



3013 N. Monticello  
Chicago, Illinois 60618  
(773) 252-0970  
www.aspirail.org

## **ASPIRA Board of Directors Wednesday, June 25, 2025 Minutes**

### Directors Present:

Debra Cruz, V.C. Programs  
(Excused)

Yolanda Frontany, V.C. Personnel

Luis Martinez, Director

Marco Morales, Treasurer

David Rodriguez, Chairman

Cynthia Yuqui, Secretary

Edgar Lopez, President & CEO

### Directors Absent:

Luis Diaz-Perez, Director,

Rosemary Lugo-Gross, (Excused)

Astrid Miranda, High School Rep

### Staff Present:

Leslie Foster Ramsey

Jose Reyes, COO

Sonia Sanchez, Board Liaison

### 1. Call to Order

Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm

### 2. Roll Call

Secretary Yuqui called the roll. Quorum was determined to be present.

### 3. Approval of the Agenda

**D. Cruz made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by C. Yuqui. Motion prevailed unanimously.**

### 4. Public Comment

No public comment made

### 5. Approval of the minutes of April 2, 2025 Regular Meeting

**D. Cruz made a motion to approve the Minutes of the April 2, 2025 regular board meeting with a minor clerical correction. Seconded by M. Morales. Motion prevailed.**

### 6. CEO Report:

CEO Lopez presented his report.

A. **Education:** ASPIRA's charter was renewed for two years. Leslie Foster Ramsey, Chief Academic Officer, reported out on the ASPIRA Charter Network Renewal Findings.

1. Renewal Process: Site visits to each campus made by CPS personnel to observe educational process.
2. Renewal Findings:
  - Academic Performance: Meets Standards. ISBE designation for all campuses is Commendable. Campuses must improve classroom engagement. Campuses must align teaching practices with grade level instruction. Campuses must ensure teachers are qualified. Campuses must create equitable grading procedures.
  - Financial Performance: Needs Substantial Improvement. Aspira Charter Network is required to participate in the Innovation & Incubation Financial Remediation process, due to its Financial Performance Outcome. If the Network remains in Financial Remediation in the second year it will be required to submit a Financial Corrective Action Plan
  - Inclusive Programming & Equitable Systems: Needs Substantial Improvement. All campuses must demonstrate progress toward implementing the recommendations by the Office for Students with Disabilities. All campuses must meet state and federal rules governing English Learners. CPS has designated OMME to conduct site visits to determine compliance with rules regarding English Learner Programs.
  - Organizational Compliance: Approaching Standards. Deficiencies derive from the school's non-compliance with meeting its contractual conditions. ASPIRA must meet its new conditions during the agreement term. Conditions include qualified teachers, special education compliance, English Learner compliance and financial documentation
3. Next Steps: the charter renewal findings are going to be the anchor for the next two years strategic planning.
  - Hire EL Director & Case Manager
  - Improve classroom instruction
  - Ensure Finances are transparent and compliant
  - Organizational compliance
  - Qualified Teachers
  - EL compliance
  - Special Education Compliance

Ms. Foster-Ramsey responded to several questions regarding the roles of EL Director, Case Manager and Data and Compliance Officer.

Approximately 50% of our students are English Learners. Many of the policies and procedures for EL students mirror Special Education policies and procedures.

- B. Loan Refinance: CEO Lopez met with the bank officials. The meeting went better than expected. They have started the process for renewal which should be completed by the end of July.
- C. City approved the One Summer Chicago funding for our youth employment program
- D. Facilities / Maintenance Schedule: In the process of addressing many issues with maintenance that had been neglected by the former facilities manager. There was no maintenance schedule being followed and there was shoddy work done that needs to be fixed.
- E. Senator Graciela Guzman secured \$250,000 Capital Funding to support improvements to the facility on Central Ave.

#### 7. Chairman's Report

- Chairman Rodriguez has been working closely with CEO Lopez on budget and other financial issues.
- There has been some improvement from where the organization started last year but there's a lot more that needs to be done to balance the budget.
- The financial reporting systems need to be upgraded and implemented but the organization can't afford to replace them yet. The plan is to implement them by next year.
- Part of ASPIRA's budget shortfall is a result of CPS keeping 14% of the funds allocated for all public students.
- Aspira lost a great friend and ally with the death of Charlie Serrano last Spring. He served as a consultant working on many projects. He was a strong supporter of ASPIRA and will be greatly missed.
- Our main focus this summer is on recruitment of new students. Aspira has brought in a contractor, Carlos Jimenez, whose main role is recruitment and marketing.

