

# Ocean Academy Charter School Board of Education

## Minutes – Board of Trustees Regular Meeting, June 11, 2024

In Accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act: Public Notice of this Meeting pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act has been given by the Board Secretary in the Asbury Park Press – Paper of Record. Ocean Academy Charter School, 1650 Massachusetts Avenue, Lakewood, NJ. Attendance by virtual or in person.

Anita Raynes Lepelstat – President  
Jim Muzikowski – Vice President  
Marshall White  
Aase Marie Hare  
Sharon Hollander  
Roxanne Martin  
Wendy Osorio - Absent  
David Corso

Valarie Smith (Board Secretary), Lorna Hassel (Head of School), Dawn Cobb-Fossnes (Middle School Principal), David Block (School Business Administrator), Thomas McMahon (Facilities Consultant), and Board Attorney, Dave Hespe.

Meeting Called to Order by Anita Lepelstat at 6:23 pm  
Salute to the Flag by Board President Anita Lepelstat

### **Action Agenda**

#### **Public Session:**

#### **Old Business**

#### **Approval of Meeting Minutes of May 14, 2024**

Motion to approve the minutes of May 14, 2024 made by Jim Muzikowski  
Seconded by Sharon Hollander  
Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

#### **New Business**

**Lakewood Public Schools – Complaint to Controversies & Disputes** – Presented by Dave Hespe, Esq & Valarie Smith

Update on negotiations with Lakewood Public Schools

**Update on Trailer** by Valarie Smith & Tom McMahon

Tom reported that we needed to have a section of the parking lot restriped for handicap parking at the front of the trailer. Once that is completed, most likely we will have the certificate of occupancy.

[High School Update](#) – Presented by Tom McMahon

Update on temporary facilities – Christ United Methodist Church  
Update on general planning

Discussion - Questions & Answers

[Ocean Academy Charter School](#)  
[Board of Trustees](#)

***RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE APPLICATION TO COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION  
TO AMEND CHARTER TO ADD A NEW SCHOOL LOCATION AND FACILITY***

June 11, 2024

WHEREAS, Ocean Academy Charter School (OACS) wishes to add a new school location and facility within its region of residence at Christ Methodist Church, 678 5th Street, Lakewood, New Jersey ;

WHEREAS, OACS, in order to meet the needs of its growing student body as it begins phasing-in its high school grades will need an additional school facility pending completion of a new high school building;

WHEREAS, OACS rented classroom space at the Christ Methodist Church in the initial years of its charter before moving to its current location and found the space and location suitable for the needs of the charter school;

WHEREAS, OACS will locate the incoming 9th Graders at the new facility totaling no more than 70 students (per approved maximum enrollment);

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees and school community have been engaged in the decision to locate the incoming 9th Graders in the new facility and are supportive of this request;

WHEREAS, the property is an existing parochial school and OACS will have the exclusive use of the following spaces on school days:

Lobby, Hallways, Two Offices, Supply and Utility Closets, Eight Classrooms, Bathrooms, Kitchen, & Recreation Hall.

The school will have full access to the school parking lot during school hours which will also be used for bus pick up and drop off and parent access.

WHEREAS, the rental of the new property will not negatively impact the finances of the charter school;

WHEREAS, the transportation needs, if necessary, will be immediately communicated to the transportation departments of the sending districts, in writing, to request transportation services as required by NJSA 18A;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The School Administration be and hereby is authorized to file an application to the Commissioner of Education to amend the School's charter to add a new school location at 678 5th Street, Lakewood, New Jersey.
2. The School Administration be and hereby is directed to duly provide a copy of this application to the Lakewood Board of Education and take any and all actions in furtherance of this charter amendment application, including, but not limited to, the preparation and filing of a letter to the Commissioner in support of the amendment application.

