

# 02-27 February Board Meeting

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## Meeting Information

- Date & Time: 2025-02-27 18:33:10
- Location: Virtual
- Attendees: Luke Copley, Martha Zornow, Ibrahim Yusuf, Nick Pozek, Kristan Norgrove, Gareth Daley

## Meeting Notes

### 1. CFO Board Presentation - Operational Improvements and Financial Management

- **Gareth's Achievements and Plans**  
Gareth discussed his achievements in streamlining purchasing systems, establishing policies, and improving financial processes. He also outlined plans for the next six months, including budget preparation and system integration.
- **Employee Retention Credit (ERC) Concerns**  
The team discussed the challenges in collecting the Employee Retention Credit and its impact on budgeting. They considered writing it off as uncollectible due to prolonged delays.
- **Employee Manual and Policies**  
Gareth suggested revising the employee manual to clarify policies and procedures, especially concerning staff terminations.
- **System Redundancy and Integration**  
Gareth emphasized the need to reduce system redundancy and focus on integrated systems for cost savings and efficiency.
- **Budget Transparency and Accountability**  
The discussion focused on improving budget transparency and accountability for principals and staff, ensuring they have up-to-date spending data.
- **Gareth's Experience and Motivation**  
Gareth shared his positive experience working in the school environment, highlighting the joy of interacting with students and contributing to their development.

## 2. Board Meeting Discussions on Parent Engagement, Bylaws Changes, and School Year Planning

- **Gareth's Contribution**  
Gareth has been acknowledged for his financial expertise and the systems and structures he has implemented, which were much needed.
- **Parent Engagement**  
The board discussed creating a non-voting role for parents on the board to better engage the parent community. The plan is to have parents join at the beginning of the next school year.
- **Board Minutes Approval**  
The board reviewed and approved the minutes from December and January meetings, with some changes to the December minutes.
- **Bylaws Changes**  
The board discussed changes to the bylaws, including term limits, video conferencing, committee authority, and check signing requirements.
- The updated Bylaws were approved as presented

### Conclusion

1. A proposal will be developed by June to outline the role and process for parent engagement.
2. Minutes from both meetings were approved.
3. Changes to the bylaws were approved and will be sent to the liaison.

## 3. School Operational Challenges and Opportunities

- **Finance and Bond Covenants**  
The finance team discussed issues with filing financials due to amendments to bond agreements.
- **Lease Negotiation**  
The school is considering leasing a parking lot and adjacent building from Penske. The space could be used for parking, a playground, or a gym, and there are considerations for monetizing the parking lot.
- **NWEA Map Assessment**  
The school conducted its second NWEA map assessment, with lower-than-expected scores. They are exploring environmental factors and implementing test prep to improve results.
- **Attendance and Enrollment**  
Attendance rates have dropped due to holidays and weather, but the school is working to improve them. Enrollment remains stable, and efforts are ongoing to reduce chronic absenteeism.
- **Staffing and Principal Search**  
The school is finalizing the hire of a special populations coordinator and

continues to search for a new principal. The goal is to have the principal in place by July 1.

#### **4. School Safety and Strategic Planning**

- **Safety Plan**

The meeting discussed the district-wide safety plan, emphasizing the need for a robust plan including cyber safety policies. The plan is on track for revision by the end of the year, with public comments expected in the summer.

- **Emergency Preparedness**

Issues with communication systems at the elementary school campus were identified, with plans to work with vendors to address these. The possibility of involving external third parties for safety assessments was debated.

- **Family Engagement**

The school is committed to the Joyce Epstein model for family engagement, with plans to help families with financial literacy, particularly around setting up 529 accounts.

- **Enrollment Strategy**

The meeting addressed declining enrollment trends, particularly in early childhood, and discussed the potential of opening a high school to address these trends.

#### **5. School Enrollment and Marketing Strategy**

- **Demographic Changes and Enrollment Strategy**

The meeting discussed the decline in birth rates and demographic shifts in Harlem, affecting school enrollment. The focus was on understanding these changes and strategizing marketing efforts to attract different demographics. The school is performing better than other charters in terms of enrollment, indicating a strong product.

- **Financial Monitoring**

The discussion covered the importance of monitoring financial metrics like DSCR and days cash on hand to ensure financial stability. The school is confident in meeting financial covenants this year.

- **Leadership and Continuity Plans**

The meeting highlighted the need for mid-year conversations with leaders to understand their goals and interests. Continuity plans are in place for emergencies, ensuring leadership responsibilities are covered.

- **Marketing and Website Updates**

The discussion emphasized the need for improved marketing efforts, particularly updating the website to attract potential students. The current website lacks essential information, impacting enrollment.

- **Freelancer for Marketing**

The meeting explored hiring a freelancer to handle marketing tasks, including SEO and content creation. Budget constraints were discussed, highlighting the need for a realistic approach.

## **Conclusion**

1. The school should focus on understanding demographic changes and strategize marketing efforts accordingly.
2. The school is confident in meeting financial covenants this year.
3. Continuity plans are in place for emergencies.
4. The website needs to be updated to attract potential students.
5. Hiring a freelancer for marketing tasks is being considered.

## **6. Organizational Development and Strategic Planning**

- **Marketing Strategy**

The discussion focused on the need for a comprehensive marketing strategy to improve enrollment. Suggestions included hiring a marketing professional, possibly a freelancer, to manage digital marketing efforts. The importance of community outreach and aligning with community organizations was also emphasized.

- **Website Improvement**

The need to update the website, particularly the curriculum section, was highlighted as a priority to attract potential students and families.

- **Budgeting for Marketing**

The team discussed the importance of including marketing expenses in the upcoming budget and the need to decide on the level of investment.

- **Enrollment and Social Worker**

The discussion covered the impact of unmanaged student behavior on enrollment and the potential benefits of hiring a social worker to address these issues.

- **After School Program**

The team explored options for running an after-school program, including potential partnerships and budget considerations. The possibility of using existing space for students from other schools was also discussed.

- **Data Security Review**

A brief mention of the need to review data security measures was made, but no detailed discussion occurred.

- **Strategic Planning**

The team discussed the need for a strategic plan covering the entire organization, with a focus on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

## Next Arrangements

- Discuss ERC collection issues in the finance committee.
- Organize a proposal for parent engagement by June.
- Send approved bylaws changes to the liaison.
- Communicate school year start date changes to staff.
- Kristen will inspect the Penske property to assess its condition and potential uses.
- The principal search continues with promising candidates being interviewed next week.
- Revise the district-wide safety plan by the end of the year.
- Explore external third-party assessments for safety.
- Help families with financial literacy and 529 accounts.
- Update the website with current information.
- Evaluate the possibility of hiring a freelancer for marketing tasks.
- Update the website's curriculum section.
- Explore partnerships and budget options for an after-school program
- A proposal will be developed by June to outline the role and process for parent engagement.