

**Briya Public Charter School**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, September 8th, 2021, 6:10-7:30 p.m.**

**Board members present**

Daniela Carozza, *Chair*  
Doris Garay, *Vice Chair*  
Flor Buruca, *Secretary*  
Nishit (Nick) Sheth, *Treasurer*  
Bill Bletzinger  
Thomas Gerkin  
Brenda Martinez  
Judy Mortrude

**Staff members present**

Christie McKay, *Executive Director*  
Lorie Preheim, *Director of Outreach & Adult Education Strategy*  
Geovanna Izurieta, *Director of Finance*  
Stella Wang, *Board Liaison*

**Board Members Absent**

Alejandra Sandoval  
Cara Sklar  
Ji Sung Yang

1. Call to Order

- a. The meeting was called to order at 6:17 pm.
- b. Daniela Carozza reminded everyone that board members will go into executive session at the end, then adjourn.

2. Approval of Minutes

- a. July 14th, 2021, Briya Board Meeting Minutes
  - *Judy Mortrude moved to approve the July 14th, 2021, Briya Board meeting minutes; Doris Garay seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*
  - Roll call:
    - Daniela Carozza, Chair - yes
    - Doris Garay, Vice Chair - yes
    - Flor Buruca, Secretary - yes
    - Nishit (Nick) Sheth, Treasurer - yes
    - Bill Bletzinger - yes
    - Thomas Gerkin - yes
    - Brenda Martinez - yes
    - Judy Mortrude - yes

3. Director's Report– reported by Christie McKay, Executive Director

- a. Starting the school year

- Christie gave an update on the first two weeks of Briya's school year, including the start of the 2gen program, CDA program, and Briya's health and safety protocols and attendance.
- This year Briya is having infants, toddlers, adults, and pre-K students coming on site 2-3 times per week. Classes began last Monday.
- Briya is happy to be able to provide Chromebooks for every adult student.
- Briya continues to prioritize health and safety. During the second week Briya saw a significant reduction in attendance. This is because:
  1. There are parents who cannot come on site because their kids have been sent home from school and have to quarantine.
  2. If students have one symptom on the list of symptoms, they cannot come on site (even if they are vaccinated).
- Briya's CDA night program began on 9/7 and almost every student showed up on the first day.
- Flor Buruca shared that she has been a little nervous for the beginning of the school year. It is difficult for her because she cannot spend time with her daughter in the classroom.
- Briya will not have family time together this year to avoid large groups in close proximity. Briya hopes to be able to do more as the year goes on, especially as more students are vaccinated.
- Briya reached our goal of 100% vaccination rate for staff, which is a big milestone. Briya is not yet allowed to mandate vaccines for students; only the mayor can make that decision.
- This year is in some ways more challenging than last year. The hybrid model this year is like having two different schools going at the same time, on top of all the health and safety regulations.
- Briya has contracted with Mary's Center to provide COVID testing at each site once per week.
- The recording momentarily stopped because of connectivity issues, and restarted after a few seconds.
- The city recommends schools test 10-20% of unvaccinated students every week. Briya is testing 100% of pre-K students (because they cannot be vaccinated) and 10-20% of unvaccinated adult students every week.

b. Dr. Christina Grant, State Superintendent visit

- Dr. Christina Grant, the State Superintendent of Education, visited Briya in August. She met with students and toured the Fort Totten building.

c. Goals

- Christie shared her attached strategic goals for 2021-22 from her performance review.

d. Outdoor learning

- Christie played the new outdoor learning video that Briya created.
- Early Childhood students will be outside as much as possible this year. Students will be indoors for naptime. This is Briya's second year offering outdoor learning, so we are expanding our outdoor classroom and have some beautiful outdoor spaces. Children on the autism spectrum have done so much better learning outdoors.
- Briya has always had a dream of more integrated outdoor learning, but did not expect to jump into it 100% so quickly last year. This year there will be 70-80% learning outdoors.
- Briya has added an additional aide in pre-K classrooms to help with the physical labor of bringing materials outside.
- Geovanna Izurieta shared that this is the only program she knows of in the city that provided outdoor learning last year which is very special, particularly in an urban environment with limited outdoor space.

