

**B. W. Harris School Alumni Association,Inc.-USA**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention**  
**General Meeting**  
**Silver Spring, Maryland**  
**Saturday, July 4, 2015**

**Meeting Called To Order:** The General meeting was called to order at 11:08am by National Chair Gudrun Harris.

**Agenda:** It was moved by J. Yuku Stewart that the agenda presented be accepted as outlined, which was seconded by J. Saba Kla Williams. The Agenda was accepted by majority vote.

**Opening Prayer:** In the absence of the National Chaplin, Lafayette Willis, the opening prayer was offered by Wanda Bropleh.

**Minutes of 2014 Convention in North Carolina:**

The Minutes were read in silence, reviewed and corrections made.

**Questions/Concerns/Corrections:**

Georgina Roy Akins-Scott asked what “satisfactory GPA” means on page 4 of the minutes? Angeline Bishop-Oshoko clarified that “Satisfactory GPA” is “B” average which is 80% and above.

Comfort Kenneh asked if National Chair Emerita Wilhelmina Wilson had made a motion during the General Meeting in North Carolina (2014) for an audit to be conducted of the National Association. National Chair Gudrun Harris stated that the minutes should reflect that the former National Chair had presented a sealed envelope to her, which later was discovered to have a request for the Association to be audited by an external auditor, but had not understood her to be making a motion during the meeting. National Chair Emeritus Handel K. C. Diggs and Legal Counsel Mohamedu F. Jones confirmed that the former National Chair had made a motion, but it had not been seconded, and accordingly was not taken up for consideration by the General Meeting.

Without additional comments and corrections, J. Saba Kla-Williams moved that the minutes with all necessary corrections be accepted. The motion was seconded by Cyril Jones. The motion was carried and the Minutes were accepted.

### **Convention Committee Report**

National Financial Secretary Albertha Gillespie reported that DC Metro Chapter was the first chapter to present its At-A-Glance at the Convention the year before it was scheduled to host Convention. She also reported that DC Metro had the largest number of pre-registrants at the Convention.

**Membership Committee Report** \_David Moore, Chair, Membership Committee stated that a Report would not be presented at the General Meeting, but would be sent out to Chapter presidents to discuss at future chapter meetings. He thanked National Chair Emeritus Handel K. C. Diggs and soon to be National Chair Emerita Gudrun Harris for having had faith in him to chair the Membership Committee for the several yearsyears. The Membership Committee Chair reported that all chapters continue to have the same issue: Members do not attend chapter meetings and advised the next Membership Committee chair to be a people person and to love people.

**Registration Report** Albertha Gillespie, National Financial Secretary\_reported that there were a total of 169 pre-registrants for the 2015 Convention.

**Chapter Ranking:** Metro had 59 pre-registrants, taking first place. Tri-State was second with 41 pre-registrants, and taking third place was PennDel with 19 pre-registrants.

**Class Ranking:** Class of 1980 with 23 pre-registrants was first; Class of 1978 ranked second place with 20 pre-registrants; Class of 1982 was third place with 12 pre-registrants; and Class of 1987 ranked fourth with 6 pre-registrants. A total of 26 honorary members pre-registered for the Convention.

### **National Chair Report**

National Chair reported that she knows she is loved by the majority of members and no one can tell her any different. The National Chair stated that she also knows as she attends other events that BWHESAA-USA, Inc. is the best and number one Liberian Alumni Association in the USA. She thanked all of the National Officers from the bottom of her heart for their support and cooperation during ther two terms in office. The National Chair continued by highlighting some of the accomplishments made by her administration including:

- An increase in the number of scholarships awarded each fiscal year.
- The highest amount of money raised in the history of the Association.
- Revamping computer lap with modern chairs and tables including a conference table.
- Recently sent 20 computers of which 13 were donated by DC Metro Chapter.
- The Association revamped the Science lab.
- DC Metro Chapter spent approximately \$6,000.00 to provide new reading books for the library.

- Tri-State had funded Kindergarten and Clinic projects.

The National Chair reported that she had implemented a policy that all items shipped and supplied to the school be stamped with insignia of the Association.

National Chair Harris informed the meeting that during her visit to the school she had work productively with Principal Lurleen King Fallah. She stated that while at the school, she was dissatisfied with teacher' attendance; she said they have poor attendance and arrived late for classes and for work. She noted that this is a country-wide issue. Upon her return from, she had consulted with the National officers to change the teacher's incentive program to be based on performance, which was done.

