

Benjamin Franklin Board of Trustee's Meeting 8/9/2007

In attendance: Mr. John Neas, Ms. Lori Clements, Ms. Anna dos Santos, Ms. Jennifer Moccia, Mr. Rich Frongillo, Ms. Cathy Tomaso, Mr. Tim Tracy, Ms. Caroline Agresti, Dr. Charles Mayo, Ms. Cheryl O'Donnell

Dr. Kevin O'Malley, Ms. Heather Zolnowski

Absent: Ms. Maria Weiss, Dr. Poh-Lin Yeoh, Ms. Michele Pearl and Mr. Kevin Buckley

Meeting called to order 7:05 p.m.

Introductions made. John Neas congratulated Tim Tracy and Caroline Agresti as new members with voting rights.

Remarks from President of Board

Noted that Franklin was named by Family Circle Magazine as one of the ten best communities in the nation for raising children. J. Neas handed out copies of the article.

List of board meeting dates for the year was handed out.

Our regular Board Meeting in September is 9/6 at 7 PM.

Second meeting in September scheduled for 9/26/2007 at 7:30 PM.

Performance expectations for Board of trustees handed out. Board members should review and send comments back to J. Neas. No date specified for return.

Private page for Board of Trustees documents has a new URL. R. Frongillo will send email with information to board members.

Thank you notes from teachers were read. Notes were from Carol Babineau, Ben Benjamin, Judy Bergesen, Laurie Canning, Joe Chillo, Lynn Dwyer, Kate Edgar, Elizabeth Henderson, Jean Marie Sette, Ellen Williamson.

Open Comment

Mary Brennan comments that it was nice to hear the Thank-you notes. She indicates that she is proud of us all.

Remarks from President of Board

Presidents Fund: Board members, who would like to participate, should send \$35 to J. Neas. The money will be used for sending flowers to fellow board members in the event of a death, injury, etc.

Refreshments will be provided by Board Members at future meetings. Names were pulled from a hat and months assigned to individuals. Drinks and snacks are optimal.

New information notebooks were handed out to Board Members. In the event of a board member leaving, the notebook should be returned to be reused.

Clerk's Report:

Minutes of last meeting approved unanimously.

Executive session meeting minutes will be sent from R. Frongillo to J. Neas and Kevin for review. They will then be reviewed by R. Frongillo before being sent onto the board of trustees for review.

C.Mayo to work with Ben on setting up power points for next meeting

Remarks from President of Board

J. Neas introduced idea of having parent or teacher (paid) to take minutes during meetings with clerk to review. Should request be sent to finance? Estimated cost \$50 per month.

A. dos Santos- Note that responsibility for accurate records remains with Clerk. Will this make it difficult for the clerk to keep it accurate?

J. Neas- Don't see issue with the by-laws.

A. dos Santos- Will need to modify policy #1 if we do this.

R. Frongillo- Would need to pick up person who is "hip" to lingo of common abbreviations, etc. It would be up to C. Mayo to be sure that this works clearly. Would Executive session present a problem? Would this be restricted to someone in BFCCPS?

J. Neas- No that would be open.

C.Mayo- Willing to take minutes sees advantage in having someone additionally take minutes to assure not missing information while participating in Board Discussions. So person taking notes would be a backup.

Unspecified- Finance will take a look at doing this. Should it go to human resources since it involves payment for service? No, it's like hiring an independent contractor.

J. Moccia- Looking into the future. Seems like something that would be dependent upon the individual clerk. Then it would go back to the clerk.

K. O'Malley- Would this be something that Heather could do? Heather would be present in most instances of Executive Session and if it were an issue

C.Mayo would continue to take the notes without backup.

H. Zolnowski- She would be happy to take notes.

Unspecified- General agreement that Heather can take the notes.

Finance Report:

There was an auditor's review. The auditor found about \$36,000 in supplies and curriculum material paid for with FY07 funds that appear to be for FY08 use. Auditor indicated that this is not allowed by accounting rules. We may need to correct this by moving \$36,000 in expenditures from the FY07 to the FY08 budget.

C. Agresti- The auditor had not been so definitive about the issue of using fund from one year for expenses in a future year at the June FinComm meeting.

A. dos Santos- Really got this clearly conveyed at the audit session. Finance will need to look to see implications for the 2008.

