



**Board of Trustees  
Public Meeting Minutes  
June 20, 2023**

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

**Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Scott Herbert.**

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

**Roll Call:**

Present at 7:05 pm: Sharon Klinger, Dan Kurtz, Jackie Zilliox, Jessica Peters, Marsha Chwastiak and Scott Herbert

Absent: Danielle Sallada

**Quorum:** Yes, 6 out of 7 members present at 7:06pm.

**Also Present:**

- Nicolle Hutchinson, Executive Director and Director of Education
- Krista Bevan, Director of Organizational Development

**Review and Adoption of Agenda:** The agenda was sent prior to the meeting. Are there any additions or changes that need to be made? Do I have a motion to adopt the agenda as written? Dan Kurtz motioned to adopt the agenda as written, seconded by Sharon Klinger. All ayes, 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 7:22 p.m. to discuss personnel and gym lease.**

**Public meeting reconvened at 8:05 p.m.**

## Reports:

### Executive Director/Director of Education, Nicolle Hutchinson:

Good evening, all. It's a pleasure to work with you and to celebrate the end of a successful school year! We ended with a bang! Heather Hill and Deidra Herbert directed and produced The Tempest, prom was a smash, Krista and company produced a wonderful yearbook, and Mr. Shaull and I facilitated a lot of creative and talented performances at our annual talent show on the last day of school. And, of course, commencement was amazing as we celebrated the graduating class of 2023. Special thanks to Karen Faust for organizing the event and to all the teachers and staff who attended and presented the grads, and special thanks to board members, Scott, Jess and Jackie, who were able to share in the distribution of the diplomas!

We are changing our auditor. SD Associates organization no longer has the manpower to continue conducting Gillingham's audits moving forward, so tonight we are recommending that the board approve the engagement of the services of Barbacane, Thornton & Company, which was recommended to us by S.D. Associates.

#### School Calendar

We are recommending the 2023/24 school year calendar, and we are recommending that Gillingham begin to commemorate the federal holiday, Juneteenth, by closing the school's offices on June 19th each year.

#### Literacy Consultant

We are requesting that the board approve the consulting contract with Dr. Andy Gavalis. After extensive discussions with CMI's reading experts, Dr. Carroll Smith and Gladys Shaefer, Dr. Gavalis and Dr. Alex Schuh, and our reading interventionist, Mary Fetterolf, we have some areas we need to notch up in our literacy instruction, and we'll do that by incorporating the Structured Literacy approach. This is recommended by PDE for all schools, by the way.

Dr. Gavalis sent this following conclusion after observing classrooms and interviewing teachers and administration.

- There is an abundance of positive practices happening at Gillingham Charter School.
- While many components of Structured Literacy are addressed, Phonological and Phonemic Awareness are not explicitly taught in the curriculum.
  - These areas will be addressed first through professional learning and followed by support with lesson planning as well as classroom coaching and curriculum development.
  - Phonics and word recognition are addressed in the classrooms; however, curriculum development and assisted lesson planning may augment these practices in the classrooms.
  - Automatic, Fluent Reading of Text and Vocabulary will not be an area of focus for professional learning, lesson planning, and coaching, but some practices may be embedded through curriculum development.
  - Reading and Listening Comprehension as well as Written Expression will be areas of focus for professional learning, lesson planning, classroom coaching, and curriculum development.
    - Specifically, embedding more independent reading, peer discussion, and academic vocabulary.

- In terms of written expression, creating a scope and sequence of writing as well as integrating different types of writing would be beneficial.

## Charter Renewal Update

- We are pleased to share an update from Bobby Weaver, co-owner of the Pottsville Athletics gym that we would like to use again:

**From:** Bobby Weaver <bobbyweaver94@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 10:13 AM  
**To:** Nicolle Hutchinson <nhutchinson@gillingham.school>  
**Subject:** Pottsville Athletics | Update  
Good Morning Nicole!

I wanted to provide an update on the Pottsville Athletics property at 325 S Centre Street. We are working with the City of Pottsville to get an occupancy on this building. There is still miscommunication on what fire alarm system needs to be installed, as they are frequently citing "school codes" and we haven't been able to get answers on that. Once we get answers on the fire alarm system, that will be the last thing before we are able to open!

