

Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School
Board of Trustees Meeting
APPROVED Minutes
Thursday, May 14, 2009 7:00pm
School Library

Attendance: Trustees President John Neas, Vice President Lori Clements, Treasurer Anna dos Santos, Clerk Richard Frongillo (7:15), Faculty Representative Gail Trotin, Nav Chander, Chuck Mayo (7:20), Cathy Tomaso, Thom Viveiros; HOS Dr. Kevin O'Malley, Asst. HOS Heather Zolnowski, Joe Perna

Absent: Poh-Lin Yeoh, Tim Tracy, Cheryl O'Donnell

Call to order, Comments by the Chair (7:05)

John mentions several items: the music department has purchased a new drum. John signed lease with the Town of Franklin renewing a 1-year lease of the Red Brick School. He highlighted the 4/29 State House visit. He distributed financial ratio information provided by our accountants with data on all Massachusetts charter schools for comparison. Next meeting will be on Wednesday, June 10 because June 11 is 8th grade graduation. Cliff Chuang from the Charter School Office will be changing jobs to join the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Office of Expanded Learning Time, Pilot, and Readiness Schools. The Board retreat will be rescheduled from June 13 to a new date.

Recognition of the Month (7:15)

Kevin recognizes the Capstone project of Marina Smoske who organized a walk to raise awareness about autism. The project was jump-started by her uncle who contributed significantly. In all, the project has raised \$6,500 so far and the money will be given to the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation and Aspergar's Association of New England.

Kevin also recognizes the work and accomplishments of 8th grade teacher Krissy Salley for her with both 8th- and 7th-graders. The 8th-grade national contest attracted more than 3500 entries among which was BFCCPS Matt LaNeve who is to be recognized at the state house after making the final cut. Twenty-eight students had their poetry published; Salley involved the students in *Letters About Literature* and *Creative Communications*.

Clerk's Report (7:23)

MOTION: By Rich/Anna to approve meeting minutes for February 12, March, 12, and April 8.
RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

Action Register (7:27)

Lori reviews the Action Register handout. Rich distributes a copy of the Mission Committee charter to be approved later tonight. Lori highlights that trustees interested in a Board officer position should notify John by the end of May. She notes that the Annual Board Retreat is being considered for 6/20 or 7/18 at the Red Brick School. John wonders about whether all HOS evaluations have been received; all but two which could be submitted if done quickly. Some are missing their financial disclosure forms.

Nominating Committee (7:32)

Chuck asks Anne Gilberti to introduce Don Tappin and Rich to introduce Stephan Katinas as candidates for the open Board position. Each of these candidates had met with the Nominating Committee previously. Another candidate Merlyn Irudayaraj introduced herself. Chuck states the the Nominating Committee recommends NOT voting to select a candidate to fill the open Board position this month, preferring to have all candidates considered next month when all Board positions for next year will be filled. He observes that other applications are coming in. He has spoken with Dean College who may have a candidate submitting an application. Notices will continue to be published in the Pink Sheet. Chuck is targeting a two-week advance to trustees of

information about candidates prior to the June meeting. John accepts the report of the Nominating Committee and asks each candidate a few brief questions before giving each an opportunity to make a statement of their own. Don has two children (K, 1st) in the school and was flattered to be approached to help out. He does business development for a software firm, is a volunteer with the Cub Scouts, and has an interest in finance, facilities, and the possibilities of a new building. Stephan loves BFCCPS and has three children (2, 4, 7) in the school; his family has had a very positive experience and wants to see the school advance its great mission with continued parental involvement. Merlyn has a 3rd grader and a 9th grader who graduated from BFCCPS. She is looking for an opportunity to give back to the school and is willing to do anything to help.

Open Comment (7:52)

No comments offered.

Treasurer's Report (7:52)

John notes that the discussion of the budget will come later in the meeting. He notes a new report of the state's senate budget committee which includes more cuts including significant cuts in Chapter 70 monies. In light of this, John wonders whether it makes sense to delay the budget discussion until June when more firm figures may be known.

Anna is inclined to move forward with discussions and a vote tonight. There will be no guarantee that anything more will be firm in June or beyond. Although a 2% cut would be very serious if it were to come to pass, it is important to know where we stand tonight. Several agree that it is best to move forward tonight. Cathy hopes that a vote tonight will reaffirm the Board's continued commitment to providing fair compensation to our teachers.

Concern is expressed that if economic matters continue to worsen, that we may be in a position to reduce the budget in the payroll area. Gail observes that any decision we make tonight is made with the understanding that it is made "barring catastrophic funding news."

Head of School Report (8:05)

John has requested that Kevin limit his report to ten minutes to allow ample time for budget discussions and other agenda items. Kevin observes that the culture of the school has been dented by the financial issues of the day. The budget proposal includes some reduction of time for a few individuals and no increases for others. All in all, this adds unhappiness and stress. The growth in student population will help shield us (bringing more dollars), but there is pain being felt.

Kevin has met the new St. Mary's Pastor, Father Brian Manning who he found to be delightful and pragmatic. He looks forward to getting together to discuss the lease in coming weeks.

The "big trips" (Quebec, Washington D.C., Nature's Classroom) were very successful this year with our students representing the school well. Kevin expresses gratitude to the staff and parent volunteers who supported these trips. Involvement is a strong indication of the school's well-being.

