

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS
FEBRUARY 5, 2024**

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas held a public meeting on February 5, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at 8151 N. Shaumber Road, Las Vegas, NV 89166.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Board Chair Travis Mizer. The following Board members were in attendance: Travis Mizer, John Bentham, Will Harty, Cody Noble (joined at 6:12 p.m.), Sarah McClellan, and Renee Fairless.

Board Member LeNora Bredsguard was not in attendance.

Also present were the following principals: Lee Esplin, Jessica Scobell, Mindi Palomeque, Cesar Tiu, David Fossett, Kate Lackey, and Shannon Manning. Somerset Inc. representative Suzette Ruiz and Academica representatives Gary McClain, Michael Muehle, and Marla Devitt attended the meeting.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Susana Harty provided public comment regarding class size.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 30, 2023 BOARD MEETING**
- b. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO THE MOU WITH CSN FOR DUAL ENROLLMENT**
- c. APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**
 - 1. SCHOOL FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**
 - 2. APPROVAL OF 2022/2023 SINGLE AUDIT**
 - 3. APPROVAL OF NORTH LAS VEGAS CAMPUS SHADE STRUCTURE**
 - 4. APPROVAL OF LOSEE CAMPUS FIELD RENOVATIONS**

Member Mizer stated that item 3.c.4 would be pulled from the consent agenda.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA, AS PRESENTED. MEMBER HARTY SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

Mr. Gary McClain addressed the Board to discuss the Losee Campus field renovations proposal outlined in the support materials. The bid, obtained through government cooperative agent Omnia and secured through Shaw Omnia, presented a base price of \$626,868.00. With the proposed options, the total cost would amount to \$890,000. Member Mizer inquired about the possibility of negotiating the price, to which Mr. McClain clarified that Omnia had already negotiated the price. Member Mizer suggested that add-ons were typically negotiable. Mr. McClain proposed that the Board could include a requirement to request a discount for adding all the options. Member Mizer expressed uncertainty regarding the necessity of all the options. Mr. McClain reviewed some of the options: the upgraded turf would last longer than the turf included in the base bid, the natural play infill would help reduce maintenance and costs moving forward, and the impact padding would have a lifespan of twenty-five years.

Member Harty noted that some previous projects had been approved with the condition that a designated board member assist with negotiations. Principal Jessica Scobell addressed the Board, confirming that all additions were in line with the specifications of CCSD fields. She noted that the campus was self-funding many items for the project, such as fencing, additional bleachers, and a new scoreboard. Member Mizer sought clarification on the bid process. Mr. McClain explained that Omnia functioned as a purchasing co-op, conducting RFPs across the company, with seven companies bidding on the project. Member McClellan inquired about the source of funds, to which Mr. McClain confirmed they were coming from surplus.

MEMBER HARTY MOVED TO APPROVE THE LOSEE FIELD INCLUDING THE BASE AND ALL THE OPTIONS, AS PRESENTED, NOT TO EXCEED \$890,000, WITH MEMBER MIZER AND ACADEMICA WORKING TOGETHER TO NEGOTIATE. MEMBER NOBLE SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

4. ANNUAL MEETING

a. RE-ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBER WILL HARTY FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM

Mr. McClain explained that according to the revised bylaws, any board member active at the time of the revision could serve the remainder of the term of the person they replaced, as well as two additional five-year terms. Member Harty had already served two five-year terms and was eligible to serve one more year to complete the remainder of the previous member's term.

MEMBER MCCLELLAN MOVED TO RE-ELECT MEMBER HARTY TO THE SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM. MEMBER BENTHAM SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

b. ANNUAL ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS

Member Bentham nominated Travis Mizer as Board Chair.

WITH NO OBJECTIONS AND ALL IN FAVOR, TRAVIS MIZER WAS ELECTED AS BOARD CHAIR.

Member McClellan nominated LeNora Bredsguard as Board Vice Chair.

WITH NO OBJECTIONS AND ALL IN FAVOR, LENORA BREDSGUARD WAS ELECTED AS BOARD VICE CHAIR.

