



K-12 PREPARATORY ACADEMY

**CHPA BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**DHPH Conference Room, Cafeteria and Live Streamed**  
**Tuesday, August 9, 2022 – 5:45P.M.**

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**Meeting Date: August 9, 2022**

**Recorded by: Lorrie Marquez**

**AN=Action Needed; AT=Action Taken; D=Discussion; I=Information Only; CR=Committee Referral**

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**Present: Stephen Varela, James Salazar, Angela Giron, Matt Garcia**

**Ex-Officio Member Present: Cheryl Gomez**

**Guest: Brad Miller, Miller Farmer Lawm**

**Others Present: Hal Stevens, President/CEO; Lorrie Marquez, Executive Assistant; Don Ortega, Interim CFO; Marne Autobee, Chief Human Resources Officer; Loretta Cruz, IT Director; Kim Sanchez, DHPH Principal; Theresa Martinez, DHPH Counselor; Tiffany Larkins, Fiscal Services Manager; Robin Archuleta, Director of Enrollment/Marketing; Mike Aguilar, Maintenance Director; Scott Anderson and Juanita Jacquez, IT Dept.; Tom Weston, D60 Liaison**

**This regular CHPA Board of Directors' meeting was called to order at 5:45p.m. in the DHPH Cafeteria by CHPA Board President, Stephen Varela.**

**Roll Call of CHPA Board Members constituted a quorum.**

**Executive Session 5:46p.m. AT James Salazar moved to enter into Executive Session for discussion of personnel matters pursuant to CRS 24-6-402-4(f) and seconded by Matt Garcia, with a unanimous roll call vote, no discussion. Motion carried. Hal Stevens, Lorrie Marquez were in attendance.**

**Exit Executive Session 6:07p.m. AT James Salazar moved to exit Executive Session, seconded by Angela Giron with a unanimous roll call vote, no discussion. Motion carried.**

**Open Session began 6:16p.m. I Open session was held in the DHPH Cafeteria, President Stephen Varela welcomed everyone in attendance and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.**

**Brad Miller I Mr. Miller, addressed the following topic:**

Board Officer elections were legal, Administrative Policies are not binding, they were consistent with past practices, not feasible to reverse the election.

Miller Farmer Law has been requested by the President/CEO to perform a comprehensive review of the Board Policies and Bylaws, a report will be given in the next couple of months.

CHPA charter contract renewal with D60, posed some challenges due to the change in leadership and academic results. The Board has taken steps for the President/CEO to review the balance of administrative and teaching; holding teachers accountable while supporting them.

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CHPA's Administrative Procedures are conflicting with Board Policies, suggested changes will be addressed with Board at a future time.

Hal Stevens made a personnel decision that did not include the Brad or the Board, it was based on observations and internal issues, Brad asked that partisanship not be involved with this issue. Hal had the authority to make the personnel decision, this should not affect our students.

Brad announced that personal attacks of individuals or discussion of personnel who are or are no longer employed by CHPA will not be allowed during public comments. He reiterated that the Board or Stephen Varela did not direct the personnel decisions.

Concerns that were sent to D60, should have been addressed to a supervisor, then the President/CEO and if not satisfied with the outcome then a written appeal to the Board to address the concerns in executive session; if the decision of the Board does not resolve the concern, then contact Brad Miller with Miller Farmer Law who will discuss the legalities of the concerns. D60 has no role to address concerns.

### Modifications/Approval of Agenda

AT

**James Salazar motioned to approve the agenda as written, seconded by Matt Garcia, Angel Giron asked if the Public Forum could be moved to the beginning of the meeting as normal, with no further discussion, the Board President called for the vote; 3 in favor, 1 opposed by Angela Giron, with no further discussion. Motion carried 3 to 1.**

### CEO's Report

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Hal Stevens gave a statement of his first 30 days with CHPA, he reported clerical level staff shortages at academies, an overstaffed administration, critical teacher shortages at all academies. Family members reporting to a relative; unqualified staffing, in consistent employee writeups. Pay scale inefficiencies, unsupported programs or programs that were never implemented. Funds spent on overpriced contracts that were redundant and unnecessary. An unsustainable administrative bureaucracy that could hinder future ability relating to bond commitments. An administrative structure to the detriment of teachers and students. Qualified applicants were ignored due to not following policies and procedures. Unqualified internal candidates were considered over more qualified external candidates due to lack of internal connections. Employees not following the chain of command, airing grievances externally to discredit their superiors and/or board members. Employees secretly recording internal meetings to send to people outside CHPA. He believes the irregularities, lies, innuendos and internal sabotage should have not place at CHPA. His goal to make CHPA one of the top third academically rated schools in the state.

