

Syracuse Arts Academy

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 9, 2025

Location: North Campus, 357 S 1550 W, Syracuse, UT 84075



In Attendance: Art Hansen, Neil Garner, Mary Johnston, Nate Schow, Rene Dreiling,

Others in Attendance: Kellie Mudrow, Dawn Kawaguchi, Brad Taylor, David Robertson,

SAA Mission Statement

The purpose of Syracuse Arts Academy is to develop respectful, confident citizens in a solid educational environment enriched by artistic expression.

Minutes

2025-2026 Board Vision Plan

CTE/CCA Pathway Funding Access Policy Project
Lunch & SpEd Budget Management
Close Specific Curriculum & Learning Gaps
Build a Business Case for Phased-In Campus Expansions
Engaging Externally

5:30 PM – INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

- Welcome & Roll Call – Mary Johnston
 - Board Mission – Neil Garner
 - School Mission – Mary Johnston

There was no PUBLIC COMMENT.

CONSENT ITEMS

- *October 2, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes* – There was no further discussion. **Nate Schow made a motion to approve the consent items. Rene Dreiling seconded the motion.**
The votes were as follows:
 - Mary Johnston – Aye**
 - Neil Garner – Aye**
 - Rene Dreiling – Aye**
 - Art Hansen – Aye**
 - Nate Schow – Aye****Motion passed unanimously.**

VOTING ITEMS

- *Award Borrowers Counsel* – David Robertson provided an overview of the two legal counsel roles involved in the bond transaction, outlining their respective responsibilities

and the necessity of their participation in the process. The borrowers counsel will represent SAA. He explained that Dorsey & Whitney was selected for their expertise in Utah market transactions and experience from the previous school transaction.

- *Award Bond & Disclosure Counsel* – David Robertson stated that the bond counsel will represent the finance authority who will be issuing the bonds for the School. He is recommending Gilmore & Bell who is one of four firms that are approved by the state. David outlined a plan for refinancing existing bonds, purchasing the South Campus, and expanding facilities over the next 8 months. The school will pay for immediate classroom expansion out of its fund balance, with reimbursement expected by June to align with the annual audit. A large financing package combining existing bonds, new building purchase, and expansion is being considered, with underwriter selection to be discussed at the December board meeting, aiming for a single transaction next year to maximize cost efficiency. David outlined a timeline for refinancing bonds, which includes selecting an underwriter in December, drafting documents in January-February, meeting with rating agencies in March, and submitting the financing application in March or April. The team aims to close the bond sale in June, with a guaranteed maximum price contract for facility expansion needed by April or May. David explained that the current BBB- rating is actually favorable for the school, as it places them in the top 10% of rated schools nationally, and noted that the credit enhancement program has been expanded to include schools with lower ratings. David discussed the upcoming finance authority meeting and bond pricing, emphasizing that while these tasks would require significant attention, they would be well-prepared. He clarified that Brad would be the point person for certain tasks, and they reviewed past experiences with school projects, including refinances and expansions. The board discussed the possibility of future expansion requests, but agreed to address them later when needed.
- *Award RFP for General Contractor for Antelope Campus* – Mary Johnston reported that only one proposal was received, submitted by OneWest Construction. She, along with Neil and Kellie, served on the evaluation committee and independently scored the submission. Based on their assessments, the committee recommends awarding the contract to OneWest. Mary also reviewed the three project phases previously outlined in last week's meeting, along with the associated costs for each phase. She highlighted an additional option for installing turf at the Antelope campus. The board engaged in a discussion regarding the benefits of turf as a valuable enhancement to the school environment, as well as potential drawbacks and strategies for proper maintenance to ensure long-term durability. Kellie explained that the turf field would improve maintenance efficiency and support student participation in extracurricular activities, as students involved in sports tend to be more connected to the school. *David Robertson and Brad Taylor were excused at 6:30 p.m.*
- *2025-2026 School LAND Trust Plan for the South Campus* – Kellie Mudrow reminded the board that the South Campus is the new school and we split the Jr. high and elementary at the Antelope campus so the jr. high is a new school. She reviewed the South campus goal for reading with kinders and what the funds will be spent on to help reach the goal. There was a discussion on the funds going to salaries and sustaining the employees hired.
- *2025-2026 School LAND Trust Plan for the Jr. High* – Kellie Mudrow reviewed land trust plans for South Campus and Antelope Junior High, with specific academic goals focused on reading and science respectively.

- Amended Positive Behavior Plan – Kellie Mudrow presented the revised Positive Behavior Plans for both the junior high and elementary schools. She noted that the only item removed from the junior high plan was Reality Town, as the program is no longer being implemented. The elementary principals collaborated and reached consensus on a unified plan. Additionally, Kellie shared that the administrative team is now engaging in monthly collaborative meetings to support alignment and continuous improvement.

Rene Dreiling made a motion to approve the following:

- **Approve the engagement of Dorsey & Whitney LLP for Borrower’s Counsel services;**
- **Approve the engagement of Gilmore & Bell for Bond Counsel services;**
- **Approve the 2025-2026 School LAND Trust Plan for the South Campus;**
- **Approve the 2025-2026 School LAND Trust Plan for the Antelope Jr. High;**
- **Award the contract for design-build construction services to One West Construction and authorize Mary Johnston to negotiate and sign, on behalf of SAA, the contract with One West Construction for the project up to \$14.5 million; and**
- **Approve the amended Jr. High Positive Behavior Plan and Elementary Positive Behavior Plan.**

Neil Garner seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:

Mary Johnston – Aye

Neil Garner – Aye

Rene Dreiling – Aye

Art Hansen – Aye

Nate Schow – Aye

Motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Calendaring Items – ALL

- Holiday Social on November 6th @ Timbermine. Dawn will be sending out an email for preselected entrees.
- Next Pre-Board Meeting on November 20th
- Next Board Meeting on December 18th
- NCSC26 New Orleans, LA June 24-26 (Wed-Fri)

There was no CLOSED SESSION.

6:48 PM – Neil Garner made a motion to ADJOURN. Art Hansen seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:

Mary Johnston – Aye

Neil Garner – Aye

Rene Dreiling – Aye

Art Hansen – Aye

Nate Schow – Aye

Motion passed unanimously.