

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

May 12, 2021

Video Call

DRAFT AGENDA

Strategic Priority	Agenda Item	Purpose	Time	Facilitator
	Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Meeting Participants and Guests 	5 mins	Dee Dee
Map Processes & Systems	New Business/Old Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for Public Comment* 	5 mins	Dee Dee
Map Processes & Systems	Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of Minutes Consent Agenda 	5 mins	Dee Dee
Best in Class Talent	President's Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board Self-Assessment Update Charter School Governance Training 	5 mins	Dee Dee
Best in Class Talent	DEI Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debrief on AUSL & Next Steps 	10 mins	Lauren Long
Best in Class Talent	Board Development Committee Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Succession Planning Exercise Board Governance Manual Review 	20 mins	Ronit
National Model	Strategic Task Force Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges & Opportunities Moving into FY22 Updates to Strategic Plan Process 	20 mins	Kenny
Map Processes & Systems	External Affairs Committee Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private Revenue Dashboard Graduation Gala Debrief 	10 mins	Jeff
Map Processes & Systems	Finance Committee Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on Financial Position 	10 mins	Steve
Best in Class Talent	Executive Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pending/Probable Litigation** Update on Personnel Issues 	30 mins	Advisory

Total time: 120 minutes

*In accordance with Executive Order 2020-07 issued March 16, 2020, the May board meeting will take place via conference call. Non-essential voting matters will be postponed. Anyone interested in participating in the conference call are asked to contact Meaghan Jennings, Director of External Affairs at mjennings@christopherhouse.org.

** The Christopher House Board will go into closed session as permitted by provisions of the Illinois Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120/11, the Board may discuss matters related to the pending, imminent, or probable litigation and other exempt items that may come before the Board.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

May 12, 2021 at 6:00 PM
Virtual Meeting, Hosted Over Conference Call

Board Members Attending by Phone: Adnan Assad, Ronit Barrett, Stacey Blasko, Rob Buono, Jessica Cardoni, Dee Dee Chesley, Temok Contreras-Hernandez, Joe Hammon, Jeff Kemerley, Lauren Long, Joel Lozada, Liam O’Kane, Thomas O’Neill, Stephen Raquet, Dave Rodin, Homero Tristan, Lizzy Whitehorn, Thomas Woodrow

Quorum Met

Board Members Absent: Rolando Acosta, JoAnne Cicchelli, Robert Interiano, Kenny Langston, Dan Lynch, Kim White,

Christopher House Staff Attending by Phone: Bailey Baker, Claudia Bielicki, Faith Chang, Sarah Collentine, Michelle Correa, Gaby DeLoof, Ramon Goggins, Alejandro Gonzalez, Meaghan Jennings, Veronica Johnson, Sara Kane, Gloria Kuechenberg, Genevieve Kveton, Alex Machuca, Mallory Namoff, Kelsey Nelson, Laura Pietrini, Krissy Novy, Jordan Reece, Libby Shortenhaus, Becky Seibel, Traci Stanley, Katheryn Steward, Endora Turner, Jasmine Velez, Audrey Zidzik

Guests Attending by Phone: Liz Levin, Rosalba Perez, Casey Sweeney

Minutes Recorder: Christina Henneuse

Proceedings: Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM

Welcome, Presented by Dee Dee Chesley

Tonight’s meeting begins with the opportunity for public comment.

Public Comment presented by Kelsey Nelson, Audrey Zidzik, Michelle Correa, Jordan Reece and Veronica Johnson

Christopher House teachers read a statement to the Board addressing issues among the teachers and administration regarding the organization chart for next school year. Some teachers at Christopher House feel that recent administrative changes have restricted their ability to communicate teacher preferences with the administration. In addition, some teachers are frustrated that these changes have come without explanation and are concerned that it is as a result of their intent to unionize.

Minutes and Consent Agenda. Presented by Dee Dee Chesley and Becky Seibel

Motion made by Adnan Assad and seconded by Dave Rodin, and carried unanimously to approve the March 10, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes.

Motion made by Tom O'Neill and seconded by Ronit Barrett, and carried unanimously to approve the 7 items on the consent agenda:

1. Early Head Start Federal Grant Application
2. Early Head Start Federal Grant COLA Application
3. Head Start COLA Application
4. Early Head Start COLA Application
5. Head Start Budget Revision
6. Early Head Start Budget Revision
7. Annual Self-Assessment/Action Plan

DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) Task Force, Presented Lauren Long

A DE&I Task Force has been put together at Christopher House to develop our organizational values around diversity, equity and inclusion. The task force is currently meeting with committee leads to discuss ways we can recommend changes to current structures. Immediate next steps are to meet with external experts that can help us conduct an audit of the Board.

Board Development Committee Report, Presented by Ronit Barrett

One of the priorities of the Board Development Committee is to diversify the board to help reflect the demographics of both our staff and scholars. There are currently 24 board members on the Christopher House Board of Directors, with six seats available. The Board Development Committee has a real opportunity to grow the board in impactful ways.

The Governance Manual has currently been updated to adhere to our strategic policy and effective governance.

Motion made by Tom Woodrow and seconded by Rob Buono, and carried unanimously to approve the changes to the Governance Manual.

President's Report, Presented by Dee Dee Chesley

Dee Dee reminds the Board of their Charter School compliance requirements.

The FY22 Board Meeting schedule has been confirmed and the calendar invitations will be sent out shortly.

Strategy Committee, Presented by Libby Shortenhaus and Traci Stanley

92% of Christopher House 8th grade scholars made it into their top 3 choice high school.

We are currently in phase 4 of re-opening. On April 12 we welcomed back 92 of our scholars onsite. The Committee is working on ways to help mitigate learning loss in the classroom for the Summer and Fall.

