

Ocean Academy Charter School Board of Education

Minutes – Board of Trustees Regular Meeting, May 13th, 2025

In Accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act: Public Notice of this Meeting pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act has been given by the Board Secretary in the Asbury Park Press – Paper of Record. Ocean Academy Charter School, 1650 Massachusetts Avenue, Lakewood, NJ. Attendance by virtual or in person.

Anita Raynes Lepelstat – President
Jim Muzikowski – Vice President
Marshall White - By Phone
Aase Marie Hare
Sharon Hollander - Absent
Roxanne Martin - Absent
David Corso
Raul Orellana
Gregory Brandis

Valarie Smith (Board Secretary), Lorna Hassel (Head of School), Dawn Cobb-Fossnes (Middle School Principal), Stephen Nichol (High School Principal), David Block (School Business Administrator), Didi Yencer (Whole School Reform), and Board Attorney, Dave Hespe.

Meeting Called to Order at 6:15 pm

Salute to the Flag

Action Agenda

Public Session:

Old Business

Approval of Meeting Minutes of April 8, 2025

Motion to approve the minutes of April 8th, 2025 made by Raul Orellana

Seconded by Jim Muzikowski

Vote: unanimously passed by the Board

New Business

Elementary Principal's Report Presented by Lorna Hassel

Month of April – Staff & Student Attendance

Total Staff - 122

Full Days Taken Off - 81

Half Days Taken Off - 28

Total # of Students - 538

Student Absences – 257

End of Year Teacher Survey Results – Presented by Lorna Hassel

Summary –

Summary on Parent/Teacher Conferences – Presented by Lorna Hassel

All went well with the spring Parent/Teacher Conferences

Special Congratulatory Note from Seaside Park! By Lorna Hassel

We received a special congratulatory / Thank You letter from the mayor of Seaside Park, John A. Peterson, for our students helping with Clean Ocean Action for “Beach Sweeps”. Our students participated on April 12th, the annual beach clean-up sponsored by Clean Ocean Action.

Update on NJSLA Testing – Didi Yencer

Elementary (3-8) – Didi presented on all of the planning and organizing for the upcoming NJSLA testing for the elementary school grades.

Summer School – Presented by Lorna Hassel

Grades K-7: We will be having 16 days of Summer School the month of July. 4 days a week for 4 weeks. Monday thru Thursday, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm – concentrating on ELA and Math

8th Grade will be joining the High School Students for the Summer “Boot Camp” program at Georgian Court University

Starting July 7th thru July 31st

Motion to Approve Summer School Programs Made by Aase Hare

Second: Raul Orellana

Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

Upcoming Field Trips – Presented by Lorna Hassel

- ✚ Field Day, Thursday May 22, at Oak View Lodge - 1412 Schoolhouse Road, Wall Township, NJ
Please feel free to join us!
- ✚ Kindergarten – May 28th, Pirates!
- ✚ Grounds for Sculpture – June 6th – Art Class
- ✚ 4th Grade – Cape May Zoo
- ✚ Stem Students will be going to Liberty State Park Science Museum

High School Principal's Report – Stephen Nichol

New Hires – High School

Courtney Krauchick as the nurse at OACHS LPN - finishing her RN then School Nurse Certification at \$60,000

Motion to Approve New Employees made by David Corso

Seconded by Anita Lepelstat

Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

High School Field Trips

Student Government Six Flags Great Adventure - May 28, 2025

13 students; 3 chaperones

Popcorn Park Zoo - May 21, 2025

32 students; 6 chaperones

Grounds for Sculpture June 16th

High Schools NJSLA & Other Testing – Presented by Stephen Nichol

Summary of prep for NJSLA Testing at the High School

Building – High School Update – Presented by Tom McMahon (Facilities Consultant)

-  The builder is still projecting that we will have a certificate for occupancy for September 1st.
-  We are looking into renting the fields and gymnasium at the Catholic Holy Family complex @ 1139 E County Line Rd, Lakewood, NJ 08701 for High School student use
-  We are also looking into the possibility of a preschool program since Lakewood Public Schools has pulled out of their program at Holy Family.

Charter School Program Grant \$1.25M High School Facilities – Presented by Valarie Smith

Update: Amy LaBarca, Stephen Nichol, and Valarie Smith had a virtual interview (May 6th, 2025) for one hour (capacity interview) with the NJ Charter School Association. This is the second and final hurdle in the process. We should hear the final outcome within the next 2 weeks.

