

**NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2025**

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the New Jersey Schools Development Authority (SDA or the Authority) was held on Wednesday, September 3, 2025 at 9:00A.M. in the Joseph A. McNamara Board Room at the offices of the Authority at 32 East Front Street, Trenton, New Jersey.

Participating were:

Robert Nixon, Public Member, Chairman

Stephen Martorana (EDA)

Kevin Luckie (DCA)

David Moore (Treasury)

Bernard Piaia (DOE)

John Capo, Public Member

Lester Lewis-Powder, Public Member

Michael Maloney, Public Member

Mario Vargas, Public Member

Nicole Vecchione, Public Member

being a quorum of the Members of the Board. Mr. Capo, Mr. Lewis-Powder, Mr. Maloney, Mr. Moore, Mr. Piaia. Mr. Vargas and Ms. Vecchione participated by teleconference.

At the Chairman's request, Manuel Da Silva, chief executive officer; Laurette Pitts, vice president and chief financial officer; Janice Venables, vice president and assistant secretary; Ramy Kamel, vice president; and Albert Barnes, chief counsel of the SDA participated in the meeting. Jamera Sirmans of the Governor's Authorities Unit also attended the meeting.

### ***Pledge of Allegiance***

Led by Chairman, the assembled Members stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Nixon, who requested that Ms. Venables read the requisite notice of public meeting. Ms. Venables announced that the meeting notice had been sent to the *Trenton Times* and *Star-Ledger* at least 48 hours prior to the meeting, and was duly posted on the Secretary of State's bulletin board at 225 West State Street in Trenton, New Jersey and on the SDA Website. Ms. Venables then conducted a roll call and indicated that a quorum of the Members of the Board was present.

### ***Approval of Meeting Minutes***

The Chairman presented for consideration and approval the minutes of the Board's August 6, 2025 Open Session meeting. A copy of the meeting minutes and a resolution had been provided to the Members for review in advance of the meeting. Upon motion duly made by Mr. Piaia and seconded by Mr. Luckie, the Open Session minutes of the August 6, 2025 SDA Board meeting were approved with the Members' vote in favor of the resolution attached hereto as ***Resolution 3a.***

Next, Mr. Nixon presented for consideration and approval the minutes of the Board's August 6, 2025 Executive Session meeting. The meeting minutes and a resolution were provided to the Members for review in advance of the meeting. Upon motion duly made by Mr. Piaia and seconded by Mr. Vargas, the Executive Session minutes of the August 6, 2025 SDA Board meeting were approved with the Members' vote in favor of the resolution attached hereto as ***Resolution 3b.***

## *Authority Matters*

### *CEO's Report*

Mr. Nixon asked Mr. Da Silva for the report of the CEO. Mr. Da Silva said that he wanted begin his report with an update of the new school that is being delivered this year, the Union City New Grade 7-9 School, named the New Esther Salas Academy by the District. He reported that the School received a temporary certificate of occupancy recommendations last week excluding the playground, stage and greenhouse. He noted that the excluded areas are on target for completion by September 8. He added that the District initiated move in last week with teachers yesterday and students scheduled for tomorrow. He advised that Union City completed its streetscape improvements around the School yesterday, adding the final welcoming touches. He said that he wanted to thank our colleagues at Department of Community Affairs for their commitment and dedication, as well as our SDA team, Dobco, Inc., Accenture, SDA's union partners as well as the Union City School District. He added that the delivery of the school cannot happen without team work and collaboration. Mr. Da Silva thanked everyone involved.

Next, Mr. Da Silva provided an update on design-build projects in the design phase. He said that footing and foundation work for the new Garfield Elementary School project is underway.

With respect to projects with active early site preparation, Mr. Da Silva reported that proposals for the new West New York Middle School project design-build procurement are due today. He added that the award for the design-build is scheduled to go to the October Board Meeting.

In continuing, Mr. Da Silva gave an update on projects in the procurement stage. He said that for the Bridgeton High School additions and renovations project, the design-build award is

also scheduled to go to the October Board Meeting along with the advancement of the construction manager award. He noted that proposals for both procurements were received late August. For the Elizabeth New Elementary School project, he explained that the design notice-to-proceed (NTP) was issued last month and the kick off meeting was held mid-August. He said that management advertised for the engagement of a construction manager with proposals being due September 16.

In continuing, Mr. Da Silva said that the NTP for the early site preparation for the Pleasantville New Elementary School project was issued on August 12. He advised that the contractor is expected to mobilize today and will initiate abatement of the existing building. He added that management also issued the design-build advertisement last month with proposals being due late October. For the Trenton New Elementary School project, he reported that the design-build award is on today's agenda for consideration by the Members.