The preparation for the next strategic plan should begin in this fall but with the challenges of last year as a result of the pandemic we feel it is best to extend the current strategic plan by one year

Motion made by Tom O'Neill and seconded by Tom Woodrow and carried unanimously to extend the current strategic plan by one year (FY23).

External Affairs Committee Report, Presented by Meaghan Jennings

Jeff Kemerley is stepping in as the new Chair of the External Affairs Committee and Lizzy Whitehorn will continue in her role on the the Advisory Committee.

External Affairs is excited to announce the recent acquisition of the \$100K CME Group Foundation grant and the \$200K Paul Angell Foundation grant this week. In addition, we raised \$269,495 at last week's Graduation Gala, our first virtual benefit.

Meaghan would like to encourage the Board to reach out to her directly with comments and suggestions on how to improve next year's event.

Finance Committee Update, Presented by Steve Raquet

We are projecting to re-open ECDS and YD at limited capacity and plan to review fundraising goals. Christopher House recently increased the minimum wage to \$15/hr ahead of the city mandate.

The budget for FY22 will be presented at the July Meeting.

Motion made by Jeff Kemerley and seconded by Temok Contreras-Hernandez and carried unanimously to change Investment Portfolio Manager from Balasa Dinverno Foltz, LLC to First Midwest Bank.

Motion made by Temok Contreras-Hernandez and seconded by Tom Woodrow and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned to Executive Session at 7:10 PM.

The following statement was written collaboratively by the union at Christopher House. We are joined by many of our colleagues on this call in support and thank them for being here. We are all looking forward to the results of our NLRB election and are excited to move forward in collaboration with CH & the Board.

We are here tonight on behalf of our students and colleagues. Repeatedly this year, CH leadership has expressed their commitment to, “honest, transparent conversation that emphasizes equity and prioritizes the needs of scholars and families.” This is commendable, and it is a commitment that we share.

But while CH has made this commitment in words, the reality is very different. We are here tonight to share our experiences around staffing for next year. In the past, this process has been collaborative between administration and staff. This year, however, our administrators have shut down conversation and withheld information. This break with established practice will damage staff morale and retention, and negatively impact student success next year.

This year our administrators made the highly irregular decision not to distribute intent to return letters. This decision -- with no explanation as to why this change in policy was being made -- **eliminated** a key opportunity for staff members to voice their preferred position for next year. In the past, intent to return letters were distributed in February. Staff members indicated their intent to return for the next school year, as well as their preferred position. These letters not only provided an opportunity for staff voice, but also allowed administrators to begin making hiring decisions in early spring. Intent to return letters are standard practice across charter and traditional schools around the country. They have long been standard practice at CH as well, and teachers' preferences have **always** been respected. Sharing their desired grade levels -- and trusting that those preferences will be taken into account -- allows grade level teams to begin working together in the spring to plan for a strong beginning the next fall. This is especially important for our Diverse Learner and ELL students, who may have the same teacher year after year, and for whom consistency is the key to success.

However, the decision to eliminate intent to return letters was followed by the news that significant disruptions are **planned** for next year. We received an email from Principal Novy last Thursday, stating that, we quote, “In assessing the needs of our students with the school now fully built out, I am anticipating **quite a few changes** in positions, especially to meet the needs of our ELL and DL scholars. In order to be fair, there will **not** be individual conversations about position changes. Rather, the organizational chart will be sent out **via email** so that everyone has access at the same time. This is likely to be in the next couple of weeks.”

We do not believe this rationale. It does not attempt to explain why teacher preferences were not solicited or considered. Moreover, the school has **already** been fully built out for a year, and the vast majority of staff plan to return. At the moment the only open teaching position is in our DL department -- the solution is not to move staff around and further overburden our DL teachers, but to hire the appropriate number of staff to best meet the needs of all of our scholars.

Speaking candidly, we find it suspicious that this unprecedented and unnecessary change to the staffing process is happening the same year that nearly **80%** of our staff declared our intent to unionize. We find it disappointing that our advocacy for greater democracy at the school has been met with a refusal to engage in conversation. In our mission statement, we called for CH to center the needs of our DL and ELL students by hiring an appropriate number of staff: the response has been to threaten to destabilize those departments instead. Although it was said that there would be **no** individual conversations about position changes for next year, that is simply not true. We have been in communication with staff members who **have** had 1:1 conversations with members of administration about their individual roles.

While disappointing, this arbitrary policy change is not surprising to us. Since going public with our union, our emails have gone unanswered, grade levels have been unattended, and staff members in the building have been flatly ignored when they say good morning as they walk inside. We have asked for more clarity and information about staffing. We have asked for intent to return letters so that teachers could have a voice in these decisions. We take our roles as educators and advocates for our students seriously, and we come to you now because we have no confidence that our concerns will be addressed if we continue to raise them with our administration.

Tonight we will email you an organizational chart created by the union. It was written, as organizational charts have been in the past, in consultation and with input from the majority of staff. We know that you share our commitment to students, staff, and families. We ask that you demonstrate that commitment by working alongside us to **collaboratively** plan, as we have in years past, for the long-term success and stability of the school. Moving forward, staffing decisions should return to being a democratic process, consistent from year to year, with staff voices included from the start.

We cannot say it enough: expressing displeasure with the staff by **arbitrarily** changing school policies is not constructive. The threat to unnecessarily move teachers into different grade levels, if carried out, **will** negatively impact our students -- our DL and ELL students most of all. Our scholars deserve a stable and experienced teaching staff as they return to their classrooms next fall after a traumatizing and destabilizing year away. We are here tonight to advocate for them.

Thank you for your time.