

Meeting Minutes
April 7, 2025

ATTENDEES:

Brenda Robertson – Chair
Walter Martin – Vice Chair
Mark Fleming – Secretary
Steve Moody – Treasurer
Natalie Wright – Board Member
Marcia Simmons – Board Member
Kristina Rodrigues- Interim HOS/MS Administrator
Tasha Parnell – HS Administrator
Stacey Bryant – EC Administrator
Kelly Shannahan – EL Administrator
Chad Long – K12
Scott Sides – K12
John Kramer – K12
Sara Struhs – Executive Director

Sara confirmed there was a quorum and Brenda called the meeting to order. Brenda welcomed everyone and Sara to read the mission statement
Brenda asked for a motion to accept the Agenda and the past meeting minutes
Mark made the motion and Walter seconded it. Brenda called for the vote and it was unanimous.

Brenda asked Kristina to give the HOS report.

Kristina said the current enrollment is 3297 which was down 340 students.
She said re-enrollment has opened and we have about 88% of our current students already re-registered for next year. There are still 267 who are undecided which give us a possible return enrollment of 95%.

This means there will be fewer seats available for enrollment through the lottery. We currently have 1289 signed up for the lottery.

Kristina said we are heading into testing season. Last week was ACT testing and there were many problems with it as their system was down the first day. After waiting for some time, they re-scheduled the test for the following day. Kristina thanked the staff and explained the extraordinary efforts the staff in the field made to ensure we could re-book the testing spaces for the following day. Despite all the challenges, we had a test rate of 94% participation – most of them coming back the next day and some of them going to the Durham office to take the test. Kudos and thanks to all the staff for their help through this challenging testing time.

She said we are now preparing for the EL and MS check in #3. English Language Learner must remain in ELL classes until they test out.

EOY testing is scheduled for May 16 – this is a two week process and we are grateful this year that there are enough teachers to help out that we are able to have one person do the first week and another do the second week. This helps with all teachers being able to begin the training for the new platforms coming to our school next year from the state.

This week, for the first time, rising 6th and 9th graders are enrolling in the Skills USA program. This is the first time we have had such good growth for CTE participation.

The lottery starts this week

This week is the biggest outing of the year with a choice of attending Ft Macon or the NC Zoo. The zoo is the most popular outing of the year drawing students from across the state.

A reminder for the board: the Prom and MS dance will be held at the Embassy Suites Briar Creek this year on June 9. Graduation will be the next day, June 10. Tasha and her team have done a wonderful job planning the graduation and we are happy and excited for our soon-to-be graduates.

In May the school will host a virtual outing : an art show. Kristina encouraged all board members to consider participating in this outing re-enforcing you do not need to be an accomplished artist to enter something.

And last of all, Kristina highlight a student in elementary school who has self-published a book on Amazon about being brave in today's world.

Brenda asked Kristina if all the positions that were vacant had been filled and Kristina explained there are still several open: 2 in MS which she is holding open strategically for next year and a few others: 1 in Elementary, 2 in MS remediation, 1 in MS science and 1 in MS math; and 1 in HS English and 1 in HS remediation.

Marcia asked if the English position in HS is in a testing area and Tasha said it is not. Kristina said the science vacancy is in 8th grade which is a testing area. Fortunately, we have an English MS teacher who is also certified to teach MS science and has been able to handle the EOY preparation.

Brenda asked for more information on the ACT testing issue wondering if it was due to issues with the state. Kristina was unsure where the issue was, but it closed down the testing for the day statewide and did present many challenges. Still she was very pleased that we were able to have 94% testing. Brenda asked is the state would cover the costs but everyone quickly responded knowing the state would not be helping to cover the costs.

Brenda thanked Kristina and asked Chad to present the bill for the month.

Chad presented the monthly invoice for \$1.3 million a little over the previous month. He then presented the letter of engagement from the auditor and the changes need to be made to the 410 policies to: change the ACH payments; have state requested language added to the policies to require contracts to be checked against the debarment list; and approval of the contracts should be based on the best needs of the school.

Brenda asked to see the proposed changes before voting on them. Chad agreed to send them to her and agreed they may be voted on at the next meeting.

