



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SEPTEMBER 21, 2023 @ 8 AM

ZOOM: MEETING ID: 867 9681 8940 | PASSWORD: 195330

LOCATION: FREIRE CHARTER SCHOOL WILMINGTON | 201 W. 14TH ST., WILMINGTON DE 19801

Board Members Present: Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, John Kane, Robert Mansell, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Nathan Will

Others Present: Leigh Botwinik, Olivia Burgess, Toni Damon (Assistant Head of School), Kelly Davenport, Paul Rameriz, Melanie Reiser, Maddie Weckel, Nathan Yufer

Meeting Start: 8:00 AM

I. Public Comment

- A. Olivia Burgess asks the board to celebrate David Singleton and his accomplishments for Freire Wilmington.

II. Governance

- A. Antiracism
 1. Between the World and Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015)
 - a. Kelly Davenport shares the new Anti Racism initiative the Freire Schools Network and schools are implementing this year. She welcomes all board members who are interested in the reading to join in.
- B. FCSW Board Visitation Day | October 19, 2023
 - a. Olivia Burgess reminds the board about the annual Board Visitation Day, which will be held on October 19, 2023.

III. Review & Approval of Minutes, June 22, 2023 & June 28, 2023 (*Att. 3*)*

- A. The board reviews the minutes from the June 22, 2023 & June 28, 2023 board meetings.
- B. Kate Bayard makes a motion to approve. Nathan Moser seconds.
- C. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, John Kane, Robert Mansell, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

IV. School Report

- A. Staff Update
 1. Nathan Moser shares the staff recently had a great summer but are happy to be back in session with the students. Staff also were pleased and amazed by the turn out at the back to school night.
 2. Recently, Yonder pouches have been implemented into the school and it has been a back and forth process with the students. Some students are having a hard time adjusting to the new cellphone policy and others are encouraging their peers to follow the policy and help with the culture of the school.
 3. Nathan emphasizes his appreciation and excitement about the dual enrollment program over the last year. Dual enrollment is where students can take a high school course but the course has a college level aspect and the student can receive a college credit for it.
- B. Student Update
 1. Alicia Martin (12th Grade), loves how close knit the Freire Wilmington community is due to it allowing her to build a better relationship with her teachers and classmates.
 2. Alicia's initial reaction to the new cell phone policy was not in favor of the process but she appreciates it more due to it allowing her the opportunity to appreciate the information she is learning in her classes.
 3. Alicia shares her joy and excitement for prom and graduation. She wants to get her degree in psychology and attend Howard University.
- C. Heads Report
 1. Admissions Update

- i. See C.3.IV.
- 2. Freire Schools September 2023 Dashboard (Att. 4A)
- 3. Freire Charter School Wilmington 2023-24 Annual Plan (Att. 4B)
 - I. Maddie welcomes the board and reviews admissions, the dashboard and annual plan.
 - II. Maddie shares that this Academic Year is extremely critical since it is a renewal year. Maddie shares that for the past few years the campus has not met proficiency goals and it has caused her to reflect on her leadership and what is needed for transformational change to performance and growth..
 - III. The Annual Plan aims to address some of the shortcomings regarding student proficiency, the document also outlines academic achievement plans and culture readjustment plans for the school.
 - Maddie introduces Toni Damon (Assistant Head of School) to the board. Maddie shares she will be in charge of the attendance team.
 - Toni shares she has 28 years of experience and is extremely ecstatic to be at Freire Wilmington and help ensure our students are coming into school to get the education they need to succeed.
 - IV. Enrollment currently is below the budgeted amount and lower in comparison to last year.
 - A. We will need to make budget cuts in order to balance the budget
 - B. One barrier to enrollment is the new application process put in place by the state. It has become cumbersome for many families and schools since new families in DE/public schools must register at their District school before they can enroll with us.