Member Harty nominated John Bentham as Board Secretary.

WITH NO OBJECTIONS AND ALL IN FAVOR, JOHN BENTHAM WAS ELECTED AS BOARD SECRETARY.

Member McClellan nominated Will Harty as Board Treasurer.

WITH NO OBJECTIONS AND ALL IN FAVOR, WILL HARTY WAS ELECTED AS BOARD TREASURER.

5. ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. CAMPUS UPDATES BY SOMERSET PRINCIPALS

The principals of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas addressed the Board, providing updates and highlights from their respective campuses. Principal Mindi Palomeque introduced Crystal Hampton, the new assistant principal of the North Las Vegas campus. Assistant Principal Hampton addressed the Board providing a brief introduction. Principal Palomeque reported that currently, 155 students were

participating in before and after-school tutoring sessions, led by twenty-eight staff members, with a focus on foundational math skills. She stated that every class was on track to meet the campus's school-wide target of completing three thousand iReady lessons before May, with three classes already surpassing the goal. The cheerleading team secured first place in their division and became overall grand champions in a competition. Both the girls' and boys' basketball teams remained undefeated. Principal Palomeque stated that during a recent data debrief with Dr. Barr, they were informed that the campus had the highest projection of Star points, as a mid-3 Star, she had ever made for the campus. They were diligently working to maintain these numbers. She noted that chronic absenteeism had seen an 8% reduction at this point.

Principal Shannon Manning stated that Dr. Barr had projected a 3-star rating for the elementary school and a 5-star rating for the middle school. The Aliante Leader in Me initiated Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) aimed to elevate the AGP and the NGP to boost the elementary school to a 5-star rating by year-end. The campus was visited by the governor's office for a potential STEM school designation, with student leaders delivering the presentation. The inaugural Leadership Day was slated for March 6th at 8:15 a.m., with an invitation extended to board members. Principal Manning noted the undefeated status of the girls' 3-5 basketball team and the overall success and enjoyment of all sports teams. Member Mizer asked about absenteeism, to which Principal Manning replied that middle school absenteeism was below 5%, while elementary absenteeism stood at 10%.

Principal Lee Esplin expressed excitement for the progress achieved at Principal Palomeque's campus, acknowledging the dedicated efforts invested in its improvement. He noted that while the Sky Pointe campus had notable success in its data, there were also areas that fell below expectations. He stated that the campus would make mid-course adjustments using the information from the data. Principal Esplin commended Mr. McClain for his role in swiftly resolving a water main break, ensuring the school remained operational without closure. He praised his dedication to providing support to all Somerset campuses. He stated that Nevada Attorney General Aaron Ford had expressed interest in visiting the campus and participating in Reading Week.

Principal Esplin reviewed recent events at the campus, including a White Letter ceremony to honor students who maintained three consecutive 3.75 GPAs, 5th-grade students preparing to attend space camp, and middle school hosting its inaugural Eagle Mania event, with 100 students qualifying due to impeccable attendance, completion of assignments, exemplary behavior, and adherence to the dress code. Other highlights included a successful winter dance with 250 participants, the implementation of simulation-based learning by the eighth-grade social studies teacher, and the launch of the Conservatory to enhance the fine arts programs. The premier band and orchestra were chosen as Nevada's sole representatives at the Pacific Coast Invitational, while the theater program clinched victory at the Southern Nevada regional thespian championship. Principal Esplin concluded by noting that a record number of students completed the first semester, and the student council earned the prestigious Southern Star award for their outstanding contributions.