L. Clements- Can budget show this as surplus carried forward into reserves to use for this year?

A. dos Santos- Auditors will come into next meeting. Will need to approve budget for October.

The state Legislature allows participation in group insurance plan for school systems. This would help our budget. Drawback is that you have to go with the 80%/20% cost sharing plan. Would have to sign up by October 1st to implement next year. There are 9 different plans from which employees can select.

Finance committee meetings will be Wednesday's at 8 a.m. Next Wednesday is the first.

L. Clements- will that be the first Wednesday of each month.

A. dos Santos- Normally yes.

Head of School Report

People were genuinely pleased with the Thank You's. The appreciation element is far more important than the money.

Presented Head of school goals

- Re-organization of the school- Ready to actualize leadership teams. These are envisioned as ongoing "lighthouse" that distinguishes our school. Teacher teams beginning to meet now. These groups focus more on broad views than on day-today operation details. For example, examining dress code policy. Leadership team can't work unless the teams are empowered.

J. Moccia- Are teachers on teams self selected?

K. O'Malley- Yes. Thinks that this initiative with teachers will be groundbreaking in Massachusetts.

- Math Initiative- Hired Dr. Susan Looney as Math Specialist. She will be helping to blaze trails to improve math and science practice. Board has already taken positive step by providing funding for new materials.

J. Moccia - Question on math initiative. Will there be help for students on both ends of the spectrum ie. those who need extra help and those who need extra challenge?

C. Agresti - Other school programs allowed arranging programs to provide more opportunities for students who are ready to move ahead. Can we do this?

K. O'Malley - Yes.

J. Neas- We are going to have an enrollment task group that will look at programs that our school has compared to others.

- School Handbook- This will play a role in helping to "tighten" the school up. Things like "bullying" occupied more time than we would have hoped for. We can do better. Distributed draft handbook with some modifications from last year's. Final copy will be distributed second week of school at latest. There will be content on behavior and better emphasis on character education. Nothing Draconian, but some things will be said in a way to get a bit more emphasis. There may be resistance in some areas, for example dress code. Comments from board on content for new handbook should be sent to Dr. O'Malley within the next week.

L. Clements- Assume not looking for comments on outdated information.

K. O'Malley- No, this has more on discipline.

Cathy- will letter go out to make clear this isn't just another copy of last year's.

K. O'Malley-Yes.

Unspecified- Problem with bullying may in part be with the students that we have attracted. Is there anything that we can do about that?

K. O'Malley- Not really. Lottery system doesn't allow for prescreening

C.Tomaso- Taskgroup last year emphasized importance of keeping the mission alive. Need to emphasize what our mission is with incoming parents.

J. Neas- We must be careful to remember that we are a public school and not a private school. We do need to have a better orientation for new and continuing parents. We are trying to work on this issue through this direction.

A. dos Santos- We are able to require parents to come to an informational orientation. Not basing selection on that, but it provides opportunity to be certain parents understand what we are about.

K. O'Malley- Don't believe it is true, that such meetings can be compulsory.

C. Tomaso- There was a Boston Globe article discussing schools that do this.

K. O'Malley- The article exposed schools engaging in that type of practice. It is unlikely that the practice will continue.

L. Clements- Another benefit to orientation meetings in assisting in keeping people who are already here.

Last year was one of stability; kudos to board. This year needs to be one of progress. We had a resignation of a part time Latin teacher and a part time French teacher. These will be joined into one full time position for both French and Latin. This will allow Latin to be extended to other grades. Latin is one of the definers of our "classicalness".

J. Neas- Is there one viable candidate at the moment?

K. O'Malley- Yes.

J. Neas- Are exit interview's planned?

K. O'Malley- Yes.

C. Tomaso- Need to removed resigned teachers from the web site to avoid confusion.

List of new teachers was presented. Feel very well about this group. Heather will have distinct and important responsibilities in the school. She will be working extensively with teachers.

Now ready to implement technology more extensively in daily operations. Will do all of our report cards, attendance, communication with modern technology. Mass One is the portal we will use. Best teachers send lesson plans to central location that other teachers can access.

Last school year there was an incident that resulted in an expulsion hearing. Subsequent to the hearing and before results of hearing were determined, the student and family elected to withdraw from the school. Therefore the results of the hearing were suspended but not eliminated. Consultation with school attorney was held to guide and affirm our actions in handling this issue.

J. Moccia - Could you please give us an update on the other parties involved if possible?

K. O'Malley -Some of the student's involved in bullying have elected of their own volition not to return. Heather will be working with those that did return to assure the behavior is not repeated. This emphasizes our need to put character education in to real practice.

