

# Syracuse Arts Academy Board of Directors Meeting Minutes Thursday, February 5, 2026

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



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

**Excused:** Nate Schow,

**Others in Attendance:** Kellie Mudrow, Dawn Kawaguchi, Platte Nielson, Brad Taylor, Jon McQueary, Ken Jeppesen,

## SAA Mission Statement

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

## Agenda

### 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

### **5:33 PM – INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

- Welcome & Roll Call – Mary Johnston
  - Board Mission – Art Hansen
  - School Mission – Rene Dreiling

**There was no PUBLIC COMMENT.**

### **REPORTS**

- **Eide Bailly**
  - Present FY25 Financial Audit – Ken Jeppesen reviewed the standard letter regarding government standard, reiterates their independence, and that there were no significant findings. He will be reviewing four opinions today. The first opinion was an unmodified or clean opinion. This report is the financials (numbers). The audit revealed that unrestricted assets increased from \$1.7 million to \$7.8 million. Ken reported that they increased their revenue by \$1.33 million while revenue exceeded expenses by \$1.6 million. He also reviewed the five of the six notes including cash and investments, capital assets, long-term liabilities, concentrations and benefit plan. He mentioned that the Schools original budget and final budget

were followed very close and there wasn't a large variance between the two. Ken moved on to the second audit which tests internal controls over financial report and on compliance and other matters based on Government Auditing Standards which reported strong internal controls. The third audit tests internal controls over compliance as required by the state. This year the following was tested: budgetary compliance, fraud risk assessment, internal control systems and public education programs. This was another unmodified/clean report. The fourth and final audit was the single audit which tested special education and COVID stabilization programs, with no findings reported. Ken thanked AW, School Admin and staff, and the board for their cooperation with the audit. *Ken Jeppesen was excused at 5:46 p.m.*

➤ **Board of Directors**

Update on School Bonding – Brad Taylor reported on updates regarding building finance and bond ratings. He explained that S&P meetings would occur in March to discuss ratings and new bonds, with David, Kellie and Mary needing to prepare presentations and possibly one other board member which will be Neil. Other items going on behind the scenes were discussed. Brad also discussed soil sampling for Phase 1 environmental assessments, which was already underway at some campuses. Mary Johnston informed the board that something came up at the preboard meeting with the replacing the gym flooring and changing rooms so we brought in OneWest in to see if we can take out some classrooms in the annex building to add a gym without changing the bonding cost then we can put some classrooms in the current gym. We will hope that to have more information by March. Brad added that the board needs to review final construction agreements before the S&P meeting in March to ensure bond compliance.

- Financial Update – Jon McQueary presented the new financial summary for the board which will be included in the board packet moving forward with information and then if there are any questions, he can answer those. Jon reviewed financial updates, noting that operating cash was down by \$1.2 million year-over-year due to a transfer to cover school costs, though some funds may be returned with bonds. Current liabilities increased but were explained by new expenses like South Campus lease payments. The P&L report showed total revenue at 49.3% and total expenditures at 49.4%, with property and liability insurance costs significantly higher than budget. Jon explained that supplies and materials spending was 75.7% of the year's budget due to the South Campus opening, and travel costs were over budget due to coding errors that would be fixed in next month's financials. The board agreed to receive financial reports days in advance for better review. *Jon McQueary was excused at 6:26 p.m.*

➤ **Administration**

- State of the School – Kellie Mudrow
  - ✓ Update on Costco Construction – Kellie shared updates on traffic rerouting plans due to a new Costco development, including the discovery of an unexpected median near the school. She explained that construction is scheduled to begin in March or April, with temporary measures in place to ensure student safety, such as a crossing guard and a temporary pickup spot with an asphalt walkway. Kellie also mentioned that the Costco VP

prioritized student safety during the development, and the project's timeline is dependent on weather conditions.

- ✓ Current Enrollment – Kellie reviewed current enrollment and enrollment for next year. Additionally, she noted that enrollment for the lottery is looking positive, with the junior high's incoming class already at 176. The board reviewed enrollment projections, which showed steady growth with approximately 50 new junior high students annually, potentially reaching 600 students in three years.
- ✓ School LAND Trust FY25 Final Reports – The FY25 SLT final reports are included in the packet. Kellie confirmed that the funds were used in accordance with the approved plan. She also reminded the board that these reports apply only to the Antelope and North campuses, as the South campus did not yet exist and the Antelope campus had not yet been divided into elementary and junior high.
- ✓ Celebrations! – Kellie shared several teacher achievements and celebrations, including Amanda Hansen being named one of Utah's most valuable educators (she was recognized at a Jazz Game) and Chelsa King receiving Educator of the Month recognition for Skill Struck. Heidi Stone has been selected to present at the International Gaming Summit. Wendy Long was on ABC news highlighting our students' digital production class with Terry Thoren, CEO of Wonder Media, LLC. Kellie ended her celebrations stating that, "The greatest thing we can ask for is that our teachers are getting recognized for the amazing things that they are doing because that means they are making an impact on students and for our students are getting recognized for the wonderful work that they are doing." There was a brief discussion on the monthly calendar invites for the board members.

