AURORA ACADEMIC CHARTER SCHOOL

BOARD COMMITTEE

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Date: September 18, 2025
Time: 7:00 PM
Location: AACS Skyrattler Campus and Online

Attending: Zahida Hirani-Saran (Chiar)
Jennifer Singh (Vice Char)
Constance Amenaghawon
Ajoke Omage
Adedayo Ojeleye
Kerry-Ann Sitcheron
Fauziat Raji
Ian Gray
Khryssa Genery
(Recording Secretary)

Guests: None

Items

7:00PM

1. **Land Acknowledgement (Zahida Hirani-Saran, Board Chair)**
   Board Chair Zahida Hirani-Saran read the Land Acknowledgement and called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. **Call to Order (Zahida Hirani-Saran, Board Chair)** 7:01PM
   The meeting was called to order by the Board of Directors Chair at 7:01 PM, and was held at the AACS Skyrattler Campus and virtually for the public via Google Meets.

   a. **Approval of the September 18, 2025 Meeting of the Board of Directors Agenda**
      i. **Motion:** To approve the September 18, 2025 Board of Directors Agenda as presented.
      ii. **Moved by**: Fauziat Raji.
      iii. **Seconded by:** Adedayo Ojeleye
      iv. **Vote Decision:** The Board voted unanimously.

   b. **Approval of the Meeting of the Board of Directors Minutes(Motion**
      i. **Approval of the Minutes of June 16, 2025(Motion)**
         Motion: To approve the June 16, 2025 Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors as presented.
         Moved by: Ajoke Omage
         Seconded: Fauziat Raji
         Vote Decision: The Board voted unanimously, with the one typo to be corrected.

      ii. **Approval of the Minutes of September 11, 2025 (Motion)**
         Motion: To approve the September 11, 2025 Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors as presented.
         Moved by: Constance Amenaghawon
         Seconded: Jennifer Singh
         Vote Decision: The Board voted unanimously, with one typo to be corrected.

3. **The Association of Alberta Public Charter School(TAAPCS)** 7:05PM
   The Board welcomed Dee-Ann Evans, President of TAAPCS and Board Chair of STEM Calgary, along with Kelley Charlebois, Executive Director now in his fourth year of service. Ms. Evans, who has served as TAAPCS President since November 2024, is a trained medical scientist, author, and long-time science fair and speech judge. She began by sharing her professional background and accomplishments before providing an overview of TAAPCS's role and work.

   TAAPCS is a member-driven organization representing Alberta's charter schools, which collectively serve approximately 14,250 students—about 2% of the province's total enrollment. The association advocates on behalf of charter schools within government, the education sector, and the broader public. Notable recent accomplishments include:

   - Securing access to SLS funding
   - Advancing $40 million in capital requests
   - Increasing recognition of charter schools in the provincial budget (from one line item in 2022 to two in 2025)
   - Establishing monthly meetings with Board Chairs to strengthen communication and advocacy.

   a. **Current Priorities**
   The presentation outlined several key advocacy priorities for TAAPCS, including:

      i. Achieving equity in capital funding with other public schools

ii. Establishing a pathway to permanency for charter schools
iii. Securing access to municipal land reserves for facilities
iv. Inquire absence of startup funding for furniture and equipment

In addition, TAAPCS has submitted a formal letter to the government advocating for a review of superintendent compensation caps, with the objective of aligning charter school salaries with those in the public system. The association also underscored the importance of research funding and the sharing of best practices across the sector to strengthen innovation and student outcomes.

b. Upcoming Initiatives

TAAPCS is advancing several initiatives to support growth and advocacy:

i. Annual General Meeting – November 1, 2025 (hosted by Thrive).
ii. Regional Teacher Conferences – Fall 2026.
iii. Engagement Package – A sector-wide advocacy initiative.

