



Board of Directors Meeting
Feb 10, 2022

7:00 p.m. (Virtual - Zoom/Facebook Live)

Members Present:

Nolan Perry, Kate Day, Verna Little, Ana Rynearson, Daniel Gibson, Kimberly Potter, Maria Mills (Director), Stephanie Nall (Compliance Director - taking minutes)

Absent:

Jay Sikes

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:06pm and hosted via zoom by Board Chair, Nolan Perry.

Nolan read the mission statement:

Carolina Charter Academy prepares students for a lifetime of learning by developing their natural passion for discovery and problem-solving. Students are immersed in an engaged learning environment where they develop knowledge-based education to better understand the world around them.

Approval of Minutes:

Both November and December meeting minutes were reviewed. Ms. Rynearson motioned to approve the minutes, Kimberly Potter seconded, and all were in favor.

Public Comments:

Will now be gathered in a separate section of the Facebook live

New Business

Nolan began by reviewing the audit Carolina Charter is required to conduct and submit each year. Recommendations from the auditors included adding some clauses to employee contracts, considering a higher amount of coverage on some insurance, and using the Carolina Charter LLC for bond payments.

Dan Gibson asked a few questions clarifying how the LLC has been operating with taxes thus far. Mrs. Mills and Mr. Perry clarified that the auditors were paid by CCA (as a requirement from the state of NC) and recommended best practices, however, they may not have been privy to all the requirements of the bond process which included the LLC.

Next, Mr. Perry moved to the Management Discussion Analysis completed by Acadia Northstar, our payroll and accounting consultant.

- During the fiscal year, Carolina Charter Academy, Inc. was allotted \$55,910 in state funds and \$20,965 in federal funds to assist the School with ongoing expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The School expended \$58,850 of those funds in the current fiscal year and will carry-over \$18,025 for fiscal year 2022 expenses.
- The School's total net position increased by \$238,785, due to an increase in the net position of the governmental activities (increase in student numbers).

In summary, CCA is in a good place financially, in part due to increased funding for COVID relief, but also due to diligent efforts from Mrs. Mills to closely manage the budget.

Director's Report:

Maria began by reviewing enrollment for the year. The Principal's Monthly Report shows 627 students. Open Enrollment is ongoing, and currently 314 applications have been submitted. The most open seats will be Kindergarten, since those are all new students. The school is currently determining how many open seats will be available in other grades based on returning students. Enrollment FYI:

- 15% of seats reserved for ELL/EDS (weighted lottery) due to ACCESS
- The lottery is scheduled to be held February 28th and will be live streamed on Facebook. Parents are not required to view or attend the lottery and will be notified via email of their student's status.

Next, Mrs. Mills reviewed the discipline report. She reiterated that there are no major or recurring disciplinary problems.

Mrs. Mills also shared the data of positive cases amongst students and staff. January was a challenging month due to many staff members testing positive and being required to quarantine and cover classes. Nurse Daley is spearheading a grant/funding for in house testing, which is convenient for students/parents.

- Mr. Gibson asked Mrs. Mills' opinion on changing the mask policy at school, considering the changes in guidance released today by the state of NC.
- Mrs. Mills sat in on a webinar from DPI about the changing toolkit from NC DHHS. They are withdrawing any requirements about being excluded from school. (A child doesn't have to be excluded unless they test positive). In her opinion, it would make sense for CCA to adopt a mask optional policy. It will no longer be necessary to consider the "choice" of multiple students or classes being forced to learn remotely if masks weren't required.

- The “toolkit” revisions will not be effective until February 21st, but schools can implement these changes as soon as they see fit.

These comments led to the board’s discussion of the monthly mask policy.