## **BOARD TRAINING**

- School LAND Trust Training Assurances – Mary Johnston asked each individual board member if they have completed their SLT training. Every member present at the meeting has completed the training. Dawn texted Nate to see if he had completed the training and he replied back that he did.
- Annual Open and Public Meetings Act Training – Platte Nielson led a training session on the Open and Public Meetings Act, covering key requirements for board meetings including public notice, meeting documentation, and recording protocols. He clarified that while board members' names must be included in meeting minutes, attendees' names are only required for those who make public comments. Platte also explained that electronic board meetings are now permissible without a physical anchor location, though a physical location must be provided if requested by the public within 12 hours of the meeting. The session concluded with a discussion of Zoom meeting protocols, noting that participants must speak audibly during voting to ensure their vote is counted.

## **CONSENT ITEMS**

- December 18, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes – There was no further discussion.

- 2026-2027 Amended School Calendar (Kindergartener Schedule Only) – There was no further discussion. **Neil Garner made a motion to approve the consent items. Art Hansen seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:**
- Mary Johnstson – Aye**
  - Neil Garner – Aye**
  - Rene Dreiling – Aye**
  - Art Hansen – Aye**
- Motion passed unanimously.**

## **VOTING ITEMS**

- Antelope Campus Flooring Replacement – Kellie Mudrow presented the need for flooring replacement for the Antelope elementary entry way and gymnasium due to significant deterioration and safety concerns for students, staff, and visitors. She is requesting a total cost not to exceed \$60k.
- Helpside Professional Employer Agreement – Platte Nielson presented the Helpside professional employer agreement, noting that under Utah procurement code, contract terms are generally limited to five years with few exceptions. He explained that Helpside provides a comprehensive suite of services, including payroll administration, 401(k) management, FMLA administration, unemployment support, and workers' compensation coverage. Platte clarified that the agreement is typically structured as a one-year contract with the option to renew annually for up to four additional years. However, for a school of this size, a formal RFP would be required to extend the contract beyond a single year without annual board approval. The board also discussed the possibility of exploring other providers as the school continues to grow, while noting that Helpside's affiliation with AW's network of schools currently offers a significant cost advantage.
- Amend Student Conduct & Discipline Policy – Platte Nielson presented the amended Student Conduct & Discipline Policy which were triggered by the 2025 legislative session and included rules related to physical restraint and seclusion. Other updates and clarifications have also been added to the policy to increase its compliance with new and existing laws and updates to USBE rules, including those related to due process for student disciplinary actions, reinstatement of students after suspension, reintegration plans, administrative student conduct and discipline plans, corporal punishment, and state reporting requirements for suspensions and expulsions.

**Neil Garner made a motion to approve the following items:**

- Approve the Antelope Campus Flooring Project not to exceed \$60,000;**
- Approve the Professional Employer Agreement with Helpside and authorize the Board President to execute the agreement on behalf of the school; and**
- Approve the Amended Student Conduct & Discipline Policy.**

**Rene Dreiling seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:**

- Mary Johnstson – Aye**
- Neil Garner – Aye**
- Rene Dreiling – Aye**
- Art Hansen – Aye**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### ➤ Calendaring Items – ALL

- Next Pre-Board Meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup>
- Next Board Meeting on March 26<sup>th</sup>
- NCSC26 New Orleans, LA June 24-26 (Wed-Fri) – Art would like to attend the conference this year. Neil stated that due to a conflict with this year's dates, he would like to attend next year.

**7:16 PM – Neil Garner made a motion to enter a CLOSED SESSION to discuss the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual and/or to discuss deployment of security personnel, devices, or systems pursuant to Utah Code 52-4-205(1)(a) & (f) in the North Campus Library. Art Hansen seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:**

**Mary Johnstson – Aye**

**Neil Garner – Aye**

**Rene Dreiling – Aye**

**Art Hansen – Aye**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**7:40 PM – Art Hansen made a motion to exit the CLOSED SESSION and ADJOURN. Rene Dreiling seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:**

**Mary Johnstson – Aye**

**Neil Garner – Aye**

**Rene Dreiling – Aye**

**Art Hansen – Aye**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**Syracuse Arts Academy  
Board of Directors  
Closed Session Statement  
Thursday, February 5, 2026**

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

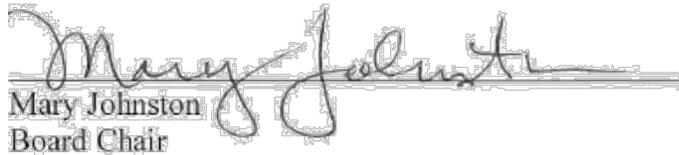


**CLOSED SESSION SWORN STATEMENT:**

*At a duly noticed public meeting held on the date listed above, the board of directors for SYRACUSE ARTS ACADEMY entered into a closed session for the sole purpose of discussing the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual and/or to discuss deployment of security personnel, devices, or systems pursuant to Utah Code 52-4-205(1)(a) & (f)*

I declare under criminal penalty under the law of Utah that the foregoing is true and correct.

Signed on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of Feb, 2026, at Syracuse, Utah.

  
Mary Johnston  
Board Chair