A significant part of the engagement package is the new communication strategy, which includes a brand refresh, website redevelopment, media monitoring, and the creation of advocacy materials. This three-year initiative will be funded jointly by all member schools:

iv. Year 1 (2025–2026): $68,000 – Brand refresh, website redevelopment, initial media engagement, advocacy materials, and monitoring.
v. Year 2 (2026–2027): $22,000 – Ongoing media relations, website updates, advocacy document refresh, and monitoring.
vi. Year 3 (2027–2028): $38,000 – Strategic media campaign ahead of the provincial election, digital advertising, stakeholder report, and monitoring.

The total cost is $128,000 (plus GST). All member schools have endorsed this cost-sharing plan, recognizing the value of amplifying the collective voice of Alberta's charter schools.

In addition, TAAPCS highlighted its involvement with the Downtown Revitalization Coalition website as a tool for public education and its ongoing dialogue with the Minister of Education, who has expressed support for charter schools' access to municipal reserve lands.

c. Questions and Discussion

Board members raised questions regarding communication, inclusivity, funding, and governance safeguards. In response, TAAPCS confirmed the following:

i. A monthly newsletter is distributed to each school's designated contact;
ii. Monthly Board Chair meetings are held;
iii. Three general board meetings and monthly executive meetings take place annually.

On superintendent compensation, TAAPCS reaffirmed that advocacy for parity is ongoing and confirmed that a formal request has been submitted to the government. Regarding capital and infrastructure, the association encouraged Aurora to submit letters on startup funding shortfalls, assuring its full support in such advocacy efforts.

On inclusivity, TAAPCS highlighted its governance structure, which ensures balanced representation across north and south, rural and urban, and large and small schools. Pre-meeting engagement further strengthens member input and ensures minority voices are considered. While safeguards have been built into the new bylaws, TAAPCS emphasized that ongoing member engagement is essential to maximize influence and maintain balanced representation.

d. Closing Note

The session concluded with the reminder that TAAPCS's advocacy remains student-centered, aiming to ensure equitable access to resources, facilities, and opportunities for charter school students within Alberta's public education system. While consensus is not always possible, members are encouraged to remain engaged in shaping priorities and leveraging the benefits of association membership.

e. Alignment with TAAPCS Three-Year Strategy (2025–2028)

The priorities presented to the Board align closely with TAAPCS's Three-Year Strategy (2025–2028). Both emphasize equitable capital funding, access to municipal reserve lands, and startup resources for facilities as central goals.

The strategy's focus on clarifying the identity of charter schools and increasing public awareness was reflected in the planned communication initiatives, newsletters, and engagement tools such as the Downtown Revitalization Coalition website. Similarly, the commitment to strengthening governance and sector-wide collaboration was evident in the introduction of new bylaws and monthly Board Chair meetings.

Finally, the association's intention to elevate charter schools' visibility ahead of the 2027 provincial election aligns with the AGM, teacher conferences, and the broader advocacy campaigns now underway. Together, these elements demonstrate a clear and consistent alignment between TAAPCS's long-term strategy and its current priorities.

10 minute break

The Chair of the Board recessed the meeting for a 10-minute break at 7:57 PM. The meeting reconvened at 8:07 PM.

4. Superintendents Report

The Superintendent began his report at 8:07 PM by extending his gratitude to staff across all campuses who worked tirelessly over the summer to ensure that schools were prepared for the start of the 2025–26 year. This preparation contributed to a smooth launch despite record enrolment growth, with approximately 300 additional students bringing Aurora to its highest enrolment to date. The Board Chair expressed appreciation to principals for their leadership during start-up and noted the positive feedback received from both students and families. Parents have been particularly appreciative of the opening of the new grade levels, although some have commented that homework expectations came as a significant adjustment for new Aurora families.