The National Chair stated that Ebenezer Sowah had contacted her and suggested that the Association provide rice to the teachers in face of the Ebola crises; the National officers agreed and recommended that along with the rice an additional \$75 per teacher should be provided to assist the teachers.

National Chair Harris indicated that because she had created an Ebola Task Force in the Association, this action had led to her being asked to participate in a Liberia organization wide consortium.

The National Chair reminded members that the Association provides \$2500 annually to assist the school with building infrastructure improvement including painting replacing lights doors etc. While in Liberia, she reported that she had personally paid for fans for all classrooms in the school.

She reported that she had commissioned updates and improvements of the Association's website. She stated that she because of the improvement; there is an increase in visitors to the site and consequently donors. She asked that members visit the website more often and not only when Convention is approaching. As members talk to people outside the Association, we can share the wealth of information on the website to increase participation and possible donors, she noted.

National Chair Harris commended Texas chapter for donating funds for headphone which is used to help teach the children to read as part of the reading program at the school.

She informed members that there was a significant increase in convention pre-registration during the Harris administration, surpassing the Diggs administration, which had the prior

record. She observed that she continues to say everywhere she goes that she built her administration on the successes of the Diggs administration and that her successor should build theirs on hers and surpass her by every measure.

The National Chair stated that a total of \$137,67.00 was spent on projects and programs during her administration, covering all grades and divisions of the school. This represented the largest four year investment in the school in the Association's history.

The outgoing National Chair thanked the National Officers and members for a job well done during the four years and reaffirmed her lifelong commitment to B. W. Harris.

In response to a question about what is being done about the teachers being late for work, Cyril Jones responded that this is a Liberian national/country issue. He stated that several teachers had sued B. W. Harris because they were not paid during the Ebola crisis. The school had to hire lawyers. He stated that there is a serious labor problem in education in Liberia since the Ebola crisis and more teachers are gravitating to the public school sector because they pay more

In response to the observation that government Ministries are transporting their staff to work and if the Association could provide transportation for teachers to go to work, Cyril Jones suggested that it should be a total package that takes a holistic approach to solving the multiple problems.

DC Metro Executive Board Representative Saba Kla-Williams stated that based on the information presented at the Executive Board meeting about the various issues facing the school, he recommends we set up a mechanism to examine what is going on in order to improve the situation.

In the course of discussion by members it was offered that since the public schools pay more, the Association needed to look seriously into increasing the salary of the teachers and providing other incentives to increase performance. It was also reported that it is not only at B. W. Harris, but many students give money and clothing to teachers for grades. There should be a commitment to finding quality people and look for ways to keep them and make education a priority. Famatta Samuel Lincoln stated that if needed, she can buy her own ticket and go to Liberia to train teachers at B. W. Harris.

Legal Counsel Mohamedu Jones reminded members that B. W. Harris and the Association cannot compete with the government of Liberia in terms of pay. In addition, the Association does not have any control over the day-to-day operations of the school and its place has always been to support, encourage and supplement the school, not to try and run it.

National Chair Gudrun Harris asked if it was true that the school is trying to bring in new teachers? Cyril Jones in addressing this question and the multiple points that members raised indicated that the Jones and Jones Law Firm has donated the equivalent of two full time lawyers to B. W. Harris to address the various labor disputes. He said that the school has teachers who are not qualified to continue teaching and when the school tried to get rid of them they sued the school. The school is also confronted with challenges with the Board of Trustees. He pointed out that B. W. Harris is owned by Trinity Cathedral and we do not have any control over it and are sometimes confronted with resistance and proposals are denied. He stated that Alumnus Charles Allen is one of the Association's strongest supporters on the Board. He suggested that we should also continue to work with the Dean of Trinity Cathedral and bring our concerns directly to the Bishop and try to get more people who have more interest in the school on the Board. He emphasized that we need to work with Bishop Hart if we are to get anything done.

The National Chair provided background the situation regarding the Association's representative to the Board of Trustees, which is historical. She indicated that Bishop Hart has taken the position that he can no longer accept Adolf Sackey as the Association's board representative because there are already two alumni currently on the board.

She stated that since we are an independent organization based in the United States, she had written a letter to Bishop Hart asking him to kindly designate which of the two alumni to represent us. Bishop Hart has completely ignored the Association's request. David Moore stated that all of his efforts to bring the Bishop to respond to the Association have been unfruitful. The National Chair observed that once while she was at a dinner with the Bishop he had commented that his interest is not in B. W. Harris School, but in Cuttington and the church.

