



**Board of Trustees  
Public Meeting Minutes  
May 16, 2023**

**Location:** Gillingham Charter School, 915 Howard Ave Pottsville PA 17901

**Meeting called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Scott Herbert.**

**All participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.**

**Roll Call:**

Present at 7:30 pm: **Sharon Klinger, Jackie Zilliox, Marsha Chwastiak, and Scott Herbert**

Absent: Danielle Sallada, Dan Kurtz and Jessica Peters

**Quorum:** Yes, 4 out of 7 members present at 7:30pm.

**Also Present:**

- Nicolle Hutchinson, Executive Director and Director of Education

**Review and Adoption of Agenda:** Sharon Klinger motioned to adopt the agenda, seconded by Jackie Zilliox. All aye, none opposed. Agenda is adopted.

**Public Comments:** No public comments.

**Finance Report:** Diane Cooney of Charter Choices. [Report can be found on file at Gillingham's Administrative Office and on Gillingham Charter School's website.]

**Adjournment to executive session at 7:48 p.m. to discuss personnel, director's compensation and gym lease.**

**Public meeting reconvened at 8:19 p.m.**

## **Reports:**

### **Executive Director, Nicolle Hutchinson:**

Tonight, we are recognizing so many people!

Juniors, Jacinda Webber and Makiah McKee, and 5th grader, Tadgh Friend, competed in the Eastern Nationals last week in Kentucky. 2 of them were only 1 point away from going to the finals in SC. Looks like the two girls will be competing in West Virginia for the special 3D national tournament...we'll keep you apprised!

Special thanks to Coach Martin for driving them and for working with the parents to ensure that the students could practice before the event. He also raised funding to help allay the costs of the trip!

Today was a special day, and one of our new students was all smiles when he told me that this was a really fun day. Spirit Day is our field day at Bunker Hill, and what a joy they classes had as they competed in playground games.

We recorded some of it to share with our international partners in Rwanda, the Bright Schools, and they'll send videos of their playground games.

On Thursday, we are excited to host leaders of the local Chamber of Commerce. They will observe a 6th grade lesson with Mrs. Meza, tour the schoolhouse and classes, and then speak to our upper school students for assembly.

I want to thank Jackie Zilliox for representing the board on the Schoolwide Title I Steering Committee.

As you know, on April 14th we sent in Gillingham's agreement to the PASD's charter proposal. Then, 2 days later, we were informed by the local newspaper that the board president was going to state that the board would not be presented with the proposed charter as we had been told. We negotiated in good faith for 8 months, and to be told that they are not going to complete the negotiation is stunning.

We ask that the board of Pottsville rethink the revocation process since their denials of our charter failed 2 times before in 2011 and 2017. We sent their board a packet of facts, and we are distributing a flyer of facts to the public since they are taxpayers. We're also hosting Facebook Live events to keep the public informed!

Here are the facts we shared with their board:

#### **Fact #1**

##### **Gillingham Charter is well within the certification requirements.**

We'd first like to address the alleged "Partial or completely inaccurate" information for 20 staff members on PDE 414, regarding teacher schedules and job descriptions.

At no time did the administration or the district's counsel reach out with questions or concerns about the information provided and its accuracy. Given that the district was willing to recommend charter renewal before the alleged concerns regarding certifications for the 2021-2022 school year were raised, Gillingham Charter School decided to hire an outside consultant to check Gillingham's certification percentage for that year. Gillingham hired Alex Schuh, Ph. D. to perform this outside audit. Please see the attached document for Dr. Schuh's credentials.

In his audit, Dr. Schuh reviewed the TIMS for accuracy. According to his calculations, Gillingham had an 84.5% teacher certification rate in 2021-2022. We are also on track to exceed the 75% certification requirement for the 2022-2023 school year, although no formal calculation can be done until the year is concluded. Dr. Schuh's calculations are available for your review in this packet.

## **Fact #2**

### **The strong majority of Gillingham Charter School students are Schuylkill County students.**

Next, we'd like to address the statement that the Pottsville School Board made alleging "GCS has an insufficient number of students from Schuylkill County." During any given month through the school year, Gillingham has never had more than 13 students enrolled at any time from a county outside of Schuylkill. Since 2019, we average 11 "out-of-county" students and 239 Schuylkill County students.

Yearly details are below:

2019-2020 school year - Gillingham had at most 13 students from outside Schuylkill County out of an average total enrollment of 250 students.

2020-2021 school year - Gillingham had at most 13 students from outside Schuylkill County out of an average total enrollment of 230 students.

2021 - 2022 school year - Gillingham had at most 7 students from outside Schuylkill County out of an average total enrollment of 230 students.

2022 - 2023 school year - Gillingham had at most 10 students from outside Schuylkill County out of an average total enrollment of 244 students.

As you know, the Charter School Law makes all students eligible for enrollment in a charter school. Gillingham is not permitted to discriminate in admissions against students who reside outside of Schuylkill County, although in accordance with the law, we give preference to those students who reside in the Pottsville Area School District. That students from outside the county want to enroll in Gillingham, despite their distance, is a testament to the strength of Gillingham's education model.

## **Fact #3**

### **Gillingham Charter currently has only one open teaching position.**

It was alleged that Gillingham Charter School has a high turnover rate among our teaching staff. Like other schools, Gillingham was also impacted by the Great Resignation following the COVID-19 Pandemic. See attached documentation stating national stats on the Great Resignation among educators.

