



## The School District of Philadelphia

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### Board of Education Public Meeting Minutes September 19, 2024

A public meeting of the Board of Education was held in hybrid format on September 19, 2024. Some Board Members, select staff, and some registered speakers participated in-person, while others participated remotely. Members of the general public who did not attend in-person participated via the Zoom meeting platform.

The meeting was convened at 4:00 p.m by Reginald Streater, President.

#### **Opening Remarks**

President Streater reported and commented on the following:

- Welcome all to almost 200,000 students, their families, and staff to the 2024-2025 school year
- Recognition of the month of September that includes Labor Day, Brazilian and Chilean Independence Days, a number of events in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, Missing in Action and Prisoner of War Recognition Day, International Day of Peace, and International Translation Day
- Recognition of American Sign Language, or ASL, interpreters who join us for every meeting to ensure our meetings are inclusive and accessible to Philadelphians of all abilities
- Acknowledgement of Constitution Day and Technology Professionals Day

#### **Non-Voting Student Board Representative Appointment Ceremony**

Board Member Andrews announced that the Board will appoint the new Student Board Representatives for the 2024-2025 School year. Board Member Andrews shared that Student Board Representatives are essential to the composition of the Board of Education; helping Board Members as they make tough decisions by sharing with us the successes and concerns of their peers, and most importantly, bringing their voice to the discussion. Additionally, Board Member Andrews noted that the Board received 28 applications from qualified applicants from across Philadelphia and detailed the application process. Board Member Andrews thanked members of the selection committee who put in many dedicated hours and supported the selection of the newest student board representatives.

Board Member Andrews announced that Charles Rinker and Kenzy Ahmed were selected as this year's Student Board Representatives and Jake Benny as the alternative Student Board Representative. Board Member Andrews invited Dr. Debora Carrera, Chief Education Officer for the City of Philadelphia, to provide brief remarks. Dr. Carrera shared remarks congratulating the students and wishing them well throughout their term. Following Dr. Carrera's remarks Board Member Andrews invited Dr. Watlington, Superintendent to provide remarks on the importance of student voice, thanks the teachers and principals who recommended Charles, Kenzy, and Jake. Following Dr. Watlington's remarks, Board Member Andrews introduced Principal Lee (Franklin Learning Center), Principal Crowder (Northeast High School), Principal Davis (Central High School) and invited them to provide remarks on their respective students.



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Following Principal remarks, Board Member Andrews invited President Streater to present the administration of the Oath of Office. Following the administration of the Oath of Office, Non-Voting Student Board Representative's Charles Rinker and Kenzy Ahmed as well as Non-Voting Alternative Student Board Representative Jake Benny shared brief remarks thanking their families and school communities for their support as they prepare to serve in their roles.

### **Announcements**

Vice President Novales made announcements concerning recording, copyright, participation in, and viewing of the meeting.

President Streater acknowledged Board Member Stern who was inducted into the Bond Buyer Hall of Fame.

President Streater reminded the public that the Board is actively seeking applications to join its Parent and Community Advisory Council; applications will be accepted through October 1.

President Streater provided a brief remark about the public comment portions of the meeting reminding members of the public that he will be enforcing the 3 minute per student and 2 minute per non-student time limits to address the Board.

### **Roll Call and Minutes**

Lynn Rauch, General Counsel, announced that the Board met in Executive Session on August 29, 2024 to discuss confidential, privileged personnel matters, and today to discuss privileged, confidential, personnel, and litigation matters in connection with the following cases: Franklin Towne Charter High School vs. The School District of Philadelphia Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas No. 23100164 (challenging appointment of hearing officer); V.B. vs. The School District of Philadelphia United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania No. 2024-1162 (alleging negligence and civil rights claims); Hemphill vs. Global Spectrum et. al Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas No. 230102694 (alleging personal injury).

Ms. Rauch conducted Roll Call.

Members Present: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

Members Absent: 0

Attending: Tony B. Watlington, Ed.D, Superintendent



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The minutes from the August 22, 2024 Board of Education Action Meeting were presented for approval.

