Erie Elementary Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting
May 14, 2025, 6:00pm
1405 N Washtenaw Ave, Chicago, IL 60622

Board Members who attended in person (8): Sarah Airola, Keith Ellett, Rajiv Naidu, Victor Sy Nelson, Diego Galvez, Melanie Madigan, Mary Boehler, and Vivek Sadanand.

Board Members who attended virtually (3): Leslie Pigozzi (Staff Representative), April Kennedy (Parent Representative), and Tony Sutton

Staff who attended in person: Principal Karem Gomez, Interim Assistant Principal Aimee Frantzen, Business Operations Manager Marisol Martinez

Staff who attended virtually: Business Coordinator Diana Morquecho

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Board Chair Sarah Airola brought the meeting to order at 6:15pm.

Approval of Minutes
Ms. Airola asked if directors had a chance to review the minutes as presented. There were no changes requested.

Melanie Madigan moved to approve the minutes of 05/14/2025 board of directors meeting as presented
___________- A 2nd Director seconded the motion

Directors who voted in favor of the motion: *Sarah Airola, Keith Ellett, Rajiv Naidu, Victor Sy Nelson, Diego Galvez, Melanie Madigan, Mary Boehler, and Vivek Sadanand.*

Directors who voted against the motion*: None*
Directors who abstained: *None*

Update on the School Charter Renewal
Principal Karem Gomez was informed by Chicago Public Schools that the vote by the school board to renew the Charter was now scheduled for May 30th.

The district is recommending a two-year renewal for Erie. 11 of the 14 schools whose charter is up for review are getting two-year renewals. School leadership will inform the board once the vote is official.

Finance Committee Report
Finance Committee Chairman Keith Ellett shared that staff would be given a 3% salary increase next year.

We will be renewing the same medical insurance coverage for employees as the feeling is that we do not want to change the quality of the plans or the coverage. We have projected for the highest insurance cost to budget conservatively.

Mr. Sutton asked about the student enrollment count for next year?
Karem Gomez: we are on track to be fully enrolled next year with a wait list. We are currently at 422 and full enrollment for us is 415.

Mr. Ellett: It is important to balance the FY26 budget, and it is balanced, and budget details will be finalized by the end of June.

Mary Boehler moved to give the Finance Committee authority to approve the FY26 budget once complete.
Rajiv Naidu seconded the motion.

Directors who voted in favor of motion: *Sarah Airola, Keith Ellett, Rajiv Naidu, Victor Sy Nelson, Diego Galvez, Melanie Madigan, Mary Boehler, and Vivek Sadanand.*
Directors who voted against the motion*: None*
Directors who abstained: *None*

Initials of Marisol Martinez__________ Initials of Rajiv Naidu:__________

Mr. Ellett and staff discussed Form 990 and the annual financial audit. The plan is to try to do a mini internal audit in the summer and the FY25 audit itself will be completed in the fall.

Academic Report

Karem Gomez shared:

- There are issues with the RCP platform and the need for clarification from CPS.
- The Care Diagnostics assessment results highlighting areas of strength and areas for growth.
- The COVID literacy results with a focus on increasing participation in the Dual Language program.
- The strategic plan metrics that showed progress in various areas.

Ms. Gomez noted that regarding High School applications most of our students are applying to charter schools and IB programs. The number of students getting into their first choice is high, with 6 out of 7 General Education students being accepted

We are providing a tutoring for math in the weeks leading up to the high school application tests, and that has been successful. It is agreed that it's important to track and analyze high school application data.

In terms of hiring for the next school year Ms. Gomez indicated that we have 10 vacancies. 4 teachers have already been hired and there are interviews scheduled to fill 3 more. The importance of building capacity in teachers for differentiated pro development is discussed.

Executive Director Search Update- School Leadership Structure

Following a prolonged search, the school did not hire an Executive Director this spring for various reasons.

Principal Karem Gomez has proposed a new leadership structure in which she would be taking on a portion of the Executive Directors duties.

Some directors expressed concern that her role in academics would be reduced. They have faith in her as an academic leader and the school has made progress. Why reduce her role in academics? Is there a way to keep more of instruction and teacher evaluation on Karem's plate?

Ms. Gomez indicated that at the moment, the tasks that are taking most of her time are not part of her regular job responsibilities. The Charter Renewal process and work the CIWP (Continuous Improvement Work Plan) are taking an enormous amount of time. These are logistics platform things. CPS requires that it be the principal who completes the items.

Sarah Airola: Karem will be ultimately responsible for academics, but the data will now be collected by others – as will one on one meetings and evaluations. The data and reviews will still be presented to Karem.

