

Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School
Board of Trustees Meeting
APPROVED Minutes
Thursday, October 2, 2008 7:30pm
BFCCPS Library

Attendance: Trustees President John Neas, Treasurer Anna dos Santos, Clerk Richard Frongillo, Faculty Representative Gail Trotin, Lisa Buchholz, Nav Chander, Chuck Mayo (until 9:35), Cheryl O'Donnell (until 9:35), Cathy Tomaso, Tim Tracy, Thom Viveiros, Poh-Lin Yeoh; HOS Dr. Kevin O'Malley, Asst. HOS (acting) Joe Perna

Absent: Vice President Lori Clements;

Call to order, Comments by the Chair (7:30)

John welcomes visitors from Rick's Music and from the Red Brick School Association. He mentions his interest in having the Board take on a community service project and he is taking suggestions about it.

Recognition of the Month (7:32)

Kevin acknowledges the attendance of Asst. HOS Heather Zolnowski and her new born baby girl Madison. He then recognizes three teachers: Kris Salley has had a positive influence on the school; she initiated her students' submissions of poetry last year and 22 of 28 students had their work published in *Celebration of Poets Northeast 7-12, spring 2008*.

Kevin next tells about a surprise assembly and celebration honoring Sue Weidman who was named by Walmart as Teacher of the Year earning her a \$100 gift certificate and \$1000 to BFC-CPS PCO.

Representatives of Rick's Music read and present Ben Benjamin with a plaque noting the work of Mr. Benjamin and Mr. Boday and the school for its selection as one of the top 100 schools in the nation for music.

Discussion of Red Brick School potential usage (7:43)

John reviews that he had asked two trustees to coordinate a "for" and "against" white paper, respectively. These reports had been distributed to the Board. Anna notes that the question about the potential cost of liability insurance remains open. Gail expresses her concern that there is no particular plan to actually make use of the space. Others feel that if the space was "in hand", individuals, parents or staff, would step forward to make use of it. Lisa asks whether there is a minimum amount of time that the building must be used and the answer is no.

Chuck thanks John for the "point/counterpoint" approach and states his major concern is that of safety of getting students in and out of the schoolhouse. John notes that the HOS would need to construct a safety plan. Cathy has interacted with the safety office who said that no incidents have occurred with students in the past. Gail observes, though, that the circumstances would be different than having kindergartners bussed in.

Thom wonders about a long-term plan; Cathy states that, although the town would appreciate a long-term plan, they are not requiring one. Anna feels that utilizing the space would be a good connection with the town. Rich and Lisa agree that if the liability cost is reasonable then we should try it and see whether it is used sufficiently.

MOTION: By Rich/Anna to have the BFCCPS pursue the use of the Red Brick Schoolhouse for one year subject to the completion of a suitable contract that addresses logistics.

RESULT: Pass (8-4, Thom, Chuck, Gail, Cheryl)

John states that the BSA has agreed to pay utilities for 1 year. The Franklin Town Council will need to approve BFCCPS use to complete the deal. President Herb Hunter and several members of the Red Brick Schoolhouse association introduce themselves.

Open Comment (8:12)

Nothing to report.

Clerk's Report (8:13)

MOTION: By Chuck/Cathy to approve minutes of the 7/12 and 9/11 Board meetings.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

Action Register (8:14)

Cathy reviews the register of action items. Anna comments that progress reporting on the strategic plan will begin in December and continue in alternate months thereafter until June. Trustees, especially committee chair people are to consult the action register for upcoming deadlines.

Treasurer's Report (8:17)

Anna reviews the minutes of the 10/1 Finance Committee meeting with thanks to Tim for producing those minutes efficiently. Anna notes that the FinComm is considering having a consultant provide guidance for improvements to the accounting system. The school is considering having an accountant come in on a 1-day-per-month basis to assist with process. Anna distributes the charter statement for the FinComm which includes the list of meeting dates and voting members. A faculty member's presence would be appreciated.

MOTION: By Anna/Cathy to approve the Finance Committee charter as presented.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

Anna reviews the monthly actual vs budget statement. She notes that the insurance line item does not reflect contributions from teachers which will reduce the cost to the school in time. She observes that the Public Relations Committee has been involved in seeking out grants to help the school and the PCO. Alan Earls is a member of PCO and PR Committee which will be effective. Anna highlights that the Foundation has agreed to allocate \$10K towards participation by staff in the annual Core Knowledge Conference.