Walter reminded everyone that the meeting next month will be on the 3rd of May for the budget. Natalie reminded everyone that she will not be able to make that meeting. Brenda asked Natalie to share her perspective on the HOS candidates and Sara said she is meeting with Scott in the coming week to get the resumes of the final three candidates and would forward them off to everyone.

Brenda then asked about the administrative withdrawals and Sara said she was filling in for Chris who could not be at the meeting tonight. She said the Governance Committee recommended that after careful consideration of the cases presented, they recommended the A/W's be upheld.

Sara then reminded the board that they were sent 5 iterations of the mission statement as they requested it be condensed and simplified. Mark was the only one to respond and so she said she would be sending it out again and asked that everyone rank their top 3 choices. She also explained there is no rush as this is something that needs to go before the CSRB and there is no deadline for making a change.

Sara explained the Governance Committee is looking at the tuition reimbursement policy for teachers. They started a conversation to update the policy and will continue working on it. It needs to be updated to be clearer and to provide payment out upon completion of each course rather than waiting until the end of the year. Marcia agreed we need to do a better job of reimbursing in a timely manner.

Brenda then asked Natalie to give an update on the Academic Committee. Natalie said the committee has agreed to meet the 2nd Monday of every month from noon – 1:00. She said they had a meeting with Kelly and shared their concerns about the master schedule she has for the elementary school. Sara told them she has asked Kelly to present another option at the meeting next week. Natalie also talked about the new platform iReady and the discussion around using that next year to better improve yoy tracking of our students and the progress they are making. Mark asked that the master schedule discussion be on the agenda for the May meeting.

Brenda then asked Sara to give the Executive Director update. Sara said she has started updating the policies and hopes to have some to them for a vote to update soon. The 100's are done and she is working on the 400's now.

Sara said the night before the May meeting we will be meeting for dinner to celebrate Steven Peters and his service to the board for the last six years. Details for a location have not been finalized, but she will let them know as soon as possible.

Sara then reminded people that Brenda will also be retiring from the board soon – in June. To that end, we are going to be voting on new board members in May. If anyone is interested in a particular position, they should reach out to her.

And last of all, she highly encouraged all board members to attend the Prom and Graduation. Both are wonderful events and is worth the time. Kristina agreed it is a wonderful time and they would not be disappointed.

Stacey then spoke up and mentioned the article about Leon who had received a scholarship from the board last year and used it to attend GTCC power pathways. He is autistic and this program was a wonderful program and very successful. His family said he has new found independence and is now enrolled in another program working on life skills.

Sara reminded everyone we need to vote on scholarships again this year and will do that at the May meeting. Tasha said a number of students are preparing their applications for scholarships to be submitted for consideration in May.

Sara discussed there are 3 4-yr scholarships; 2 2-yr scholarships and one 1-yr scholarship for OCS.

Marcia asked if there had been any feedback from the CSRB/OCS regarding our interview for the charter renewal. Sara said there were a few updates to the website that are needed but nothing outstanding. She is however concerned that we need to show “success” and no one can identify what that means. Marcia explained it is because this is all new and they still have not thought through everything. The only concrete thing that Sara could report was that they do not know how to define success which for us is challenging since we do not know if we our academic success will be judged against Durham or statewide numbers.

There was then discussion about the legislature and what legislation is before them and how it will effect our school. There seems to be support for a bill that requires a charter school be a “C” grade or better after 3 years or they will be shut down. At the moment, this is just a bill out there and we do not know if it will pass so we will wait and see. Scott offered to have Harry and Amanda talk to us about the bill and any other concerns about legislation.

Sara then updated the board on her conversation with David Hostetler, our attorney, about the possibility of creating a foundation. He suggested they compile their questions and send them to hi and he will respond.

Brenda then moved on to the votes.

Brenda asked for a vote to pay the monthly bill. Natalie made the motion. Mark seconded it. Brenda called for the vote: it was unanimous.

Brenda asked for a vote to uphold the Administrative Withdrawals. Steve made the motion. Walter seconded it. Brenda called for the vote: it was unanimous.

Brenda asked for a vote to adjourn. Mark made the motion. Steve seconded it. Brenda called for the vote: it was unanimous.