Summer courses have been successful. List of 27 held this summer was distributed. We seem to have hit a vein where parents are interested in having more of these enrichment programs. We will start this program earlier and expand upon it for next year.

We have a summer mailing. Word from last year was that there was too much paper. This year will be smaller. Instead one large packet of information that may overwhelm parents, the information will be distributed in packets sent home over three days followed by a fourth and fifth evening to allow question and answer.

C. Tomaso-Will packet be sent by family rather than by child?

K. O'Malley-Yes. Blue sheet and Pink sheet will be done differently. We will make better use of the web site. Kate Edgar will be the central contact for scheduling events. If Kate doesn't know it, it doesn't happen.

That will be the new rule.

J. Moccia-Will a supply list be published?

K. O'Malley- Yes, they will be on the web as of Monday. This will take burden off of individual teachers to get this information out for their classes.

T. Tracy- What about forms for food and milk.

K. O'Malley- Yes that will go out on the first day.

J. Moccia- Library assistant coverage?

K. O'Malley- Yes packet goes out day 2.

Sandy Frongillo- Medicines for kids?

K. O'Malley- That's day one and the school nurse is already on top of it.

Last year a few teachers, running programs, we're caught out paying for expenses not reimbursed by parents. The school did make up the loss for the teachers.

Our enrollment as of today is 404. We all know that number may fluctuate between now and the beginning of the year.

Calendar for start of school year

New Staff: 8/22 & 23

All Staff: 8/27

Kindergarden Begins (1/2 Day): 8/27

Family Picnic: 8/23

Class Begins for other grades: 8/28

<http://www.bfccps.org/main/AboutUs/Documents/Calendar2007-2008.pdf>

Head of School Evaluation of the Board of Trustees

In the past, the relationship of board of trustees to school has been unclear. This is more cut and dried at public schools. Last year peace in school came from board stepping back and not interfering. This is not easily done.

There ought not to be any surprises at board meetings. Let the school be the school and board is the guardian of the school. If we keep our spheres clean, the faculty feels stability, because they know there is a singular way to get things done. Board deserves the credit for getting this done. Suggest talking with K. O'Malley about issues that may pertain more to operations than policy, for clarification, prior to introducing at a board meeting.

Suggest as overarching thought for the board " Why do we exist " "what makes us different (better than) Franklin public schools?" We must admit they are very good. We are competing with an already excellent school system. So why we exist needs to be the reason that students come here.

Board should focus on activating the strategic plan. Point school in direction and then let the school get there. The Board of Trustees are the guardians of the Mission of the school. How do we see that playing out is important. Let's make a forward going plan to which we can attach our budget and effort.

The Board of Trustees epitomizes what is good about education, because it is clear that our actions are about what is in the best interests of the kids.

Overall, he would give the Board of Trustees an A; and remember he's not an easy marker.

A. dos Santos- If a Board members talk to the Head of School about an issue, then don't they need to be doing that as a parent, not as a board member? Board issues should be presented at Board Meetings.

K. O'Malley- Yes that is an Achilles' heel. Certainly if it is a board issue first discussion should be at the board. However, if it is oriented toward operation, beginning with a conversation with the Head of School may maintain stability.

C.Tomaso- It is important to convey information to K. O'Malley that may pertain to daily detail. Sometime parents bring this information to Board members instead of to the Head of School.

R. Frongillo- That type of talking around may lead to that discord. It is delicate.

New Business

This year more time will be spent on strategic planning.

J. Neas- Would like to pass on all committee reports for this month.

Lori- On behalf of nominating would like to welcome Cheryl.

Caroline Agresti has submitted resignation from the board. She and her family will be relocating to another state. Motion to accept resignation was made, seconded and voted to accept unanimously.

C. Agresti- Her family has been at BFCCPS since the second year. She has greatly enjoyed being on the journey. Thanks to Dr. O'Malley, so glad that he is a part of our journey.

Cheryl O'Donnell was next on the list of alternates. Cheryl is with Ben Franklin Bank. Motion to elect Cheryl O'Donnell was made, seconded and voted to accept unanimously.

Board members who have not yet filled out a disclosure of financial interest form should complete the forms and return to Lori.

New board members should create short biographies to be posted on the school web site. Please e-mail these to Ben Benjamin.

When using the mail alias for the Board of Trustees, please note that K. O'Malley and Heather are not included in that alias. So you will need to include them explicitly.