Principal Jessica Scobell began her report by acknowledging Mr. McClain's commendable service. She noted the progress evident in elementary school data, with significant growth and full points on the opportunity gap metric, along with a 10% reduction in chronic absenteeism. In middle school, promising growth was observed, with perfect points for the opportunity gap, reflecting the school's dedication to ensuring all students progressed. Absenteeism in middle school decreased by 9%, accompanied by a notable improvement in the overall climate and culture. Principal Scobell stated that the Goodie Two

Shoes Foundation would provide new shoes to 500 qualifying students. The campus organized a Christmas gift drive for twenty-five families classified as homeless. The boys' basketball team achieved the top ranking in the 4A Desert Division, while the girls' team secured the second spot in the 4A division and five football players received scholarship offers. She stated that Somerset Losee was one of only two charter schools in Las Vegas to qualify choir students for the state choir competition and two students earned QuestBridge scholarships. She concluded by mentioning ongoing efforts to bring the NFL Experience to campus.

Principal David Fossett began his report by also expressing his appreciation for the support received by Mr. McClain. The Stephanie campus was excited about the mid-year data, projecting just under 5 Stars for the elementary and a solid 5 Stars for the middle school. He mentioned his invitation to Henderson City Hall, where he was recognized, alongside other schools, for their success. Principal Fossett noted the continued improvement in the campus's culture, highlighting that all teachers had expressed their intent to return for the 2024/2025 school year. As part of improving the school's culture, Principal Fossett noted his involvement in running an afterschool club and joining a band with the PTO president, another parent, and a former student who hosted a concert for the school. He noted a significant decrease in chronic absenteeism, though acknowledging there was still room for improvement. One teacher successfully secured a \$10,000 donation for a commercial hydroponic system.

Member Mizer inquired about the effectiveness of the 8th-grade matriculation agreement. Principal Fossett stated that approximately five students each year had taken advantage of the agreement and transferred to Pinecrest for high school. He clarified that the majority of the students were enrolling in CCSD schools for their high school education, with the largest decline in enrollment observed in the 6th grade. When Member McClellan asked about the absenteeism rate needed for full points on the Star rating, Principal Fossett explained that 5% garnered full points, but schools could receive bonus points for significant improvements.

Principal Cesar Tiu stated that the winter data projected the Lone Mountain campus to achieve a 5-star rating in both elementary and middle school categories. He highlighted positive trends in K-5 reading as well as middle school reading and math. The SBAC boot camp commenced the previous Saturday, aiming to further support student success. Chronic absenteeism rates stood at 5% for both elementary and middle school. Principal Tiu provided campus highlights, including the middle school varsity quiz bowl team's upcoming competition in Chicago in May and the reintroduction of Ron Clark's Amazing Shake competition, where the top two students would compete in Atlanta. He also mentioned the induction of numerous new members into the NEHS and NJHS, as well as the school's participation in National Charter School Choice Week.

Principal Kate Lackey reported that the Skye Canyon campus was projected to achieve a 4-star rating for the elementary school, with ongoing efforts to improve it to a 5-star rating. The middle school was projected to attain a high 5-star rating. Carrie Howren, from the Regional Professional Development Program, provided highly beneficial professional development experiences at the campus. Absenteeism rates were recorded at 6.72% for elementary and 4.95% for middle school. Principal Lackey stated that data meetings were conducted between administrators and teachers working collaboratively to analyze data. The SBAC boot camp was scheduled to take place two weeks before testing. The campus hosted its first math festival night, featuring various interactive stations. A dance was organized for the middle school students. The campus actively engaged in monthly charitable activities, including a partnership

with Mater Academy to provide toys for their students during the holidays. Eighth-grade students were undergoing CPR AED certification, and the APEX fun run was upcoming. Principal Lackey concluded by noting that a fun cultural activity was arranged on data day, fostering campus-wide collaboration and the 3rd-5th grade cheer team secured 1st place in a recent competition.

b. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE 2024/2025 MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT

Mr. McClain stated that the proposed enrollment was the same as the current year with a ratio of 26-1 and 31-1. Member Harty asked about the financial impact on the system if the ratio was reduced to 25-1 and 30-1. He stated that if the decision was made to reduce enrollment it would be done through attrition, which would reduce the affect for the 2024/2025 school year. Member Noble noted that the most impacted grade would be kindergarten, which would roll up over the years to reach the 25-1 ratio.