4. Development Committee— reported by Christie McKay, Executive Director

a. The development committee presented the officer slate:

- Chair – Daniela Grigioni-Carozza
- Vice Chair – Doris Garay
- Treasurer – Bill Bletzinger (Nishit Sheth is completing his six-year term this fall.)
- Secretary – Flor Buruca

b. *Doris Garay moved to approve the officer slate. Thomas Gerkin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- Roll call:
  - Daniela Carozza, Chair - yes
  - Doris Garay, Vice Chair - yes
  - Flor Buruca, Secretary - yes
  - Nishit (Nick) Sheth, Treasurer - yes
  - Bill Bletzinger - yes
  - Thomas Gerkin - yes
  - Brenda Martinez - yes
  - Judy Mortrude - yes

a. Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Forms

- These are annual forms required for all board members to sign.
- Board members should read, fill out, and send signed forms to Stella by September 15<sup>th</sup>.

b. Completion of board member goals

- Each board member should send two to three goals to Stella.

- Examples include participating in a graduation ceremony, helping out with testimonies at city council, etc. There are many different ways board members can provide additional support for Briya.
- c. Board Equity Affirmation Statement
- Thomas Gerkin and Bill Bletzinger put together a first draft of the equity statement from the board in support of Briya's equity initiatives. The new statement has feedback and edits incorporated since the July meeting.
  - Christie asked that if members are in agreement and affirm the statement, to please raise their hand.
  - Everyone raised their hand.
  - The statement will be shared with Briya staff in the October all-staff meeting.
  - This year Briya staff participated in three different trainings about interrupting bias. Briya is considering working with the same training consultant to create school-wide equity goals.

## 5. Finance Committee

- a. June 2021 financial reports – presented by Geovanna Izurieta, Director of Finance
- Geovanna shared that this is very close to being the final financial statements from last year.
  - Executive summary
    1. Briya had a net income of 2.4 million dollars, 2.7 million dollars above budget. This is 1 million dollars over what Briya presented in the May financial statement.
  - Main highlights
    1. Briya received additional actual income for per-pupil funding of 575k.
    2. Briya had 150k more in private donations than budgeted.
    3. And approximately 900k of unrealized gains.
    4. Briya had extra revenue/expenses with this ChildCare pass-through grant from Mary's Center.
  - Main reasons for additional revenue this year:
    1. Briya was able to save on expenses.
    2. Personnel savings of 600k from a very conservative approach of budgeting for staffing costs and contingencies funds that were not used.

3. Briya had delays in hiring timelines for the MA program and the positions were not filled until later in the year.
  4. Briya also had hiring efficiencies. Some positions were filled by staff who took on additional responsibilities, so no new positions were added.
  5. Briya had savings in volunteer hiring fees. Briya did not hire additional volunteers. Instead, Briya hired the volunteers from the prior year as staff members who could support the school with an extra year of experience.
- The actual cost of staffing expenses increased by 300k from FY20 to FY21.
  - Briya had 175K in occupancy savings because of remote/hybrid learning.
  - Direct student expenses increased by 82k from FY20 to FY21. Briya was able to provide cash assistance to students and their families during the pandemic.
  - Monthly variances
    1. From May to June we had \$1.3m higher than forecasted last month. The main factor for this is the unrealized gains in our mutual fund accounts.
  - At the end of the year Briya disposed of about 300k worth of computers that were no longer in service. This had minimal cash impact.
  - Geovanna said the 16.1 gross margin reflects 2.4m in net income that includes almost 900k in unrealized gains. 1/3 of the income is unrealized gains.
  - Bill remarked that the LSCR is significant because we are carrying the load with the LLC and that having liquidity put the school in a strong position to be able to do that.
  - Christie shared that she had a meeting with Venture Philanthropy Partners and they were impressed with the childcare grants that Briya was able to provide for the 145 providers and small businesses in the district, which was represented in the 1.3 million that we were able to give out as cash assistance so these small businesses could stay afloat during the pandemic. They were impressed because they had a number of childcare centers in Virginia that had to close during the pandemic and they wanted to learn more about this model of providing assistance to small businesses during the pandemic.

- During FY21 the school was able to all our student programs without interruption:
  1. During FY21 Briya was able to provide staffing improvements and create nine new positions—four new teaching positions, two new IT positions, and three new admin support positions.
  2. Briya provided equitable compensation for staff. Each staff member received an additional \$2,700 payment. \$1,200 were paid as qualified disaster relief payments and \$1,500 were paid out as service awards.
  3. Briya provided direct cash assistance to Briya families. 700 families received a gift card for \$100. The school as also to provide case by case COVID-19 cash support for our families.
  4. Briya’s direct student support expenses increased by 51k, 10% higher than FY21 budget.
- Christie shared that Briya held monthly distributions for Early Childhood students and frequent distributions for adult students. Briya gave out a variety of materials throughout the year for students despite being unable to learn on-site. These distributions ensured that all students had materials to use at home.
- Geovanna shared that Briya received a grant through Mary’s Center and part of the grant was to provide books and learning materials for Early Childhood students. Briya distributed these in December last year and in the spring.
- Bill shared that this is part of Briya’s equity work in the past year. Briya addressed equity within our staff and community by helping provide opportunities and leveling the playing field for students and families.
- Doris Garay shared that it is important that we can see in action what equity means for Briya.
- Flor shared that she is very grateful to receive a laptop bag which has been very helpful for carrying the computer to and from school.
- b. FY21 Audit update– presented by Geovanna Izurieta, Director of Finance
  - Briya had an audit two weeks ago. Audits are handled remotely, so Briya has provided the files and info they needed. We anticipate a draft in two weeks and anticipate a clean audit.