Mr. Da Silva said that as reported, there are 6 new active projects thus far. He advised that management expects to advertise 3 more projects consisting of high schools in Passaic, Newark and Camden. He added that the design studio, procurement, Gregory Voronov, Ronald Carper and the planning department are working very hard and it shows in the amount of SDA projects out there.

Turning to Authority events, outreach and other activities, Mr. Da Silva informed the Members that on August 26, the SDA held a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the construction of the new Woodrow Wilson School No. 5 in Garfield. He said that management was joined by Senator Wimberly, Assemblyman Abdelaziz, Superintendent Tomko, school district and city officials. He added that the highlight of the event was 8 young students who helped turnover the soil. He noted that they are the reason we do what we do and it was great to have them there.

Next, Mr. Da Silva said that the SDA is actively working to schedule an event in West New York for the early site preparation project.

Lastly, Mr. Da Silva advised that the SDA is also working with the Union City school district as they prepare for the ribbon cutting ceremony scheduled for September 15. He added that once the SDA receives the official invitation, management will notify the Members with the specific details.

### ***Chairman's Report***

#### **Appointment of an Assistant Treasurer to the Board**

Mr. Nixon then provided the Chairman's report. He explained that, as the Members know, they elect the SDA's Board Officers each January at its Annual Organizational Meeting. He noted that former vice resident (VP) and chief financial officer (CFO), Donald Guarriello, had served as the Board's Assistant Treasurer since 2008 and retired from the SDA effective June 1, 2025. He said that Ms. Laurette Pitts was approved by the Members to serve as the SDA's VP and CFO at its May 2025 Board Meeting. Mr. Nixon said that before the Members today is a recommendation to appoint Laurette Pitts to serve as the Assistant Treasurer to the Board.

A resolution pertaining to this matter had been provided to the Board in advance of the meeting. Upon motion duly made by Mr. Vargas and seconded by Mr. Luckie, the appointment of vice president and chief financial officer Laurette Pitts to serve as the Authority's Assistant Treasurer to the Board was approved with the Board's unanimous vote in favor of ***Resolution 4bi.***

## *Audit Committee*

Mr. Nixon, as Audit Committee Chairman, advised that the Audit Committee met on August 18, 2025, at which time management provided the Committee with the July 2025 New Funding Allocation and Capital Plan Update. He reported a \$5.2 million increase in commitments in the Planning Reserve balance during the reporting period due to Board approval of the final project charter for the Elizabeth New Elementary School—Battin Replacement project. He then reported that commitments decreased in the Reserve Balance for the Regular Operating Districts (RODs) by \$2.4 million during the reporting period due a reduction in state share for grant projects nearing completion.

Mr. Nixon then provide the July 2025 Monthly Financial Report advising that the Authority’s operating expenses (Actual vs. Budget) for the year-to-date period totaled \$8.3 million, down \$1.6 million as compared to the budget for the corresponding period. He explained that this decrease is mainly attributable to lower than projected personnel costs. He said that the decrease is partially offset due to a reduced payroll expense allocation to project expenditures, professional and other contracted services, information systems, facilities and general office expenses and SDA-owned automobiles. He advised that the current full time equivalents (FTEs) headcount is 124 as of July 31, 2025 reflecting an 11 FTEs decrease compared to year-to-date staffing levels. Next, Mr. Nixon reported that school facilities project expenditures (Actual vs. Forecast) for the year-to-date period totaling \$111.8 million are \$31.9 million below the projected capital spending forecast. He said that this variance is due to a decreased spending in grant agreements, property acquisition, construction work, project insurance, and school furniture, fixtures and equipment. He advised that these reductions were partially offset by a modest increase in design services spending. He then reported that project expenditures (Actual vs. Prior Year Actual), at \$111.8 million, are \$67.7 million lower when

compared to the capital spending forecast for the corresponding prior year period. He advised that this variance is the result of decreases in expenditures for property acquisitions, grant agreements, construction work, and school furniture, fixtures and equipment. He noted that the decreases were partially offset by an increase in project insurance costs and design services. Mr. Nixon then advised that, since program inception, 82.7% of the funds authorized for the SDA districts have been disbursed. Additionally, he noted that 96% of all SDA disbursements relate to school facilities projects, while 4% relate to operating expenses. He advised that the estimated value of active school facilities, capital, emergent and ROD grant projects, is approximately \$1.2 billion.

Mr. Nixon then reported that, in compliance with the amended SDA By-laws and Audit Committee Charter, the CEO reported to the Committee regarding Authority personnel matters in his quarterly staffing report.