***Vote: To Approve Resolution - TO AUTHORIZE APPLICATION TO COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION TO AMEND CHARTER TO ADD A NEW SCHOOL LOCATION AND FACILITY***

***This resolution was approved by the Board of Trustees on June 11, 2024 at a regularly scheduled board meeting. The following trustees were present, and all voted in the affirmative: Anita Raynes Lepelstat, President; Jim Muzikowski, Vice President, Marshall White, Aase Marie Hare, Sharon Hollander, Roxanne Martin, David Corso. Motion made by Marshall White, Seconded by Dave Corso, Vote: Unanimously in the Affirmative.***

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**Update on New High School Building, Construction, etc** – Presented by Tom McMahon

The yellow house on the property next door should be coming down within the next two weeks. The builder is projecting about a 15-month time frame for the high school to be completed.

**Renewal of Mashio's (Food Service Contract)** – Presented by David Block & Valarie Smith

Motion to renew food service contract with Mashio's made by Aase Hare  
Seconded by Marshall White  
Vote: Unanimously approved by the Board

**Financials** – Presented by David Block

Motion to Approve Financials as presented by SBA David Block: May & June  
Discussion Questions & Answers

Motion made by Jim Muzikowski  
Seconded by Roxanne Martin  
Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

**Resolution for ESL** – Presented by Valarie Smith via Liz Montalvo

*N.J.A.C. 6A:15 requires that all school districts submit a three-year plan outlining the programs and services provided to all English Language Learners,*

“The goal of Ocean Academy's ESL program is to enable English language learners to become competent in the understanding, reading, listening, speaking, and writing of the English language through the development of literacy and academic skills in grade level content areas,

The Goal of the Plan is to increase the number of ELL's who achieve English Language proficiency ensuring equitable access to all programs and service in the school. Providing schools with a framework for using data. Informing district policies and classroom practice, including effective instruction for ELLS. Providing a guide to analyze and review data. Identifying trends and developing goals that will enable ELLs to succeed academically and linguistically. Aligning funding sources to ensure educators have the tools & skills to instruct ELLs Ensuring alignment of program practices with the district's vision for student success Articulating which LIEPs the school is implementing for ELLs for the next three years

Ocean Academy Charter School continues to support ELL to the fullest extent possible in the school's three-year plan and such plan contains the following components: Identification of students, Program description, Number of Certified Staff Hired for program, Bilingual & ESL Program Curriculum Development, Evaluation Design, Review Process for Exit, Budget for the Bilingual & ESL Program or English Language Services”

Motion to approve the School Districts goals and three-year plan for English Language Learners made by Jim Muzikowski  
Seconded by Anita Lepelstat  
Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

**Board Self-Assessment & Goals for the 2024-25 School Year** – Presented by Anita Lepelstat

Transcript of Board Self-Evaluation

Board members were recently asked to complete a self-assessment of their individual performances/contributions as members, and to give feedback as to the boards' performance as a whole. Seven members submitted feedback and gave comments relative to their ratings.

With the exception of one member, all responded that their role as a planning body, policymaking body, were vital or very important. Similarly recognized as vital to their and the board's role, as a whole, was in

providing oversight for student achievement, for budget development and evaluation, good boardsmanship in areas of confidentiality, listening, and conflict management.

Under this area deemed vital was board/superintendent, board/staff, and board and community relationships. One rating of “somewhat important” was assigned to Board & Community.

On subsequent pages, each area was evaluated specific to the ones alluded to above, specifically:

Planning, Policy, Student Achievement, Finance, Board Operations, Board Performance, Board/Superintendent Relationships, Board/Staff Relationships, and Board & Community.

All areas received either a 3 or good or 4 or commendable vis-à-vis individual performance with 14 value indicators for commendable and 14 value indicators for good for overall board performance with exception of the area of Board & Community.

### Board Member Comments

#### 1. Planning

“I have excellent attendance & participation at all meetings and some school functions. I lend my limited expertise when appropriate”

“The Board is fully engaged in planning for the High School Expansion.”