Dora Enst inquired if there was a way to go around the Bishop and if the Association could go to the Diocese as a group and request a meeting to put something together to address the issues with Bishop, indicating the Association should go to whomever the Bishop reports to. In response, Legal Counsel Mohamedu Jones reminded members that most of what the Association wants to get done at the school always gets done. He concluded by pointing out that the Bishop of the Episcopal Church is the leader of the church; no one is above the Bishop and he is only accountable to God.

National Chair Harris indicated that the Association should continue doing what we do for the children. She stated that she was very grateful for Charles Allen when she was in Liberia for his cooperation and assistance. She informed the Convention that the Principal of the school is

currently suspended by the Board of Trustees for a month to return to work on August 8, 2016 as a result of what is apparently a personal disagreement between her and the Board. It is understood that she suspended a staff for a week and the Board of Trustees in turn suspended her for a month.

### **Scholarship Committee Report**

The Co-Chair of the Scholarship Committee, Owen Neal, indicated that the Committee would not be presenting a report today for this this year. He stated a report will be sent to the Secretary to update the previous year's records. This year's report will later be emailed to the chapter's presidents

National Chair Harris stated that due to Ebola, some of the children will not be able to graduate in time and we may not have 10 graders to provide scholarships to. She reported that those students who are required to take WAEC to go to the next class could be kept back a year because of the Ebola crisis.

Charles Hoffman presented a letter he received from former Dean Dennie Diaska at Western Michigan University indicating that she will be making a donation to the school and proposed a collaboration of B. W. Harris School and Western Michigan University in the field of engineering. Dean Diaska indicated that in the future she will ensure entry/admission to the school for qualified B. W. Harris graduates. He stated that the amount of the donation will be announced tonight.

Ebenezer Sowah reported that he was working on the possibility of Brown University offering an online internet based course with staff from Brown volunteering their time to teach courses via the internet to B. W. Harris students.

In response to the Brown University potential project and members' inquiries, Cyril Jones stated that there is not electricity all the time to do such a project; observing that to start such a project now will not be effective because they cannot guarantee that electricity will be available. In 2017 Liberia is expected to have affordable electricity. The cost of operating a generator or using solar energy is very costly, noting that solar panels from China are not very good. Members also commented on the difficulty on protecting solar panels from theft.

National Chair Gudrun Harris remarked that she hoped that the Capital Campaign Committee will begin to grow since we know that there is a cost to get solar panels and could possibly fund it in the future.

The National Chair informed members that she had contacted St. Augustine University and reminded them of our relationship with them in the past and to see if we can reestablish a relationship. St Augustine responded and is interested; she will pass the information to the next Chair to follow-up on.

Break for Lunch at 1:26pm for 15 minutes return for a working lunch.

### **Capital Campaign Report**

The Chair of the Capital Campaign Mohamedu F. Jones reminded members that when you register for Convention it covers the hall, food etc., but does not cover the cost of supporting projects and programs in the school. The reason for the Capital Campaign is to have an impact at the school. The Chair suggested that members should not be concerned or embarrassed by what other people give; adding that members should give what you can give and it will be appreciated. He pointed out that the Capital Campaign is the core of what we do for the school. He noted that are unique ways to contribute to the Capital Campaign including “lay away” and payroll direct deduction as Daffeh Hansford did.

The Capital Campaign previously made presentations to Ophelia Acolatse, David Moore, Gudrun Harris, Daffeh Hansford, Handel KC Diggs and now Angeline Bishop-Oshoko as having contributed to every fund of the Capital Campaign. A Certificate was presented to Angeline Bishop-Oshoko as an acknowledgement of her generosity.

It was observed that Nee Allison was the first to pay her \$500.00 for her Hall of fame.

The Chair of the Capital Campaign Committee also observed that in order to help grow the Endowment fund it was established years ago that any money in the budget not used as designated will be put into the Endowment Fund.

During the meeting the following members contributed to the Wall of Memory:

Mary Gabbidon memorialized her father Edwin J, Gabbidon, Sr.

Wariebi Family memorialized Ingutu Wariebi

Jerudo and Charles Martin \$150 memorialized Konkai Harris

J Yuku Stewart memorialized Meyatta Clark Browne

Sarah Maximore memorialized her brother James Maximore

Kim Dunbar Dunzo memorialized her sister Even Dunbar

### **Budget Report**

National Treasurer Meyartha Perry presented the Annual Budget which is appended to and form part of the Minutes.

