

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of  
The Equity Project (TEP) Charter School Board of Trustees  
October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

The **196<sup>th</sup>** regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of The Equity Project Charter School was held on **October 6<sup>th</sup>** at The Equity Project Charter School's Middle School location **at 153 Sherman Avenue, New York, NY 10034** pursuant to due notice to Trustees via electronic mail sent on 10/1/25. Public notice was posted on TEP's website at [www.tepcharter.org](http://www.tepcharter.org).

**The following Trustees were present:**

Andrew Buher, Sean Juan, Brooks Clark, Jennifer Mulhern  
joined via video conference from the following public locations posted in advance on TEP's website:

630 Park Avenue  
Brielle, NJ 08730

55 Hudson Yards  
New York, NY

600 Third Avenue New York, NY 10016

253 N Mountain Avenue  
NJ 07043

**The following staff members were present:**

Casey Ash, Aaron Villela, Bennett Fins, and Sophia Senhaji

**The following guests were present:**

Shelly Gupta

Meeting called to order at 5:30 pm.

**Meeting Agenda and Notes:**

**1. Welcome, New Trustee!**

Mr. Ash welcomed Ms. Shelly Gupta to her first Board of Trustees meeting. This meeting Shelly attended as a non-voting observer, guest as the school is still awaiting confirmation of Ms. Gupta's documents. MS. Gupta shared her content on returning to TEP as a Board Trustee and looks forward to future meetings.

## **2. Enrollment**

Mr. Villela expressed positive enrollment numbers. The goal is to maintain 1,080 student enrollments throughout the year. Currently, enrollment numbers are slightly below this goal (1,075), but the remaining seats are expected to be filled as soon as possible.

## **3. Afterschool Programming at TEP**

Mr. Ash highlighted TEP's strong afterschool programs, which have currently enrolled approximately 55% of all TEP students. Mr. Ash reiterated the programs are free to families and TEP as they are all at no cost or funded by the city, such as the DYCD Compass program at the elementary school. TEP remains committed to providing these after-school programs for enrichment, academic remediation (tutoring), and as a support to TEP's working families.

## **4. FY25 Budget vs. Actuals**

Mr. Ash shared the FY25 budget vs. actuals with the Board, which showed a positive variance in income and expenses.

After a comprehensive overview of the FY25 budget vs. actuals, Mr. Ash proceeded with a motion for a vote to approve the FY26 budget. All board members voted to approve the FY26 budget.

## **5. School Spotlight: Chef Bennett Fins**

Mr. Bennett Fins, Executive Chef & Director of School Services, shared with the Board the origins of the TEP Café & school food program. Mr. Fins started at TEP in 2019, but the starting point of the TEP Café was June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016, when the construction of the MS building began. Mr. Fins emphasized that when developing the TEP Food Program, the team made sure it aligned with TEP values. This was especially considered in 2020 during COVID, as the team transitioned quickly to a grab and go model of service for the community, serving about 1,000 meals a day. Chef Kathy approached Bennett in 2021 and had an idea to use the same process to provide lunch for all three campuses. The TEP Café team now proudly serves all 1080 students and staff members each day with fresh, healthy meals all year round.

Meeting adjourned at 6:08 pm

Minutes recorded by Jennifer Mulhern