### Higher Education Representative Report

#### a. Cheryl Gomez – Pueblo Community College

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Ms. Gomez reported that the PCC's Panther Fest (open house) was recently held, fall semester begins August 27<sup>th</sup> and the nursing department is completely moved to St. Mary Corwin.

- I Angela Giron asked when will the Faculty Representatives would be to the Board; Hal Stevens reported that he delayed the faculty elections to after the start of school, elections will be held in time for the Faculty Representatives to be installed at the September 2022 Board meeting.

### **Board Committee Reports:**

#### **a. Achievement & Student Success Committee**

- I Matt Garcia announced that the public is invited to attend committee meetings. The committee is working to expand extra-curricular activities, mariachi program, create a theatre program, start a Future Farmers of America Club on campus and give students the opportunity to attend classes with the Civil Air Patrol. ECMS students and staff will participate in the selection of uniforms.

#### **b. Finance Committee – Chair: James Salazar, Chair**

- I James Salazar reported that the committee is working with the Interim CFO to make sure CHPA has rainy-day funds. He extended an invitation to everyone to attend the August 10, 2022 ECMS Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.

### **Approval Item:**

#### **a. Fred Galvez, CSU-Pueblo Ex-officio Representative**

- AT **Matt Garcia moved to accept Fred Galvez as an Ex-Officio Board Member to represent CSU-Pueblo, seconded by James Salazar, with a unanimous vote, no discussion. Motion carried.**

### **Consent Agenda:**

- a. Bills and Payroll June 2022
- b. Approve Board Meeting Minutes July 14, 2022
- c. Personnel Report – Hal Stevens

- AT **James Salazar moved to approve the Consent Agenda items, seconded by Matt Garcia, with a unanimous vote, no discussion. Motion carried.**

### **Board Member Reports:**

- I Angela Giron thanked parents and teachers, we need to make sure we have the best year possible.
- I Matt Garcia commented that his son started 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the ECMS staff did a great job with the first day of school, students are excited about the new building.
- I Stephen Varela announced that for safety reasons when DPHH undergoes renovations the CHPA Board meetings will be held in an alternate location.

James Salazar – no comments

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### Public Forum [Reference BP 1070 Public Participation at Board Meetings]

I The following people requested to address the Board:

NAME	Affiliation	ITEM TO ADDRESS
1) Ret. Judge Dennis Maes	Community Member	Board Policy
2) Larkin Bond	ELA Teacher ECMS	School Climate Issues
3) Aubrey Wheeler	CTE/Program Lead DHPH	Schools Current Culture
4) Jess Mata-Gillman	Title I Instructional Tech. Coach	Current School Climate
5) Arjun Sahdev	Math Teacher ECMS	Work Conditions
6) Theresa Martinez	DHPH Counselor/ECP Liaison/K12 Gifted & Talented Coordinator	Roles and Responsibilities
7) Juan Espinosa	Community Leader/Past Board Member	History & Legacy of CHPA
8) Margaret Nelson	D60 Teacher/Minnequa Elementary	Community Atmosphere
9) Kim Sanchez	DHPH Principal	Importance of School Climate
10) Commissioner Garrison Ortiz	County Commissioner/DHPH Alumni	Current School Status
11) Lisa Kogovsek	Math Teacher ECMS	Working Environment
12) Karen Ortiz	Former Employee	Future of CHPA
13) Nick Angiocchi	Former Employee	Proposal to the Board
14) John Lopez	Former Board Member	Advocating for CHPA

#### Nick Angiocchi – Proposal for the Board

As a concerned citizen, CHPA Board requires no credentials to serve on the Board, he requested the Board to consider removing BP 1320 Board Member Travel and Meeting Expenses/Stipend and spend the funds on a community wide ballot question, he and his wife offered to contribute \$2,000 toward the ballot expense.

Brad Miller replied to Mr. Angiocchi’s proposal, a community-based election will not be considered but maybe a member-based election, Board members declined the stipend compensation.

#### Karen Ortiz – The future of CHPA

Mrs. Ortiz asked for the staff and students to find their voice, it is not okay what is happening at CHPA, she has spoken on behalf of the children in our community. Karen expressed concerns of the unprofessional way she was reflected to the CHPA All Staff meeting by the President/CEO.

#### Lisa Kogovsek – Working Environment

Mrs. Kogovsek prefaced that her statements are her opinion; change is accepted by leaders with widely accepted leadership skills, honesty and integrity. She, colleagues and community members believe there is no trust in the Board President Stephen Varela, Mr. Salazar and Mr. Stevens. Consistently the Board has proven the stakeholder input is unwanted. Some Board members and high levels of administration have consistent disregard for stakeholders by their display of egregious behavior resulting in a hostile and insecure work environment. Based upon her discussion with stakeholder, she is of the opinion that Mr. Salazar, Mr. Stevens and Mr. Varela can no longer regain trust of stakeholders, changes under their leadership is not possible, asked for each of them to resign.

