

**Minutes for August 26, 2025 Meeting**  
**Board of Trustees of Grand Concourse Academy**

**Board members in attendance:** Arlene Hall, Damaris Moquete and Richard Conley

Absent but participated by phone: Walder Thame and Howard Banker

**GCA staff in attendance:** Ira Victor and Michael Simonetti

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Chair Arlene Hall opened the meeting at 6:30 PM and expressed thanks to everyone for attending.

**1) Minutes of June 17, 2025:** The prior meeting Minutes of June 17th were discussed. A typo was noted regarding the Charter School Conference date. Richard Conley moved to accept with that minor revision and the minutes were approved by Board.

**2) Financials:**

- (i) Michael Simonetti presented the current financials to the Board. The school continues to run a positive cash flow. Through July 2025 the school continued to show positive cash flow and strong liquidity.
- (ii) We discussed the real estate tax exemption application, which has been pending with AG approval of dissolution of the lots from the abandoned condo filing. The AG has approved and we will proceed with the filing of the approval and the DOF application.
- (iii) The coming year GCA's budget projects 784 students, a 10% increase from 2024/25 school year. Applications to the school have increased from local sources as well as transfers from other Charter Schools. We again discussed the fact that hundreds of affordable apartments are being built on the next block and the positive impact that will have on the school numbers.

**3) School Expansion:** At the June meeting, given strong liquidity and demand, the board engaged Lee Ciavarra, our architect of the current school, to present plans for an expansion on available land adjacent to the school. At this meeting Bernita Frank, an associate in the Lubrano Ciavarra firm, presented schematic plans for the proposed new expansion. The plans reflected prior input from Ira Victor and Michael Simonetti. Highlights of the proposal, as well as other amenities, include:

- (i) Ten new classrooms including 2 multi-purpose rooms
- (ii) Roof top playground
- (iii) Kitchen upgrades
- (iv) Randall Avenue side school vestibule with security office
- (v) Expansion will potentially add 300 additional students

- (vi) Timeline for this project is completion in time for the 2026/27 school year.
- (vii) Preliminary estimate from Euro Struck, the contractor who built the recent expansion, is \$8.5 million. This can be paid from the \$20 million GCA surplus.

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**4) Items/Policies Discussed and Approved by the Board:**

- (i) Safety Plan was officially approved by the Board
- (ii) Absences and Lateness—Discussed at last meeting and approved
- (iii) SY 2025-26 Budget (DRAFT)—Discussed at last meeting and approved
- (iv) Approved current plans for school expansion
- (v) A proposal was presented to hire a new school food management vendor, **SLA Food Service Management Company**. The company had strong recommendations from other schools. The contract price is approximately 5% greater than the current vendor but within allowed guidelines. Given the positive recommendations and impressive menus, the board approved entering into the proposed contract.

**5) Executive Director's Report:**

- (i) 180 Day Academic Calendar was discussed and approved
- (ii) Summer Boost program was a big success with 300 children participating. Funding included \$500,000 from the Blumberg Foundation
- (iii) Legal Issues: Walker Memorial Baptist Church case. Mr. Victor discussed status. The case has not been dismissed, and we discussed whether we should settle. Ira is to contact the former GCA attorney to determine what documentation is available for defense if we go to a trial rather than settle.
- (iv) Projected enrollment was discussed. End of 2024-2025 enrollment was 705. The 2025-2026 enrollment is projected at 784 and can possibly go up to 809. The first expansion, completed in the past year, can support this increase.
- (v) **Board Composition:** Arlene Hall formerly announced she has retired from Mount Sinai and is resigning from the GCA Board. She will be moving onto the GCA staff to work in administration. Richard Conley will serve as interim Board Chair.

The Board officially approved Wendy Blythe as a new member subject to submission of required paperwork to SUNY and their approval. Three new potential candidates are being scheduled for interviews

Richard Conley moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20pm, seconded by Damaris Moquete and the Board adjourned.