a. Academic Reports

Each campus provided highlights of its academic and community activities. At Sherbrooke, staff are implementing the new K–6 provincial curriculum and have launched literacy and numeracy assessments alongside strong community engagement events such as the Terry Fox Run and Meet the Staff Night. Skyrattler successfully held its first Terry Fox Run, welcomed families at Meet the Teacher evening, and continues to build positive relationships with neighbouring organisations to support smooth transportation coordination. Alberta Avenue expanded its dual-credit programming into pathways in sciences, arts, commerce, political science, and pre-med, with students already engaged in advanced coursework and national competitions. Across campuses, parents have re-engaged through well-attended events, and students have quickly taken ownership of their learning and extracurricular opportunities

b. Student Learning Services

The Superintendent reported that Student Learning Services (SLS) continues to play a pivotal role in supporting all students, including those facing health-related challenges, academic struggles, and social-emotional needs. Supports are delivered through early interventions, counselling, speech-language and occupational therapy observations, and psychologist consultations across campuses. Transition meetings with families of new secondary students were held to build proactive support plans, and the BASE Program, a social-emotional learning resource, has been relaunched across all campuses. The Board noted that these supports remain a defining feature of Aurora, setting the school apart in its commitment to student wellbeing

c. Research and Grant

The Superintendent thanked Dr. Paul Wozny for his leadership in research and grant initiatives. Highlights included the launch of *RAISE: Research and Innovation in School Education*, Aurora's first practitioner-led research journal featuring staff and university contributions. The Authority's Alberta Education Assurance Measure results continue to reflect strong performance, with significant gains in safe and caring environments, parental involvement, access to supports, and education quality. Aurora has also advanced its ConnectED Parents initiative with the University of Calgary, expanding parent engagement and family health supports

d. Operational Reports

Transportation was discussed in detail. Aurora began the year with a new provider, Cunningham Transportation, serving 27 buses across three campuses. A new fee structure of $900 per student was introduced, with real-time tracking available through the EZ EnRoute app. While the system has improved communication, ride times and delays remain inconsistent, with some buses exceeding the 75-minute guideline. The Board expressed concern that this issue, recurring each September, conflicts with existing policy. The Superintendent recommended monitoring routes until the next Board meeting, noting that ongoing adjustments and the formation of a parent–trustee Transportation Committee will help optimize routes and improve oversight. He emphasized that bussing is a privilege rather than a guaranteed right, and recommended that the next Board newsletter reinforce this message in a supportive tone.

Facilities updates included commissioning work at Skyrattler (installation of security cameras, PA system, and winter readiness measures), roof repairs at Alberta Avenue, and continued ventilation challenges at Sherbrooke. Enrolment has reached ~1,534 students, with Sherbrooke at capacity, Skyrattler welcoming ~225 students in its first year, and Alberta Avenue continuing stable secondary growth. The Board also received updates on the ongoing Organizational Assessment, which has collected over 800 survey responses and entered its interview and focus group phase.

e. Innovation Spotlight

Two key initiatives were highlighted. The first is Aurora's 30th Anniversary and Skyrattler Grand Opening on September 26, which will celebrate community partnerships, showcase the new campus, and recognize three decades of student success. The second focused on digital wellness in early grades, with a proposal to reduce or eliminate one-to-one Chromebook use in Kindergarten to Grade 3. Research indicates excessive screen time can negatively impact behaviour, development, and wellbeing, and Aurora will pilot shared-device approaches while monitoring developmental outcomes

f. Closing Notes

In reflection, the Superintendent emphasized that Aurora's growth and success this year are due to the dedication of its staff, strong community engagement, and innovative programming. While challenges remain around transportation, facilities, and extended student absences, the Authority continues to demonstrate resilience and momentum. Aurora remains committed to balancing rigorous academics, wellness supports, and operational readiness to ensure students receive a high-quality education in safe, supportive environments.