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

### **Superintendent Remarks**

President Streater invited Dr. Watlington to provide remarks. Dr. Watlington reported/commented on the following:

- District Recognitions
  - Hispanic Heritage Month
  - New Student Board Representatives
- Opening of Schools Update
  - School Performance Data
    - Improvement in the areas of safety, student attendance, student dropouts, and graduation rates
  - Teacher Fill Rate
    - Maintained the current teacher fill rate
  - School Cooling
    - Decrease in the number of schools that currently do not have adequate cooling in the building
- School Selection
- Leadership in a Politically Charged Climate
  - Dr. Watlington shared an update on the District's plan/approach to addressing the current conflict taking place in the middle east. Dr. Watlington noted that the District's strategy will include student workshops and forums, staff training and workshops, and school-advocate circles.
- Facilities Update
  - Dr. Watlington shared that the District is preparing to launch a facilities planning process that will target six specific desired outcomes. This process will include the convening of a project team, a series of in-person and virtual Listening and Learning sessions in coordination with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood and Community Engagement, a review of comprehensive data to inform plan development, and the finalization of a plan to be submitted to the Board of Education in 2025.



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Vice President Novales thanked Dr. Watlington for bringing forward a plan to address the Middle East Conflict, noting that the Board has heard from several public participants over the past few months who have expressed concerns related to the Middle East conflict and the District's approach.

Board Member Lam asked for additional information related to how the District will form the project plan for the facilities planning process and also asked how the currently issued RFP includes the completion of the already existing data warehouse. Dr. Watlington provided a response.

Copies of presentations are included within the meeting agenda.

#### **Registered Student Speakers**

Phoebe Dougherty, Philly Aquatics, urged the Board of Education and the School District to reopen indoor pools to allow students to swim year round and asked them to set aside money to rebuild and open Marcus Foster swimming pool.

Hazel Heiko, student, spoke in support of Keziah Ridgeway, a teacher who was recently removed from Northeast High School and urged the District to engage in uncomfortable conversations.

#### **The Board meeting recessed at 5:25pm**

#### **Presentations**

President Streater invited Alba Martinez, Commerce Director from the City of Philadelphia's Commerce Department, to provide a presentation on the Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) Action Items 21 - 24.

Board Members asked clarifying questions to better understand the history of Keystone Opportunity Zones including the timeframe that they have existed, how much tax revenue has the District received throughout the timeframe that KOZ's have existed, how the recipients of KOZs are working with students through the Career Connected Programming, and the threshold for KOZ extensions.

President Streater invited Mariel Ziegler, Interim Chief of Charter Schools, to provide a brief overview of some of the amended sections that pertain to brick and mortar charter schools. Ms. Ziegler also provided a presentation on Action Item 26 - Impact Charter School West, formerly known as Independence Charter School West – Application for Charter Renewal - Added 9.16.2024/Updated 9.19.2024.

#### **Public Testimony, Elected Officials, and General Speakers**

Board Member Jones acknowledged the receipt of and summarized seventeen (17) pieces of written testimony submitted to the Board from:



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- Michael Jones from the Powelton Village Civic Association, Jessi Ray Koch from the Centennial Parkside Community Development Corporation, and Michael Thorpe
- Horace Clouden
- Amy Chai and Cassie Grey
- Hannah Mermelstein, Chana Helfand, Barbara McDowell Dowdall, Jordan Kardasz, Norman Shaw MacQueen, Harmony Thompson, Katherine Riley and Amanda Zaid
- Bassem Saad
- Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke
- Grady Lights
- Cecelia Thompson

Complete copies of the written testimony are included within the meeting agenda.

