

**Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School
Board of Trustees Meeting
APPROVED Minutes
Thursday, September 7, 7:30pm
BFCCPS Library**

Attendance: Trustees President John Neas, Vice President Laureen Pfizenmaier, Treasurer Mark Kripp, Clerk Richard Frongillo, Faculty Representative Joe Perna, Colleen Brown, Lori Clements, Anna dos Santos, Charles Mayo, Michele Pearl, Scott Stavely, Cathy Tomaso; HOS Dr. Kevin O'Malley

Absent: Jack McCarthy (meeting conflict); Consultant Dr. Jerry Marcus (out of state)

Call to Order (7:30)

John welcomed Trustees, staff, and parents

Recognition of the Month (7:35)

John introduced Kevin who introduced teacher Ed Callahan. Ed introduced eighth grade student Nick Hurst who spoke confidently about the merits of introducing a golf team at BFCCPS. Ed described the golf program and asked for the support of the Board for it and the continuation of the basketball program which was introduced last year. So far, 17 boys and girls in grades 6-8 have signed up for the program. Financial support is available in the budget without amendment.

MOTION: by Laureen/Anna to support the school's athletic initiatives in golf and basketball.

RESULT: Pass

Clerk's Report (7:42)

MOTION: by Rich/Anna to approve minutes of 8/10 Trustee meeting.

RESULT: Pass (3 abstentions)

Finance Committee Report (7:43)

Committee meeting minutes are posted separately. Mark reviewed the highlights. He has requested the school delay payment to auditors until open issues are resolved. The audit was conducted in July but the auditors did not consult with the Finance Committee or Treasurer prior to conducting audit as is normal practice. Response from the auditors is expected.

MOTION: To approve Treasurer's report.

RESULT: Pass

Review Outstanding Action Item Register (7:50)

Laureen reviewed several items. An updated register is contained in a separate document.

Comments by Dr. Marc Kenen

Dr. Kenen is the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association. He spoke about "best practices" in conducting charter school business. His mantra: Charter Schools are **public** entities Everything is public except a few, specific exceptions; even performance of an employee is public. He observed that the worst thing charter school leadership could do is to attempt to keep something secret. It is best to "overly communicate" to school constituencies and to do so *before* decisions are made. Dr. Kenen highlighted the need to have a clear process that differentiates between "input" (received from many) and "decision making" (the charge of the leadership). Making decisions may take longer when more input is requested and processed, but it is best to avoid conflict later on. Comments and observations in response to several questions:

- Good idea to keep private e-mails concerning BFCCPS business.
- Suggests consultation with attorney about Documentation Retention Plans.

- Referred to DOE document regarding difference between standing committee and task force
- Highlights need for confidentiality when discussing private information.
- Suggests several ways to help stakeholders feel/be involved: staff advisory board, parent advisory board, e-mail channel to Trustees, comment box; sit and listen
- Notes that outward communication approaches may be customized for staff versus parents; suggests using many avenues to communicate.
- Having a faculty representative is okay on Board as long as rep excuses himself from decisions that effect him.
- Rules stipulate what warrants a quorum to hold a meeting (e.g. 7 trustees). Once that burden is met, then majority of those present can approve business.

Open Comment (8:30)

John distributes and reads handout on “meeting rules” for the Open Comment period which have been discussed for the past few months. The handout is posted in the meeting room.

Ed Duggan offers a number of comments:

- Related to previous discussion about requiring two signatures for amounts greater than \$5000, he suggests having that printed right on the check to avoid confusion.
- Referencing John’s meeting rules, he observes there is little opportunity for public to provide comment on items if the decision is going to be made on *that night*. His concern is that issues will arise, Trustees will be prepared to vote, public comment is not to be discussed that night (by rule), and public comment, therefore, may not be properly considered.
- Would like to know when documentation of executive sessions becomes public. Also, how does one get to that “public information” when it does become available. He will contact Dr. Kenen directly.

Head of School Report (8:35)

Kevin reports a “good, strong opening”. BFCCPS is a “first rate school” with a “positive atmosphere” All indications are that BFCCPS is a “very effective school.” Kevin applauds Deb Schwab (“a great asset”) for her tireless efforts in managing enrollment as she addressed several issues in the last thirty days.

Related to the question of a Leave of Absence policy, Kevin spoke with DOE’s Mary Street who indicated that such a policy is not appropriate. A student is either in or out. Trustees will action the repeal of its policy based on this information.

Kevin notes DOE communique which proposes: to move threshold of “proficient” to 240 (from 220). MCAS are based on 200-280 scale for reporting performance. He suggests Trustees may want to consider this matter. Testing discussed.

Related to curriculum, Kevin reports positive movement in programs about “what children learn”. He highlights new alliances of grades for reading, math, and science between Kindergarten and 5th grade, 2nd and 4th grade. He applauds the teachers who have led this initiative. Also, a history curriculum was proposed, adjustments to science are being formulated; Kevin will present these ideas to Trustees in upcoming meetings. In general, he is looking at the question of more “rigor” without tipping the balance to “overload.”

