminded the board that as public state employees, there are limitations on how board members can communicate about political issues. Board members are able to communicate publicly about legislation but not ballot initiatives in their role as special state employees.

1. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 am.

List of Documents Presented at the Meeting*:*

1. October 27, 2015 Meeting Minutes
2. Updated Student Enrollment Policy
3. Boston Compact Renewal document
4. Finance and Fundraising Update
5. PARCC Performance Slide Deck

Respectfully Submitted,

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Chris DeLorey, Chair