The meeting was opened to the public for presentation of statements by registered general speakers. Ms. Rauch provided the applicable provisions of the speakers' policy for the meeting. Ms. Rauch called general speakers:

The following individuals spoke about the importance of addressing air quality in schools and how to meet air quality standards for classrooms set by the CDC. These individuals urged the District to procure HEPA filters for every occupied space noting that having improved ventilation will support with improving student attendance and reducing student absenteeism:

- Katy Egan, community member,
- Isabelle Ouyang, district staff member

Mitchell Cram, community member, expressed that he is speaking in solidarity and support of students and teachers by holding teachers accountability. Mr. Cram demanded that the District protect students and stand up to the attacks, reinstate Keziah Ridgeway, and implement the Philly Educators for Palestine's demands.

Will Brown, district staff member, spoke about the importance of smaller school communities and the impact that they have on student educational experiences.

The following individuals spoke about the importance of Marcus Foster swimming pool and spoke about the importance of restoring Marcus Foster and Pickett swimming pools to provide children with access and opportunities:

- Veronica Holman, philly aquatics
- Gloria Presley, philly aquatics



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The following individuals spoke about the importance of changing the narrative around the School District of Philadelphia and the importance of everyone working as champions for public education to increase student achievement and enrollment within the District:

- Dr. Robin Cooper, Teamster CASA 502
- Sabrina Feggins, district staff member
- Crystal Edwards, district staff member
- Dr. Pauline Chung, District Staff Member
- Wendy Sharpe, district staff member
- KaTiedra Argro, District Staff Member
- Jodan Floyd, district staff member
- Tiffany Osei, district staff member
- Dollette Johns, district staff member
- Bianca Gillis, district staff member
- Bahir Hayes, district staff member
- Hope Patterson, Community Member

Lynda Rubin, community member, expressed concerns regarding Action Item 14 - Contract for Student Special Education Evaluation Teams and Center (\$1,875,000) asked clarifying questions to understand who is supporting special education work and IEP development in the District. Ms. Rubin also asked questions regarding the hierarchy of support being provided to families and who is in charge for ensuring evaluations and adjustments as they need to be made.

The following individuals spoke in support of Keziah Ridgeway, a teacher who has been currently removed from her classroom following a complaint and called on the District and the Board to reinstate Keziah Ridgeway at Northeast High School:

- Dina Portnoy, Community Member
- Jethro Heiko, parent/guardian
- Nick Palazzolo, District Staff Member
- Kristin Luebbert, District Staff Member
- Arielle Sternman, parent/guardian

### **Registered Elected Officials**

State Representative Chris Rabb, expressed the importance of ensuring that students and teachers are not being attacked for talking about critical issues such as the conflict in the Middle East.



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#### **General Speakers (cont'd)**

The following individuals spoke about the importance of changing the narrative around the School District of Philadelphia and the importance of everyone working as champions for public education to increase student achievement and enrollment within the District:

- Julian Graham, district staff member
- Cassandra Houston, Community Member and her team
- Toni Damon, district staff member
- Dr. Reuben Mills, district staff member
- Aliya Catanch-Bradley, district staff member
- Kiesha Wilkins, district staff member
- Mike Lowe, district staff member

#### **Consideration of Action Items**

**Lisa Haver, on behalf of the Alliance of Philadelphia Public Schools, stated an objection under the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act on Action Item 26, Impact Charter School West, formerly known as Independence Charter School West - Application for Renewal.**

President Streater described the process of how Action Items would be presented for consideration:

- Priority Item(s):
  - Action Item 18, Contract with Brownstone PR and Insight Education Group, LLC for Community Engagement and Facilitation Support
  - Action Item 19, Contract with DLR Group Inc. for Facilities Planning Services
  - Action Item 26, Impact Charter School West, formerly known as Independence Charter School West - Application for Renewal
  - Action Item 27, Facilities Plan Resolution
- Consent agenda for the remaining Action Items, which are Action Items 1-2, 4-17, and 20-25.



