



# MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**OCTOBER 19, 2023 @ 8 AM**

**ZOOM MEETING ID: 861 7425 4289 | PASSWORD: 608408**

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

**Board Members Present:** Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, Clint Walker Nathan Will

**Others Present:** Leigh Botwinik, Olivia Burgess, Toni Damon, Kelly Davenport, Kaelyn Dupree (10th grade), Paul Rameriz, Melanie Reiser, Nathan Yufer

## Meeting Start, 8 AM

### I Public Comment

- A. There is no public comment.

### II. Executive Session

- A. Head of School Evaluation (*Att.2*)
1. David Singleton makes a motion into Executive Session at 8:01 AM to discuss personnel matters in which the names, competency and abilities of individual employees or students are discussed, unless the employee or student requests that such a meeting be open. Nathan Moser seconds.
  2. The board makes a motion to adjourn Executive Session at 8:27 AM. Nathan Moser seconds.
  3. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, Clint Walker and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

### III. Governance

- A. FCSW Board Visitation Day | October 19, 2023
- a. Olivia Burgess reminds the board about the annual Board Visitation Day, which will be held after today's board meeting.

### IV. Review & Approval of Minutes, September 21, 2023 (*Att. 4*)\*

- A. The board reviews the minutes from the September 21, 2023 board meeting.
- B. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Lissa Brutus seconds.
- C. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, Clint Walker and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

### V. School Report

- A. Staff & Student Update
1. Nathan Moser touches on staff morale/impact from the recent layoffs and job changes due to low enrollment.
  2. Nathan shares his concerns about the beginning of year STAR benchmark test scores for the 10th grade students being so low and how hard it is to maintain a college prep level of instruction when students are starting so low. But he appreciates that all teachers, not just ELA and math teachers, are being given the data. He also shares that social studies teachers like him are participating in teaching reading/ELA standards.
  3. In regard to Joy, students are excited about the gym being finished and being able to have their basketball games and practices on campus.
  4. Nathan introduces Kaelyn Dupree (10th grade), she thanks the board for allowing her to share her thoughts today.
  5. Kaelyn shares Nathan Moser is one of her favorite teachers because of his hands on teaching style which makes class more engaging
  6. She shares she appreciates the Yonder pouches being introduced into the school because it has helped her and her classmates pay attention although she worries about not having access to it in an emergency,

## B. Heads Report

### 1. Admissions Update

- [See. III.B.2.](#)

### 2. October Data Packet ([Att. 5A](#))

- Maddie Weckel reviews the data packet. Math proficiency on start of year benchmark is down slightly in comparison to last year but a cohort analysis shows more consistency year over year.
- Maddie notes the leaders have been ensuring all staff understand the data and are planning for how to use it to drive their instruction.
- Maddie shares that Ms. Toni Damon is at the helm of the attendance team and thanks her for her fierce leadership skills. They are implementing the plan to communicate absences and follow truancy procedures for those students who meet the threshold for absences.
- Disciplinary incidents are lower than last year and Maddie thanks Tyron for his diligence and his new plan for the year.
- Admissions unit count ended last week with 411 students which is below budgeted amount. Maddie and her team have been working with Nathan Yufer and Kelly Davenport to ensure the schools financial sustainability is preserved.

## C. Slate of Staff ([Att. 5B](#))\*

1. The board reviews the slate of staff.
2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Lissa Brutus seconds.
3. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, Clint Walker and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

## VI. Financials

### A. August 2023 Financial Report ([Att. 6A](#))\*

1. Nathan Yufer shares that the school continues to struggle with enrollment. The original budget that was approved back in June 2023 assumed enrollment of 475 students. Our official enrollment which is determined by the September 30 unit count is 411 students. This will have a negative impact on revenue and the school will have to make cost reductions to offset the reduction in enrollment.
2. Some good news is that the Sonecha Foundation pledged \$1M over the next 5 years (\$200k per year) so we will have an additional \$200k in revenue for FY24 that was not in the original budget. We also received a "Stronger Connections" grant from the state which will be ~\$150k in additional revenue in FY24.
3. It's still early in the year so it's hard to see any expense trends yet. For most categories we are projecting to be close to budget with the below exceptions: advertising and building maintenance are trending above budget and gym construction and salaries below budget.
4. If the school can keep expenses under control we should end the year with a small surplus. We are not projected to meet the enrollment (explained earlier) or cash flow metric (due to receiving a large amount of donations in FY23 earmarked for construction where the costs are not being incurred until FY24. The school is expected to meet all other financial metrics including the debt service covenants.
5. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
6. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, Clint Walker and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

### B. Approve Modified 23-24 Budget ([Att. 6B](#))\*

1. Nathan shares an adjusted budget based on revenue from our actual enrollment of 411 students.
2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Lissa Brutus seconds.
3. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, Clint Walker and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

C. FY 2023 Final Audit Report ([Att. 6C](#))\*

1. Nathan shares that John Kane reviewed the audit and that no findings or issues have been found. The auditors determined Freire Wilmington is a low-risk auditee.
2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Kate Bayard seconds.
3. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, Clint Walker and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

D. CBOC Update

1. There is no update at this time.

## VII. Advancement

A. Advancement Report ([Att. 7](#))

1. The board decides to increase its fundraising target for the year.
2. A few week's ago Freire Wilmington met with the Sonecha Family Foundation, which has been a significant supporter of the school. They pledged \$1,000,000 over the next five years and we are so grateful.
3. Melanie reiterates that Freire Wilmington received a \$316,518 Stronger Connections Grant. This competitive federal grant will be spent over the next two years to establish a safer and healthier learning environment at FCSW.
4. We received a \$30,000 restricted grant for science lab equipment and supplies.
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. Please RSVP to Melanie as soon as possible.

## VIII. Policies and Agreements

A. Approve charter Modification Application ([Att. 8](#))\*

1. Leigh Botwinik shares the application to request a minor modification to Freire Wilmington's charter to lower the enrollment cap from 500 to 430. We are proposing the board approve this application given our current enrollment of 411. A cap of 430 would represent a 14% decrease from our current cap of 500. 430 would make for a manageable target to hit for the April 1st count to ensure we remain compliant with our charter.
2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve the application. Keisha Nesitt-Cohen seconds.
3. Kate Bayard, Lissa Brutus, Keisha Nesbitt-Cohen, Sheela Dattani, Jilian Mackenzie, Nathan Moser, David Singleton, Clint Walker and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

## IX. Midtown Brandywine Committee Update

- A. Kate Bayard there is no update at this time.

## X. Progress report on the gym project - DS

- A. David Singleton shares his thanks to Nathan Yufer for his help with the gym project financially.
- B. David notes the gym should be finalized and ready for use in January 2024.

**Meeting Adjourned, 9:20 AM**