



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

APRIL 9, 2025 | 8 AM

Meeting ID: 868 5522 0923

LOCATION: FREIRE CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOL (1026 MARKET ST., PHILA., PA 19107)

Board Members Present: Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser, Kathleen O'Connell

Others Present: Leigh Botwinik, Doreese Bull, Olivia Burgess, Pam Dougherty, Promis Evans (11th grade, FCHS) Dawn Eubanks, Brian Galetto, Jamillah Gibbs (Dean of Culture, TECH), Johnny Mills, Chris Moore, Katie Pollard (Director of People Operations, FSNO), Tanza Pugliese, Paul Ramirez, Melanie Reiser, Scott Solomon, Kate Webb (Math Department Chair/Instructional Coach, FCMS), Nathan Yufer, Andrea Zepp

Meeting Start, 8:00 AM

I. Public Comment

A. No public comment

II. Executive Session

A. Personnel Matter - Review Slate of Staff (Attachment 1A)

B. Settlement & Release for BJ (Attachment 1B)

1. Linda Kilpatrick makes a motion to move into Executive Session at 8 AM *"To discuss any matter involving the ... evaluation of performance ... of any specific ... current ... employee... employed ... by the agency."* and *"To review and discuss agency business which, if conducted in public, would violate a lawful privilege or lead to the disclosure of information or confidentiality protected by law, including matters related to the initiation and conduct of investigations of possible or certain violations of the law and quasi-judicial deliberations."* Raquel Leach seconds.
2. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
3. David Bryant makes a motion to exit Executive Session at 8:10 AM. Raquel Leach seconds.
4. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

III. Resolutions

A. Review & Approve Minutes from February 5, 2025 (Attachment 2A)*

1. The board reviews the minutes from February 5, 2025.
2. Kathleen O'Connell requests an edit to be made to all voting sections and the word "no" to the motion statement of "There are no votes against and no abstentions."
3. Nicole Jenkins makes a motion to approve. Raquel Leach seconds.
4. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

B. Review & Approve Teacher Equity Plan (Attachment 2B)*

1. Katie Pollard reviews the Teacher Equity Plan with the board.
2. Plan is required as part of receiving Title I/Federal educational funds. The purpose of the plan is to ensure the school districts are not disproportionately assigning teachers with less experience or credentials or assigning less effective teachers to schools that qualify for Title 1 funds or have significantly higher portions of low-income students.
3. The Teacher Equity plan outlines what Freire Schools is doing as a network to recruit and retain qualified, experienced teachers.
4. David Bryant makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.

5. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- C. Review & Approve Student Handbooks (Attachment 2C)***
1. Tanza Pugliese reviews the 2025-2026 student handbooks with the board.
 2. Freire Charter School decided to relocate a few policies that are less relevant to day-to-day life as a student, such as the Student Records Confidentiality Policy, to the website.
 3. For significant but lengthy policies, such as Title IX, we included a short summary in the handbook with a link to the website for the full policy.
 4. Freire Charter School condensed the Emergency Procedures section into a more readable chart.
 5. Freire Charter School proposes modifying the Chromebook/technology policy to signal that Chromebooks will either be provided 1:1, where students are assigned a personal device, or via classroom technology, where the school maintains carts of chromebooks that teachers may use when a lesson calls for it.
 6. Nicole Jenkins makes a motion to approve. David Bryant seconds.
 7. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- D. Presentation of Draft Budget for FY 2026 (Attachment 2D)**
1. Nathan Yufer reviews the DRAFT budget for FY26 with the board.
 2. Freire Charter School is budgeting an annual general fund deficit of \$1,400,000 for FY26. This is driven by the loss of ESSER grant revenue, lower enrollment, and the MS offering school buses next year to students.
 3. Freire Charter School current budget cash on hand as of June 30, 2026 is estimated to be \$2,400,000, which represents 38 days of cash on hand.
 4. The proposed budget currently does not meet either of the financial loan covenants surrounding debt service coverage and days cash on hand (standard is 45 days).
 5. Average enrollment is budgeted at 960 students, which would be 480 students each at both the MS and the HS. Special education enrollment is budgeted at 235, representing 25% of overall enrollment.
 6. ESSER revenue is budgeted to decrease \$900,000 to \$0, due to the grant ending 9/30/24.
 7. Medical insurance is budgeted to increase by 20%, CSO Fee is tied to enrollment and therefore is expected to increase by \$136k, and Approved Private Schools (APS) expected to increase by \$63k.
- E. Review & Approve 2025-2026 School Calendar (Attachment 2E)***
1. Johnny Mills reviews the 2025-2026 School Calendar with the board.
 2. Linda Kilpatrick makes a motion to approve. David Bryant seconds.
 3. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- F. Approve Pam Dougherty as Head of School for FCHS (Attachment 2F)***
1. Paul Ramirez shares Pam D will be stepping into her new role as Head of School for FCHS in the new school year.
 2. Linda Kilpatrick makes a motion to approve. Raquel Leach seconds.
 3. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- G. Approve Andrea Zepp as New CEO of Freire Charter School (Attachment 2G)***
1. Paul Ramirez shares Andrea Zepp will be stepping into her new role as the CEO of Freire Charter School.
 2. Lisa Hoffstein makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
 3. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- H. Approve Freire Schools Collaborative Bylaws (Attachment 2H)***
1. Leigh Botwinik reviews the Freire Schools Collaborative Bylaws with the board.
 2. One minor edit is proposed to update the organization's name from Build the future to Freire Schools Collaborative. This change must be approved by Freire Charter School per the bylaws.
 3. Lisa Hoffstein makes a motion to approve. David Bryant seconds.
 4. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

