



## The Children's Guild DC Charter School Board

Date: Monday, December 9, 2019  
Time: 6 – 8 p.m.  
Place: 2146 24th PI NE, Washington, DC 20018

### MINUTES

#### **Attendees**

Imani Samuels (Board Chair)  
Dana Baughns  
Melody Giles  
Cleopatra Green-Clarke (phone)  
Leslie Nesmith (phone)  
Dr. Joan Payne (phone)  
Chris Zimmerman

#### **Staff**

Dr. Andy Ross  
Bryan Daniels  
Dr. Gary Kellner  
Nakia Nicholson  
Kathy Lane  
Dr. Paul Rao  
Josh Sutherland  
Amanda Henck

#### **Call to order**

Ms. Samuels called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

#### **No public comment**

#### **Previous Meeting Minutes Approval and Work Meeting Session**

Ms. Giles made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Zimmerman seconded the motion. Previous minutes approved.

#### **Management Company and its Responsibilities**

The DC Campus, governed by the Board is an independent entity and hires the management company of its choice. As per Dr. Ross, The Board does not have any employees. The employees of the school report all concerns to the management company and the management company reports to the Board.

In the management company agreement, Section 2 lists the duties which are:

- (a) General. The D.C. Campus's administrators, teachers, academic staff, clerical staff, and facilities staff (collectively, the "D.C. Campus Staff") shall be comprised of employees of the D.C. Campus. The principal, however, shall be an employee of the Guild. The Guild shall manage the day-to-day operations of the D.C. Campus, including performing the obligations set forth in this Section 3.
- (b) Specific Administrative and Management Services. The Guild shall perform the following Services:

- (i) Accounting and bookkeeping.
  - (ii) Management of accounts receivable, including collections.
  - (iii) Management of accounts payable, including the payment of bills.
  - (iv) Human resource recruitment and management.
  - (v) Facility management and operation.
  - (vi) Public relations and marketing.
  - (vii) Management of computer and information technology support.
  - (viii) Management of purchasing and business operations.
  - (ix) Management and planning of staff in-service training and consultation.
  - (x) Management of any special education services provided by the D.C. Campus.
- (c) Supervision and Assessment of Principal. As previously indicated, all D.C. Campus Staff (except the principal) will be employees of the D.C. Campus. The Guild will periodically assess the performance of the principal of the D.C. Campus. Such assessment shall be performed annually, or more or less frequently as requested by the D.C. Campus Board.

The DC Charter Board (PCSB) asked The Children's Guild to come into the district to create a charter school that serves children who require Special Education services and willing to train other charter schools on the same component. The Chief Academic Officer reports to the management company.

Dr. Ross clarified that there should be no communication between the Board and school staff. The Board brings its concerns to the Educational Management Company i.e. The Children's Guild.

The parent board members, Ms. Giles and Ms. Green, have three different roles. They are employees, board members and parents and they have a duty to disclose a conflict of interest if there is one. In the parent role they have a conflict of interest because they consider their children first and as staff members they have a conflict of interest because of their investment in their program. Dr. Ross suggested that the parent board members should not participate in discussions around budget cuts because of a possible conflict of interest. Dr. Ross stated that if he requests a raise, since he is a part of The Children's Guild Board he is not allowed to vote on anything that pertains to his own personal concerns.

Ms. Samuels asked the board for their thoughts on parent board members who are also staff and whether they can be recipients of the presentation but should not be part of the discussion or the vote. Dr. Ross felt this depends on the discussion and the Board would need to determine if the issues being presented would be a conflict of interest at the time of presentation.

Dr. Ross stated the Board is a governance board and should be voting on the budget not on specific line items in the budget. The Board can review materials/ recommendations and ask questions. Since the Board is not expected to understand special education or all of the specific details regarding the operation of the school it is The Children's Guild's responsibility to give the best advice to serve the board well. In the end the board can decide to overrule the EMO. However, the board needs to be aware that the special education

component of the program requires professional knowledge of the children and competence in special education law. There has to be a level of trust between the EMO and board.

For additional checks and balance, Mr. Zimmerman is on the Board but he also sits on the Children's Guild Alliance Board, as does Ms. Samuels who is an automatic member of that Board as chair of the charter board.