V. Financials

- A. June 2023 Financial Report (*Att. 5A*)*
 - 1. Nathan Yufer reviews the June 2023 Financial Report.
 - 2. Nathan shares Freire Wilmington had enrollment challenges last year, the school ended the year with 450 students however Freire Wilmington did receive a good amount of donations related to the gym project. Freire Wilmington also received a one-time supplemental payment from the state that went towards staff bonuses so these additional Revenue sources helped offset the decrease in revenue because we had lower than expected enrollment.
 - 3. Since taking out an \$11,000,000 loan to purchase the building, according to the government accounting standards the loan actually counts as a revenue for the school.
 - 4. Freire Wilmington ended the year with \$20,600,000 in revenue compared to the budget that we originally had set for \$8,900,000.
 - 5. Expenses for the year did go over the original budget that we passed back in Spring of 2022, however that was driven by the purchasing of the building and when the building was purchased Freire Wilmington received extra cash that was used to perform needed repairs on the building.
 - 6. We will meet all financial metrics for 22-23 except enrollment.
 - 7. Nathan Will makes a motion to approve. Lissa Brutus seconds.
 - 8. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, John Kane, Robert Mansell, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- B. Modified/Possible 23-24 Budgets (*Att. 5B*)*
 - 1. Nathan shares two possible amended budgets to account for lower enrollment. One shows a tentative enrollment amount for 420 and the other for 450. Both would include cuts to budgeted expenses including some layoffs.
 - 2. Maddie shares information about applying for a minor modification to our charter to reduce enrollment.
 - 3. The board holds on making a vote due to not having enough time to review the document and wishes to revisit at the October 19, 2023 board meeting.
- C. CBOC
 - 1. No update at this time.
- D. Audit Update
 - 1. Nathan shares the audit is being finalized and will be presented at the next board meeting.

VI. Advancement

A. Advancement Report (Att. 6)

1. Melanie Reiser shares last year Freire Wilmington had an amazing fundraising year and thanks all the board members for their dedication and donations.
2. Advancement held a capital campaign that raised close to \$1,900,000 and Melanie thanks everyone on the board and praises the quality of the program. More money has been raised towards programs related to the athletic center rather than the construction itself.
3. Over the summer Advancement applied for a competitive Federal grant through the Delaware Department of Education. It's called the Stronger Connections Grant, which is designed to promote safer and healthier learning communities across the country and Freire Wilmington received \$316,000.
4. Last week Freire Wilmington met with the Sonecha Family Foundation and the foundation has been a big supporter of Freire Wilmington. They pledged \$1,000,000 over the next five years and we are so grateful.
5. Bridge to Wisdom Awards Reception will be held on Wednesday, November 15, 2023 from 5:30pm to 8pm at the Liberty View at the Independence Visitor Center. Freire Schools will be honoring one of our major donors and supporters Charles Widger as well as paying tribute to one of the original school board members, Gerry Escovtiz.

VII. Policies and Agreements

A. Approval of Children's Internet Protection Act Policy (Att. 7A)*

1. Leigh Botwinik shares the policy is annually approved and it is to protect students from finding unsafe content and block hacking access into the Freire Wilmington internet infrastructure and to educate students about Internet safety.
2. Kate Bayard makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
3. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, John Kane, Robert Mansell, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

B. Approval of Health & Safety Plan 2023-24 (Att. 7B)*

1. Leigh shares the policy is required due to ESSER funds and every six months we are required to re-adjust the plan to ensure we are in compliance with guidelines. There are no changes to the plan since the last time it was approved and continues to stay aligned to the CDC recommendations.
2. Nathan Moser makes a motion to approve. Kate Bayard seconds.
3. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, John Kane, Robert Mansell, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

C. Approve Charter Renewal Application (Att. 7C)*

1. Minor Modification Proposal for Enrollment
 - a. Leigh shares draft charter renewal application that is due at the end of the month. The last few pages, the board has to approve the document and attest that Freire Wilmington will follow all relevant laws for being a charter school.
 - b. The application covers topics such as academic performance, financials, and organizational compliance. It includes a lower enrollment projection for the charter term because we knew we would be discussing a modification request to lower enrollment cap today.
 - c. Nathan Will makes a motion to approve. Nathan Moser seconds.
 - d. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, John Kane, Robert Mansell, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

VIII. Gym Update & Hard Hat Tour - David Singleton

- A. David Singleton thanks everyone, especially Melanie and Nathan for their help and hardwork in this project. David shares that many of the money received from outside sources do not have to be repaired once the gym is ready.
- B. The gym will be officially opened by December 2023

IX. Midtown Brandywine Committee Update

- A. Kate Bayard shares the committee has been discussing the park lights and the drive lights. The neighborhood is mainly concerned about safety in the park for individuals.

Meeting Adjourned, 9:30 AM