- I. Adopt Foreign Exchange Student Policy (Attachment 2I)*
 1. Leigh Botwinik shares Freire Charter High School recently received interest from a foreign exchange student for the upcoming school year.
 2. The School proposes adopting a foreign exchange student policy because of the value that foreign exchange students could bring to the Charter School community, fostering cultural exchange and global awareness among our students. As foreign exchange students are not PA residents, the School would not receive state funding for them nor would such students count towards the enrollment cap.
 3. Raquel Leach makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
 4. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. Lisa Hoffstein is abstaining.
- J. Approve Slate of Staff*
 1. The board reviews the Slate of Staff.
 2. Linda Kilpatrick makes a motion to approve. David Bryant seconds.
 3. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- K. Approve Settlement & Release for BJ*
 1. The board reviews the Settlement & Release for BJ.
 2. David Bryant makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
 3. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

IV. School Report

- A. Staff & Student Report
 1. Chris Moore introduced Promise Evans, who shared recent academic updates.
 2. She noted that she recently completed the ACT exam, which was administered digitally.
 3. Looking ahead, Promise shared that students are anticipating a college tour in April, with scheduled visits to Coppin State University and Morgan State University—an exciting opportunity to explore potential post-secondary paths.
- B. Heads Report
 1. Chris Moore shares a few trips are coming up for the students along with other joyful events
 2. He also highlighted that preparations are underway for the school's Pep Rally, and with Spring Break approaching, there's a renewed sense of energy throughout the building.
 3. Pam D. shared that STAR Benchmark testing is currently in progress.
 4. She observed a growing sense of comfort and confidence among both students and staff as they engage in testing and daily routines.
 5. Andrea Zepp addressed student attendance, noting that while it has not yet reached desired levels, other areas show encouraging progress.
 6. Out-of-school suspensions have decreased, and STAR Benchmark data indicates overall academic improvement.
 7. Kate Webb reported a 6% increase in student growth when comparing the most recent STAR assessment data to the last benchmark.
 8. She also highlighted the implementation of W.I.N. (What I Need) periods in classrooms, which are designed to provide students with targeted, individualized support based on their specific learning needs as part of the School's Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS.)
 9. Jackie and Kate have also been conducting academic interventions with students who require additional support, particularly those who are performing below grade level. Their collaborative efforts are aimed at closing achievement gaps and boosting overall performance.
 10. Freire Network Dashboard (Attachment 3A)
 - a) See IV.A.1.2.3 & See IV.B.1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8
 11. Lead Water Testing Update (Attachment 3B)
 - a) Johnny Mills shares that Freire Charter School last conducted lead water testing in Spring 2024, with results publicly posted to the school's website and shared with all parents/guardians through the school's bi-weekly newsletter. The test results are included in the board packet for review.
 - b) In accordance with Act 39 of 2018, if the school chooses not to test for lead levels in a given year, the School must discuss lead annually at a public meeting. This discussion and report review serve as Freire Charter School's annual public discussion of lead.
 - c) In an effort to ensure a lead-free learning environment for all members of our school community, Freire Charter School will re-test for lead in the water again in Spring 2029.

C. Graduation Update**

1. Friday, June 6th, at The Dell Music Center (2400 Strawberry Mansion Dr., Philadelphia PA 19132) at 9:00AM

V. Financials**A. February 2025 Financial Report (Attachment 4)**

1. Nathan Yufer shares that Freire Charter School has a current surplus of \$420,000.
2. As of February 28, 2025, the MS has an average enrollment of 469 and the HS has an average enrollment of 509. We will continue monitoring enrollment and will make adjustments to the year end forecast as needed.
3. Significant expenses currently for Freire Charter School include:
 - a) Approve Private School (APS) costs for three students which will drive the forecast to \$300,000 for the year.
 - b) Special Education Transportation - the School hired a new transportation company for the remainder of the year. This was done to save on special education costs. This program is budgeted at \$900,000 for FY25 and will be monitored.
 - c) Budgeting elevator bills and repair costs that range from \$86,000 - \$125,000.

VI. Advancement**A. Advancement Report (Attachment 5A)**

1. Melanie Reiser shares that the F25 unrestricted fundraising target is set to \$775,000 which is \$150,000 per Freire campus.
2. Currently the Advancement Team has raised \$359,431 in donations and pledges toward the goal.
3. FY25 Fundraising progress surrounds the following:
 - a) Bridge to Wisdom honoring Kelly Davenport will be held on Tuesday, May 13th at the Independence Visitor Center at 5:30pm.
 - b) Our Valentine "thank you" cards to donors went out in February
 - c) Foundations in Delaware and Pennsylvania are starting to communicate to past grant recipients a desire to help navigate the uncertain financial landscape, including uncertainty about future Federal funds for our campuses.

B. Bridge to Wisdom Sponsor Packet (Attachment 5B)

1. Melanie reviews the Bridge to Wisdom Sponsor Packet with the board.

C. Political Landscape

1. Freire Schools continues to pay close attention to any proposed charter regulation, budget cuts or proposed changes to the charter school renewal process.

VII. Governance**A. Review & Approve Board Meeting 2025-2026 Schedule (Attachment 6)***

1. The board reviews the board meeting schedule for 2025-2026.
2. Lisa Hoffstein makes a motion to approve. Linda Kilpatrick seconds.
3. Kiara Allison, Paul Archibald, David Bryant, Lisa Hoffstein, Nicole Jenkins, Linda Kilpatrick, Raquel Leach, Bruce Lesser and Kathleen O'Connell vote in favor. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

B. Annual evaluation of Freire Schools Collaborative and Board self evaluation

1. Leigh Botwinik and Paul Ramirez share that the school board annually receives the opportunity to evaluate the services received from the network office along with a self evaluation survey.
2. A survey will be sent out in the coming weeks.

Meeting Adjourned, 9:46 AM