

Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School
Board of Trustees Meeting
APPROVED Minutes
Thursday, February 12, 2009 7:00pm
School Library

Attendance: Trustees President John Neas, Vice President Lori Clements, Treasurer Anna dos Santos, Clerk Richard Frongillo (8:00), Faculty Representative Gail Trotin, Lisa Buchholz, Nav Chander, Chuck Mayo, Tim Tracy, Thom Viveiros, Poh-Lin Yeoh; HOS Dr. Kevin O'Malley, Asst. HOS Heather Zolnowski

Absent: Cheryl O'Donnell, Cathy Tomaso

Call to order, Comments by the Chair (7:07)

John acknowledges a very successful site visit for Charter Renewal. He notes a terrific PCO family night of bowling at Ficco's with about 100 people in attendance with benefits for Medway Shelter. The school is looking for Board members to participate in Read Across America Day. Several played in the student-staff basketball game which ended in a draw which was great fun.

Recognition of the Month (7:12)

Kevin recognizes the school newspaper *The Flash* which involves many students as one of the best middle school newsletters ever produced with excellent parent and staff support. Kevin lauds Jennifer Hollis who advises the distinguished paper. Ms. Hollis acknowledges Chase Buchholz, the editor-in-chief who had vision and has worked tremendously hard. Chase speaks about *The Flash* and the success of the newspaper staff. The original was a Student Council project which has grown to include many more students and more articles and pages.

Open Comment (7:17)

No comments offered.

Clerk's Report (7:17)

Review and approval of January minutes deferred until next month.

Action Register (7:18)

Lori reviews the Action Register handout. The Mission Committee and Governance Committee needs a charter approved and meeting schedules need to be submitted to the state office. HOS school will report tonight on meeting of goals. Will discuss Nominating procedure. Staff portion of HOS evaluation is coming together. Budget, Board office positions, Board evaluation of HOS are actions coming up in March and April.

Faculty Input Team (FIT) Review (7:23)

Jennifer thanks for support of the Faculty Input Team (FIT). Impressed by the commitment of the school to let students and faculty members reach their own potential. FIT helps teachers grow. FIT strives to have staff-initiated improvements to the school, open and voluntary. FIT meets formally once per month.

Research Action Teams (RAT) collect data and information and report back to FIT. Nearly all staff has been involved in some way. Opinions are solicited and valued. Lots accomplished: FIT binder to catalogue procedures, policies, and forms for work, held by the Assistant HOS and reviewed by state auditors; Homework RAT (K.Urkevic) looked at consistency/uniformity of philosophy regarding purpose, time-on-task, and responsibilities while allowing autonomy of teachers (ready for publication); Field Trip RAT (M. Ward) looking at how field trips are used, how they can be made to be cost-effective to supplement our overall program, how they can be timed/spaced to be more effective (some documents in draft form); Dissemination RAT is looking at how we share the good work at BFCCPS with others, a sequel to an early-BFCCPS program called "Ben's Best", and what should be shared as unique, unusual or special to BFCCPS (e.g. FIT, language

support, special events, Forest of Virtue, music), lots of information to review (first part of feedback begun).

In future, looking at community service benchmarking, examining how Edline is being used and how it can be used to maximize experience for all.

Lisa asks about how the FIT might take in outside information (e.g. parents would have feedback on field trip costs, etc.). Jennifer looks for opportunities to draw in lots of opinions and would have no issue with asking specific questions. Thom asks about distinction between policy and philosophy. Jennifer wants to combine vision to form philosophy without forcing policy on individuals. It is not goal of FIT to dictate how specifics are done. Anna asks about “no zero” policy and whether it was discussed by Homework RAT. Jennifer said that it was discussed/reviewed. John wonders about whether the original Ben’s Best had an outside source of funding. All applaud the efforts of Jennifer and the FIT as professional and important work.

Treasurer’s Report (7:48)

Anna will distribute Finance Committee meeting minutes and budget for meeting in early February. Budget has been cut by \$142K this year and no other cuts are anticipated for this year. Small group met to review current budget looking for potential savings and will meet again. The \$70K for ELA may be deferred until next year to reduce draw on reserves. Regarding 403b services (retirement planning), a meeting was held to consider possible changes. Anna feels that it is a decent investment of \$1600 (possibly covered by a donation to the school) to get a manager of a plan for our school. Review of Policy #22 Budget Amendments has begun with Tim creating a draft to allow more flexibility and reason.