Inhouse School Security Changes – Presented by Valarie Smith

We have been advised by the local & state law enforcement that we should have a Security Director. Appointing a School Safety Director is essential for operationalizing and sustaining a successful safety program. This role not only ensures the safety and security of students and staff but also serves as the cornerstone of your district's safety efforts.

Thus, we would like to create a position of Security Director for starting July 1, 2025 for the 25-26 School Year.

The Head of School Security is responsible for coordinating and implementing a district's overall safety and security program. This includes developing and implementing comprehensive safety plans, emergency operation plans, and policies, as well as training staff and students on these procedures. They also collaborate with law enforcement and other emergency agencies to ensure the safety and security of students, staff, and school property, directing & coordinating all safety drills, and serving as a primary point of contact for all safety-related concerns.

Motion to create a new school position of “Head of School Security” made by Raul Orellana

Second by David Corso

Vote: unanimously approved by the Board

Motion to hire Todd Gonnella as Head of School Security as an Ocean Academy full time employee made by Anita Lepelstat

Second: Jim Muzikowski

Vote: All in Favor

Facilities Consultant Contract (Thomas McMahon) 2025-26 – Presented by Valarie Smith

Motion to continue our contract with our Facilities Consultant Thomas McMahon for the 2025-26 School Year made by Jim Muzikowski

Second: Raul Orellana

Vote: All in Favor

New Position of Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction K -12 - Presented by Valarie Smith

An Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction is essential for effective school districts because they provide specialized leadership in curriculum development, instruction, and assessment, ensuring high student achievement and supporting teachers' professional growth. This role helps to create a focused, data-driven, and improvement-oriented school system

As a part of Whole School Reform and Aligning Standards and having a seamless transition throughout the school in curriculum & Instruction, Ocean Academy creates the position of Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction K-12.

Certification Required: Standard Principal certification, which includes Asst Super of Curr & Inst.

Motion to create the position of Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction k-12 made by Dave Corso

Second: Greg Brandis

Vote: All in Favor

Motion to move into Executive Session made by Dave Corso @ 7:25 pm to discuss personnel matters

Seconded by Anita Lepelstat

Vote: All in Favor

Motion to adjourn Executive Session made by Dave Corso @ 8:00 pm

Seconded by Greg Brandis

Vote: All in Favor

Amy Labarca to be promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction

Motion to promote Amy Labarca to Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction made by Dave Corso

Second: Raul Orellana

Vote: Unanimously approved by the Board

Changes in Administrative Team – School Wide – Presented by Valarie Smith

Angela McCarty will be retiring at the conclusion of this school year, prompting a necessary reorganization aimed at better aligning the high school, middle school, and elementary school. This restructuring is intended to enhance compliance and address the needs of the entire school community effectively.

Motion to Approve New Administrative Organization made by Raul Orellana

Second: Jim Muzikowski

Vote: Unanimously approved by the Board

Motion to Create the new Administrative Position of Head of Students made by Anita Lepelstat

Second: Greg Brandis

Vote: Unanimously approved by the Board

Salary Raises – Presented by Valarie Smith

Overall Administrative Salary Increase to be in sync with others at 3.5% as listed.

Motion to accept administrative increases as presented for 2025-26 School Year made by Aase Hare

Second: Raul Orellana

Vote: Unanimously approved by the Board

Change in Base Teacher Salary – Presented by Valarie Smith

New Jersey's average teacher starting salary for the 2023-24 school year was \$57,603, the fourth highest in the nation, according to the National Education Association Benchmark Report. It is the 4th highest in the nation.

I would like to propose that we raise Ocean Academy's base starting salary from \$55,000 to \$57,603 starting for the 2025-26 School Year.

Motion made to increase the base teacher salary to \$57,603 made by Aase Hare

Second: Jim Muzikowski

Vote: Unanimously approved by the Board.

Financials – Presented by David Block

 April Bill List 2025

 Board Secretary's Report for March 2025

Motion to Approve the above cited financials as presented by Board Secretary David Block made by Aase Hare

Second: Dave Corso

Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board

Board Comments: None

Announcements: Next Board Meeting will be Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Dawn Cobb-Fosness reported on the 8th Grade Washington, DC trip

She also presented "Thank You" letters from the students to the Board

Motion to Adjourn: @ 8:21 pm made by Aase Hare

Second: Jim Muzikowski

Vote: Unanimously Approved by the Board