Committee Assignments

J. Neas appoints the chairs but not the committee members. Chairs need to prepare solicitation for Kate to put in the pink sheet announcements. Then, the committee chairperson shall submit the names of proposed committee members to the Board of Trustees for confirmation by a majority vote. J. Neas has not appointed C. O'Donnell unless she explicitly desires it so, to avoid overburdening the community representative. J. Neas concurrently outlines items of interest for the particular committees. Not all faculty have been happy to be assigned to committees. Many teachers would prefer to just focus on the classroom. We won't compel faculty to be on committees.

Facilities-J. Neas (C. Tomaso-declined to chair) Need to continue work on the new school site. Can architects redesign school to fit entirely on one side of the strip or the other. What would the implication be for easement to drive over the strip? Then we could have parking in one side and building on the other. If that doesn't work we need to find a different property and sell the existing. Will need to negotiate longer term lease with the church. Best to think now about getting an extension on the rental perhaps 10 or 20 year lease. Maybe then use money currently saved to put in central air, gymnasium.

Finance-Anna dos Santos J. Neas will send request for \$10K to put an attorney on retainer for the school. Attorney we have used on per case basis indicates we would have better access and also reduced fees. It would be helpful to the Head of School to be able to pick up the phone and ask if an issue with legal implications arises. J. Neas outlined interview process to help us select a firm.

Governance- Tim Tracy Need to have a review and rewrite of our policies. Some changes may be as simple as just changing the date. However we do need a process to demonstrate review. Will go back to K. O'Malley for representatives for Governance and Finance.

Human Resources-Lori Clements has three faculty representatives. This year will do new salary grid.

Mission- Charles Mayo J. Neas provided list of speakers that we have had at the school for Character education programs. Pass list on to C. Mayo for spring colloquium. Need to get started soon. Maybe will go to pillar council but let's get the ball rolling. J. Neas passed on news article on Town of Hudson recognized for mission and education. Thinks Mission should go to Hudson.

Nominating- Will stay blank. President cannot appoint chair. According to by laws that will have to be done at the time the committee is formed.

Public Relations- Poh Lin Yeoh and Jennifer Moccia will co-chair. Would like to see us do a Ben's Best II, Coordinate with K. O'Malley and the Staff. From the board perspective we are supposed to disseminate our best practices to other charter schools. Going to have a section in the pink sheet the week following the board meeting with broad brush outline of what happened at the board. Then they could read results in the minutes.

Technology- Rich Frongillo

R. Frongillo-Charge of committee has been altered by the fact that we have staff in place to carry out implementation. Do we need the committee?

C. Tomaso- Policy specifies technology as a standing committee.

J. Neas- Let's leave this as a board level committee.

K. O'Malley- It is in a way a redundant committee for the implementation side

however, it may be valuable on the strategic view side.

C. Mayo- Our technology program is woefully behind Massachusetts frameworks guidelines. Maybe Technology committee could play a role in helping to improve our curriculum in this area.

J. Neas- Obviously can't spend money that we don't have. We do now need to keep a view of where we should go with our programs.

Enrollment Task Force- Michelle Pearl Deb Schwab needs to be involved in the program, she has been carrying the ball. Examples of issues of interest are enrollment and retention, salary. J. Neas given the money he would like to increase the salary for all. Deb is going to prepare for us a list of reasons that parents leave, we don't always get the deeper reasons (e.g. inadequate math program, lack of sports program) that we would need to contribute to a strategic plan to retain students. C. Tomaso expressed interest in working on the task force and will co-chair with Michele.

A. dos Santos- Is J. Neas going to write the charge for the Task group? Need beginning and endpoints, timeline.

J. Neas-Yes.

Elections Task Force- No one designated. Want to go back to look at our elections process. May be as simple as turning 2/3'rds majority to simple majority. Surgis Charter school uses a simple majority.

A. dos Santos- Colleen Berg pointed out last year that DOE recommended 2/3 rd's majority. Elections process is already on the governance committee agenda. They have done some work on this already.

R. Frongillo-Will J. Neas have task force charge presented to board for vote of approval? It needs to be specific on whether looking for information, recommendations, timeline. Would anticipate order for setting up time line being getting charge for task group done first, then appoint.

A. dos Santos- The policy already describes process for creation of task force. We'll need to follow that policy.

Board Goals- J. Neas passes out list of items that he is interested in as goals for 2007- 2008. After we determine a list of goals we will define a grid that outlines our objectives, timeline and measures of success.

9:52 Motion to adjourn, unanimous.