That said, we are proud of our ability to attract strong candidates to replace educators who have decided to choose a different path. As stated above, our only open position is for an Art Educator. In comparison, PASD has far more open positions as indicated on the website:

<https://www.pottsville.k12.pa.us/Page/298>.

## **Fact #4**

Gillingham has a better attendance rate than Pottsville Area School District. You will see on [futurereadypa.org](http://futurereadypa.org) for 2020-2021, that Gillingham's percentage of students with regular attendance at 70.1%. Compared to PASD's percentages of 68.2% at the high school, 38.5% at the middle school, and 73.6% at the elementary for an average of 60.2%.

## **Fact #5**

The district's administration and legal team spent eight months negotiating a charter with Gillingham's administration and legal team. On April 14, Gillingham sent the administration an agreement to the final charter proposal, after being told by the district's counsel that it would be presented to the PASD school board. Then on April 18, the board president stated that the final agreement would not be presented. For eight months the additional factors, those listed by the board president at the end of his statement, were not a factor.

For example, the listed student achievement as a concern.

Gillingham Charter School's academic growth scores, which are the state's measure of a school's instructional impact on its students' academic performance, have been strong throughout the history of the school. The scores presented below, which can be accessed on the state's website [www.Futurereadypa.org](http://www.Futurereadypa.org),

demonstrate that our students have made academic progress relative to the Pennsylvania Academic Standards in multiple subjects in multiple years (as measured by PSSA and Keystone tests).

Note that 70 is considered a “good” growth score. GCS’s average PVAAS growth score over the three most recent testing years was 71.2, well above the Department of Education’s target of 70. In 2021-22, the school exceeded the Pennsylvania Statewide average growth scores in both English and Science.

**Table 1. GCS PVAAS Academic Growth Scores, 2018-2019, Pre-pandemic**  
**[From Future Ready PA website]**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Gillingham CS</b>
English/Literature	69.4
Math/Algebra	71.0
Science/Biology	74.0
<b>Average</b>	<b>71.5</b>

**Table 2. GCS PVAAS Academic Growth Scores, 2020-2021, Mid-pandemic**  
**[From Future Ready PA website]**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Gillingham CS</b>
English/Literature	77.8*
Math/Algebra	55.8
Science/Biology	Not measured
<b>Average</b>	<b>67.0</b>

\*Exceeds State Average

**Table 3. GCS PVAAS Academic Growth Scores, 2021-2022, Pandemic Emergence**  
**[From Future Ready PA website]**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Gillingham CS</b>
English/Literature	77.0*
Math/Algebra	68.0
Science/Biology	76.0*
<b>Average</b>	<b>73.7</b>

\*Exceeds State Average

**Fact #6**

CAB historically dismisses PASD allegations and renews Gillingham’s charter. We are confident in the facts we have presented in this packet and would prefer not to needlessly waste taxpayer dollars on legal fees. We would rather educate than litigate.

We continue to want to collaborate with PASD for an agreed-upon charter.

**Director of Organizational Development, Krista Bevan:**

Enrollment Projection for next year is 265 students based on an audit of our current enrollment and waitlists for each grade. We anticipate starting the year with 265 students, and a waitlist of 59 students. For your review in the board documents for this meeting you will have seen quotes for security upgrades. We are recommending going with the DM2 quote because we already have their system in the school. The upgrades performed will provide door access cards to every employee, improving the physical safety of all on campus. The new system is also capable of sounding an alarm if a door is left propped open or doesn't latch correctly. The cost for this upgrade is anticipated to be completely covered under the PCCD School Safety and Security Grant.

**Acting Director of Education:** No report.

**Board Charter Compliance Committee: Scott Herbert.** No report.

**Board Financial Audit Committee: Jackie Zilliox.** We followed for determining compensation for our Board of Directors the 990 process.

**Board Academic Excellence Committee: Dan Kurtz.** No report.

**Board Facilities Committee: Dan Kurtz.** No report.

**Board Governance Committee: Scott Herbert.** No report.

**Item A: New Business**

A. It has been recommended to the Board to approve the following items in a consent resolution under the categories of **Reports, Budget, Operations, Facilities & Policies:**

1. Tonight's reports
2. April 18, 2023, board meeting minutes
3. Concussion Policy
4. Commencement of the public comment period of the 2023.24 school budget to be held from May 17-June 20, 2023
5. 2023.2024 School Calendar
6. 2022.2023 Calendar amendments:
  - a. Prom moved to May 13, 2023
  - b. ARTSpring moved to May 25, 2023
  - c. Graduation moved to June 1, 2023, from June 2, 2023
7. DM2 Security upgrades to include employee access cards and extra alarms

8. Hire Charlotte Allar as a 12-month, salaried non-exempt administrative assistant at a salary of \$35,000

**Do we have a motion to approve Item A? Jackie Zilliox motioned to approve item A. Sharon Klinger seconded the motion. All ayes, none opposed. Resolutions have been approved.**

**Future Meeting Dates**

Tuesday, June 20, 2023      Public Meeting      7:00 pm      Schoolhouse

**Adjournment** - Any comments or discussions?

Motioned to adjourn by Sharon Klinger, seconded by Jackie Zilliox. All in favor; none opposed.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.**



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**Signature of Board Secretary**