Next, Mr. Nixon advised the Members that management presented the Committee with one matter requiring Board action. He said that for consideration today is management's recommendation for approval of Legal Services Contract Awards (Services, the Awards). Referencing a memorandum that was distributed to the Members in advance of the meeting, Mr. Nixon noted that in 2023, the SDA entered into 2-year legal services contracts to complement legal support to the SDA through its Division of Chief Counsel and by the Department of Law in the Office of the Attorney General. He said that the current Contracts will expire in December 2025. He advised that a competitive procurement process was followed in accordance with SDA regulations for a new group of law firms with legal expertise in 6 areas: 1) environmental law; 2) government contracting, bid protests and procurement; 3) employment law; 4) professional errors and omissions and cost recovery; 5) construction litigation; and 6) real estate law. He said that work assignments will be made by way of "task order". He explained that any law firm

selected to provide legal services to the SDA will be required to submit a proposed budget for any task order assignment. He said that prior to execution, the contracts with the selected law firms and related documentation will be reviewed and approved by the SDA Division of Chief Counsel. He advised that management and the Audit Committee is recommending that the Board approve 2-year contract awards to 11 firms to provide legal services for a blended hourly rate of \$285 and an hourly rate of \$125 for paralegals for the two-year term. He noted that 9 of the 11 proposed firms are included in exiting Authority contracts. He added that no one firm can be compensated in excess of \$2,100,000 over the term of the engagement, regardless of whether it provides services in one or more of the specialty areas. Mr. Nixon requested the Members of the Authority approve the proposed award of contracts for legal Services as presented. He noted that the proposed law firms are well known, highly regarded and respected firms throughout the State.

A resolution pertaining to the Legal Services Contract Awards was provided to the Board in advance of the meeting. Upon motion duly made by Mr. Vargas, and seconded by Mr. Piaia the Board approved the proposed contract awards for legal services for a 2-year term with its unanimous vote in favor of ***Resolution 5a.***

### ***School Review Committee***

Next, Mr. Luckie reported that the School Review Committee met on August 18, 2025 at which time one action item was discussed. He said that management is seeking Board approval of a Design-Build award and Final Project Charter for the Trenton New Elementary School project (School or Project). He advised that the Project will consist of the construction of an approximately 124,000 square foot facility to educate 837 students in grades Kindergarten through Six. He said that on July 5, 2023, the Members approved the preliminary project charter, thereby approving the demolition of the old school and construction of a new elementary school



facility and related site development work utilizing in-house design and a design-build delivery method. He explained that a package for design-build services was advertised beginning May 6, 2025 with “price” weighted as 60% of the overall weight and “all non-price factors” having a combined weight of 40%. He said that upon completion of the competitive procurement process, the construction operations directors and the financial operations director recommend award of the contract to the highest ranked bidder, Ernest Bock & Sons, Inc., in the amount of \$69,973,000, inclusive of SDA-established allowances totaling \$2,625,000. He noted that along with the contract award, SDA executive management recommends that the Members approve the Final Project Charter as presented to the Board on this date and representing all expended and projected funds necessary for completion of the Project. He reported that the background of the Project, a detailed description of the procurement process followed and the specifics of the final charter recommended for approval are set forth in detail in the memorandum presented to the Board on this date and incorporated herein. He said that prior to execution of the contract, the contract and related documentation will be reviewed and approved by the SDA Division of Chief Counsel.

A resolution pertaining to this matter was provided to the Board in advance of the meeting. Upon motion duly made by Mr. Piaia and seconded by Mr. Vargas, the Board approved an award for Design-Build and Final Project Charter for the Trenton New School project with its unanimous vote in favor of ***Resolution 6a.***

### ***Public Comments***

At this time Mr. Nixon announced that the public comments portion of the Meeting will commence consistent with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act. The Chairman opened the Public Comments portion of the meeting. Mr. Nixon recognized Nikki Baker from New Jersey Healthy Schools Now (HSN). Ms. Baker greeted in the new school year noting that she has been

the organizer/coalition coordinator for HSN for three years and proud to be speaking to the Members. She said that she was happy to hear about all the work that is ongoing noting that the students, staff and entire communities appreciate the work of the SDA. She recognized unprecedented challenges that exist today. Ms. Baker said that there is renewed optimism on the part of HSN and voiced her gratitude that the SDA continues its good works with enthusiasm for all communities. Mr. Nixon thanked Ms. Baker for her support of SDA staff and the Authority.

### ***Adjournment***

There being no further business to come before the Board, upon motion by Chairman Nixon and with unanimous consent, the meeting was adjourned.

**Certification:** The foregoing represents a true and complete summary of the actions taken by the Board of the New Jersey Schools Development Authority at its September 3, 2025 meeting.

/s/ Janice Venables  
Assistant Secretary