The board discussed the lack of awareness of the operating standard of the Board. Ms. Giles stated that in the full charter agreement it indicates there are to be two parent board members and it does not indicate they cannot vote.

The reasoning for the different structure of this board compared to The Children's Guild's other charter schools was a requirement of operational laws in DC that the board must be independent. The management agreement is the contract between the board and the EMO. The board feels it was important to have active parents and for their participation on the board given the valuable insight they can provide. It is also a requirement of the charter to have parent representation. It was suggested that going forward perhaps a document should be collaboratively developed which removes legalese and tells parents who sit on the board the rules of engagement.

Ms. Baughns felt The Guild as the advisor and the expert, brings information and answers any questions raised by the Board members. The role of parent board members is to give information to the Board from their perspective so the Board has the advantage of input from both the EMO and the parent perspective.

While the bylaws do outline the requirement for two parent representatives it does not provide details on whether or not they are voting or nonvoting and also does not take into consideration that the parents could be employees.

Ms. Samuels noted the optics of the makeup of the management team versus the makeup of the school and the leadership of this school shows a huge discrepancy. When we talk about trust this is where there are huge red flags. There was concern that last week on the vote for the budget that there were two votes against the budget approval. Dr. Payne added that regarding the budget she felt rushed, had incomplete information and did not understand the relationship of the budget to the philosophy of the school as well as she would have liked to. She also felt reluctant to make suggestions as she wasn't sure how it would be received. She requested receiving the budget with adequate time to review before voting on approval. The budget process generally starts in February and then the Board receives it in April for it to be approved in May or June with a submission date in DC of June 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Sutherland agreed that any stakeholder should have an advanced notice of the particulars of the budget to be able to raise issues and ask questions. As to the issue with diversity he added that the organization has contracted with the Ivy Group to work on the concept of cultural diversity. Dr. Ross stated the Ivy Group will start in January with training for executive management and department leaders and then with the Board. The outcomes are not predetermined as they are different with every group creating a plan that is agreed upon.

The Board did ask for a timeline to understand the steps that were needed to get to the hearing for the charter renewal.

### **Charter Renewal** *(see attached documentation)*

Ms. Lane stated that every five years the DC Public Charter Board (PCSB) conducts a review to recommend whether it should continue that charter. Our review was this year and we are pleased to announce that PCSB is making the recommendation to renew our charter with two conditions. The conditions are not to expand to a high school and limit our enrollment to 450 students. The PCSB is well regarded as an authorizer nationally and seem to be making an effort to expand charter options in their portfolio to include alternative schools. We will be meeting with PCSB on Monday, December 16, 2019 along with three other alternative schools. The Guild has been meeting with the PCSB monthly to talk about authorizing strategies for alternative schools. The PCSB realized that the metrics have been unrealistic and none of the alternative schools met their goals. The PCSB is working on an appropriate accountability metric for an alternative school and has been researching best practices across the country for evaluating alternative schools such as The Children's Guild. Although we didn't meet our goals which was the expectation, we have shown progress with the culture and climate at the school which is reflected in the data. In our academic goals, we have made significant progress with I-Ready scores. A lot of credit goes to Ms. Nicholson and Mr. Daniels in getting us to the next five years.

### **Kids First**

Dr. Kellner reported the Kids First program has been initiated and will be launched with a gala celebration on March 28<sup>th</sup> that will focus on innovation and transformation. The board is asked to attend.

### **Human Resource Responsibilities as EMO**

Mr. Howe reported the EMO's job and responsibilities are to provide Human Resources to recruit and screen candidates for positions at the school. Our job as the program leader is to offer the position verbally and in writing and then to begin the onboarding process. The onboarding process must be tracked due to the number of compliance issues such as background, drug screening and child abuse checks, management of benefits, leave, workman's comp, FMLA, short term disability, long term disability, etc. HR works with Finance around position control so we aren't hiring more employees than our budget can afford. The hiring process is currently paper driven but we are switching from ADP to Paycom which will allow for a systemic approach for position control.

### **Meeting Adjourn – Ms. Samuel**