LION LEADERS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD CHARTER SCHOOL

May Board Meeting Minutes, May 18, 2026

Board Members Present: Talal Rojas Julie Medler David Schatsky Tony Stoupas Catherine Jessup Rosann Santos Ruth Jarmul Nicholas Ober **Board Members Joining Remotely:** Ana Maria Gomez **Board Members Not in Attendance:** Herb Fixler Deborah Dumont	**Members of the Public LION asked to be in Attendance:** Keveney McCrillis, Director of Communications and Strategic Projects Celia Sosa, CEO Leslie Rich, CFO Maya Severns, Director of Development and Marketing **Members of the Public:** Mark Fusco

Tony Stoupas, Board Chair, called for a motion to begin the meeting at 6:04 PM. The motion was seconded by Catherine Jessup and unanimously approved.

Tony Stoupas motioned to dispense with the reading of the minutes and approve the April meeting minutes, which had been shared via email before the meeting. Julie Medler seconded the motion. The April meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Celia Sosa, LION's Chief Executive Officer, reviewed the CEO report, which was emailed before the meeting. She began reflecting on LION's quarter three academic performance. She discussed LION's goals to improve by 10 percentage points in state exam proficiency and how the quarter three benchmark results indicated progress toward that goal. She expressed pride in the team and students. A board member discussed how the principals presented this data at the education committee meeting. Another board member indicated that some of the interventions taken this year seem to have helped.

Celia Sosa shared that after SUNY's visit, there were signals they were paying attention to certain key indicators. She reflected on the high school's credit accumulation and graduation rates. She then discussed some of the adversity that high school students and staff are currently facing due to things happening in the community. There was a board question about gang activity and its impact on our high school students. Celia answered that question. There is a board question about LION families and their involvement in gang activity. Celia answered that question. There was a board discussion about whether we see this impacting middle or elementary school students. Celia answered that question. Celia then discussed the performance on high school benchmarks and that the school is paying close attention to the math and science scores.

Celia Sosa then discussed current enrollment trends and ways that LION is marketing or offering services that other schools may not be. She discussed the rising second-grade cohort and where we are in closing that gap. She expressed confidence in LION hitting its enrollment targets.

Tony Stoupas reminded the board of the AI discussion at the January Board Retreat, and then Celia discussed how she's been engaged in professional development on AI. She discussed how LION plans to codify their approach and set a framework for students and teachers. She expressed excitement around AI in education and at LION. She indicated that this is something the senior leadership team will discuss during their summer retreat.

Leslie Rich, LION's Chief Financial Officer, then presented her financial report, which was shared via email along with LION's monthly financials and draft FY 27 budget before the meeting. Leslie Rich shared the April closed financials and discussed an ERC credit that LION received. She indicated that this has been vetted by LION's auditors, PKF, and that they have together assessed the risk. It will be recorded as a liability, not as other income, and placed in a segregated account for the next two years. Tony asked if there were any questions about this decision before they voted on whether to move forward with the proposed plan. There was a board question about our application and how we received the money. Leslie answered. Tony discussed the process LION went through to verify and discuss the funds with the finance committee and the auditors. Tony then motioned for a vote to move forward with the finance committee's recommendation to book the money as a liability and place it in a segregated account. Julie Medler seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

Leslie then noted the positive variance throughout April, which she predicted would hold through the end of the year. She highlighted key performance indicators, including student full-time equivalent numbers, staff headcount, and vacancies.

Leslie Rich went on to discuss the FY 27 budget. She discussed how, if we meet or exceed enrollment targets, our budget would expand, and how LION plans to use those additional funds when/if they are released. That includes overhiring additional certified teachers, which LION is actively recruiting for. There was a board question about where LION was in enrollment at this time last year. Celia answered that question. Leslie finished her report discussing finance items that are on the horizon, including the interim audit, the 403 B audit, and two new systems implementations.

Tony Stoupas asked Rosann Santos to discuss the Toastmasters program that she will be partnering with LION High School on for next year. She shared that this is a public speaking youth leadership club that will begin in September, with a faculty advisor to be chosen in August. Another board member shared that he participated in the Toastmasters program in graduate school. Celia Sosa thanked Rosann for her partnership and stated that this is a need at the high school level. A board member agreed that public speaking and presentation skills are key.

Tony then asked for committee updates. Keveney McCrillis, Director of Communication and Strategic Projects, shared the facilities updates, including those around the classroom redesign project and the high school LION's Den secondary heating and cooling system. Talal Rojas and Maya Severns, Director of Marketing and Development, discussed the launch of LION's new website and the upcoming spring social and fundraiser. Ruth Jarmul highlighted that this is the school's 20th-anniversary event and encouraged participation and support. A member of the public, Mark Fusco, discussed his idea for a LION Hall of Fame and for inducting two alumni into it. There was a board question about how often it would be updated. There was a discussion about that being an annual tradition. Celia Sosa discussed how fundraising efforts help support LION alumni.

Tony Stoupas asked if there were any public comments. Mark Fusco, teacher at LION for 17 years, discussed his involvement and representation of the retention committee at LION. Their mission is to make being a staff member at LION attainable, including attracting and retaining talent. He noted that LION is at its best when it employs excellent teachers who stay. He discussed wanting to codify a family leave policy that offers new parents six weeks of fully paid leave. The board said that it has been discussed, and they are optimistic about when it will be presented to the board. Celia discussed that there has been research regarding similar policies at the DOE and other local charter schools. She is prepared to present a six-week paid leave policy to the board to vote on, which would be in effect September 1, 2026.

Tony Stoupas motioned to move into executive session at 7:12 PM. Nick Ober seconded, and it was unanimously passed.

Tony Stoupas motioned to return to the meeting and adjourn the meeting at 7:22 PM. Talal Rojas seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Notes prepared by Keveney McCrillis.