“Public has no input in district goals or the planning process.”

In the remainder of this summation, the numbers of each board member’s input regarding his/her performance and the board as a whole, are listed. The comments are included relative to each category.

#### 2. Policy

“I would love to see a well-orchestrated Soccer Club at the school. However, it is not my place to determine one student activity over another. So, I maintain a reserved opinion and focus on the betterment of the school for all children.”

“The board acts within policy guidelines.”

“Our policy book is thousands of pages. We pay the state board to keep the book up to date.”

#### 3. Student Achievement

“I study the data, listen closely to the educators involved in the board, and attend conferences to stay up to date on the best technology and curriculum available. “

4. Finance

“I observe, listen, and review all reports provided to me as a board member.”

“Financial operations of the school are presented on an ongoing basis and in a format that is easy to understand.”

5. Board Operations

“I absolutely bring a fresh, appropriate, out of the box approach to many issues and generally do so in a pleasant manner.”

“On my short time on the board, I have observed that the board has an overall handle on governance issues.”

6. Board Performance

“There are voluminous policy directives on all areas of board activities. I do my best to keep current and listen closely to our board attorney.”

“I have observed that the Board operates within a respectful manner and is ethical. Does not participate in bad behavior and works with the administration.”

“The Board has every opportunity to raise questions and has input into motions and resolutions proposed by the Executive Director.”

7. Board/Superintendent Relationships

“I feel comfortable and respected with all issues and interactions with the superintendent.”

“In my short term on the board, I have observed a very open and good relationship with the Executive Director.”

8. Board/Staff Relationships

“As previously stated, I respect the superintendent and her many accomplishments and participate in an many activities as time allows.”

“I have not yet had the opportunity to engage in a lot of staff issues but anticipate being fully engaged with the High School expansion.”

“We are not informed of all school activities.”

9. Board & Community

“I encourage board involvement in improving community relationships whenever possible and appropriate.”

“I have observed that the board is fully aware of community issues and makes decisions in the best interest of the community.”

### Challenges & Potential Board Goals

Directions on Form as Follows: Recognizing that our board’s highest priority is to improve student achievement, what are the major challenges currently facing our district?

- ✚ We must keep helping our students learn so that they may achieve all they can in life.
- ✚ Meeting the needs of the students with IEP’s
- ✚ High School Expansion
- ✚ Establishing a competitive high school program with an eye on outcomes, higher education, vocational training, etc
- ✚ Develop an after-school program that meets the goal of helping students improve self-image
- ✚ Our parents are limited in their ability to reinforce youngster’s learning due to limitations in understanding and speaking English
- ✚ We must work hard to keep paraprofessionals in as many classrooms as possible.
- ✚ We must strive to have more Spanish speaking staff to allow our children to have many adults with whom they can easily communicate
- ✚ Meeting the needs of gifted & talented students
- ✚ As we build and operate a new high school, present a wide variety of extracurricular activities to maximize student potential and help create good citizens.
- ✚ Hiring of new staff especially related to current teacher shortages in NJ
- ✚ Maintaining improvement of students’ academic skills and scores that reflect this.
- ✚ Behavior management, especially for students as they get older.
- ✚ Increasing student attendance.
- ✚ Develop programs to help parents improve their ability to assist their students in school
- ✚ Addressing issues related to levels of absenteeism
- ✚ The board doesn’t represent the community it serves.

Motion to Approve the Summary Self-Assessment of the Board made by Sharon Hollander

Seconded by Roxanne Martin

Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

[Board Assessment of the Executive Director](#) – Presented by Anita Lepelstat

### Superintendent/Executive Director’s Assessment by the Board

This summative report is based on district goals for 2023-24 and on the job description for the Superintendent of Schools.