#### 8. Finance Committee Report: Marco Morales reported

- The total budget is \$16.2 million with a deficit of \$1.8 million
- \$11 million or 68% of the total budget goes to salaries, benefits, and incidentals
- ASPIRA needs to recruit 160 new students to close the deficit.
- Jose Reyes has developed a fundraising plan with several fundraising activities and events to raise some revenue.
- The IRS owes Aspira approximately \$2.5 million. We are working with Congresswoman Delia Ramirez to help us get it
- Balance of the bank loan is \$6.2 million.

D. Cruz asked to be provided with a list of all contracts including scope of services and amounts the contracts cost.

Several board members asked that the board be informed whenever contractors are retained and whenever key personnel are either let go or resign.

There was a discussion regarding the need for an update to the ASPIRA website.

9. Personnel Committee Report: Yolanda Frontany, Personnel Committee Chair
  - The committee met and worked on a revision to the Employee Policy & Procedures updating the section on PTO.
  - The maximum number of unused hours of PTO that can be carried over to the following year will be 80. Any unused excess hours will be forfeited and not carried over.
10. Approval to enter Closed Session  
**D. Cruz made a motion to enter Closed Session. Seconded by C. Yuqui. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
11. Approval to return to Open Session  
**Y. Frontany made a motion to enter Open Session. Seconded by C. Yuqui. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
12. Adoption of School Year 2025-2026 Academic Calendar that was approved by the Executive Committee on April 23, 2025  
**D. Cruz made a motion to Adopt the School Year 2025-2026 Academic Calendar. Seconded by M. Morales. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
13. Approval of revision to the PTO Policy of the Employee Handbook  
**C. Yuqui made a motion to approve the revision to the PTO Policy of the Employee Handbook. Seconded by M. Morales. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
14. Approval of the Board Meeting Calendar for FY 2025-2026  
**Y. Frontany made a motion to approve the Board Meeting Calendar for FY 2025-2026. Seconded by D. Cruz. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
15. Approval of Joana Intriago as College Rep Board Member  
**C. Yuqui made a motion to approve Joana Intriago as College Rep Board Member. Seconded by Y. Frontany. Motion prevailed unanimously.**

16. Approval of Sabrina Alicea as Board Member  
**C. Yuqui made a motion to approve Sabrina Alicea as Board Member. Seconded by M. Morales. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
17. Approval of James Ramos as Board Member  
**M. Morales made a motion to approve James Ramos as Board Member. Seconded by L. Martinez. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
18. Approval of Noel Sanchez as Board Member  
**Motion made by L. Martinez to approve Noel Sanchez as Board Member. Seconded by Y. Frontany. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
19. Approval of a Resolution authorizing the Chief Executive Officer to transfer the property located at 3909 W. Fullerton, Chicago, IL to the ASPIRA of Illinois Foundation NFP  
**C. Yuqui made a motion to approve a resolution authorizing the Chief Executive Officer to transfer the property located at 3909 W. Fullerton, Chicago, IL to the ASPIRA of Illinois Foundation NFP. Seconded by D. Cruz. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
20. Approval of a Resolution authorizing the Chief Executive Officer to transfer the property located at 2900 N. Central Ave., Chicago IL to the ASPIRA Illinois Foundation NFP  
**D. Cruz made a motion to approve a resolution authorizing the Chief Executive Officer to transfer the property located at 2900 N. Central Ave., Chicago IL to the ASPIRA Illinois Foundation NFP. Seconded by M. Morales. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
21. Approval of the FY 2025-2026 Budget  
**M. Morales made a motion to approve the FY 2025-2026 Budget. Seconded by D. Cruz. Motion prevailed unanimously.**
22. Old Business/New Business  
None presented.
23. Adjournment  
**D. Cruz made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by M. Morales. Motion prevailed unanimously.**