John notes that DESE distributed a calculation from the state with proposals made by the governor. BFCCPS is being paid for 404 students this year. John wonders who is responsible for the “revised Form 990” submission. Anna states that this effects the BFCCPS Foundation and PCO. John spoke with Mark Kripp (former BFCCPS treasurer) who is willing to assist the FinComm.

Head of School Report (8:05)

Kevin thanks the school community for the support during the state’s site visit which was a significant bit of scrutiny requiring lots of preparation behind the scenes. The work was well-received by the intelligent, perceptive, and articulate visiting committee. We are looking forward to their response. The school was as prepared as it could be and presented ourselves fairly and the excellent school we are. We have room for improvement and we await their input which should arrive in mid-February, initially looking for factual correction. Thanks to Joe and Heather for their efforts related to the site visit preparation.

Kevin highlights the student-adult basketball game with thirty students and several good-natured adults bonding in a wonderful event. Kevin notes that FIT is a leadership program that is exemplary program. Recruitment has been very strong this year, particularly in the upper grades where numbers have been strong and stronger than in previous years.

Goals of the HOS: Kevin gives a progress report starting with the effective interactions among the HOS and Assistants to the HOS. Regarding the pillars of the school, there are many programs ongoing related to Character Education with benchmarks added to the K-4 and 5-8 programs maturing. Service education is being addressed; Capstone projects will begin in the 7th grade and be more personally invested by each student. BFCCPS has a valuable resource of a counselor and Becca Harrington has been credible and approachable. Regarding curriculum, the school has taken on and utilized the “new” math program quickly, and ELA has been reviewed and standardized this year with a clear pathway. Regarding facility, we are doing as well as we can with the given limitations. Leadership practices are solid with a succession plan, mentoring, and sharing of many voices leading to better results. The viability of the school is quite solid with impressive results in character education and academic tests.

Rich wonders about community service in the upper grades. Kevin notes that the individual service may be doing better than the class-wide service. He hopes that progress will continue to

expand the program. Joe notes that the advising groups have had projects introduced for community service. The FIT team will be looking at benchmarks for service in future.

Rich asks about the purview of the “advising groups” in upper grades. Is there a framework that ties together character education, community service, Junior Achievement done during advising? Kevin states that the program is evolving from its origin as for character education and expanded to include two days. Joe adds character education has been more integrated at the same time.

Heather notes that a number of staff went to the Foxboro School to meet with their math staff as they are in their second year of using the same math program we are using. This was an excellent meeting. Our school is in a good position relative to making progress in adopting the program and effectively implementing the program. We will share ideas with Foxboro again.

Heather notes that Charter Day is April 28 and as many parents as can should attend. Buses may be offered to allow the trip. She announces the upcoming assembly schedule. She thanks Cathy Tomaso for coming to Enrollment Nights and speaking about her role as a Board member. Applications are up. Four staff members have children in the lottery.

Joe took the opportunity to ask people at Enrollment Night why they came to BFCCPS. Curriculum, character education, and parent involvement were top reasons. Joe notes that we passed our fire inspection for this year. March 6-7 will be the production of Seussical Jr. at the school. Many went to a professional version of Seussical in Boston recently. Joe thanks Ben Benjamin for keeping the website up to date including new video.

John thanks Cathy and Tim for attending Enrollment Nights. It seemed that about half of the attendees were from Franklin and half not. John asks the administration to send recommendations to him, prior to the March Board meeting, for discussion. John suggests that the staff discuss a before-Labor Day start on the calendar. John hopes we have further discussion about field trips and keeping them financially accessible to our students.

Discussion and Motion to Determine the Number of Openings for the Board (8:53)

John notes that there are five openings in this year and Lori is interested in getting to a rotation of having four positions (instead of 3 or 5) open each year. Lori suggests is that we vote to fill only four slots this year and carry an open slot this year. That is, have 12 members for one year (11 members plus faculty representative). Then, next year, we'll fill four forevermore. The bylaws state that we have a twelve member minimum. Lisa wonders whether we should invite someone for a 1-year term. This is an option, but Lori feels not the best option. Rich wonders whether it matters significantly whether we change 4 or 5 and whether we have the authority to adjust. Nav feels that five is a significant change in a single year. Lori feels we do have the authority. Lisa raises a question about having an even number of members without a tie-breaker. Chuck supports the proposal for going with 12 for a year and that tie-breaking happens rarely. John feels that the possibility of reducing the size of the Board is something for the Election Task Force.

