

Connections Public Charter School

Governing Board Minutes

February 19, 2025

Kress Building 3:30 pm

Call to Order: At the request of Chair Romeo Garcia who attended virtually, Mrs. McDaniel called the meeting to order at 3:33 pm.

Members Present: Romeo Garcia (online), Damon Murphy, Nalu Tufui, Pam Thatcher, Christina Wilbourn, Heather McDaniel

Members Absent: Michael Fischer, Clint Kolyer, Joanna Highstein

Guests: Cheryl Gravela, John Woolverton, Deborah Anderson, Jaycinth Vea

Public Comment: A complaint was brought to the board by Jaycinth Vea. Discussion required executive session.

At 3:35 pm, a motion was made by Mr. Murphy to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Wilbourn. The issue was discussed in executive session. At 3:50 pm, Mr. Murphy made a motion to leave executive session. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Wilbourn. There was no action out of the executive session.

Approval of Agenda: Members reviewed the agenda for the February 19, 2025 meeting.

A motion was made by Mrs. Wilbourn to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tufui and was approved with consensus.

Approval of Minutes for January 15, 2025 meeting: Members reviewed the minutes from meeting on January 15, 2025.

A motion was made by Ms. Tufui to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Wilbourn and approved with consensus.

Approval of New Members: None

Elections of Officers: None

Food Program Update: Mr. Murphy reported that Mr. Schwerdtfeger and Mr. Salmoiraghi have been receiving more produce from the school's Kaumana property. Members discussed.

Correspondence & Communication: Mr. Murphy received another grievance from HSTA regarding a department head position. He indicated that the complaint in the grievance was false and that the issue will be resolved.

Commission School Lead Report: None

Old Business: The request from a student to bring a service dog on campus has been redirected to the Attorney General's office. There has been a transition in the Attorney General's Education Division, but we finally have an AG in place. More information will be forthcoming.

New Business:

Approval of New Substitute Teachers: Annmarie Weed has completed the paperwork and is requesting approval to substitute teach.

A motion was made by Mrs. Wilbourn to approve Annmarie Weed as a substitute teacher. The motion was seconded by Mr. Murphy and was approved by consensus.

Mr. Murphy requested board approval of the Title IX Policy.

A motion was made by Mr. Murphy to approve the Title IX Policy. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tufui. Members discussed. Motion was approved with consensus.

Operations Report:

Operations Status - Financial Officer's Report

Members reviewed the financial statements for January 2025. Ms. Gravela discussed the report with members. She highlighted a few items at the bottom of the financial statement.

Approval of Financial Statements:

A motion was made to approve the January 2025 financial statement by Ms. Tufui and seconded by Mrs. Wilbourn. Members discussed. Motion was approved with consensus.

Next, Ms. Gravela discussed the purchase of a new bus. After discussion, members agreed on obtaining a second quote. Further discussion involved EV bus research (Steve Hirakami) and the purchase of an older Akita bus for \$12,000. Members agreed that Mr. Murphy and his administrative team with work out the details and bring this issue back to the governing board.

Administrator's Report:

Current enrollment: 350

Title IV-A Report:

Mrs. Thatcher informed members that Title IV-A office has gone through personnel changes. Revisions were needed for the first semester review as requested by their new staff. The Title IV-A office has decided to have schools reapply each year rather than the current 3-year cycle.

Student Achievement Report:

The school's database launch is stalled again. This database will house our student information, including achievement reports. It has been difficult to gain access to export our data from Infinite Campus to our new database built by Eduvero. There does not seem to be consensus as to the requirements for charter schools to complete this process. The procedures in place are for HIDOE schools. We are working to clarify this process to be able to launch our site as soon as possible. This database will help us to more effectively provide for the needs of our Connections' students.

Other Items:

Mrs. Anderson presented the idea of WASC Accreditation. To begin the process of self-study, the cost is \$160. There are more costs required if the school decides to go through the process. She recommends applying for accreditation for grades 9-12 as there are many benefits that high school students can gain from attending an accredited school. Mr. Garcia, Mr. Thatcher, and she have all gone through this process. Mr. Garcia stated that spring would be a good time to begin the self-study. Mr. Murphy will investigate this process to determine if we should begin.

Kaumana Property Report:

Mr. Murphy reported that we are close to completing the process for the permit of the smaller 15-acre parcel in Kaumana. TANF funding will be used for new crops at the farm with Studio Shaka's after-school groups. Mr. Silva, farm manager, is currently developing a new seed bank. One of the goals is for the farm to become a revenue-producing entity. There will be a community open house at the farm on Friday, February 28 from 3:30-5:30 pm.

Other Items:

Mr. Kua has been working on preparations for the radio station. Connections will be entering into a partnership with The Hawaii Developmental Disabilities Foundation, owner of the station with callsign 93.5 KDDF.

Mr. Murphy visited HAAS to see the small modular unit they built that does not require permits. HAAS is in the process of obtaining permits for larger units. The steel-frame buildings and container modules are purchased from China and can be used as affordable housing units. Pending the outcome of HAAS's permitting process for the larger units, they could be purchased for classroom buildings at the Kaumana property.

Mr. Murphy and Mr. Garcia will try to meet with Mayor Kimo Alameda to gain support for the Kaumana farm and development of the smaller 15-acre parcel.

Mr. Woolverton shared the new brown and green 'io volleyball uniforms. The first home game is at the Hilo Armory on February 25.

Mrs. McDaniel informed members of the passing of one of Connections Public Charter School's founders, Larry Jackson. Larry was one of the original teachers of Connections School-within-a-School that began on the campus of Mt. View School in 1995. Five years later, he became one of the founders of Connections Public Charter School when the original charter was approved in May 2000. Larry brought a wealth of knowledge and expertise to Connections, and with that, he held many roles over the years: teacher, mentor, counselor, registrar, administrator, governing board chair, and more. He will be greatly missed.

Mrs. McDaniel adjourned the meeting at 5:00 pm.

Next Meeting: March 12, 2025 at 3:15 pm.

Adjournment: 5:00 pm

Respectfully submitted by:

Mr. Romeo Garcia

Connections Governing Board Chair