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## Board Business Meeting

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Agency: [Cleveland Metropolitan School District \(CMSD\)](#)

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## Summary

- Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) Board of Education Vice Chair Leah Hudnall and board member Denise Link are stepping down from the board and were recognized for their service.
- CMSD CEO Warren Morgan presented data (both overall and disaggregated by groups of interest) on student attendance, chronic absenteeism, out-of-school suspensions, demographics and state testing.
- Board members, family members and community members made remarks about former board president and civil rights leader Arnold Pinkney, who at the June 11 meeting had an administrative building renamed in his honor.

## Follow-Up Questions

- This is more a comment than a question, but it's interesting to compare the data presentation at this meeting (and at a Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GRCTA) meeting I observed) to presentations from vendors at Cleveland City Council sub-committee meetings. The data in this CMSD presentation flows from existing goals and objectives and also specifies plausible connections between interventions and the outcomes observed (e.g., interventions during the year leading to declines in out-of-school suspensions).
- What is the relationship between the CMSD board and Cleveland City Council and other local government entities such as Cleveland Public Library (CPL)? The Pinkney article I link to below states the vote to rename the administration building "came after Cleveland City Council voted to encourage the board to do so." Does the verb "encourage" mean only an informal nudge, or are there more direct ways that Cleveland City Council and CMSD are connected? When CMSD board member Briggs made the comment about deficit spending to library CEO Felton Thomas Jr., is that just an offhand remark or are there other layers there?

## Notes

### **Records Commission meeting**

Before the Cleveland Metropolitan School District board meeting, there was the annual meeting of the Records Commission, which consists of CMSD Chief Executive Officer Warren Morgan, CMSD Chief Financial Officer Kevin Stockdale, and CMSD Board of Trustees Chair Sara Elaquad. The minutes from the June 2023 meeting were approved, and a motion to update the records retention schedule was approved unanimously.

### **Notes**

The meeting began shortly after 6:30 p.m. All members were present except for Leah Hudnall. After roll call, all board members and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Elaquad recognized the resignation of board members Denise Link and Hudnall and expressed appreciation for their service. Board member Link also made remarks about her long tenure.

### **CEO report**

This portion of the meeting began with CEO Morgan also recognizing the board retirees, followed by CFO Stockdale answering previously submitted questions from board members in areas such as RTA fees for students, insurance costs, and other assorted costs.

Morgan gave a data presentation to the board on both demographics and performance measures. Highlights of the presentation include:

- 1. Demographics and enrollment** - Total enrollment is expected to be stable for the 2023-24 school year compared with last year (between 34,000 and 35,000 students). 63% of students are African-American and 18% are Hispanic. 26% are students with disabilities, while 12% are English-language learners.
- 2. College and Career** - Morgan presented data showing that the percentage of high school seniors completing FAFSA college financial aid forms increased from 40% in June 2022 to 48% in June 2024, and the percentage completing at least one college application increased from 54% in June 2022 to 61% in June 2024. Morgan talked about collaborations between school personnel in this area, along with FAFSA completion workshops held during the year to help families fill out the form.
- 3. Attendance** - Average attendance for CMSD students was 91% prior to the pandemic in 2019-20, then 81% for three consecutive years between 2020-21 and

2022-23. For this year, the estimate is for a slight increase to 83%.

- 4. Chronic absenteeism** - The percentage of students with chronic absenteeism (defined as missing 10% or more school days) increased from 36% in 2018-19 before the pandemic to 64% in 2021-22. However, for this year the percentage is estimated to decline to 56%. Absenteeism declined for all groups of interest (race/ethnicity, disability, English language proficiency), but with wide variations between groups (for example, white students had a 14% decline in chronic absenteeism compared with just a 4% decline for Black students and for students with a disability).
- 5. Out-of-school suspensions** - Suspensions were up 2% for this year compared to last year. However, while suspensions were higher for September through December of 2023 compared with the same time period in 2022 (822 vs. 563), suspensions were lower for January through June of 2024 compared with that time period in 2023 (705 vs. 893). Morgan discussed interventions implemented during the middle of this school year that he believes led to this decrease. Morgan also mentioned disproportionate suspension rates for Black students (81% of suspensions compared with 63% of population) and students with disabilities (36% of suspensions compared with 26% of population).
- 6. State testing** - Preliminary state testing results show that the percentage of CMSD students scoring proficient or above increased from last year in both English/Language Arts (from 27% to 30%) and in math (from 18% to 21%). All groups of interest showed improvement in English/Language Arts, and all groups showed improvement in math except for students with disabilities.

Board members held a general discussion about how to improve outcomes, with Chair Elaquad talking about how the board will be involved next year in the process of creating district goals. One board member inquired about a dashboard for board members to further analyze data, with another board member asking for school-specific data.

#### **CEO foregoing pay raise**

CEO Morgan said that he went to board leadership about a month ago to state he wasn't seeking a pay raise given "financial realities" (this pay freeze also applies to other high-ranking "cabinet" employees). Board Chair Elaquad agreed with this decision given the current "difficult financial position", while emphasizing this wasn't due to a lack of confidence from the board in CEO Morgan.

#### **Renaming of East Professional Building after Arnold Pinkney**

At the most recent meeting on June 11, [the board decided to rename the East Professional Building after civil rights leader and former Cleveland Board of Education](#)

[president Arnold Pinkney](#). At tonight's meeting, Elaquad said that this renaming was an example of practicing equity and inclusion. Afterward, Betty Pinkney (Arnold Pinkney's widow) made remarks about her husband and the renaming of the building.

### **Public comment**

Nine individuals made remarks during the public comment section of the meeting, with all comments being about Arnold Pinkney's life and work in education, politics, business, and the church. Individuals making comments were: 1) Mr. Forbes, 2) Rev. E.T. Cabiness ([pastor of the Greater Abyssinia Baptist Church](#)), 3) Rev. Dr. Otis Moss (former pastor of Mt. Olivet Institutional Baptist Church), 4) [Cleveland City Council Member Stephanie Howse-Jones](#) (who said that she had recently received a letter from the East High Alumni Association stating that they hadn't been consulted about the renaming of the building), 5) Tyrone McGinness, 6) Kent Whitley, 7) James Jones (chair of the deacon board at Mt. Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, 8) [Cleveland Municipal Court Judge Jeffrey Johnson](#), and 9) Stuart Muszynski.

### **Consideration of assorted resolutions**

The board considered 36 resolutions for approval, with all but three discussed at the most recent June 11 meeting. Highlights include:

- 1) The reappointment of Melanie Shakarian to the Cleveland Public Library (CPL) Board of Trustees. Shakarian made remarks to the board about the position along with Cleveland Public Library CEO Felton Thomas Jr.. The reappointment was approved unanimously.
- 2) The resolution to adopt the tax budget for CPL was approved unanimously. However, board member Briggs expressed concern about library deficit spending, which was acknowledged by CEO Thomas.
- 3) Other items approved included an internal auditing contract to an outside association, along with specific authorized payments and acceptance of grant funds.

### **Executive session and meeting conclusion**

At this point, about two hours into the meeting, the board went into private executive session for more than two hours. When the public portion of the meeting resumed shortly before 11 p.m., board members Lebron and Link were no longer present. The board unanimously (now 6-0) voted to approve an agreement with Teamsters union #436. The board also unanimously voted not to renew the contract of two unnamed administrators. After that, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

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