The Three Goals Highlighted for this part school year were:

- ✚ To continue to advance with a High School Expansion
- ✚ Parental Outreach – ProActive
- ✚ Continue with Whole School Reform

## **1. School Expansion**

Valarie has provided the details regarding preparation in meeting the criteria for our grant application for our proposed high school expansion.

Valuation by the board of Valarie’s Efforts and accomplishment in this area was overwhelmingly positive in our recognition of her achievements, the support received from parents, input from her administrative staff, from faculty, board, and consultants.

A sampling of comments accompanying valuation in this area were:

- ✚ Valarie has done an incredible job in making the dream of not only providing a charter school for the children of Lakewood, but also a high school – enabling students to complete their education without interruption”
- ✚ “Great Accomplishment”
- ✚ “Fantastic! I was not sure this was on the horizon for OACS”

Overall consensus is that decisions for choice of High school principal and placement of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students for the 2024-25 were made in a timely manner and with overwhelming approval from the Board.

## **2. Parental Outreach – ProActive**

Valerie has indicated parental outreach continues to be a priority of her administration. One has been the harassment of our parents by Lakewood Public Schools regarding legal domicile.

The Executive Director and BOT have filed a motion with the DOE to address the Lakewood School District Issues.

Attendance & tardiness have been an ongoing issue that continues to be addressed through communication with parents.

Valarie also has addressed assigning advocates to accompany parents to IEP meetings and outside services to assist with their limitations in speaking and understanding English.

Activities that have taken place and are ongoing in regard to parental outreach are outlined in Valarie’s summation for the board.

## Board Comments on Parental Outreach

- ✚ The staff, administration, and board has done and is doing a great job working with parents. I am especially pleased to see parents join the board to give specific, local details to help in decision making concerning the school.
- ✚ The approach is very good. The effort is tremendous, and the nature of the goal causes it to be on-going.
- ✚ I am very proud of the school's effort at parental outreach. Exceeds expectations.
- ✚ Unfortunately, the PTO was disbanded by a vote of the officers. The parent group was not included in the discussion.
- ✚ This is a particularly challenging area. Notable progress is noted in efforts to engage parents in participation in their student's learning.

### 3. Whole School Reform

Whole School Reform is ongoing.

## Board Comments on Whole School Reform

- ✚ The progress is amazing. Scores are going up and students are happy and receiving a great education thanks to all the special programs developed.
- ✚ The numbers are up while a significant number of students have IEPs. We are heading in the right direction, but the challenges will continue.
- ✚ The additional staff members should be able to continue Whole School Reform at the school.
- ✚ All positions should be posted so all staff can apply
- ✚ Outstanding progress has been made in the process of Whole School Reform demonstrated most notably in improvements in students' achievement in English & Math Scores

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## What are the superintendent's greatest strengths and how does this directly contribute to attainment of the district goals and increase student achievement?

- ✚ "Her oversight of business functions and government regulations, oversight and involvement."
- ✚ "We are able to provide the best available technologies for improved learning opportunities."
- ✚ "Instructional Leadership and Personnel Management"
- ✚ "Higher test scores and hiring new staff needed to implement the High School Expansion"
- ✚ Financial management is a major strength: money is available for the High School Expansion based on current budget surplus.
- ✚ "General Responsibilities Valarie is a Jill of all trades"

## In support of continued improvement in student achievement, which standard do you think deserves the superintendent's increased focus and attention?

- ✚ Student attendance is an important concern. Our attendance numbers are very high.

- ✚ Community involvement and addressing the high absenteeism rate
- ✚ Advanced classes for the gifted and talented. Extracurricular and sports activities, proven undertakings which develop discipline, fortitude, and teach team work

**What assistance should the Board provide to enhance the superintendent's strengths and promote the achievement of the district goals**

- ✚ Attendance at all meetings
- ✚ Support through sub-committee participation & volunteer guidance in areas where the board has expertise.
- ✚ Continued support to the Executive Director and the school's priorities
- ✚ Willingness and readiness to help her when the need arise
- ✚ Support expansion and other initiatives

**Summary – 2023-24**

Thank you to the board members for their completed self-evaluation forms and their evaluation of the Chief School Administrator.

