

**Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School
Board of Trustees Meeting
DRAFT Minutes
Thursday, February 8, 7:30pm
BFCCPS Library**

Attendance: Trustees President John Neas, Vice President Lauren Pfizenmaier, Treasurer Mark Kripp (8:09), Clerk Richard Frongillo, Faculty Representative Joe Perna, Colleen Brown, Lori Clements, Anna dos Santos, Chuck Mayo, Michele Pearl, Cathy Tomaso; HOS Dr. Kevin O'Malley; Consultant Dr. Jerry Marcus

Absent: Jack McCarthy (meeting conflict)

Call to order, Introductions (7:36)

John shares several comments: (1) four Trustees played in the 2/1 Student/Faculty basketball game and had great fun; (2) at least three Trustees (Colleen, Mark, Lauren) are finishing up their term in June, other members are encouraged to consider leadership positions; (3) an update on charter schools was received from Mass Charter Schools Executive Director Marc Kenen which was, on balance, quite positive; (4) an article was circulated regarding great progress for charter schools in New York; (5) regarding the 1/30 Dept of Education visit, two significant comments were offered: some "tension" was noted between Mass frameworks and Core Knowledge and BFC-CPS would do well to review the Strategic and Accountability Plans; (6) the word from the DOE Governance Specialist is that it IS possible to have an election of trustees by the school community; (7) John points to 10' banner with BFCCPS mission statement; (8) the "Fabulous Fifties" sock hop is coming up in March; (9) John reads a letter from Fr. Callahan of St. Mary's formalizing the church's disinterest in selling the school building; (10) three Trustees (Anna, Lori, John) attended the recent charter school seminar at Sturgis and valuable information was received.

Recognition of the Month (7:45)

Circumstances did not allow students to attend this month and they will attend next month.

Report of Nominating Committee (7:46)

Michele notes some difficulty in communication leading up to the meeting of the committee. Faculty members were reached via telephone and all had input.

MOTION: by Michele/Cathy to appoint Jennifer Moccia to fill the open trustee seat vacated by Scott Stavely and which has its term ending in June, 2007.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

John welcomes Jennifer and provides rapid-fire orientation.

Clerk's report (7:52)

MOTION: by Rich/Anna to approve minutes of 1/11 Trustee meeting.

RESULT: Pass (1 abstention)

Treasurer's Report (7:57)

Lauren reviews notes of 1/30 Finance Committee meeting (separate document). She highlights that both she and Mark are finishing up their tenure at the end of the year and new members are sought to help transition to next year. Two new members have stepped forward. A recent review of the budget and actuals suggests that the expected surplus for the current year is \$100k which is in line with desired amounts. This amount is not related to the \$100k that is being sought in next year's budget for organizational changes.

Review Outstanding Action Item Register (8:03)

Lauren reviewed several items. An updated register is contained in a separate document. She tapped the services of Ben Benjamin (out of school due to injury) to audit the website for docue-

ments not posted after approved at meetings since January, 2005. Next month each trustee should be prepared to comment on Strategic Plan progress.

Open Comment (8:11)

Letha Hemingway asks about Full Time Equivalent (FTE) numbers as raised in the financial discussion. She wonders whether there is a cap on classroom size as it seems BFCCPS has some larger classes. Laureen points out the regulation that limits the school to fifty students per grade (nine grades gets to the limit of 450 students) or a per-class size of 25.

HOS Report (8:13)

Dr. O'Malley offers gratitude to the entire school community for their sympathies expressed at the passing of his brother in January.

