

# Community School of Digital and Visual Arts

## Board Meeting Minutes

**Date:** May 2, 2025

**Time:** 4:00pm

**Location:** Virtual Meeting via Zoom

## I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:00pm by Board Chair Joe Battle

## II. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum

Roll was called, and a quorum was declared present.

### Board Members Present

- Joe Battle
- Michael Palmer
- Kathy Everett-Perry
- Toni Hall
- Bonnie Hause
- Tommy McNeill

### Non-Board Members Present

- Brian Crawford
- Olufemi Adeniyi
- Ben Johnson
- Ronald Jackson
- Cheryal Isaac
- Jatun Batts

## III. Approval of the Agenda

- **Motion by:** Joe Battle to approve the draft agenda as presented.
- **Moved by:** Micheal Palmer
- **Seconded by:** Bonnie Hauser
- **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously.

### Amendment to Agenda:

- **Motion by:** Joe Battle to revise the agenda by adding the Principal and Director Reports before Board Reports, with Board Reports to follow at approximately 4:30 PM.
- **Moved by:** Michael Palmer
- **Seconded by:** Bonnie Hauser
- **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously.

## IV. Approval of Previous Minutes

- Approval of the previous month's minutes was postponed.
- **Discussion:**
  - Minutes are prepared but were not circulated in time for inclusion in the agenda.
  - Draft minutes will be circulated post-meeting.

- A **referendum document** will be sent for board members to sign in lieu of formal approval during the meeting.
- Members expressed the need to remain compliant with monthly reporting requirements to the Charter School Board.

## **V. Principal’s Report – Olufemi Adeniyi**

Olufemi Adeniyi provided a comprehensive update on academic and behavioral matters:

- **EOG Preparation:**
  - Electives have been temporarily canceled to allow for intensive EOG small-group instruction (Falcon Push & Falcon Small Groups).
  - Students have been grouped into three tiers based on MAP and EOG data: intensive, targeted, and on-grade-level.
  - Instructional staff, electives, and leadership are all involved in small group support.
- **Behavioral Management:**
  - An increase in student behavioral issues is being addressed with a stricter in-school and out-of-school suspension protocol.
  - Communication has been made with families emphasizing zero tolerance for persistent infractions.
  - A renewed focus on classroom calm and engagement during the final weeks before testing.

### **Staff Retention Bonus & Performance Incentive Plan**

- Olufemi Adeniyi will develop a proposal to reward staff based on EVAAS growth metrics and academic performance.
- **Considerations include:**
  - Tiered bonuses based on student movement from lower to higher achievement bands.
  - Ensuring equity for staff working with more challenging student populations.
  - Options for individual vs. team-based incentives.
- Total proposed retention bonus cost: **\$50,000** (one-month salary equivalent).
- Funded through:
  - \$26,000 from the \$52,000 state-provided “staff enhancement” allotment.
  - \$24,000 from the school’s existing budget surplus.
- **Motion by:** Joe Battle to allocate \$26,000 from staff enhancement funds toward the approved retention bonuses for certified staff and reserve the remaining \$24,000 from the school’s existing budget surplus.
- **Moved by:** Bonnie Hauser
- **Seconded by:** Michael Palmer
- **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously.

**Action Item:** Olufemi Adeniyi to present a finalized incentive structure at the June meeting.

## **VI. Director of Operations Report – Mr. Ben Johnson**

### **Enrollment & Intent to Return**

- **Enrollment Decline:**
  - Enrollment dropped from 214 to 197 students.
  - 18 students withdrew before year-end; some withdrawals were tied to behavioral concerns and sibling groups.
- **Intent to Return Forms:**
  - 70% of current families submitted responses.
  - Administrative team and teaching staff are contacting remaining families via ClassDojo, text, and phone to encourage submission before the Monday deadline.
  - Admin follows up directly with families who respond “No” or “Maybe” to understand concerns.
- **Parental Uncertainty:**
  - Continued confusion among families regarding the school’s renewal status and future location.
  - Parents reported receiving conflicting or outdated information, including media reports.

## **VII. Facilities, Safety, & Health Inspection Report – Mr. Ronald Jackson**

- **HVAC Failure – Elementary Wing:**
  - The 20-ton HVAC unit, originally manufactured in 2004, experienced compressor failure.
  - **Repair Option:** Compressor replacement estimated at \$17,500.
  - **Replacement Option:** Full unit replacement estimates:
    - Lee Air: \$58,666
    - BORE Brothers: \$70,234 (no compressor-only option available).
  - **Recommendation:** Proceed with \$17,500 repair to ensure classroom comfort and continuity of learning.
  - The board agreed that this is a necessary short-term investment given building sale status; will seek potential credit with broker.
- **Health Inspection Findings:**
  - Overall inspection score: 94.5 (“A” rating).
  - Minor cosmetic issues cited: missing baseboards, peeling laminate on bathroom stalls, dust in high areas of the auditorium.
  - Required adjustments:
    - Replace/repair stall partitions due to absorbent material exposure.
    - Clean skylight and upper storage areas requiring a 15–16 ft ladder.
    - Elevate all storage boxes 15 inches off the ground using rolling platforms.
  - The inspection report was submitted to janitorial team for corrective action.
  - Clarification: Missed inspection in prior year was due to staffing delays within the county, not the school’s fault.
- **Motion by:** Joe Battle to proceed with \$17,500 to repair HVAC compressor to ensure classroom comfort and continuity of learning.
- **Moved by:** Michael Palmer
- **Seconded by:** Bonnie Hauser
- **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously.

