

The Renaissance

35-59 81st Street, Jackson Heights, NY 11372

www.renaissancecharter.org • 0060-803-718 • 718-803-3785 (fax) Charter School

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Monte Joffe, Ed.D.

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Chester Hicks

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Dr. Rachel Mandel

Everett Boyd

Rebekah Oakes

APPROVED

February 5th, 2025

The Renaissance Charter School

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

HONORARY MEMBERS

Sandra Geyer, 1941-2019

Hazel DuBois, Ph.D. 1937-2013

Francine Smith, 1949-2021

Hon. Rudolph Greco, Esq.

Margaret Martinez-DeLuca

Meryl Thompson

1. Chairperson's Message – 3 minutes
 - a. Welcome message provided by Monte Joffe at 8:36am (no formal comments)
2. Roll Call – 2 minutes
 - a. Present: Chester Hicks, Raymond Johnson, Everett Boyd, Stacey Gauthier
Monte Joffe, Rebekah Oakes (present at 9:15am)
 - b. Absent: Dr. Rachel Mandel, Dan Fanelli,
 - c. Community: Tashi Tashi
3. Approval of Last Month's Minutes – 5 minutes
 - a. Minutes approved by acclamation.
4. School Management Team Report – 10 minutes
 - a. Stacey Gauthier:

"Developing Leaders for the Renaissance of New York"

- b. Full Staff Meeting: immigration issues and concerns; circulated and shared info with families and staff regarding protocols and process should ICE appear at the school. Note this is a changing landscape but we will follow current protocols.
 - c. Families Workshop: grant consortium sponsoring immigration workshop on Thursday, translated in Spanish, red cards being distributed
 - d. Immigration Protocols – if ICE enters the building, front desk will get an SMT admin; get the ICE representative to provide name, etc., plus any paperwork. Then they are to wait outside. Then, lawyer contacted to review the warrant. No assumptions about agents or the legitimacy of documents, as compliance must be confirmed prior to action.
 - e. NOTE: If ICE agent acts in an “out of control” manner, our school safety officer will be required to call the police.
 - f. Families are afraid to send their students to school; absenteeism rates may reflect this; field trips are also a concern by parents. Same process will apply (contact SMT, lawyer) should this happen.
 - g. PowerSchool – nationwide data breach. Getting letters out to families, conferring with counsel regarding who is sends out the letter. Breach affected 4 staff members including social security numbers (2 no longer at the school). Credit monitoring will be provided by PowerSchool to affected members. Letters to everyone will be informed shortly.
 - h. Success – DOE has finally agreed to get our phone systems fixed; they have responded due to our security concerns; the school will pay for it.
 - i. Financial committee meeting to be scheduled for next month.
5. Board Development: Jose Mane – paperwork ready, training and meetings.
- a. Jose: process has been thorough and informative, has a better understanding of scope of position; working with a team with the best interests of the school. Looking forward to joining in sharing vision.

- b. Jose questions for the Board: Committees – how often do they meet, and is there a set schedule?
- c. Stacey: Standing committees get configured based on type of need; e.g., conflict of interests are reviewed by Grievance/Complaint Committee as required. Executive Committee – emergency business/urgent matters, all normally come, but typically transactional meetings. Decisions are brought to the next board meeting for ratification. Ed Support Committee – reviews leadership team, academic charter goals, SG evaluation, set goals for the next year. Finance Committee – don't have to be a Board member to join. Meets minimum 2x a year, approves budgets and financial consultants attend.
- d. NOTES: anyone can bring a complaint directly to the Board if so desired. Due process occurs. Our board are unique. SUNY and SED don't allow teachers or any staff to sit on the board. Chancellor's Office has to allow it, but no more than 40% actually employed by the School. Parent Board member search has not been successful as of yet. Twelve meetings a year required.
- e. Bylaws state that the Board can have additional committees as needed.
- f. Legal consultants serve as financial committee and have done things like CSA negotiations. Policy drafts internal, Matthew presents to Board for review, Executive session as needed.
- g. Last questions – JOSE – what about community members?
 - i. Matthew: bylaws clarify types of members (Founders, Principal, working in the school and then those who are not—these all qualify as community members, who will take on different roles according to their institutional areas of expertise)
 - ii. Rebekah, Everett, Chester are all community members
 - iii. Non-school affiliated community members have had shorter tenures due to other commitments. Recruiting new members is desired but should be carefully considered. How do you ensure it's a right fit?

