



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2020 | 8 AM
VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE CALL

Board Members Present: Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, William Brinkman, David Bryant, Gerald Escovitz, Joseph Hargrave, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Bruce Levine, Beth Packel

Others Present: Aryss Bruce-Gallashaw (Freire Middle Student), Leigh Botwinik, Olivia Burgess, Hyniff Collins (Freire High Student), Kelly Davenport, Gretchen Ehrizt (Freire Middle Teacher), Dawn Eubanks, Dior Fields, Dan Kessler (Freire Middle Teacher), Johnny Mills, Chris Moore, Bill Ray, Melanie Reiser, Anthony Royster, Scott Solomon, Devan Smith (Freire High Teacher), Charles Ware, Chris Zagacki

Meeting Start, 8:05 AM

I. Public Comment

- a. No public comment.

II. COVID Reopening

- a. Kelly Davenport shares that leadership is currently working to create a plan to open the school for small groups of students who require student support services after the election. Kelly shares that the yet-to-be-drafted plan would be optional for both students and staff based on how comfortable they are with coming back into the building.
- b. The board suggests the Heads of School meet with their staff and create a proposed plan for reopening, keeping the board updated with what is decided by leadership. Once a plan is drafted and reviewed, the board is willing to authorize the Heads of School to bring small groups of students (including those who require student services support) into the building to provide the best support possible while maintaining a safe environment.
- c. Bruce Lesser makes a motion for the charter school organization to develop a plan to bring back students on an incremental basis, including small groups of special education students and those who need testing, as they deem necessary and appropriate to the benefit of those students while maintaining a safe environment.
- d. Beth Packel makes a motion to approve. Lisa Hoffstein seconds.
- e. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, William Brinkman, David Bryant, Gerald Escovitz, Joseph Hargrave, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Bruce Levine, and Beth Packel vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

III. Resolutions

- a. Review and Approval of Minutes from Board Meeting on September 16, 2020
 - i. The board reviews the minutes from September 16, 2020.
 - ii. Beth Packel makes a motion to approve. Bruce Lesser seconds.

- iii. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, William Brinkman, David Bryant, Gerald Escovitz, Joseph Hargrave, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Bruce Levine, and Beth Packel vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- b. Slate of Staff with Salaries
 - i. The board reviews the Slate of Staff with Salaries.
 - ii. Chris Zagacki shares that the Freire Middle School did not award raises this year because of the uncertain nature of the budget in a post-COVID world. Freire Middle chose to give a one-time stipend to all staff members in lieu of a raise.
 - iii. Bruce Lesser asks if Freire Schools has salary comparison information between Freire Charter School and other schools in the region. Leigh Botwinik shares that Freire Schools conducted a salary comparison analysis a few years ago and plans to reevaluate salaries in the coming years.
 - iv. Raquel Leach makes a motion to approve the Slate of Staff with Salaries. Bruce Lesser seconds.
 - v. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, William Brinkman, David Bryant, Gerald Escovitz, Joseph Hargrave, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Bruce Levine, and Beth Packel vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- c. 2020-2021 Textbook Review
 - i. Beth Packel makes a motion to approve the 2020-2021 Textbook List. Gerald Escovitz seconds.
 - ii. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, William Brinkman, David Bryant, Gerald Escovitz, Joseph Hargrave, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Bruce Levine, and Beth Packel vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

IV. Financials

- a. August 2020 Financial Report
 - i. Bill Ray shares that enrollment is very strong right now with the schools losing less students while virtual compared to this point in previous academic years. Each Freire campus is on pace to meet their budgeted enrollment without the need to backfill additional students mid-year.
 - ii. Bill and the Heads of School are working on auditing the traditional expenses of an in-person school year to see what expenses have not been incurred during virtual learning and repurposing those expenses elsewhere in the budget.
 - iii. Bill notes that Freire Charter Schools' cash on hand as of August 31, 2020 is \$2.47M. The School is projected to end the year with approximately \$2.23M, representing a \$158k decrease from 6/30/20. The School paid for various one-time capital projects in FY 2021, including the HVAC upgrade at Freire High and network infrastructure upgrades at both campuses. The School also paid \$122k in compensatory education costs from prior year agreements. Projected cash is still expected to exceed 45 days cash on hand.
- b. Audit Update
 - i. Bill Ray notes that all fieldwork has been completed for the annual audits. To date, there are no findings or concerns. Draft reports should be received by the end of next week.

V. Advancement

- a. Advancement Report
 - i. Melanie Reiser shares that the Advancement Committee of the joint boards met a few weeks ago and decided to set a more ambitious fundraising target for the year, with a

network-wide fundraising goal of \$525k. The committee agreed to hold on scheduling any fundraising event until after the election.