## VIII. Board Comments & Discussion

- Bonnie Hauser inquired about enrollment and intent-to-return data.
- Mr. Johnson noted that finalized breakdowns will be shared with the Board Chair by the following Tuesday.

## IX. Public Relations & Retention Strategy

### Marketing Strategy Discussion:

- **Discussion:** Board and leadership acknowledged the need for a coordinated PR and marketing campaign to restore confidence and recruit families.
  - Proposal to engage a PR firm with experience in reputational enhancement; budget needed for next steps.
  - Suggestions included:
    - Developing a short video or message for parents via social media.
    - Targeted digital ads on low-cost platforms and streaming channels.
    - Clear internal communication on student progress to increase parent confidence.
- Initial PR firm estimates suggest a cost of **\$5,000–\$7,000/month** over a 2–3 month period.
  - **Motion by:** Joe Battle to authorize Brian Crawford to solicit proposals from qualified PR/marketing firms with a total project budget **not to exceed \$20,000**, including options for media purchases.
  - **Moved by:** Bonnie Hauser
  - **Seconded by:** Michael Palmer
  - **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously.
- **Action Item:**
  - Mr. Crawford to initiate proposal process and schedule a special board meeting if a timely decision is required.

## X. Board Business

### A. Closed Session Preparation

- The chair proposed entering closed session later in the meeting to discuss staff feedback on proposed cabinet-level positions and related compensation.
- Motion for closed session will be made under permitted exceptions related to personnel and confidential matters.

### B. Board Expansion & Term Assignments

- Current bylaws allow for staggered 1-, 2-, and 3-year terms. The board agreed to reassign terms beginning July 1 for compliance.
  - **Volunteers by Term:**
    - 1-Year: Michael Palmer
    - 2-Year: Kathy Everett-Perry, Tony Hall
    - 3-Year: Thomas McNeill
- **Annual Elections:** Will be held during the June board meeting. Terms begin July 1.

- **Bylaw Clarification:**
  - Terms and limits are specified in bylaws.
  - Board size remains flexible (5–11 members).
- **Board Recruitment Strategy:**
  - Desired backgrounds: business, education, law, fundraising, marketing, arts, child development.
  - Michael Palmer introduced prospective member Connor Barker, a Duke senior and community service leader with a background in computer science and education-related outreach. Mr. Palmer will share Mr. Barker’s résumé with the board in advance of the June meeting.
  - Background check completed; visit to school conducted. Candidate to be formally voted on in June.
- **Action:** Board members asked to submit additional candidates by June.

### **C. Policy Distribution**

- Mr. Crawford will recirculate board policies and bylaws to all members for review ahead of June.

### **XI. University Partnerships & Board Recruitment**

- The board discussed outreach to local universities to identify board candidates and support partners.
- **Action Item:** Michael Palmer will contact the School of Education at North Carolina Central University for potential board candidates, with support from Mr. Crawford. Dr. Keisha Daniels was identified as a potential contact.
- Former principal Gail Taylor expressed interest in supporting the school. The board discussed her possible nomination for board service.
- **Consensus:** Board and staff expressed comfort with her inclusion on the June board candidate slate, acknowledging her prior contributions and recent outreach.
- The board affirmed the goal of recruiting members with expertise in education, law, fundraising, marketing, technology, child development, and the arts.

### **XII. Bylaws Review & Leadership Transition Planning**

- Discussion was held on necessary bylaw amendments related to:
  - Redefining the roles and reporting structure of the principal and a proposed board specialist.
  - Transitioning check-signing and transactional authority from the outgoing Managing Director.
- **Action Items:**
  - Brian Crawford and Michael Palmer will review and propose bylaw updates ahead of the June meeting.
  - The revised structure will reflect a leadership cabinet including the Board Specialist, Principal and Director of Operations, with peer-level collaboration and clearer board oversight.
- Brian Crawford confirmed willingness to transition into a board member role effective June 30, pending logistical planning.

### **XIII. Communication Plan Presentation – Cheryal Isaac/Tommy McNeill**

- Cheryal Isaac presented a draft internal and external communication framework that includes:
    - Defined contact chains for academic, behavioral, and emergency matters.
    - Multi-platform communication strategy using email, ClassDojo, phone, text, Talking Points, and social media.
    - Emphasis on personalized communication to improve family engagement.
  - The board requested:
    - Addition of text-based emergency messaging solutions.
    - Clarification of points of contact for external partners (e.g., DPI, Charter Board).
  - **Motion by:** Joe Battle to receive the draft communication plan and include it as an attachment to the minutes.
  - **Moved by:** Bonnie Hauser
  - **Seconded by:** Michael Palmer
  - **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously.
    - **Action Item:** The board will vote to adopt the finalized communication plan as policy in the June meeting.
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### **XIV. Financial Review – Brian Crawford**

#### **Surplus Projection:**

- The school currently projects a \$260,000 operating surplus by fiscal year-end.
- This projection excludes the \$600,000 in hard deposit funds from the pending building sale.
- Once received, the total cash on hand is expected to be \$800,000–\$900,000.

