

Amana Academy Board  
Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2009

Attendees: P. Holloway, L. Afani, A. Dhoulfikar, A. Cooper-Gatewood, E. Jaleel, L. Hedgepeth, K. Helz, P. Thompson, T. Blair, A. Otte, F. Howel, J. Albright, C. Jaafar, J. Naim, M. Locurto, J.J. Credi, A. Mohler, S. Allen, A. Milton, Z. Abueljebain, C. Standish, R. Thomas, K. Wilkins, S. Naqvi, S. Kodvavi

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**Opening/Welcoming of community members**

**Recognition**

Zainab Abueljebain (former Board chair) and Traci Blair (former PTA Chair) – outgoing Board member and PTA Chair

**Bylaws (Discussion):**

Feedback was provided on the following topics:

1. Committee structure, formal involvement of community members and standing committees
2. Number of board members
3. Roles and responsibilities of Board members
4. Guidelines for communication, Board vacancies and meetings
5. Procedures for consensus-building

Board members agreed to revisit the bylaws in greater detail; the recommendation was to schedule a Bylaws workshop/round table in May.

**Formal presentation of Carrie Dhoulfikhar as PTA President**

**Budget Amendment (action):**

- Discussion of current county projections – current FCS budget projections are based on enrollment projections of 420; missing central office costs; cuts to central office funding for all charter schools have been announced; Board is in constant communication with county budget office and is proactively addressing budgetary issues
- A Cooper-Gatewood brought up the issue of summer tax rolls; referenced the county reserve
- Board has detailed financial plans in place based as well as a variety of projections for different scenarios; Board budget workshop scheduled in May
- Budget amendment was reviewed - summer school, TAG testing contract services, front office overlap training - \$76k; unanimous approval

**Policy Development (discussion):**

- A reading of the Policy development procedures was conducted (attached)
- Policy packets were presented to all Board members; included in the packets was a set of three draft policies (attached) – (1) Student - Late Pick-Up, (2) Personnel - Email Retention, (3) Communications – Use of Parent Email List ([all of the policies listed here are available for public commentary on the Amana website](#)).
- L. Alexander asked about the Employee References Policy draft; P. Holloway reminded the Board of the decision to revise the Employee References Policy; L. Alexander will redraft prior to the next Board meeting
- Interim Director S. Hanief has requested several new policies – (1) Facility Use, (2) Board Operations – Conflict of Interest, (3) Personnel – Vacation Policy, (4) Personnel – Email Retention Policy, (5) Employee References Policy; drafts of these new policies will be presented to the Board for first reading at the May board meeting

#### **HR/Executive Director Recruitment (information)**

- P. Holloway spoke about the ED recruitment process and projected timeline.
- A Mohler provided an explanation of the process for parent input on the classroom/teacher assignments for the next school year.

#### **Earth Day 2009 (announcement):**

- J. Credi provided information about the upcoming Earth Day Celebration (Friday, May 1st); detailed information posted on the Amana website

#### **Recognition**

- Amana Academy has recently been awarded a proclamation by Governor Sonny Perdue as one of three schools in the State to be recognized during the upcoming National Charter Schools Week (May 4-8)
- The official campus ceremony will be held on Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup> from 2-3 pm
- A Cooper-Gatewood and E. Jaleel spoke about the impact of the award and the PR activity plans that are in place:
  - Will showcase Amana as a school of excellence nation-wide
  - Serve as a catalyst for a year-long celebration (11 Alive News)
  - Help us target the private-school market
  - Opportunity to be featured on the FCS website
  - City of Alpharetta and Roswell will make official proclamations
  - Principal of the Day accepted – Brandon Beech, President and CEO of the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce. He is Executive Director of the North Fulton Community Improvement District and a member on the Board of Trustees of Encore Park and the Grady Hospital Board of Visitors
  - Opportunity to honor our stakeholders

#### **Town Hall Session:**

- Ground rules were read by A. Cooper-Gatewood

S. Allen: Was the criteria for the selection for the Governor's Award announced?

- Innovative approaches
- Academic achievement
- Accountability
- Combination of measures and different agencies
- E. Jaleel will follow-up with Andrew Lewis, GA DOE

Are library services being eliminated?