## 6. Academic Committee

- a. Enrollment update– presented by Doris Garay, Vice Chair

- Briya's CDA class started on September 7.
    1. In the CDA 1 class, nine out of 25 students transferred from a Briya English class. For CDA 2, four out of 25 students transferred from a Briya English class. For CDA 3, 14 out of 20 students transferred from a Briya English class.
  - There is a long waiting list for both English and Spanish CDA classes, so they are very successful classes. It is amazing that students in English classes are empowered to take on the challenge of the CDA class. Briya's CDA class requires a lot of English skills, understanding, communication, writing, etc. It is empowering to learn at Briya.
  - Lorie Preheim shared that this is part of the career pathways at Briya. Students can start in English then move on to CDA, a high school diploma, and associate degree or four-year degree in Early Childhood. It is amazing to see this pathway and to see people making careers out of teaching young children.
  - Lorie shared the student count. Briya's goal is 765. Briya is registering 40-60 new students every week. Briya is currently at 692. It is typical to be under at this time of year. Once students commit, the number goes back up. 61 students are in pre-K and 631 are in Adult classes.
- b. Alumni reunion– presented by Flor Buruca, Secretary
- Briya held our first alumni reunion this summer. There were more than 52 attendees including student alumni, board members, student ambassadors, and former/current staff.
  - Thank you to Doris and Thomas for attending.
  - As a result of the reunion, some alumni decided to come back to study at Briya this year. Briya also had our first alumni ambassador meeting. We currently have about 12 alumni ambassadors and 70 student ambassadors who help promote the school.
- c. School leader evaluation– presented by Lorie Preheim, Director of Outreach and Adult Education Strategy
- Thank you to everyone who helped with the school leader performance review. Thank you to Daniela, Doris, and Nishit for representing each committee, and all the committees who met before to finalize scores for the performance review.

## 7. New Business/Announcements

- a. Christie thanked everyone for the nice comments at the end of her evaluation. She appreciates the work that went into that summary. She does not think that there is a great need for increased compensation. She thanked the board for all their service and emphasized the school could not do all this without the board.

## 8. Executive Session

- a. Pursuant Chapter 5, Subchapter IV, Section 2-575 of the Code of the District of Columbia, the Briya Board of Trustees will enter into closed session for reason 10, “to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, performance evaluation, compensation, discipline, demotion, removal, or resignation of government appointees, employees, or officials, or of public charter school personnel.”

- b. *Flor Buruca moved to approve the School Leader Evaluation, Bill Bletzinger seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- Roll call:

- Daniela Carozza, Chair - yes
- Doris Garay, Vice Chair - yes
- Flor Buruca, Secretary - yes
- Nishit (Nick) Sheth, Treasurer - yes
- Bill Bletzinger -yes
- Thomas Gerkin - yes
- Brenda Martinez - yes
- Judy Mortrude - yes

- b. *Nishit Sheth moved to approve a 5% salary increase for Christie and propose this amount to her, and ensure that Christie received the \$1500 service award received by all Briya staff (i.e., if she did not already receive this, to issue it to her), Doris Garay seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- Roll call:

- Daniela Carozza, Chair - yes
- Doris Garay, Vice Chair - yes
- Flor Buruca, Secretary - yes
- Nishit (Nick) Sheth, Treasurer - yes
- Bill Bletzinger -yes
- Thomas Gerkin - yes
- Brenda Martinez - yes
- Judy Mortrude - yes (via Doris, Judy had to leave early and authorized Doris to vote as her proxy)

## 9. Adjournment

- a. The Executive session concluded and the meeting is adjourned at 7:49pm.



This meeting is governed by the Open Meetings Act. Please address any questions or complaints arising under this meeting to the Office of Open Government at [opengovoffice@dc.gov](mailto:opengovoffice@dc.gov).