MOTION: By Lori/Nav to set the size of the Board for 2009-10 to twelve, eleven plus the Faculty Representative

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

Committee Reports (9:08)

Annual Appeal: Thom provides a snapshot of last year's campaign results (\$20,750). Looking at individual donations from last year, there were \$17K contributed through 52 individuals. He shows where donations had come last year (26 in \$50 or \$100 donations). This year, so far, \$7040 including a match of \$1K from Fidelity. It is still early. Original goal remains: increase participation no matter what size donation. Thom is considering a telephone campaign to get to “top of mind”. There has been a drop off since January 21st. Gail not in favor of a phone campaign, but wonders about having a presence at the upcoming auction. Probably not a great idea. Lori thinks a post-auction appeal might work. John has chart from last year to share with Thom. John thinks a phone campaign would need to be quite sensitively in these economic times. Nav is not in favor of cold-calling; a more personal approach would be more effective. Tim wonders whether alumni

were solicited. Not sure, but we should pursue that avenue if not. Lisa believes that being specific about amounts and the intent of the donation will help.

Election Task Force: Nav reports that the group has had two meetings and are still in the early stages. Researching charter schools and non-profits and composition of boards. Results could effect Nominating Committee as the topics interrelate. Nav and Poh-Lin have recruited members.

Facilities: Anna refers to a document that John had distributed about possible renovations and associated costs with the current facility. A little bit of progress has been seen with the Washington Street as the dialogue continues with a representative in California. Calpers does not want to sell because they want access, according to the representative. It seems this may be a moot point because access would be difficult to get Town of Franklin approval; Matt Ginnetty met with Franklin representatives and distributed the information to California. An update engineering document is being pursued. John says that it is good to have a discussion but Calpers has “known” for awhile that the strip of land would not be suitable for access.

Human Resources: No report. Meeting cancelled due to student-staff basketball game.

Lease Negotiation: Should be an interesting meeting upcoming.

Legislative Liaison: Thom and Kevin have been communicating to get message to parents about 4/28 date. John recommends setting up specific meetings with legislators for that day. Anna suggests pursuing Karen Spilka. Lisa recommends “briefing” the parents who might join in to provide them information that the Board has about the different sides of all issues. John feels that getting a large number of people attending is critical. A hearing is anticipated at the state house.

Mission Committee: Met on 2/9 with a discussion of vision statement as part of our first goal. Next meeting is 3/16. Our first newsletter Pillars in Practice was distributed today.

Nominating: John suggests that the faculty consider their representative for the Board next year. He is in favor of having Gail continue. Three Board members are interested in continuing: Anna, Lori, Poh-LIn. Chuck and Cathy are not interested in continuing.

Public Relations: Lisa reports on a meeting in January having moved on from the identity campaign. Lisa is working on graphic standards. New logo and identity system will be rolled out before the musical and before the auction. Kevin will distribute the introductory statements about the identity information. Lisa offers a “light-hearted” series of concepts for younger students to extend the logo into other, less formal settings. The idea would be to have, perhaps, four different images of Ben Franklin in the logo palette beyond the single, formal image already approved. Nav is concerned about having an unprofessional or non-serious image. Tim wonders whether children should choose a fun image. Gail likes the idea. Lori does not like the idea as it may confuse the real logo. Anna feels that the images are not serious as they should be.

MOTION: By Tim/Lori to continue the meeting past 10pm.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

The school is looking at a more standardized band/music shirt. John claims to be whimsical by nature, but is not convinced that the presented ideas need be pursued. Lisa is not pushing on it, but wanted to present the option. Kevin is a proponent of a more formal logo.

Special Education Liaison: Chuck distributes a description of the liaison position and advocates for the Board making a statement about its value of having communication on the topic of representation for the students who are most vulnerable. Trustees can send comments to Chuck. Productive meetings have been held. The issue of accessibility at our facility is an open issue that should not be ignored.

Strategic Plan: Anna will be putting together progress for next meeting.

Adjournment (10:08)

MOTION: By Lori/Anna to adjourn

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)