- No final decisions have been made as of yet; we hope to retain the qualifications of the person we already have
- Explanation of the numbers of students, ratios between the genders, etc.

How is the Board reacting to the opening of Sunshine Academy?

- School choice is a positive thing for the entire community
- Start-up charter schools take time to evolve
- We will remain focused on implementing Amana's mission at the highest levels; reinforce our own uniqueness
- Our existing customer base will be the focus of our marketing strategy moving forward
- Our new administrator leader structure will provide a higher level of quality; added level of focus on the ground; more direct communication

How does the new leadership model impact the budget?

- Necessary to support the growth of the school
- Will allow for improved customer service and external stakeholder relations and the nurturing of donor support
- Quality instruction depends on having a more focused support team on the ground

How is the Board going to be dealing with *communication* in the future?

- Board will develop/improve communication procedures; help parents feel more connected and empowered
- Positive change will occur as the Board and school continues to grow
- Board recognizes the need to react in a timely fashion

What is the Board going to do to address discipline issues?

- L. Afani explained the research being conducted and the process being followed for the revision of Amana's discipline policy; will provide for a much clearer set of expectations and consequences; expulsion tribunal; escalation procedures
- Board is in full support; in complete agreement on the need to put in place prior to the new school year

- Explanation of the new leadership procedures and how this will impact classroom management and student discipline
- A. Mohler explained the legal background and history with FCS
- Board will ensure full legal compliance and has already been “blessed” by FCS Director of Student Discipline; additional legal review will take place prior to adoption
- Once adopted, the Board will closely oversee the implementation of the new discipline policy; full accountability
- J. Credi reminded parents that the new policy will be in alignment with Amana’s ethical character mission/philosophy

What is the Board doing about the on boarding for incoming students...potential discipline issues? Can we set a criteria for new students?

- A. Cooper-Gatewood addressed charter school enrollment policies (public school of choice)
- Board will take a look at orientation and student recruitment practices; one strategy may be to target our marketing to the private/independent school population

We have a concerns about the role of the School Board in relation to the school administration/staff. Concerns about the new leadership model were brought up; qualification of the new ED; contract renewal to new teachers. How is the Board addressing it’s own accountability?

- L. Alexander discussed the evolutionary nature of start-up charter schools; made reference to other governance models and local charter schools; explained how the leadership changes have impacted the Board’s role; explained that the current focus has been on self-evaluation and internal assessment and with the new leadership model, the Board will be better able to focus on governance issues; the Board is in the process of developing additional decision-making tools and processes
- These issues are common for most start-up charter schools
- The current emphasis is on planning, accountability and customer focus

What is the Board’s role in authorizing employee contracts?

- L. Afani explained that the Board is responsible for the overall performance of the school; legal compliance issues
- A. Cooper-Gatewood explained some of the current recruitment practices and processes
- Concern about a teacher being let go could not be address (confidentiality issues)
- Board explained what is being done to recruit quality teachers
- Charter schools do not have access to the FCS teacher pool
- Parent suggested we reach out to job sharing teachers (being let go by the county); Board will follow-up with admin.

What is the timeline for the ED to be filled?

- Deadline for ED position is set for the end of the school year
- Panel has been narrowed down to finalists; phone screening taking place
- Accountability plan being put in place prior to the hire of the ED – strategic plan, annual plan, annual calendar, etc.

Can we revisit the Uniform Policy before the end of the school year...the use of the iron-on logo?

- S. Allen provided an explanation of the Uniform Committee history, the decision to go with the stitched logo and the rationale for keeping our current vendors in place
- Committee is open to all parents
- Board will ask the ID to address uniform committee issues prior to the end of the school year

Are the same procedures in place for handling parent requests for next year's classroom/teacher assignment?

- A. Mohler provided an explanation of the procedures – same as last year; will be announced to parents in the coming week
- Looping structure does allow some flexibility; students do not have to remain with the same teacher; parents should bring this to the attention of the administration prior to the end of the school year; a reminder notification will be sent out