Ms. Gomez clarified that teacher evaluations happen twice a year. She splits them with Aimee Frantzen. She is not currently directly coaching any teachers. That isn't changing, but she can still continue to coach the coaches and develop them.

Leslie Pigozzi expressed concern about whether all the instructional coaches who would be taking on the additional responsibility to evaluate teaching staff are properly certified to perform formal observations including e.g. Aimee Frantzen.

Aimee Frantzen clarified that she has a Type 75 certification [the State administrative endorsement], and she is doing the graduate coursework for the Administration leadership requirement.

Directors expressed that they understand the concern about those providing instructional coaching being properly trained/certified, but at this point, we don't have a lot of options. We need to train those who will serve as Instructional Coaches and remove the most time-consuming responsibilities from Ms. Gomez.

Tony Sutton: The Org Chart is not the defining conversation. We have to drill down on what the capacity-building of the instructional coaches. How we develop those coaches to support teachers is the critical part. Re: certification, it is important to know who is certified and who is evaluating and whether that causes a problem. He asked for clarification on what percentage of the teaching staff coming into 2024-2025 were not certified?

Marisol Martinez: I would have to do the calculation for the exact number, but the majority of the teaching staff are endorsed or certified.

Karem Gomez: We must have 75% to 80% of teachers certified. If don't have teachers certified in their teaching areas, we are out of compliance. When I met with the teachers the conversations included having to obtain certification if they did not already have It and the same when interviewing new staff.

Initials of Marisol Martinez______ Initials of Rajiv Naidu______

Ms. Airola indicated that the other piece of the proposed leadership structure is also to hire a financial consultant to support financial reporting. A decision was made to combine the Compliance position responsibilities into the roles of the Business Operations staff next yr. We will finalize the job posting for the new financial position, post it, and conduct a formal search.

Mary Boehler moved to accept the new leadership structure/design proposed by Karem Gomez with follow up on the issues that we have identified.

Rajiv Naidu seconded the motion
Directors who voted in favor: *Sarah Airola, Mary Boehler, Keith Ellett, Diego Galvez, Melanie Madigan, Rajiv Naidu, Vivek Sadanand*
Directors who voted against: *Tony Sutton stated he only voted nay because he did not get to see the organizational chart in advance.*
Directors who abstained: *None*

Rajiv Naidu: We are going to follow up on how to work on the issues that have been discussed. We are in agreement that we will not continue with a search for an Executive Director.

Invest for Kids Grant
Sarah Airola shared that Erie is one of 10 finalists for the Invest for Kids grant; this is a $200,000 grant; Karem Gomez, Aimee Frantzen, and Ms. Airola will be making a presentation for the grant on Monday, May 19th.

Directors were asked to look through the list of grant committee members that was sent to them, and if anyone knows someone on the list, please reach out to that person to discuss Erie. This outreach must happen immediately given the presentation is Monday.

When directors speak to a contact on the grant committee, they can focus on maybe two things; the suggested needs/areas they can discuss are:

- Teacher development
- Tutoring
- A librarian for the school library

Ms. Airola is working with school leadership to try to compile the strongest data before submitting the final application. Even if we cannot get this grant this year, it helps lay the foundation for next year's application.

School Library
Ms. Gomez indicated that furniture for the library has been delivered. We need a librarian, and we are exploring different possibilities to hire someone even as a volunteer.

Development Committee Report
Sarah Airola met with perspective board member Ricardo Villalobos. He grew up in this area and knows a lot about Charter Schools. He would be a great asset to the board. Mr. Villalobos is considering the invitation she extended to him to join.

She asked if any directors would be willing to meet with Mr. Villalobos give an overview of Erie. Melanie Madigan and Mary Boehler will do so.

Conflict of Interest Forms
Directors have discussed a small change to make the document more compliant to requirements and no one was opposed.

Marisol Martinez: As it is so late, I can share with each director via email what Vanessa Sahabi, the Compliance Manager [not present] still needs for their 2 Conflict of interest forms required by CPS.

Victor Sy Nelson moved to adjourn the meeting.
Keith Ellett Seconded the motion.
Directors voting in favor: *Sarah Airola, Keith Ellett, Rajiv Naidu, Victor Sy Nelson, Diego Galvez, Melanie Madigan, Mary Boehler, and Vivek Sadanand.*
Directors voting against: *None*

Minutes Prepared by	Minutes Approved by
10/07/2025	
Marisol Martinez, Business Operations Director	Rajiv Naidu, Board Secretary