Pond Street Property: Anna states that John has distributed proposals from two architects for determining the feasibility of moving the existing building on the lot or renovating the building for a school use. The Washington Street negotiation is ongoing with the hope of progress being made by the end of October, but the consideration of the Pond Street property would be done in parallel. The Finance Committee took up the discussion of Pond Street at its 10/1 meeting.

MOTION: By Anna/Tim to approve the transfer of up to \$12K for the purpose of funding a feasibility study on the Pond Street property.

Significant discussion ensues before a vote is taken. Rich asks about the process if the Board votes to spend the money and then the property is sold elsewhere. It is understood that the money is forfeited. Rich highlights that the vote of \$12K represents a significant shift in direction by the Board. Gail is concerned that the initial money would set us on a path of spending significantly more money to get further studies.

John and Chuck state that the result of this study will not yield enough information to decide whether to go forward with a purchase; it is only to shed light on the use or movement of the existing building on the lot. It is a first step over the many hurdles that would need to be cleared on our way to pursuit of the property and a building on the site. Tim feels that it is the Board's obligation to take action towards a suitable school building and that this step is an initial, but critical one.

RESULT: Pass (11-0-1, Poh-Lin)

John seeks authority to choose the architect firm based on his analysis of the proposals.

MOTION: By Anna/Thom to grant the Board President the responsibility to choose the best firm with which to engage in performing a feasibility study.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

Head of School Report (9:33)

Kevin applauds the good and heady discussion by the Board related to property and potential for a new school. He states that there are many reasons why we should work as hard as we do including the recognized individuals at the beginning of the meeting. Kevin suggests there are other reasons and one is academic excellence. The report on MCAS is spectacular, not perfect.

Kevin had distributed copies of the MCAS report including summary statements, comparative data, and year-on-year analysis. He presents his findings and highlights several key points. He begins with consideration of the Federal data about Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) which is tied directly to the No Child Left Behind statute approved several years ago to track progress in grades 3-8 in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. BFCCPS results show no issues with an overall Performance Rating of "Very High". The Improvement Rating for ELA is "On Target" and Mathematics is "Above Target". Excellent results.

The performance report is tied to one's state testing procedure which is MCAS in Massachusetts. This year's results for BFCCPS are particularly good.

MOTION: By Anna/Tim to continue the meeting past 10 o'clock.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

Kevin reviews cohort analysis tracking grades since 2004. He observes that results in grade 6 reflect the arrival of new students at this grade in year's past in which we tested students that we did not train. With the improved retention last year and anticipated for this and future year's, the test results should improve. When asked about the biggest risk to maintaining high scores, Kevin stated that student turnover is probably it.

In the end Kevin states that our school has a rich environment for teaching kids and commendable test results to go along with it. He challenges the Board to challenge him to have no students failing the MCAS test next year. Rich appreciates Kevin's conclusive comment and hopes that the mission of the school including character education and community service continue to draw families to the school rather than just test scores. Gail feels that the faculty is "on board" with the sentiment that school environment comes first and test results are a bi-product of that work.

Joe notes that enrollment currently stands at 416 with a few shifts in the first month. He reports that the Curriculum Nights were well attended and believes that these represent the initial part of a year-long dialogue between the school and parents. Another step will be a parent technology seminar upcoming on 10/15 at which parents will be assisted in getting up to speed with the areas of the curriculum that are tied tightly with technology advances. Joe also states that former faculty member and consultant Deb (Farmer) Kris will be coming to talk to parents on 10/20. She will also meet with faculty during her visit.

Joe raises the topic of field trips at the school which are used by faculty to connect the curriculum with the "real world". Issues of cost and communication (of goals of the trip) have arisen and are being addressed. Future announcements and sign up sheets for field trips will include a cover letter explaining the purpose and goal of the trip.

Joe reports that the construction on the music room is expected to be complete by 10/13. He notes that there have been some amazing assemblies and events in the school of late including a superb show of marionettes, Safe Walk to School day (with participation by the Franklin Police and Fire departments and 141 students plus faculty and HOS). 10/8 is International Walk To School Day.

Adjournment (10:30)

MOTION: By Anna/Nav to adjourn.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)