- Notes of interest: The school will have a talent show on 3/23 ("Not for Board!", Kevin warns) with no contest or prizes; visitors from a Milford school came to BFCCPS recently and observed a well-attended assembly to get a sense of our character education program; the BFCCPS music program fifteen students to the Central District for competition and six received recognition (one instrumental and five vocalists); Michael Raymond has been a "gift to the school" as he has filled in wonderfully for Ben Benjamin on his injury leave; Ben has continued to be active via e-mail
- January 30 visit from DOE. The visiting team offered few comments but the sense of people in the school is that the reviewers were satisfied and pleased; we will wait for written report; it is clear that we need to do our Accountability Plan differently to follow DOE guidelines
- Dress Code: Dr. O'Malley has maintained that it is best to open this discussion to all constituencies and notes there is a wide spectrum of lots of opinions; he will present a conservative recommendation for comment by the Board, but warns that it is likely that nobody, on either end of the spectrum, will be satisfied by his report. It will prompt discussion, however.
- Professional Development Committee: So far, fifteen members of this teacher-driven committee have joined in; the 2/9 seminar will be focused on technology; an agenda was presented.
- Enrollment: The recruitment period is ending on 2/9 with the lottery to be held on 2/14; Deb Schwab is the "best ambassador for the school" as she takes great pains to be welcoming and helpful to prospective families. Dr. O'Malley hopes for an FTE over 400 next year.
- Standardized testing analysis: As requested by the Board, Dr. O'Malley prepared a series of charts to compare various types of standardized testing results (ERB, Terra Nova, MCAS). In the large picture, the story is very positive, but there is lots of work to be done still. As of 2/9, Test Whiz will be used to allow reporting of all standardized testing for a student.

After quick review, Mark comments on trends which are downward in several instances, year to year. He notes the closing gap in comparison with Franklin districts in a number of areas which puts us behind our Accountability Plan; He observes some positive trends in cohort comparisons as well. He observes, "if you run looking behind yourself, you are bound to hit a pole." Ah.

Colleen asks what specific plans are being pursued to improve test numbers. Dr. O'Malley states that all grades have had discussions to formulate strategies; reviews of weaknesses have helped and improvements are expected and hoped for; discussions at all levels are ongoing.

Deb notes that composition of classes changes which has an effect on comparisons. Cathy observes that five BFCCPS students were recently accepted into a private school where fifty spots were open. This is an example that students need not leave in sixth grade in order to improve their opportunity to attend a private school after eighth grade. John encourages further review of testing numbers by the Board.

Comments by Dr. Marcus (8:40)

John notes that the assignment with Dr. Marcus is coming to a close this month. He will be at a meeting or two and will submit a written report.

Dr. Marcus starts by commenting on testing as an addendum to earlier discussion. He offers that

there are lots of variables that effect results and it is often difficult to draw conclusions. He cautions of “denial” that something needs to be done by turning the numbers in such a way as to miss an important message. He suggests looking at numbers relative to specific classrooms.

Dr. Marcus thanks the group for the opportunity to work with BFCCPS. He will giving a brief report at the end of his tenure. He is reflecting on the charge of why he came: to assist with administrative issues and to help Board come out of a difficult time. He points to two regrets: (1) he would have like to have spent more time in workshops to address specific requests made of him, and (2) the timing of the presentation of his and Dr. O’Malley’s recommendations for improvements as they arrived alongside the Organizational Task Force recommendations. they were not meant to be an end-run around the OTF work and he would have liked better timing.

Dr. Marcus has observed many successes since his arrival. He sees a positive trend in leadership and in growth of the organization. He believes the Board is moving out of its adolescent (impulsive, erratic) stage to get to a better position in its role as policy makers and leaders. He stresses the need to maintain focus on the most important aspect: to support excellence in the classroom on a daily basis; are teachers excited about their work and what they are teaching?

Reporting on his interactions with people in the community, he offers that the overall impression is that the Board is moving forward. Dr. Marcus states that the BFCCPS Board is the “hardest working Board that I have worked with in many years”. He feels that the Board has been very strong in setting an appropriate tone of how to make decisions and that all member are genuine in their interest to improve the school. His observation of a recent faculty meeting was that the teachers are feeling “more calm” and “most are working very hard to achieve.”

He recommends that the Board not get bogged down on perfectionism and look, rather, for concensus. Diversity is important for community, tension in a healthy organization is normal stuff even though some show impatience.

Dr. Marcus expresses concern at how hard the group has been working. The load can wear out conscientious volunteers. He recommends a limit on the number of projects that the Board will take on next year. He recognizes that it is often easier to say “yes” even if it is not in the best interest of the school. The Board needs to keep balance in deliberate, calculated decision making process.

Dr. Marcus presents John with a Yes/No coin which he had shown in a Board workshop as a reminder that decisions cannot be made by a flip of a coin. He presents a golden apple pin to both Joe, as faculty representative, and Dr. O’Malley in appreciation for the work they have done.