Kevin attended meetings with the PCO and is very grateful to that group. PCO approved its budget which includes support for next year's graduation, some technology, sports, field trips, and more. The group has been very responsive to the needs of the school.

Kevin reports the resignation of Math Specialist Dr. Looney who is moving on to a leadership role in her home town of Norwood. The school was fortunate to have her services and wishes her well. Her part-time position will be filled with the budgeted dollars for that position to continue to push the envelope supporting students at both ends of the spectrum.

Lots of great things are happening in the music department. Ben Benjamin reports on Music in the Park on 5/9 at which the chorus placed first and the band placed third. He highlights the upcoming flower sale in Medway to support the BFCCPS Band.

Cathy wonders if the PCO field trip scholarships will be distributed using a formal process. Kevin feels that the word will be spread about the availability of funds and is wary of being too formal.

Committee Reports (8:19)

Annual Appeal: \$9,990 has been collected to date. Thom notes that this is less than last year and he distributes a chart that tracks the rate of income. He is thinking about “lessons learned” in the face of economic challenges and with an opportunity to be more strategy with appeal message. He expects thank you notes to go out in June.

Dress Code: Lori states that the investigation group has met and begun to compile information. They hope to have recommendations to share in June.

Elections: The group is working towards recommendations in June.

Facilities: Anna had distributed a report in advance showing the questions posed in response to the feasibility study of the Pond Street property. There is continued concern about wetlands on the property and the building/paving limits there. Other questions are best posed to the Historical Commission for consideration at their June meeting. Anna went to the BFCCPS Foundation meeting on 5/5 and reports that a representative of Calpers is coming from California during the week of May 18. All are interested in that meeting.

Faculty Representative: Gail reiterates Kevin’s observations about the climate in the school, particularly in the area of the “support roles” that are effected by the proposed budget. There is worry. She supports a vote by the Board to show the value of the salary equalization program

Governance: The committee has not met and Tim is absent. Anna did meet with the PCO and the Foundation working towards a coordinated plan of fundraising for the school.

Human Resources: Lori reports that the process of employee evaluation has begun.

Lease: The next lease negotiation meeting has not yet been set.

Legislative: Thom thanks all who attended the 4/29 meeting at the state house on Charter School Day. The 15-person group met with Senator Scott Brown (a charter school advocate who recommended we try to engage representatives who have traditionally not shown support for charter schools), Representative Jim Vallee (a charter school advocate who indicated that the budget is bad and getting worse), and a substitute Michele Goldberg in place of Senator Karen Spilka who did not keep her appointment with us. Thom collected the following thoughts through the process: (a) compile list of legislators who are not charter supporters, (b) engage our own community to share what charters are about (e.g. we're public), (c) invite traditional public school parents to join in support for charters, and (d) media needs to more involved (Twitter? Facebook?).

Mission: Rich reports that the group met on 5/4 and had a positive discussion about adding clarity to the pillar of parents as primary educations and the definitions of the virtues used in the school.

MOTION: By Anna/Thom to approve the Mission Committee charter with meeting location added.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

Nominating: Nothing to report. Gail will return for a second year as Faculty Representative!

Public Relations: No report.

Special Education Liaison: No report.

Strategic Plan: No report.

Discussion of 2009-2010 Budget (8:44)

John introduced the discussion by observing that there will likely be varying view points among trustees regarding the budget and that it is critical that whatever the majority decides, the Board must act together in support of the decision. Anna leads the presentation of the budget referring to documents distributed prior to the meeting. She reviews each of the seventeen items listed on her document “BFCCPS FY10 Budget Highlights” which enumerates the significant budget considerations for the upcoming year. The Finance Committee worked diligently to review all possibilities and make the most of the anticipated income. The state budget continues to be cloudy but the current information provided by the DESE reflects a 3% decrease in our tuition rate for FY10

from FY09. Additional monies are implied by having 434 students and \$46K in stimulus money targeted at Special Ed.

John wonders whether there is a policy about how to target this year's Annual Appeal funds. This has not been defined, but will be discussed.

Health Insurance costs, anticipated to be rising considerably, present a challenge to the budget beyond the state funding. The facility line item was reduced and is risky as the old building's needs are difficult to predict. As mentioned, the PCO will fill in some gaps in the budget in the areas of graduation, middle school sports.

The majority of the time devoted to the budget related to discussion of the payroll line items and anticipated staff adjustments. The proposed budget includes a continuation of the salary equalization program for the in-classroom staff but at a rate of 5% (last year's plan was 7% for this year). Not all staff would participate in this program as had been anticipated last year. In addition, three positions would see a reduction in hours. All agreed that these changes were very difficult, done with great thought, and were consistent with Dr. O'Malley's recommendations in this challenging economic climate.

John suggests that the Board consider taking monies from reserves to avoid some of the cuts in the proposed budget. Rich and others feels that the budget is likely to get worse before it gets better. Taking money from reserves to cover operating expenses will be a slippery slope given the projection of even further deficits in the future.

MOTION: By Anna/Nav to extend the meeting past 10pm.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

MOTION: By Anna/Nav to approve the FY2010 budget as presented.

RESULT: 6 for, 2 against (John, Chuck), 1 abstention (Gail)

Adjournment (10:40)

MOTION: By Lori/Anna to adjourn.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)