Monthly Vote on CCA Mask Policy:

Mr. Perry added his thoughts on the guidance from NC DHHS and mask wearing. He has received feedback from parents, staff, and members of the community on both ends of the spectrum, from those who want mandatory testing weekly, to those who want to end mask wearing as soon as possible. He reiterated that the focus of the board’s consideration should not be debating the efficacy of masks, but the “litmus test” should be considering how this policy would impact the day to day learning of students. Staffing issues/absences must also be considered - if many teachers are positive and must stay at home, there eventually comes a point where there may not be enough staff to cover classes.

Important points to consider:

- If there is a positive case, the school is still required to report it to the state.
- The board is still required to vote on the mask policy every month - even if the policy is mask optional, the board can vote to change this later if cases become a concern
- The Federal mandate still requires masking on school buses
- A classroom is **not** required to automatically quarantine if a student tests positive and the policy is mask optional (students who are “exposed” in a classroom with another who is positive)

Mr. Perry concluded his thoughts and recommended the board consider going mask optional immediately. The board could consider a benchmark percent positive which would trigger a mask mandate in the event of a surge.

Mr. Gibson asked if Mrs. Mills could implement a mask mandate without a board vote if she saw fit. She clarified that only people with a positive test are required to quarantine, any going to remote learning would most likely only be necessary if several staff members were unable to report to work.

Ms. Potter confirmed that NC DHHS is still recommending wearing masks indoors. While it is possible to convert to mask optional, she shared that she thought NC was still in a high transmission rate (% positive was 24-25) while they’d hoped for it to be less than 10. She would be concerned to move to a mask optional policy at this time. As a lawyer, she would be concerned about potential liability.

Ms. Ryneason asked about the start date of the new toolkit guidance - if we go mask optional now, would the new “exclusion” procedure not take effect until February 21st? Mr. Perry confirmed this was the case, but the school is about to have a break and would only have students for a few days before the 21st. Ms. Ryneason would be concerned to switch to a mask

optional policy when we have had so many positive cases within the last month. She proposed a mask optional policy effective March 1st, based on recommendations from NC DHHS.

Mrs. Day shared her observations and concerns about mask wearing at school. Although students get some breaks, there can be a negative impact on students, such as observing speech from teachers, and social interactions.

Finally, Mr. Gibson commented that he would be inclined to concur with Mrs. Mills' recommendation to convert to a mask optional policy. Hospital rates for young children have been low, and he is not concerned about potential liability (as another lawyer).

Mr. Perry agreed with Mr. Gibson that the board is now in a position where they do not have to consider imposing masks to prevent the school moving to remote learning (based on guidance about exposure and positive cases in a mask optional school). In his opinion, it would be more important to keep kids in school, even in a mask.

Ms. Potter repeated her concerns about not following the guidance of health officials, and potentially students traveling during the upcoming break and being exposed. Mrs. Mills shared that COVID numbers at CCA have been much lower in February than January.

Ms. Ryneanson made a motion to adopt a mask optional policy starting 2/28, Ms. Little seconded.

Nay by Mr. Perry, Mrs. Day, and Mr. Sikes by proxy

Board policy adoption/amendment to employee handbook - "job abandonment" adding:

- An employee who is absent for **three (3) consecutive days** without providing mandatory notice will be deemed to have voluntarily resigned, regardless of any accumulated Paid Time Off (PTO). School officials will make reasonable efforts to reach out to the employee by phone and electronic mail. If initial efforts by school officials to reach the employee are unsuccessful, school officials will reach out to the employee's emergency contact, if provided. School officials will maintain detailed documentation of each attempt to communicate with the employee. Once an employee has voluntarily resigned, school officials will comply with the normal termination process.
- Ana brought up the concern about potential serious accidents, etc. is 3 days too short?
- Motion by Kim, second by Ana, everyone voted aye

Public Comments:

(via Google form on Facebook)

Read by Nolan

Ana motion for closed session, Verna seconded.

Adjournment:

Ms. Ryneerson motioned to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Little seconded, Mrs. Day, Ms. Ryneerson, and Mr. Perry also voted to end the meeting.