#### Kim Sanchez – Importance of School Climate

Ms. Sanchez commented on how crucial it is to have trust for a positive school climate and culture, to meet the needs of teachers, students, families and community stakeholders; it takes effort of each Academy, operational departments,

resident/CEO and the Board for a positive climate. Lack of community trust and negativity creates barriers to hire and retain highly qualified teachers. The negative environment is a reality, a hostile work environment where stress and anxiety are running high and employment is being threatened by bullying tactics. She expressed concerns for the mental health of the staff so they can take care of the students. Stakeholders need a voice and to trust that their input will be not be overseen or undervalued. In January stakeholder input during Public Forum fell on deaf ears by the Board, the decision-making mentality is having a severe direct negative impact on staff, community and students. At the April 2022 Board meeting, Stephen Varela, then Board Vice President expressed that the Board was committed to rebuild the trust lost by CHPA Staff and community; the recent actions have not rebuilt trust, she called for the immediate resignation of Board President, Stephen Varela.

### **Margaret Nelson – Community Atmosphere**

Ms. Nelson commented on the Board not valuing what the community of Pueblo stands for and what the students, teachers and staff of CHPA want; called for the immediate resignation of Board President, Stephen Varela.

### **Juan Espinosa – History and Legacy of CHPA**

Mr. Espinosa, stated that he agreed with the public comments just made. He spoke about the history of CHPA mentioning how at the start of the school there was a waiting list of parents wanting to enroll their children, the school had the history of being a role model for D60, being the first school to have student uniforms, an extended teaching day and the Early College Program. He stated that two months is a very short time for the new President/CEO to evaluate CHPA and make changes based on low test scores which all schools are experiencing due to the pandemic.

### **Aubrey Wheeler – Current School Culture**

Ms. Wheeler commented that she like the school culture when she started teaching at CHPA two years ago, she is sad that it is not the same; she asked for the resignation of Stephen Varela.

### **Larkin Bond – School Climate Issues**

Ms. Bond commented that she is a second-year teacher with CHPA, had an incredible first year of teaching with amazing students and wonderful colleagues; unfortunately, due to the Board's decision many colleagues are now gone from CHPA. The change in culture will affect our students, she called for the resignation of Stephen Varela.

### **Judge Dennis Maes – Board Policy**

Judge Maes commented that he was hopeful that the Board President, Stephen Varela would follow the Board's bylaws and policies and place the officer elections on the Board agenda, but has chosen to buck the board policies and bylaws and continues to serve not be validly elected. Judge Maes address Brad Miller's comments regarding the Board Election of Officers and quoted directly from *BP 1160 Board Officer Selection; At the annual organizational meeting in July, the Board shall elect from among its members a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.* He pointed out that the Board's leadership was elected in December of 2021, two of the members who voted for the current officers are no longer on the Board. He explained that he was hopeful that Mr. Varela would follow the Board's bylaws and policies concerning filling the Board vacancy, yet he removed Ms. Giron as the chair of the Recruitment & Nominating Committee and appointed himself as the chair of the committee and has not been diligent in his responsibilities to fill the vacancy. Judge Maes commented that he was hopeful the Mr. Stevens would have a promising vision for the future for CHPA but instead has fired and intimidated staff by listing their positions [CHPA website]. Judge Maes also mentioned the moving of the Board meeting back to this location [DHPH Cafeteria] from the planned smaller venue, the last 15 or 16 Board meetings have taken place in this place [DHPH Cafeteria]. He also commented that the only way the Board can regain the trust of the Chavez/Huerta staff and community is through the immediate resignation of Mr. Varela and Mr. Stevens.

### **Jess Mata-Gilman – Current School Climate**

Ms. Mata-Gilman commented on the starting of the school year being marred by fear and intimidation by Hal Stevens and Stephen Varela, they do not have the students' best interests at heart; she asked for Stephen Varela and Hal Stevens to resign.

### **Arjun Sahdev – Work Conditions**

Mr. Sahdev commented that our scholars are the reason faculty aspire for improvement; with the recent decisions by the Board it shows that they are not prioritizing the students' best interest, the recent termination of staff directly impacts scholars. He also commented that during the first week of school it was disturbing to hear about job security, he wanted to start the school year with confidence and to be at his best. He implored President/CEO Hal Stevens to get to know the staff and the community and to contribute to CHPA in a positive way.