John compliments the Board for its hard work, thanks Rich for bringing Dr. Marcus to BFCCPS, and thanks Dr. Marcus with a cake in his honor. There is a brief intermission as cake is distributed!

Selection of Two Board Members, Two Faculty/Staff Members and Two Parent Members to the Nominating Committee (9:08)

John asks Board members for interest in helping with the Nominating Committee, and then selects two names out of the hat: **Chuck Mayo** and **Lori Clements**. **Sue Weidman** from the faculty and **Deb Schwab** from the staff are members of the committee. Michele put names from the parent community in a hat and drew the names of **Jeffrey St. Germaine** and **Kim Pradko** as committee members. John asks Chuck and Lori to coordinate the committee initially.

Discussion and Vote to Change Policy #2 – Nomination and Election of the School Board

Colleen presents the latest draft of Policy #2 with updates intended to (a) conform directly with the school by-laws on the topic, and (2) add clarity of the process. Rich expresses concern about the lack of criteria available to select a new Board member which sets the Nominating Committee and the Board up for accusations of “inbreeding” or “old boy network”. Colleen suggests that the diversity of the committee is intended to bring about the dialog to prevent such accusations but agrees that this does not always happen. Lori does not think this will be an issue as traditionally there are a very limited number of candidates under consideration.

Mark asks about the process and order of election of officers which was raised as a concern in spring, 2006. Colleen states that the by-laws are very clear that the outgoing Board elects officers for the following year and that those officers take over immediately. The issue in the spring was that the election was held in May rather than in June as it should have been. Mark suggests re-stating bylaws in this policy document.

John asks whether updates to the policy can be made and that the vote could be pushed to next month. Consensus is reached on that plan.

Continued Discussion/Vote on the Recommendations of the Organizational Task Force and the Recommendations of Dr. Marcus and Dr. O'Malley (9:34)

Mark is looking to follow up on (a) charge to HOS of finding \$100k in next year's budget for extra positions in the organization, and (b) the recommendations of the HOS with the Board members from the OTF. Dr. O'Malley had sent an e-mail to Mark on 2/7 which they had not yet discussed. Mark believes that, given the input from Dr. O'Malley, that the \$100k can be found: \$60K from consulting that is not recurring, \$10K from fuel and utility items that were over-budgeted in the current year, \$8K from additional consultant fees not spent, and \$18-\$20K from over-budgeted health care expenses not needed. This totals to nearly \$97K, effectively meeting criteria.

Anna reports that she met with Cathy and Dr. O'Malley and had a productive meeting. Although no specific details are available yet, they are pursuing a blended solution of both sets of recommendations. The group will meet again after February vacation with a goal to be completed by next month.

Dr. Marcus recommends getting the message to staff sooner rather than later, concerned that deliberation may appear as indecision. In the end, the staff will need to hear of the process of the Board to allow understanding of how the time was spent and showing care of doing things properly. Joe agrees with the characterization and offers that the staff continues to feel that things are "up in the air" as details of a plan are finalized.

Committee Reports (9:49)

Facilities: John had a conversation with Town of Franklin Administrator Jeff Nutting who put in a call on the school's behalf stating its support of the building of the school in Franklin. Putnam employee Cathy states that the land is being leased by Putnam from Marsh-McLennon. Mark is pursuing contacts directly with the California Retirement System who owns the property.

Faculty Representative: No report

Governance: The group is clicking along. In particular, an employee grievance policy is being worked on in conjunction with the Human Resources Committee.

Human Resources: Lori notes the recent resignation of teacher Elizabeth Henderson from the HR committee. Her efforts and dedication are commended.

Mission: Chuck encourages Board participation in survey. There have been more than thirty responses to date. The Board has access to the input received. Chuck notes that there was a productive Board workshop on 2/1 and another workshop will be scheduled before the March Board meeting.

Nominating Committee: previously discussed

PR Committee: Michele will chair this committee with assistance from both Cathy and Jennifer. Michele contacted the Boston Globe reporter and refuted some of the claims made in her article. She was invited to return to the school and expressed interest in hearing "the vote".

Technology: Rich reports that a meeting was held on 2/6 at which the 2/9 professional development program was discussed.

Adjournment (9:57)

Next meetings: 3/8/2007