

Board Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2025 – 5:00PM

The Board of Trustees of NYC Autism Charter Schools (NYCACS) met on Monday, May 19, 2025
NYC Autism Charter School East Harlem 433 East 100th St. New York, NY 10029

Attending Trustees:

Alysia Steinmann
Ashley Garrett
Ben Hartman
Christine Sandler
Elaine Florio
Hannah Hoch
Ilene Lainer
Mark Saretsky
Naeema Livingston
Paul O'Neill
Susanna Kvam Norris

Absent Trustees:

Carol Santiago-DeJesus
Jason Stock
Mitch Baum

Attendees at the Invitation of the Board:

Julie Fisher, Executive Director
Tiffney Jones, Director of Finance

1. Call to order

- **Action:** The NYCACS general meeting was called to order at 5:03PM

2. Board Business

- **Minutes from the 04-28-2025 Board Meeting**
 - At 5:03PM, the minutes from the Monday, April 28, 2025 Board meeting were reviewed.
 - **Action:** At 5:04PM, Ms. Garrett made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Norris seconded the motion, and the Board voted, unanimously approving the minutes. Mr. Hartman abstained.

3. Finance Committee

- **Review of YTD February 2025 Financials**

- At 5:04PM, Ms. Jones reviewed the March 2025 YTD financials. Both schools are operating better than plan due primarily to salary savings as well as savings on staff events and consulting.
- At 5:10PM, Ms. Jones reviewed the proposed FY2026 budget. Assumptions were provided along with a high-level overview of anticipated income and expenditures. Members of the finance committee weighed in saying that, despite showing a large deficit, this is a lean budget that further supports the critical need for a per pupil funding increase.
 - **Action:** At 5:24PM, Mr. Hartman made a motion to approve the FY2026 budget. Ms. Norris seconded the motion, and the Board voted, unanimously approving the budget.

4. Governance Committee

- **Trustees Whose Terms Are Expiring**

- At 5:25PM, Ms. Lainer discussed the Trustees whose terms are expiring on June 1 – Mitch Baum and Elaine Florio. She indicated that Mr. Baum felt he could no longer commit the time required for Board participation and would be rolling off of the Board. She said that he is willing to stay on in an advisory capacity and, while the school does not currently have an official Advisory Board, he could do so in an informal capacity. Ms. Lainer also indicated that she would be working on establishing an Advisory Board as soon as possible. She went on to discuss the skillset gap left by his departure – specifically in the communications arena. She also mentioned the other skill areas in which gaps were identified, specifically government and community engagement, and applied behavior analysis. Ms. Lainer asked if anyone had ideas for accessing folks in those areas. Some questions and discussion about how to go about recruiting ensued. Ms. Sandler and Ms. Norris have a few possibilities they will pursue. Ms. Florio suggested that other avenues for Board recruitment be tried such as LinkedIn. Ms. Lainer will recirculate the skill set chart created by the Governance Committee.
- At 5:45PM, Ms. Florio exited and Ms. Lainer discussed renewing Ms. Florio's term on the Board.
 - **Action:** At 5:46PM, Ms. Lainer made a motion to renew Ms. Florio's term on the Board, allowing her to serve for another 3 years. Mr. Hartman seconded the motion, and the Board voted, unanimously approving an additional term.
- At 5:48PM, Ms. Fisher shared that she identified a parent member to serve on the Board. She will put him in touch with Ms. Lainer (Governance Chair) and potentially ask him to attend the June Board meeting.

5. Fundraising

- **Board Expectations Around Fundraising and Overall Engagement**

- At 5:48PM, Ms. Fisher provided context for this discussion point, namely the tension related to Board fundraising expectations that has been coming up outside of formal Board meetings. Ms. Garrett prepared and presented an overview of fundraising for the last three years, including a breakdown of sources as well as some details on Board

giving. Many concerns, frustrations, and ideas were shared regarding current practices, areas for change, and overall Board engagement and expectations. All agreed that: 1) certain individuals cannot be tapped for donations more than others, 2) expectations should be clear and uniform across all Trustees, and 3) the organization does not currently have a robust fundraising plan and that developing one would require additional people and resources which may not be realistic at this time. Some felt that instituting some kind of “give or get” would be fair and alleviate some of the projected deficits and/or fund some of the schools’ “extra” initiatives. Additionally, the idea of a Board scorecard was discussed as well as meetings with the ED and each Trustee to review on an annual basis. Ms. Fisher will gather a sample scorecard. She will also circulate an events calendar for the coming year. The Governance committee will look at establishing clearer guidelines for Trustees in the areas of attendance at meetings and events, additional work beyond meetings, and financial contributions.

6. Closing Items

- **Action:** At 6:34PM, Ms. Lainer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Hoch seconded the motion at which point the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.