- Gillingham families attended the PASD public board meeting on May 24 this year. Many parents, students, and our board president spoke. The board was invited by Scott Herbert to meet with you all to get answers to any questions or to share any of their concerns.
- We have not heard from the district since the meeting, and they have not sent us a list of the concerns or information that they are still waiting on. It is unclear as to what they are waiting on.
- Thus, we sent the board another packet of information to address the statements read by their board president.
- The packet is as follows:

June 15, 2023

Dear PASD School Board,

Once again, thank you for considering the following facts as you weigh your decision about renewing Gillingham's charter and the educational future of our students. We hope the information included in this document will provide clarity to some of the questions and concerns that have been raised.

I'd also like to thank you for listening to the public comments made by Gillingham students, parents, grandparents, employees, and the board president Scott Herbert, during your public board meeting on May 24, 2023. I believe their passion and commitment to Gillingham was clearly evident.

In a true spirit of collaboration and in support of our students' future, we would welcome the opportunity to coordinate a meeting, as suggested by Mr. Herbert, to bring both boards together to discuss any remaining areas of concern and to answer any additional questions directly and in-person. We ask that you take this request under consideration.

Fact #1

Gillingham Charter has implemented a plan for physical education and will continue that plan as the school partners with the gym's owners.

The May 24th board meeting was the first time we heard that PASD wants to know our plan for offering PE to our students while the gym is closed to us.

Gillingham strictly follows the guidelines set forth by the city. For the past 11 years, the city has classified the gym as a “recreational gym.” When the city inspectors and fire chief inspected the building on 1/10/23 the fire chief informed Gillingham that the gym was then classified as an educational classification, and thus changes would need to be made.

In the meantime, Gillingham received written permission from the city to continue to use the two local parks, as we have done for the past 12 years (see attached email), for PE class. The classes are held at the parks and on Gillingham’s campus when weather permits. Health classes are held indoors during inclement weather.

#### Fact #2

Over 75% of Gillingham’s teachers and staff were properly certified during the 2021/22 school year. As we stated in our previous letter dated 5/11/23, Gillingham has documentation from a third-party consultant confirming the school exceeded the state’s certification threshold of 75%. As you are aware, our first calculation contained a clerical error regarding the timeframe the certs were active, that has since been corrected. Our current staff certification stands at 84%. If there are any remaining discrepancies on certification, please provide further details on what is needed, and we will forward the necessary information.

#### Fact #3

Gillingham Charter School has two active searches currently underway.

Like all educational institutions across the nation, Gillingham faces teacher turnover. We are proud of our record of attracting strong candidates to replace educators who may choose to seek a different path.

Furthermore, we are unaware of specific language within the Charter School Law or other school law that stipulates a required percentage for teacher retention. Please share any documentation you may have that indicates a required teacher retention percentage.

While there are a number of positions currently posted on the Gillingham Charter School Website, the only two positions in an active search are for an Art Educator and a Middle School English Teacher. The other positions are posted as a proactive measure to generate a robust applicant pool in the event of retirements and/or resignations.

#### Fact #4

##### Stable Staffing

As mentioned above in Fact #3, specific positions are posted on the Gillingham Charter **School** Website to ensure a robust applicant pool for current and future vacancies. In response to statements made regarding GCS second graders having three different teachers during the school

year, after the resignation of Mrs. Steiff on 9/21/22, Mrs. Montejo, our full-time support teacher who has been with GCS since 2016, was placed in the classroom as a long-term sub. Mrs. Montejo remained with the class until Mrs. Visgarda, who served as the Elementary Nurtured Heart teacher, expressed interest in, and accepted the position of, 2nd grade teacher in February of 2023.

As you are aware, the use of long-term subs is a common practice when resignations, leaves of absence, or lengthy illnesses occur during the school year.

#### Fact #5

##### Cost of Lengthy Renewal Process

GCS approaches the charter renewal process in a true collaborative spirit, with hopes of district support to ensure GCS students a continued positive learning experience and environment. As part of the process, both parties secure legal assistance and support.

PASD expressed concerns of misinformation being shared by GCS regarding expenses and fees incurred on both sides as part of the charter renewal process. All the figures that have been shared were a matter of public record and reported by the Republican Herald in 2017 (article enclosed) in reference to expenses incurred during GCS's last charter renewal application process.

GCS recognizes the continued expenses on both sides as the process extends and will certainly provide all information and documentation that is clearly requested by PASD in writing to expedite this process and minimize the time frame involved in charter renewal.

Sincerely,

Nicolle Hutchinson

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

Our Threat Assessment Team has been meeting monthly to make recommendations and improvements to the safety and security of students and staff at GCS.

This school year, we implemented Night lock door barricades on every door in both the school and admin buildings and trained all staff on how to use them in the event of a lockdown.