### **Theresa Martinez-Blasing – Roles and Responsibilities**

Mrs. Martinez-Blasing read excerpts from the CHPA Bylaws; Article III Board of Directors, Section 3.10 *For purposed of encouraging full and knowledgeable participation of its Board of Directors, each Board Member is expected to fulfill the duties and obligations, Item ii. Be knowledgeable to essential documents binding or affecting CHPA, including the Charter School application; the Charter School Contract and any amendments, these Bylaws, CHPA's budgets, Board and CHPA policies and procedures. Item v. Recognize and act in accordance with all Board-approved CHPA policies and work in concert with the President/CEO and Administration, whose responsibility is to lead affectively and to administer the daily operations of classrooms and class work. Item vii. Maintain discretion, as it concerns expressing and relaying options formed about the staff, and follow CHPA policies, as approved by the Board, with respect to staff evaluations. Item xiii. Follow standard CHPA policies and protocol in any issues involving CHPA staff and/or CHPA students. She also commented that the President/CEO is responsible for fulfilling the mission and vision of CHPA throughout every aspect of CHPA, fostering a positive cooperative team atmosphere, reporting to the Board of Directors not solely the Board President.* She commented that BP 4040 [Disposal of Property]; AP 5250 [Standards of Conduct]; BP's 1250 [Participation in Decision Making]; BP 1120 [Conflict of Interest]; BP 1150 [Term Limits]; BP 5210 [Political Activity]; BP 1020 [Board Duties and Responsibilities]; BP 5090 [Employee Code of Ethics/Conduct]; BP 1030 [President/CEO's Relationship with the Board]; AP 2240 [Title IX – Nondiscrimination of Educational Programs] have been violated by two people sitting before her. She shared Hal Stevens' quote at a recent All Staff meeting; "This is a weird place and I find it weird that people concern themselves with a lot of things the Board does, every move, every action, every conversation that someone on the board has these things don't concern you, you should be focused on how can I make myself the best I can be at my position." She mentioned that she is good at her job, had people done their research before getting into people's positions they would have know what our schools have to offer and what staff does on a daily basis; they would know what hard workers the staff is before they posted [CHPA website] their positions while they are still in the position as a form of intimidation. She also mentioned that she was compared to a cartoon character which was a harassment and offensive. She shared what the staff was told at the All Staff meeting [August 1, 2022] she quoted Hal Stevens, "It is inappropriate to go directly to the Board or above his head, do you think I want to work with you and keep you happy, well I have to I have no choice I am your boss, but deep down think about it not only does it put things on a negative light but it's also inappropriate doing that it rarely accomplishes anything and very often makes enemies, so I ask you before you do something like this consider the ramification is it really going to accomplish what you want or is it only going to make you look bad, I will leave you to judge that for yourself". She commented that she teachers her students to speak out and referred to the student in attendance at the Board meeting; she called for the resignation of Board President, Stephen Varela and CEO Hal Stevens.

### **Commissioner Garrison Ortiz – Current School Status**

Commissioner Ortiz, commented that his mother wanted him to attend DPHH for the advantages of the only Early College Program. Due to the efforts of a teacher, he applied for and was selected as DPHH's 2009 Caine Scholarship recipient; along with the with the CSU-P 3+2 Program he earned his MBA at the age of 21 with no student debt. He commented that the school was looked down upon by other schools due to the modular classrooms; he spoke to his feeling about the nepotism, discrepancies and major conflicts of interest that were taking place at CHPA at that time and how he and his classmates felt embarrassed. The school has been through enough and has come so far to be what the school is today. He mentioned the importance of the ECMS ribbon cutting ceremony; the school is a beacon of hope that education is key to pursuing a better life and state that the composition of the Board needs to be changed.

### **John Lopez – Advocating for CHPA**

Mr. Lopez commented about items he feels the community should be outraged about; CCA and ECMS test scores have been the lowest in the district according to CDE for the last 7 years; security at the middle school regarding gangs and bullies and damages to the school caused by students. He continued that the Achievement & Success Committee was formed to help, he observed students playing with their cellphones during class, spoke about a teacher walk out, administrative costs that were above 19% with most schools operating between 10% to 12% administrative costs. (Remainder of Mr. Lopez' comments could not be noted due to shouting from the audience)

### **7:29p.m. Adjournment**

I

Brad Miller called for the meeting to be adjourned at the noted time due to audience shouting and disorder.

Prepared by:

  
Lorrie J. Marquez, Executive Assistant

Date:

11/9/2022

Verified by:

  
Angela Giron, CHPA Board Secretary  
(Signed by Board President in absence of Secretary)

Date:

11/9/2022