From the tabulated valuations, it is clear that the Board recognizes the importance of accountability and assessment, and continuing commitment to focus on and increase student achievement. A summary of checks in each area of board participation and performance speaks volumes.

We recognize the responsibility we have and take our roles seriously.

In comments relative to the Executive Director's district goals, Valarie's efforts and accomplishments have exceeded expectations in every area.

We agree that while math and English scores across all grade levels have improved dramatically, we must always strive for ongoing growth in all areas of learning

Comments through this board's assessment, supports the recommendation that we all unquestionably support Valarie, the administration, and the faculty in continuing the path of Whole School Reform. Kudos to Nancy Guzman for spearheading this course!

Community and Parent Outreach continue to be critical to program development at Ocean Academy.

We will continue to support Valarie and our new high school principal, Stephen Nichol, as they address the challenges of developing the High School curriculum and satisfying the state statutes in establishing the miracle that is sure to emerge.

Finally, we would ask you to consider our concerns and suggestions as we continue to be part of Ocean Academy's expected growth.

Anita Lepelstat – Board President

Motion to Accept and Approve the Summary Assessment of the Executive Director as presented by Anita Lepelstat made by Jim Muzikowski

Seconded by Roxanne Martin

Vote: unanimously approved by the Board

### **Accomplishment of 2023-24 Goals by the Executive Director**

Motion made by Anita Lepelstat that the Executive Director accomplished the goals set by the Board for the 2023-24 school year.

Second by David Corso

Vote: Unanimously approved by the Board

### **Merit Pay for Accomplished Goals by the Executive Director as per Contract**

Motion made by David Corso that the Executive Director receive the designated merit pay for the accomplishment of the 2023-24 school year goals:

Seconded by Sharon Hollander

Roll Call Vote: In the Affirmative: Anita Lepelstat, Jim Muzikowski, Marshall White, Aase Hare, Sharon Hollander, Roxanne Martin, David Corso.

### **Discussion on New Goals for the 2024-25 School Year**

Board Goals:

1. Supporting Administration with a parent program to learn English.
2. Continued support with advancement of High School Expansion
3. Increase achievement for all students inclusive of all curriculum areas – improvement in Math & ELA scores. Implement and share a high-quality curriculum that reflects the state standards while addressing the needs of Ocean Academy Students. Continue to revise the curriculum to match the state curriculum updates. Develop and embed our curriculum and resources to reflect social and cultural diversity. Implement the curriculum to engage students in critical thinking, purposeful learning, and compelling experiences.
4. Student & Staff – Addressing Absenteeism.

Goals for the Executive Director:

1. Increase Communications with various governmental and community entities (such as county superintendents' roundtable, various business groups, etc)
2. Continue with the high school expansion efforts
3. Continue with Whole School Reform – efficiencies and compliance by staff.
4. Address areas of Talented and Gifted programs for students to maximize student potential.

Motion to Approve the 2024-25 new goals for the Board as outlined above and the 2024-25 new goals for the Executive Director made by Jim Muzikowski

Seconded by Roxanne Martin

Vote; Unanimously approved by the Board

### **Board Comments:**

Dawn Cobb-Fossnes updated the Board on the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Trip to Washington DC

### **Announcements:**

An awards Ceremony is scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> Graders on June 17<sup>th</sup> at the 3 B's Restaurant

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation is scheduled for June 19<sup>th</sup> in the School's Gym

We will be having 4 weeks of Summer School for the month of July. Four days a week, 16 days in total concentrating on ELA and Math.

### **Motion to Adjourn:**

Made by Anita Lepelstat

Seconded by David Corso

Vote: All in the Affirmative

Adjourned 8:05 PM

**These minutes were approved by the Board of Trustees on August 20, 2024**