We added cameras in the 7th & 8<sup>th</sup> grade hallway, updated cameras in the bathroom hallways, and updated cameras in the east hallway. We have future goals of adding additional cameras outside to achieve a full 360 view of outdoor areas and properties, as well as adding cameras to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor hallways and center area.

Connie, our school Nurse developed a medical emergency response plan which we have included in your board packet this evening for review.

We implemented a new reunification plan and are currently making annual revisions on updating the EOP (Emergency Operations Plan).

We installed two KNOX boxes and once the new access system is installed, the Knox boxes will house floor plans and spare key cards that can be accessed by emergency personnel.

Plans are in motion to move from a 4-digit code system to a card entry system at all entrances to the buildings. With a card entry system, employee's movement in and out of buildings can be tracked. This has benefits to enhanced safety, such as knowing if an employee is in or out of a building or assist in locating them in the event of a fire or other emergency. All employees will have a card, and if an employee leaves and does not return the card it can be remotely deactivated.

We have updated emergency evacuation plans to identify new locations.

We have updated battery operated emergency flood lights for a power emergency.

We held staff training this past school year on Safe to Say to train new members.

This month the team did a walk around assessment of the physical buildings to identify areas that need repair or attention. We need an eyewash station in the lab, repair the treads on the schoolhouse steps, and identified shelves in classrooms that need to be fixed or replaced. A 2 foot by 1 foot "sink hole" on the west side of the schoolhouse was also found in the macadam by the new wall.

## **Board Charter Compliance Committee: Scott Herbert. No Report**

### **Board Financial Audit Committee: Jackie Zilliox**

- Total revenues increased by approximately \$406,000 due mainly to increases in federal grants and the per-student subsidy.
- At the close of the fiscal year, the school reports ending net position of (\$22,971). This net position balance represents an increase in the net position of \$334,804 for the year ended June 30, 2022.
- At the close of the current fiscal year, the school reports an ending general fund balance of \$962,925. This balance was the result of a \$78,684 surplus for the year ended June 30, 2022.
- The school's unrestricted cash balance on June 30, 2022, was \$1,010,094 representing an increase of \$8,820 from June 30, 2021.

The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance that are required to be reported under Government Auditing Standards.

In our opinion, the school complied, in all material respects, with the types of compliance requirements referred to above that could have a direct and material effect on each of its major federal programs for the year ended June 30, 2022.

### **Board Academic Excellence Committee: Dan Kurtz**

Gillingham has been designated by PDE as a Targeted School Improvement because performance by one or more student groups is at or below state-established standards. After PDE analyzed our data, and they are highlighting last year's state test scores of disadvantaged students and special ed students, our career benchmark of 63%, and our 70% attendance rate from 2 years ago.

It's basically an early warning system for at-risk student groups and as a signal to schools that may be at future risk for more intensive support and improvement strategies. If Gillingham does not improve these areas, then the school could move to the

- **Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI):** Schools facing the most significant challenges in academic achievement, student growth, and other areas; and
- **Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (A-TSI):** Schools in which performance by one or more student groups is at or below the level of the CSI schools.

As a TSI school we are required to develop building level improvement plans that analyze school community strengths and challenges, and that set conditions for improved student outcomes—both academic and non-academic. These plans require LEA approval from the Board of School Directors or Charter School Board Trustees. We determine the duration of the improvement plans.

The team has plans in the making. Treasurer Jackie Zilliox volunteered to represent the board on the Schoolwide Title 1 Improvement Planning steering committee along with Karen Shanoskie, Jenna Troutman, Dean Troutman, new teacher, Judy DeVincenzo, and Nicolle Hutchinson. This plan will address the TSI designations and will be presented to the board in the summer.

The career standards benchmark percentage did drop from 100% to 63% because of mid-year personnel illness and changes. Karen Faust has been on target and working diligently to increase our score, so this will not be on the plan.

The plan will focus on state testing scores and increasing attendance.

An attendance team has already met several times, using the “effective teams” model. The data revealed that in 2022/23, the attendance rate of students who were enrolled over 90 days was 63%, which is a drop from the 70% of 2020/2021. We analyzed the data to determine what the reasons are, who the students are, and what attitudes they have about attendance. We set a goal of 70% by mid-year next year. We intend to increase that by setting incentives, notching up the student handbook and the monitoring processes.

To address the scores, two consultants have been engaged.