Mark urges that we look at how we prepare students as they move on to schools like Franklin High School, citing anecdotal evidence. Deb Schwab observes that alumni surveys have been conducted regularly, results have been positive, and results have been getting *more* positive.

Kevin is pleased to see “lots of good faculty doing lots of good things.” Initiatives for Student Council and school store are being considered. Two strong teachers were added this month.

The publication of a job opening for a part-time, developmental professional to work on public relations and fundraising has been made as of 9/10; Kevin will be looking for support in interviewing (Board, faculty, Foundation, PR, PCO)

HR Consultant Tom Johnson will help with evaluation process development; surveys have been distributed; no evaluations will be done without evaluation system, but when system is in place it will be used from top to bottom; Tom's time frame is four to six weeks.

Comments from the Chair (9:08)

John thanks Trustees for their confidence in selecting him as President. He wanted to publicly acknowledge that he felt Laureen would have been a terrific President; he is very pleased that she is involved as Vice President. John has gavel to be used rarely at meetings other than to open meeting. He has pointed to John McCarthy as the Board's parliamentarian. Open Comment will continue. John expects to move quickly through agenda items out of respect for all present.

John expresses his confidence that we have a formula for success at our school.

Communication Discussion (9:10)

John's goal is that all Trustees will know as much as any one trustee knows. He has added a mid-month report to provide information. He has scheduled a standing meeting with Kevin on the first Tuesday of each month at 8am beginning on 10/3; all are welcome.

John requests that Kevin and Jerry be copied on all e-mails among Trustees. He discussed ongoing issues with school e-mail system which will be addressed promptly. He requests that all media inquiries get directed to Kevin for the time being. Colleen observes that we need a Media Notification Policy.

MOTION: Mark/Anna to appoint Dr. Kevin O'Malley as the official spokesperson for the school pending creation of a Media Notification Plan.

RESULT: Pass

John suggests that chairpersons meet at regular times. He has respectfully recommended that Kevin NOT attend every meeting so as to take care from burning out. All appreciate Kevin's enthusiasm and willingness to get involved as much as he can.

To be actioned in October, Laureen will establish a "posting notice protocol" that will lead to open communication. A list of recipients will be created to ease the posting process and help ensure timely publication of notices to the website, e-mail, pink sheet (parents), and blue sheet (staff).

Laureen offered a draft of a communication to be distributed at the Curriculum Nights. Chuck comments that "instilling a commitment to the four pillars" may be out of place. Mark suggests mentioning "Launch of the Mission Committee", chairpersons be noted, and the addition of a stronger statement about getting involved through committees. With the noted modifications, the Trustees agreed with the content of the document. John and Laureen will work to finalize the document in time for the first night, 9/14.

Committee Reports (9:51)

Facility

A meeting of the Trustees and Foundation was held on 9/5. An action register will be created. Alternate building styles were discussed, as was site testing. John will contact owner of strip of land about land transfer, will ask Town Administrator to call broker, will ask attorney about impact of location being next to Cole's Tavern.

Faculty Representative, nothing to report

Governance

Draft complete of Code of Conduct for Parents, Guardians, and Volunteers; another meeting will be scheduled. Drafting policy on Committee formation; Drafting grievance policy for parents, on hold as more information will be gathered.

Mark asks of Governance Committee about handling potential conflicts of interest with committee and subcommittee membership. Is this being discussed? Yes, as part of the Committee Formulation policy

Human Resources

Lori met with Kevin and with former Chairperson about outstanding issues

Mission

Chuck indicates that the committee is looking for direction from the Board. He notes an idea about integrating logic and critical thinking into the curriculum which will be further discussed. He is interested in making polished documentation consistent.

MOTION: To suspend rule to allow business to be continued past 10pm.

RESULT: Pass

Mark observes that curriculum changes must be presented to the Board.

A suggestion was made to table discussion to October. Rich states that he would hate to see time slip away without progress on Mission-related activities. Is there work to be done in the meanwhile. Jennifer Moccia (chair of Mission Committee Community Service Task Force) is also concerned about losing time. She asks, are all community service projects to come before the Board?

Answer: No, just curriculum-changing initiatives. Research on policy-related changes is okay to address in September, and encouraged.

Nominating, nothing to report

Organizational Task Force

Anna reports that interviews with staff have occurred, and much more. The group is gathering information and will produce a document. The survey deadline has been extended to 9/8 due to technical difficulties for staff. So far, 24 employee responses (about 50%) and more than 100 parent responses. Full reports of minutes are posted on web site.

Public Relations

Scott has reviewed Strategic Plan and has had numerous conversations with former trustees to get clarification on document. He is open to participation by other Board members. He has communicated with PCO about their events. He is interested in establishing consistent practices related to media access, starting with the 9/22 event with Chris Poulos.

Technology

Rich states that an initial meeting will be held on 9/8 and that more members will be sought.

Adjournment (10/28)

Next meeting 10/12/2006