#### **Building Sale Deposit:**

- A \$600,000 non-refundable hard deposit from the building buyer is contractually secured.
- Even if the buyer does not proceed with the sale, the funds are retained by the school.
- Funds have not yet been received but are expected shortly per the sales agreement.

#### **Revenue/LEA Funding:**

- April funds from Durham Public Schools were received as expected (~\$82,000).
  - Two additional payments (May and June) are anticipated.
  - Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools paid \$10,000 for enrolled students; however, the district is reported to be undergoing financial restructuring due to depleted reserves.
  - All major expenses are current, and no outstanding debts remain.
  - Concerns were raised regarding bookkeeping inefficiencies with Prestige Charter Solutions, including repetitive categorization requests.
    - **Action Item:** Mr. Johnson will meet with Prestige to streamline the classification process and discuss automation based on recurring vendors.
  - The board discussed potentially reviewing all third-party contracts at the annual meeting.
    - **Action Item:** Include annual vendor review as a regular agenda item moving forward.
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### **XV. Policy & Contractual Oversight**

- Discussion was held on reviewing financial authority levels and stratifying approval thresholds in board policy.

- Mr. Johnson and Mr. Palmer will review current policies and recommend updates on spending authorization and board oversight.
- Board agreed that policies approved in future meetings (e.g., communications, finance, board specialist) will be attached to official board minutes for compliance and transparency.

## **XVI. Legislative & Regulatory Updates**

- The school signed a required anti-DEI attestation per state directive.
- No known changes to federal program funding at this time.
- External counsel Lisa Gordon-Stella and the NC Association of Charter Schools are monitoring potential policy shifts at the state and federal levels.

## **XVII.**

### **Summer Academic Enrichment Proposal:**

- Leadership is exploring a summer enrichment camp for retention and recruitment.
- **Action Item:** Staff to present full proposal with logistics and budget at the next board meeting.

## **XVIII. Facilities Update**

- **Current Building Sale Status:**
  - Buyer remains committed; additional \$600,000 deposit due upon conclusion of due diligence is contractually secured.
- **Potential Relocation – Central Park School Lower Level:**
  - School is exploring shared tenancy at Central Park School (16,000 sq ft lower level).
    - Asking rent: ~\$30,000/month (includes CAM charges).
    - School's prior rent: ~\$180,000/year plus ~\$30,000 utilities.
    - New cost would significantly exceed previous budget.
- **Comparative Costs & Concerns:**
  - Operating current building involves ~\$100,000/year in janitorial and ~\$100,000/year in maintenance and repairs (e.g., HVAC, roofing).
  - Renting shared space may reduce maintenance liabilities but increase rent cost.
- **Action Items:**
  - Leadership will tour the Central Park facility.
  - Brian Crawford to provide a financial viability analysis comparing potential rental costs with current and future facility budgets.
- **Alternative Space Options:**
  - Broker is also evaluating converted office spaces and awaiting updates from North Carolina Central University.
- **Sale-Leaseback Option:**
  - Board discussed the possibility of closing on the sale and negotiating a leaseback through the end of the 2025 academic year if relocation is delayed.

## **XIX. Board Governance Items**

- Governance compliance items outlined in the April 7th memo were reviewed.
- Board discussed scheduling two board trainings annually, one by summer.

- **Motion by:** Joe Battle to accept board training proposal from Lisa Gordon-Stella, not to exceed \$1,000.
- **Moved by:** Michael Palmer
- **Seconded by:** Bonnie Hauser
- **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously.

**XX. Executive Coaching Proposal**

- Olufemi Adeniyi and staff proposed engaging Alex Quigley for leadership coaching and school improvement support.
  - **Motion by:** Joe Battle to get a proposal from Alex Quigley to include but not limited to executive coaching for CSDVA’s Admin Team, assist in CSDVA’s teacher evaluation process
  - **Moved by:** Michael Palmer
  - **Seconded by:** Bonnie Hauser
  - **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously.
- **Action Item:**
  - Board agreed to review proposal details and revisit with feedback and scope refinement at the June meeting.

**XXI. Closed Session**

- **Motion by:** Joe Battle to enter closed session to discuss personnel matters.
- **Moved by:** Bonnie Hauser
- **Seconded by:** Michael Palmer
- **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously

**XXII. Closed Session**

- **Motion by:** Joe Battle to come out of closed session.
- **Moved by:** Michael Palmer
- **Seconded by:** Bonnie Hauser
- **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously

**XXIII. Meeting adjourned at 6:30pm**

Approved by Board June 5, 2025