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### Board of Education Public Meeting Minutes September 19, 2024

#### Item No. 1 - Approval of Personnel Hires – Updated 9.12.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

#### Item No. 2 - Approval of Personnel Terminations (Pending)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

#### Item No. 3 - Administration's Recommendation for Termination of Professional Employees – **WITHDRAWN BY STAFF 9.12.2024**

#### Item No. 4 - Approval of Resignations and Retirements (Pending)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

#### Item No. 5 - Ratification of LCA with The Management Center (\$10,600)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0





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Item No. 6. - Contract with Mercury Public Affairs, LLC for Strategic Communications Support (\$216,000)  
– Updated 9.18.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern,  
President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 7 - Contract with Various Vendors for Hydration Station and Plumbing Supplies Action Item  
(\$3,957,820) – Updated 9.4.2024/Updated 9.17.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern,  
President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 8. - Change Orders at Various Locations (\$279,781)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern,  
President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 9. - Capital Award for Fire Alarm Upgrades at Walter B. Saul High School (\$1,780,000)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern,  
President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0



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Item No. 10. - Ratification Amendment of the IDIQ Contract for Structural Engineering (No Cost Time Extension)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 11. - Right of Entry Agreement with Bulle Development Group for Playground Improvements at the Tanner G. Duckery School – Updated 9.11.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 12. - Authorization of Cooperative Purchase Agreements and Requests for Proposals (RFPs) with Various Suppliers for purchasing of essential materials, supplies, and equipment needed in the operation of approved programs within the Office of Career & Technical Education (\$15,000,000)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 13. - Contract with General Recreation Inc. for Emlen Playground Project (\$50,000)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0



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Item No. 14. - Contract for Student Special Education Evaluation Teams and Center (\$1,875,000)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 15. - Contracts with Various Vendors for the Provision of Digital Special Education Kits and Evaluation Tools, and Materials for School Psychologists (\$1,200,000)

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 16. - Contract with Various Vendors for Asbestos Abatement, Lead Stabilization and Environmental Cleanup Projects (\$67,200,000) – Added 9.4.2024/Updated 9.17.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 17. - Contract with Various Vendors for Asbestos, Lead Paint, Mold, and Indoor Air Quality Consulting Services (\$34,860,000) - Added 9.4.2024/Updated 9.17.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0



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### Board of Education Public Meeting Minutes September 19, 2024

Item No. 18. - Contract with Brownstone PR and Insight Education Group, LLC for Community Engagement and Facilitation Support (\$430,000) – Added 9.4.2024/9.18.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 19. - Contract with DLR Group Inc. for Facilities Planning Services (\$4,450,918) – Added 9.4.2024/Updated 9.18.2024

Board Members asked clarifying questions to better understand the magnitude of the work that will be done to support this work and the size of the team.

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 20. - Amendment of Contract with the City of Philadelphia for Site Coordinators and Before School Programming (\$3,360,825) – Added 9.4.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 21. - Authorization of Keystone Opportunity Zone - West Parkside – Added 9.5.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0



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### Board of Education Public Meeting Minutes September 19, 2024

Item No. 22. - Authorization of Keystone Opportunity Zone - Navy Yard - Added 9.5.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 23. - Authorization of Keystone Opportunity Zone - Eastwick - Added 9.5.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 24. - Authorization of Keystone Opportunity Zone - 3025 JFK – Added 9.5.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 25. - Capital Award for Ventilation System Upgrade at Jules E. Mastbaum High School (\$4,563,187) – Added 9.11.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

Item No. 26. - Impact Charter School West, formally known as Independence Charter School West – Application for Charter Renewal - Added 9.16.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9



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No: 0

Item No. 27. - Facilities Plan Resolution – Added 9.17.2024

Yes: Ms. Andrews, Ms. Cubbage, Ms. Harper, Mr. Jones, Ms. Lam, Ms. Novales, Ms. Stern, President Streater, Ms. Wilkerson – 9

No: 0

### **Adjournment**

President Streater announced that the Board will hold its next Goals and Guardrails Committee Meeting on October 10, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., via hybrid format.

President Streater announced that the Board will hold its next public business on October 24, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., via hybrid format.

On motion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07pm.

Reginald L. Streater, Esq., President  
Board of Education

Tony Watlington, Ed.D.  
Superintendent