The National Treasurer reported that restricted funds are not included in the income and expenditure budget. The restricted funds are over \$60,000.00. She encouraged members to invest in the Building Infrastructure Fund. She observed that the expenditure on teacher incentives have gone down over the years since it became performance based. The National Treasurer noted that in this budget, the Association's board representative in Liberia Stipend has been increased from \$300 to \$500.

The outgoing National Chair remarked that her administration was project-centric oriented and that the projects benefit every student at the school. She encourage that members consider donating to the various projects.

### **Expenses:**

In response to an inquiry regarding how the Association's representative on the school's Board of Trustees was selected, National Chair Harris indicated that the National Chair proposed a name to the Association's Executive Board and if approved, submits that name to the Bishop.

In response to an inquiry regarding the ongoing role of Adolf Sackey since the Bishop had refrained from appointing him as the Association's representative to the Board of Trustees, the National Chair stated that Adolf is our representative in Liberia. He calls meetings with scholarship students and parents, he picks up and does inventory of shipments from the Association. Until the Bishop approves him or someone else, Adolf Sackey will continue to seek our interest as representative.

Responding to an observation that the website subscription fee can be reduced to about \$150.00, the National Chair indicated that this recommendation has been brought forward before and no action has been taken.

Following the presentation of the National Treasurer, Mona Diggs moved that the budget be accepted with all necessary corrections, which was seconded by Eva Diggs. The motion carried on the majority vote of the Convention.

## **Elections**

The Chair of the Nominations and Elections Commission Mohamedu Jones informed the Convention that all the candidates for National Offices in this election were unopposed.

On inquiry by National Secretary Nee Allison regarding payment of Chapter dues by members not affiliated with a Chapter, the Chair of the Nominations and Elections Commission indicated that such members could pay to the National Association. He verified that all candidates met the requirements of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association:

Joanna Hawah Freeman Richards, National Chair

Angeline Bishop-Oshoko, First National Vice Chair for Programs

David G. Moore, Second National Vice Chair for Membership and Public Relations

Charles Coleman, National Secretary

Albertha Gillespie, National Treasurer

Meyartha Coleman Perry, National Financial Secretary

Wanda Gibson Bropleh, National Chaplain

Cyril Jones moved that the candidate being unopposed be elected by acclamation or white ballot, which motion was seconded by J. Saba Kla Williams. The motion was carried by majority vote.

A symbolic written ballot was cast for the National Officers, who were all elected and presented to the Convention.

## **Convention 2016 Presentation**

Tri-State's Rillete Hammond led its 2016 Convention presentation, which will be held in New Jersey. She pointed out that all locations are within 5 miles of each other. Friday was "Spartans got Talent" and Sunday is the "Denim and White Night."

## **Future Conventions:**

At their requests, Texas Chapter and Rhode Island Chapter were approved by the Convention to host the 2017 and 2018 conventions respectively.

## **New Business:**

Class of 1988 is hosting a fundraiser starting at 3:30pm at Charles Blamo Norbeck Muncastle Mill Park to raise funds.

Class of 1980 "Malamu" stated that it invited the Association and sold tickets to the Association, family and friends for its 35<sup>th</sup> reunion held on Thursday July 2, 2015, and were embarrassed and dissatisfied. The Class wanted to apologize to those who bought ticket. They asked that a report should be inserted that Class of 80 contributed to the Convention 2015.

Mohamedu Jones on behalf of President Mona Diggs and Metro Chapter extended an apology to the Class of 1980 and observed that anything that embarrassed them also embarrassed Metro as the host chapter.

Charles Martin expressed his concern about the medical situation in Liberia. Most schools in Liberia have had good medical personnel. He is asking consider a strong and viable clinic in our school and is willing to serve as chairman if needed.

**Announcements from Metro:**

Church starts at 10am and additional parking is available at the shopping center lot across the street. Members should sit upfront on the right which will be reserved, and asked members to please be on time.

The Red Carpet for tonight will start at 7pm and end at 8pm; please be on time.

The music will go off at 2am and the hall must be vacated within 15 minutes. There will be no hanging outside and no talking outside after the event

Wanda Bropleh, Chaplain-elect offered closing prayer at 3:06pm

**Attendees:**