- ii. Instead of participating in Giving Tuesday, Freire Schools wants to begin a fall fundraising push in the coming weeks that focuses both on Freire Schools' COVID response and anti-racism work.
- b. Political Update
 - i. Melanie shares that Freire Schools leadership recently met with Representative Johanna McClinton, a representative for West Philadelphia, who is perceived as a charter advocate. Rep. McClinton shared that charter reform is not on the horizon
 - ii. Representative Jordan Harris recently shared that the state anticipates a \$5.5 billion deficit for the coming year due to COVID-19.
 - iii. Kelly Davenport shares that Friday morning there will be a short press event taking place in front of Freire High School on Chestnut Street to introduce the new Executive Director of PCPCS (Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools), Lenny McAllister.
 - c. Talking Points
 - i. Melanie reviews the talking points with the board noting that Freire Middle School and TECH Freire are now serving as meal distribution sites two days a week for any student under 18 years old. Families can stop by at either campus, or any other distribution site in the city, to pick up a week's worth of meals for each student living in their household.

VI. School Report

- a. Staff Update
 - i. Devan Smith introduces herself to the board. Devan is the Science Department Head and 10th Grade Health & Wellness Teacher at Freire High School. Devan has been with Freire Schools for 10 years. Devan shares that she is excited about the additional technology integration that has taken place while virtual, namely Kami and PearDeck both programs that allow for more student interaction while virtual. Devan shares that the science department has been working on ways to allow students to conduct experiments at home. Recently, students have been able to pick up supply kits from Freire High and conduct the experiment with their peers via zoom.
 - ii. Chris Moore shares that Devan has become the go-to teacher at Freire High for software and programs that help enhance online learning.
- b. Student Update
 - i. Hyniff Collins, a junior at Freire High School, introduces himself to the board. He shares that he is the leader of the Black and Brown Unity Club at Freire High which seeks to empower people of color and grow community within the school by providing a space for deep discussion.
 - ii. Chris Moore shares that Hyniff is a remarkable student and he is glad he is a member of the Freire Family. Hyniff recently earned a sizeable scholarship to a 4-day Model United Nations program in the spring.
 - iii. Aryss Bruce-Gallashaw, a current 6th grader at Freire Middle School, introduces herself to the board. Aryss has nearly perfect attendance and is an exceptional student. Aryss shares that she is enjoying virtual learning and the ability to sleep in later compared to in-person instruction.
 - iv. Aryss shares that she enjoys small group, where students break out into smaller sections with additional teachers and dive into a particular content area, like math.

Small groups allow teachers to go deeper into the content and provide more relevant and targeted one-on-one student feedback.

- v. Gretchen Ehritz, the Lab Leader and 8th Grade Math Teacher at Freire Middle School, shares that she has been with Freire Schools for 5 years and is currently in her 13th year of teaching. Gretchen shares that that she has been focused on how to enhance small group and keep students engaged while in a virtual learning environment.
 - vi. Gretchen shares that as a math teacher, she enjoys using Desmos, a program that integrates into the Illustrative Math curriculum. Desmos allows for teachers to have more dynamic instruction with community/teacher-created lessons and materials. Gretchen shares that there are some positives to being in a virtual world. One major difference in the virtual world is student's ability to attend classes at any time. If a student is absent or running late, teachers are empowered to reach out to the parent and student directly to see what's going on. In a way, this type of immediate, personalized communication is not possible when you have a classroom full of students. However, Gretchen notes that relationship building is more challenging through the computer screen.
- c. Heads Report
- i. September 2020 Data Packet
 1. Chris Moore shares that there are students who are doing better online than they did during in-person instruction. Chris notes that he is feeling a sense of lethargy from the school community mainly from the students being stuck inside for the past few months. However, he notes this is more reason for Freire High to potentially open to small groups of students with the most need for additional support.
 2. Chris Moore shares that there is a small group of teachers and administrators who are conducting home visits for students who are struggling with attendance. These visits have been well received by parents and students alike.
 3. Chris Zagacki shares that attendance is still strong across all grades and assignment completion is at 86% schoolwide. Freire Middle School has seen that students struggling to complete asynchronous work. In response, Freire Middle has implemented a new "D.T.Dubb" (Do the Work) program that awards the grade level that completes the highest percentage of asynchronous work each week. Freire Middle is also focused on authentic assessments and projects that keep kids engaged, motivated, and challenged – instead of multiple-choice questions and other traditional means of measuring student success.
- d. Anti-Racism Update
- i. Kelly Davenport shares that Freire Schools is currently developing 40 leaders across the network through anti-racist training facilitated by Just Instruction. Kelly shares that the training is challenging but incredibly powerful. Kelly notes that the end product from this training will hopefully be a place with less pain for staff of color and more equity for the students across Freire Schools.
 - ii. The board asks specifics about how the training is conducted. As of right now, there is no plan to include the board in these trainings due to cost. Once the initial 40 leaders complete the training, the plan is to open up the program to all staff members across the network.

VII. Board Committee Report

- a. Education Committee
 - i. There is no update at this time.
- b. Audit Committee
 - i. *Refer to the Audit Update in section IV.b.*
- c. 403(b) Committee
 - i. There is no update at this time.
- d. Safety Committee
 - i. There is no update at this time.

Meeting Adjourned, 9:52 AM