5. Policy Committee (Kerry-Ann Sitcheron)

The Policy Committee Report commenced at 9:06PM. The report was presented by the Policy Committee Chair Kerr-Ann Sitcheron.

a. 2080 BP: Minutes and Records (3rd Reading)

The motion to accept policy 2080 BP: Minutes and Records for its third and final reading was moved by Policy Committee Chair Kerry-Ann Sitcheron.

i. **Seconded by:** Ajoke Omage

ii. **Discussions:**

1. Amendments included replacing the word *bylaws* with *articles of association* to ensure alignment, clarifying that accounts are not made public while policies are, and removing references to responsibilities shared among several groups.
2. Discussion noted that although the Education Act already outlines requirements for minutes and records, maintaining this policy allows for easier reference and ensures clarity for the public.

iii. **Vote outcome:** The Board voted unanimous in favour.

b. 3160 BP: Conducting Research Studies (3rd Reading)

The motion to accept BP 3160: Conducting Research Studies for its 3rd and final reading was moved by Policy Committee Chair Kerry-Ann Sitcheron.

i. **Seconded by:** Adedayo Ojeleye

ii. **Discussions:**

1. No major changes were made; however, discussion centered on whether this policy remains necessary. Members noted that Aurora has a clear commitment to research, and the policy helps formalize that responsibility as part of the charter. A minor edit included the removal of the words "and all."

iii. **Vote outcome:** The Board voted unanimous in favour of BP 3160: Conducting Research Studies.

c. 4015 BP: Procurement (2nd Reading)

The motion to accept BP 4015: Procurement for its second reading was moved by Policy Committee Chair Kerry-Ann Sitcheron.

i. **Seconded by:** Ajoke Omage

ii. **Discussions:**

1. The accompanying Administrative Regulation (AR) was reviewed in tandem to ensure clarity in procurement processes. While ARs are not usually reviewed at Board meetings, this was included to confirm alignment. The only change was raising the expenditure threshold from $5,000 to $10,000.

iii. **Vote outcome:** The Board voted unanimous accepting BP 4015: Procurement for its second reading.

d. 4015 AR: Procurement

Reviewed alongside the BP as part of the 2nd reading discussion.

e. 6180 BP: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity(2nd Reading)

This policy was drafted using direct provisions from the Education Act. References to FOIP were replaced with ATIA and POPA to reflect updated privacy legislation.

The motion to accept BP 6180: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity for its second reading was moved by the Policy Committee Chair Kerry-Ann Sitcheron.

i. **Seconded by:** Ajoke Omage

ii. **Discussions:**

1. Discussion addressed potential compliance risks if the policy were not approved. It was confirmed that failure to adopt the policy could result in

penalties. Members also proposed including explicit references to age.

iii. **Additional Policy Discussions (No Motions)**

The Superintendent explained that both matters are legislated provincially and do not require local policy. It was further noted that the "book ban" legislation has been paused and that Aurora remains in compliance with the Education Act

1. .Fairness and Safety in Sports (XXXX BP)
2. Standards for the Selection, Availability, and Access of School Library Materials (XXXX BP)

iv. **Vote outcome:** The Board of Directors voted 5 in favour, 1 abstain, and 1 against. The Policy 6180 BP: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity passed the second reading.

6. Director of Finance Update (Constance Amenaghawon, Finance Chair)

The Finance Chair presented an overview of the June, July, and August financial statements at 9:36PM. The Board agreed that reviewing the June and July reports was redundant, as the August financial statement provided the most up-to-date and relevant information.

a. June, July, and August Financials

i. Revenues

Total revenues for the year-to-date were $16.57 million, or 109% of budget. Alberta Education contributed $14.40 million, exceeding budget due to the inclusion of an $809,000 rent subsidy grant and a $200,000 startup grant. Alberta Infrastructure revenues totaled $539,800, or 106% of budget, reflecting reorganized deferred revenue and WFF grants. Other Alberta school authorities contributed $239,100, well above budget at 159%, largely due to $83,000 received from the Primary School LED lighting project. Fees generated $1.02 million, slightly under budget at 96%, as a result of lower enrollment and reduced field trip fees. Investment income performed strongly at $231,800, or 145% of budget, owing to higher-than-anticipated interest rates. Fundraising totaled $68,700, surpassing projections at 137%, with significant contributions from the Aurora Fundraising Society ($50,000) and family engagement initiatives ($18,000). Gifts and donations also exceeded expectations at $16,200, representing 162% of budget, with contributions from individual and corporate donors. Overall, revenue performance was ahead of projections across most categories.