- iv. “Friends of” fundraising board that supports both schools
 - v. Junior Board also of interest, but management is a limiting factor.
 - vi. Development Board an area of interest but has not been developed yet.
 - vii. Monte: Our conception of the Board varies from the norm. We have to clarify at each charter renewal. Our responsibility as a Board is to continually link the founding mission to changing circumstances.
 - viii. Matthew: Fiduciary duty exists to ensure charter renewal – programmatically and fiscally sound. This board is mission-alignment first.
 - ix. Stacey: Board plays major role in renewal. This year, difficulties
- h. Questions of Jose:
- i. Renewal: Teacher support letters are critical for renewal. Where do you, as a Board member, negotiate this situation if teachers are not in support?
 - ii. Jose: context-dependent. Identify own conflict of interest. Generally, have to look at the mission of the school and have to make sure that we get renewal. If getting a letter from our UFT chapter is essential, Jose will communicate that to the chapter leaders / representatives in a way that makes it clear that it’s for everyone’s benefit. Ultimately, the guiding light is the mission. I will shift my responsibility to align with the Board.
 - iii. Stacey: Board members are interviewed by authorized.
 - iv. Matthew: Curious – what is an example of an exception, especially in the context of an existential issue such as letters of support for charter renewal. Allegiances as a teacher versus allegiance to the Board.
 - v. Jose: As a Board member, the context changes. Jose would be a communicator and a bridge the gap between teachers and school leaders. Being at the table to really understand the purpose of what is being asked builds trust, which goes a long way. I bring this expertise to the Board,

communicating with all different parties involved.

- vi. Monte: agrees: bridge tough word because working the full 360-degree program.
- vii. Jose: Agrees. Now understanding the nuances of board responsibly. Feels confident that he can communicate across the “divide.”
- viii. Monte: A few years ago, petition signed and sent to Monte. Sent to Jose with critiques of petition, can we write this better? What was your thinking regarding that order:
- ix. Jose: it wasn’t his position or in charge of the petition. Brought it back up to and communicated Monte’s response. Let them make the choice.
- x. Monte: Will continually be the grammarian and want writing standards to be high at every level to model to students.
- xi. Jose: recalls a Senior year sit-down with Monte regarding grammar.
- xii. Stacey: Again, the conflict piece. It is well-known that sometimes conflicts with staff members (discipline, terminations), politics exist. But the Board members focus on issues directly related to the charter first and foremost. (Financial structure is totally tied to DOE structure, and our requirements differ from other charter schools. Charter = mission. How do you navigate if a commission is not mission-aligned. How do you wear those to hats?
- xiii. Jose: Strong handle on mission and the charter, whatever it is. It’s important that all parties/stakeholders keep charter/mission in mind. All coming from that place. (This includes everyone: cafeteria, all members in all ways.) Again, straight conflicts are recusal. Consultation committee – we meet beforehand. I would come from a different perspective, which will enrich any conversation as a Board member. If there is a conflict, I will push back and challenge because it’s important to push our friends and colleagues if it’s about growth and doing the right thing. I don’t dig

in completely on any one thing. Things are never black and white, able to see nuances and communicate that to folks. UFT – that has been a conflict for a long time. Would like to think that collective understanding may occur at some point.

- xiv. Stacey: We are trying. Opened back up the contract. Reality: Working under 20 years where our conditions differ that than the DOE contract. Sometimes change phobia occurs. Mission still has to evolve and change according to the needs of the students. Teacher satisfaction is important, but is a component. Example: summer school bonuses. We have to be responsive and take stock of where we are and where we were in the founding. Our school population is changing, and some individuals are stuck in old framework. Board must drive the change. We hope to bring them along, but ultimately the Board has to make tough decisions that will be met with pushback and the Board members are tasked with leading this.
- xv. Rebekah: There are so many staff who remember the school that was founding, which is a blessing but can be a curse with the whole modus of change in the context of the mission, dependent on interpretation and area of focus.
- xvi. Monte: Last meeting, Jose beginning to investigate, beginning to investigate leadership programs. Applaud that decision because there is so much knowledge to gain that provides the broader context of educational landscape. Tell us more about determination to go toward scholarship and bring back as a Board member/
- xvii. Jose: love research, in Master's program. Got into history of education and understanding the role of culture wars in the development of education, pedagogy, leadership vision... Learned that U.S. is regionally divided with different means. Ultimately, we are seeing different regions needing different needs turning a common need (everyone needs work, crumbling infrastructure, education – amazing things happening... regarding folks resistant to change; a lot of people are stuck and not

meeting needs of constituents. Research ways to meet the needs of our local folks. Willing to learn and research – meaning directly connecting to people through civic engagement as teachers, leaders, students. Everyone should understand that no one size fits all. We should always be looking for new resources, learn ways to convince people to give us resources, using technology in responsible ways. Can be hardheaded sometimes, but with age comes wisdom, and listening more is key. Researching other perspectives and solutions to a country in crisis in

- xviii. Stacey: would you be willing to renegotiate the teacher contract?
- xix. Jose: tough question. As a board member, would need to discuss with other board members with a deeper understanding about the why, the reasons for renegotiations.
- xx. Stacey: for the parts that don't apply, doesn't the contract need to be changed.
- xxi. Jose would be willing to start the open conversations.
- xxii. Stacey: unfair labor charge that needs to be solved. Either all things are taken away (not aligned to mission and vision). It is a top priority of the Board to resolve issues. Some things happen in Exec Session, so the conflict is serious. Charter matters take up a lot, now UFT conflict, and coming up Executive orders expecting.
- xxiii. Monte: Jokes about Google translate. We will all fix education!

6. Public Speaking –

- a. None

7. Adjournment of Public Meeting

- a. Closed at 9:40 am