Dr. Alex Schuh and his team at School Frontiers analyzed our state test scores and developed an improvement plan for this past school year. The team concluded the short-term plan, and the benchmarking scores showed marked improvement. However, we won’t have the final data until the scores come in, and you will be notified.

The next steps are as follows:

1. Complete the Schoolwide Title I Improvement Plan and address these issues by setting goals and a plan.
2. Contract with a consultant to develop a comprehensive improvement plan for the 2023/24 school year to address state test scores, paying particular attention to the subgroups that were flagged.
3. Keep our reading and math interventionists.
4. Contract with Dr. Andrew Gavalis, a reading professor at East Stroudsburg, to develop a literacy/ELA improvement plan over the summer and to conduct coaching and Professional Development trainings on structured literacy and creating comprehensive pacing guides.

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

**Board Governance Committee: Scott Herbert**

Annually in June, the Gillingham board of trustees holds the board’s reorganization meeting. Tonight, we will nominate and elect board members and officers since some members’ terms end. We wish to thank Danielle Sallada for serving as a board member and representing our parents. The governance Committee nominates Andre Grant, a father of one of seniors, who has been a student at Gillingham since 2016. Andre’s wife, Samantha, supported the creation of Gillingham’s foundation. The family has supported Gillingham for many years and we are grateful that Andre is willing to serve as a board member. During annual reorganization meetings, the board reviews various policies and members and directors sign annual documents such as the Ethical & Professional Code of Conduct Policy and Gillingham’s Pact. New and old contracts will be signed.

### **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, Leases, Contracts, Policies, and Personnel:**

1. Tonight’s reports
2. May 16, 2023, board meeting minutes
3. 2023-2024 school calendar
4. 2023-2024 Parking Lot Lease with Gillingham Charter School Foundation
5. 2023-2024 school budget
6. 2023-2024 Literacy Consulting proposal from Dr. Andrew Gavalis totaling \$3,555.
7. Board approves the submission of forms 418 and 419 (rent reimbursement) to PDE when the forms become available for school year 22/23.
8. Smart Futures proposal
9. Competitive Foods Policy review
10. Procurement Plan for the Child Nutrition Program

11. District Title I Parent Engagement Policy
12. Title I Equity Statement
13. Procurement for Using Grant Funds
14. Meal Charge Policy
15. Medical Emergency Response Policy
16. The Pact review
17. Internet Acceptable Use Policy review
18. Procurement Plan for the Food Service Director
19. Anti-Bullying Policy review
20. Board Strategic Calendar review
21. Progressive Pediatrics occupational therapy and speech services contracts
22. Engagement of Barbacane, Thornton & Company, LLP, to conduct Gillingham Charter School's annual audits.
23. Termination of Joyce Aspromatis as the middle school humanities teacher

**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 are approved.**

B. It has been recommended to the Board to approve the following item under the category of **Finances**:  
2022 Audit Report conducted by SD Associates

Any questions, comments or discussion? **Do we have a motion to approve Item B? Jackie Zilliox motioned to approve Item B. Sharon Klinger seconded the motion. All ayes, none opposed. Resolution is approved.**

C. Nomination and election of board members

Nicolle would like to nominate Sharon Klinger, Scott Herbert, Jackie Zilliox and new board member Andre Grant.

**Any discussions or objections? Do we have a motion to approve Item C? Sharon Klinger motioned to approve Item C. Jackie Zilliox seconded the motion. All ayes, none opposed. Resolution is approved.**

Sharon Klinger, Vice President a 1-year term.  
Scott Herbert, President a 1 year-term.  
Jackie Zilliox ,Treasurer a 2 year-term.  
Andre Grant will let us know on how long his term will be.

D. Nomination and election of board officers.

**Sharon Klinger nominates Scott Herbert for Board President. Jackie Zilliox seconds the nomination. All in favor, none opposed. Scott Herbert will be the Board President for another year.**

**Scott Herbert nominates Sharon Klinger for Vice President. Jackie Zilliox seconds the nomination. All in favor, none opposed. Sharon Klinger will be the Vice President for another year.**

**Scott Herbert nominates Jackie Zilliox for Treasurer. Dan Kurtz seconds the nomination. All in favor, none opposed. Jackie Zilliox will be the Treasurer for another year.**



**Future Meeting Dates**

Tuesday, July 18, 2023      Public Meeting      7:00 pm      Schoolhouse

**Adjournment** - Are there any issues or comments before we adjourn?

**Can I have a motioned to adjourn? Jackie Zilliox motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Sharon Klinger. All in favor; none opposed.**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.**



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**Signature of Board Secretary**