ii. Expenses by Object

Total expenses for the year-to-date were $16.73 million, or 105% of budget. Instructional expenses (ECS–12) were the largest component, totaling $10.85 million, or 113% of budget, due to startup costs for new classrooms, additional insurance costs for expanded facilities, IMR expenses for LED lighting at the Primary campus, and initial costs related to Skyrattler. Plant Operations and Maintenance totaled $3.55 million, or 91% of budget, coming in under expectations. Transportation expenses reached $1.82 million, or 94% of budget, with August including payments for the parent ride subsidy program. Board and System Administration expenses were $515,000, or 91% of budget, also under projections. Collectively, the higher-than-budgeted instructional expenses were partially offset by savings in plant operations and administration.

b. Finance Transfers

i. The Finance Chair also clarified a transfer of $1 million between capital and operations for the Skyrattler project. The funds were subsequently returned to operations, as they were not expended.

7. Board of Directors

The Chair of the Board of Directors commenced the Board of Directors discussion at 10:15 PM.

a. The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools(TAAPCS)

An overview of the The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools(TAAPCS) presentation was shared. Membership costs were confirmed at 12500 plus $20 per student, up to a maximum of $25,000 annually.

i. Motion: Kerry-Ann Sitcheron motioned for Aurora Academic Charter School to rejoin The Association of Alberta Charter Public Schools(TAAPCS) at an annual membership cost of maximum 25000.

ii. Seconded by: Ajoke Omage

iii. Discussions

1. Discussion focused on budget considerations, with concerns raised about the cost not being included in the current budget and the perceived value of membership. Members also acknowledged the association's role in political advocacy and advancing the greater good for charter schools.

iv. Vote outcome: The Board of Directors votes 4 favor and 3 opposed. The motion passed for Aurora Academic Charter School to rejoin The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools(TAAPCS).

1. Ajoke Omage volunteered to be the representative for Aurora Academic Charter School with The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools(TAAPCS).

b. Charter Document

The Board reviewed updates to the charter document, required eight weeks prior to the AGM. Revisions included changes to reflect secondary programming as requested by the government. The updated sections were highlighted in orange and yellow. Board members were given two weeks to review the document and submit letters with recommended changes.

c. **Questions from Parent(September 11, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting)**

i. The Board reviewed a question submitted by a parent regarding the potential use of the Connaught Armoury as a future high school site

The parent raised concerns about the size and capacity of the site, noting that the building footprint appears to be approximately one-fifth the size of Old Scona Academic School, which accommodates about 135 students per grade. They questioned whether the Connaught site could realistically support only one class per grade, estimated at 25–30 students. The parent also inquired about the target student population, expressing concern about competition with nearby high-performing schools, including Old Scona and Strathcona Senior High School.

In response, Superintendent Ian Gray acknowledged that discussions about the Connaught Armoury are at a very preliminary stage. No decisions have been made, and any potential commitment would require careful consideration of multiple factors, including size, suitability, and long-term viability. Facilities for charter schools continue to present challenges, and the Connaught Armoury is one of many potential opportunities reviewed throughout the year. Mr. Gray emphasized that questions regarding capacity and student population are the types of considerations that would guide future deliberations and that community input would play an important role if this opportunity were to move forward.

8. **Next Meeting**

At 10:49PM the Board Chair notified that the next meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled for October 23, 2025 at 7:00 PM. The meeting will be hosted at the AACS Alberta Ave Campus.

9. **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting of the Board of Directors on September 18, 2025 was motioned by Ajoke Omage.

The meeting of the September 18, 2025 Board of Directors was adjourned at 10:49 PM.

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