Member Mizer stated that most principals he spoke to were not in favor of reducing ratios. He noted that the investment was already made in materials for the current ratios. Mr. McClain stated that there had been an ongoing debate about the difference between ratios of 25 and 26. He noted the lack of conclusive data on this matter and acknowledged the physical constraints in school buildings. The potential to hire higher-quality teachers due to slightly larger class sizes might justify maintaining the current ratios.

Member Harty noted the system's consistent surpluses over the past decade, even during challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting that financial stability could be maintained without the increased class sizes. Member Bentham pointed out that data supported lower ratios, especially in kindergarten through 2nd grade, and questioned whether the discussion should prioritize specific grade levels over an overall average. Principal Esplin noted the lack of room to decrease ratios in K-2. Member Mizer observed that many campuses boasted 4 or 5 Star ratings, and even those previously rated 1 or 2 Stars were improving despite the 26-1 ratio. Member McClellan concurred, noting that the 26-1 ratio had not negatively impacted campuses over time.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT, AS PRESENTED. MEMBER MCCLELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED TO APPROVE WITH A VOTE OF FIVE TO ONE WITH MEMBER HARTY VOTING IN OPPOSITION.

c. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING BOARD MEMBER SEARCH

Mr. McClain stated the search had been placed on the agenda in anticipation of Member Harty beginning his final year on the Board.

MEMBER MCCLELLAN MOVED TO APPROVE TO BEGIN A BOARD MEMBER SEARCH. MEMBER HARTY SECONDED, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

d. SKYE CANYON ADDITION REVISIONS

Mr. McClain stated that the Board made the decision to proceed with the addition at the Skye Canyon campus in September. Following discussions with Principal Lackey, it was determined that the campus's needs had evolved. Subsequently, a meeting was arranged with the architect to explore three options, excluding option C due to space constraints. Mr. McClain projected estimated costs based on current bidding conditions: option A, ranging from \$800,000 to \$1.2 million, and option B, from \$1.9 to \$2.8 million. The campus favored option B. Member Mizer inquired about the allocation of expenses from bond funds, with Mr. McClain indicating \$600,000 from this source. If the board okayed option B, Mr. McClain explained

that the project would proceed to bidding, with the final bid presented to the board for approval. Principal Lackey stated that the original project bid was tailored to match the available bond funds. The project was delayed due to high construction costs. Upon resuming the project, changes in the school's needs necessitated the reevaluation of options. Discussion ensued regarding the need to determine the future use of surplus spending.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO ACCEPT THE OPTION PRINCIPAL LACKEY HAS CHOSEN, TO TAKE IT TO BID SO THAT IT CAN BE EVALUATED WITH THE OTHER PROJECTS. MEMBER MCCLELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NOTIFICATIONS

Mr. McClain stated that he was grateful to work with the Board and the principals and appreciated the opportunity to serve and be appreciated by them. Ms. Marla Devitt addressed the Board and stated that she and others from Somerset Inc. had a great visit at the North Las Vegas campus and praised the difference in the campus's culture. Ms. Suzette Ruiz addressed the Board and commended the principals for their work.

7. MEMBER COMMENT

Member McClellan thanked Academica Florida and Somerset Inc. for their support. She stated it was inspiring to listen to the principals about the changes and gains at the campuses. Member Harty stated that he appreciated being able to disagree and have good discussions. He thanked the principals for all they do for the students. Member Noble stated that he was proud to be part of Somerset and the improvements made. He stated that they had become a leader in education in Nevada due to the hard work of the leaders and staff. Member Bentham echoed Member Noble's comment.

Member Mizer asked the principals to invite Board members to the campuses for events or leadership days. He reminded the Board members that May 24th was graduation and asked for a commitment for all to attend. Member Fairless expressed her appreciation for the principals and stated she was inspired by what they do on their campuses.


8. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

9. ADJOURN MEETING

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:57 P.M.

Approved on: April 8, 2024



**Secretary of the Board of Directors
Somerset Academy of Las Vegas**