



Committee Report

Governance Committee

Location	Date	Time
Virtual	November 16, 2023	5:01 PM
Board Members		
H. Council, President		V. Santana, Co-Vice President
D. Haynes, Co-Vice President		
District Liaison & Superintendent Representative		
B. Liss, General Counsel		R. León, Superintendent
Other District Staff		
H. Nazario, Chief of Staff		V. Wilson, School Business Administrator
N. Deering, Director of Board Relations		P. Luke, Executive Legal Assistant
K. Montalbano, Executive Assistant		
Guests		
N/A		
Meeting Summary		
<p>Call to Order: 5:01 PM</p> <p>The Committee discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board Vacancy - Newark Enrolls - Budget: SY 2024-25 - Communications with Vendors <p>Adjournment: 6:27 PM</p>		

Item: Board Vacancy	
Lead(s): H. Council, R. León	Priority/Strategy:

Comments:

Documents gathered in response to an OPRA request submitted since last month's board meeting indicated facts which led to review of advisory opinions of the School Ethics Commission regarding the "prohibited acts" provisions of the School Ethics Act. The Commission's published advisory opinions indicate that employment or service for other entities while serving as a member of a board of education creates an impermissible conflict of interest. The Committee discussed the application of that guidance, selection process to fill the current board vacancy, and the procedure for doing so.

Item: Newark Enrolls	
Lead(s): R. León	Priority/Strategy:

Comments:

A very successful All Schools Fair was conducted on November 4, 2023, with thousands of students and families in attendance. Following the Fair, in the first day after the application window had opened at 3 pm on November 4, more than 1,700 enrollment applications were submitted, which is the highest number ever for that time period. Students and parents should note that, while the Board appreciates such eagerness, an application submitted on the last possible day receives the same consideration as one submitted on the first day; all students applying through Newark Enrolls have an equal chance of receiving their choice of schools. The application window closes on February 2, and match letters are tentatively scheduled to be released on April 18. The district is putting particular emphasis this year on encouraging enrollment, through Newark Enrolls, in kindergarten to promote continuity in every student's educational program and instruction. District enrollment is now over 39,000 students, the highest in decades (it was approximately 34,000 in 2015), which is attributable to initiatives such as the High School Redesign Strategy, the very intentional ongoing work to improve and promote district schools, and Board members' fervent belief that we can help improve our City and the lives of its citizens with a successful instructional program.

Item: Budget: SY 2024-25	
Lead(s): R. León, V. Wilson	Priority/Strategy:

Comments:

The Committee discussed the impact on the district budget of necessary spending to address school facilities needs. While responsibility for financing school construction and renovation in our district and others belongs to the State, specifically the New Jersey Schools Development Authority (SDA), the State has not provided the funding needed to address our school district's facilities needs. Therefore, one possible way of providing safe and adequate facilities with relatively little impact on the operating budget is through bond financing. The Committee discussed the assessment of facilities needs, the legal responsibility and authority to address those needs, and the required procedure for bond financing, including a referendum, and the timing for such an initiative.

Item: Communications with Vendors	
Lead(s): H. Council	Priority/Strategy:

The Board President led a discussion of appropriate protocols for vendor presentations to individual Board members and Board committees. With input from the Superintendent and General Counsel, the Committee discussed that Board members responses to vendor communications should be the same as their responses to other inquiries or suggestions: they should be conveyed to the Superintendent, who may or may not then recommend action by the Board. In addition to the fact that Board action should generally be taken only upon the Superintendent's recommendation, Board members were reminded to be cautious about potentially disqualifying a vendor by having it participate prematurely in the process of considering needs, reviewing available options, and awarding a contract.

The meeting adjourned at 6:27 PM.