



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JUNE 12, 2025 | 8 AM

ZOOM: MEETING ID: 841 6518 9700

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

Board Members Present: Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, Nathan Will

Others Present: Leigh Botwinik, Olivia Burgess, Brad Crouch (Midtown Brandywine), Kelly Davenport, Nate Durant, Katie Pollard, Paul Ramirez, Melanie Reiser, Tanza Pugliese, Nathan Yufer

Meeting Start, 8:00 AM

I. Public Comment

- A. No public comment

II. Resolutions

- A. Re-Election of Freire Wilmington Board Officers & Members (Att. 2A)*
 - 1. The board reviews the election of officers and board members.
 - 2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve the election of officers and board members. Nathan Will seconds.
 - 3. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- B. Review & Approval of Minutes, April 17, 2025 (Att. 2B)*
 - 1. The board reviews the minutes from the April 17, 2025 board meeting.
 - 2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
 - 3. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- C. April 2025 Financial Report (Att. 2C)*
 - 1. Nathan Yufer shares Freire Wilmington has collected 100% of fees and local revenue as of April 30, 2025.
 - 2. Approximately 80% of federal revenue has been collected, with the remainder expected by the end of the school year.
 - 3. Freire Wilmington is projecting to end the year with \$9,700,000 in total revenue, which is higher than originally budgeted.
 - 4. Projected total expenses for the year are \$9,500,000, slightly above the budget.
 - 5. Significant expense areas include:
 - a) Substitute Services – Spending is at 154% of the budget due to more employees than anticipated going out on family leave. This has increased the need for substitute coverage.
 - b) Alternative Placement – The school originally budgeted for 10 student slots but has served up to 20 students in alternative placements throughout the year. Leadership views this as necessary to support school culture.
 - c) Security Services – The full annual budget has already been spent, driven by the need for additional security guard coverage and the purchase of a metal detector. These measures are viewed as critical for student safety.
 - d) Repairs and Maintenance – Spending has reached 110% of the annual budget. The

school budgeted \$180,000 and has spent \$200,000 to date, with an additional \$20,000 projected through year-end.

- e) Equipment – The school purchased 100 additional Chromebooks to support state testing.
 6. The school anticipates ending the fiscal year with a \$35,000 surplus, assuming no additional unexpected costs arise. Any surplus will be used to offset expenses in the FY26 budget to reduce next year's financial burden.
 7. Nathan Will makes a motion to approve. David Singleton seconds.
 8. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- D. Review & Approve FY 2026 Budget (Att. 2D)***
1. Nathan Yufer presents two versions of the FY26 draft budget to the board for review:
 - a) One version reflects a 9% increase in state funding as proposed in the governor's draft budget.
 - b) The second version is a middle-case scenario based on a 6% increase in state funding, to account for potential legislative changes.
 2. The governor's budget is not expected to pass until June 30th at midnight, and there may be last-minute changes that could reduce funding.
 3. If the 9% increase is not approved, additional cuts will be necessary. These cuts—including one potential FTE reduction—have already been factored into the 6% funding scenario.
 4. Key assumptions for both budget scenarios include:
 - a) Enrollment of 410 students, with 124 students receiving special education services (30% of total enrollment).
 - b) Loss of Stronger Connections Grant – The \$316,000 grant used over FY24 and FY25 will not be available in FY26.
 - c) New Grant Awarded – The school received a \$30,000 grant from the Lafayette McHugh Foundation, which will be applied to support the salary of the Director of Intervention and Support.
 - d) Salary Increases – A 3% average salary increase has been included.
 - e) Health Insurance – Budget reflects a 4.2% increase in health insurance premiums (a significant improvement compared to the 27% increase in the previous year).
 - f) Alternative Placement – Budget includes five student slots for alternative placement, as the school plans to manage more of these needs in-house next year.
 5. Budget outcomes under each scenario:
 - a) 9% funding increase (Invest Case Scenario) – Projected surplus of \$89,000
 - b) 6% funding increase (Middle Case Scenario) – Projected surplus of \$66,000
 6. Once the state finalizes the budget, a revised FY26 budget incorporating all changes will be presented to the board for approval at the September meeting.
 7. David Singleton makes a motion to approve both budgets. Nathan Will seconds.
 8. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- E. Unrestricted & Restricted Donation Approvals (Att. 2E)***
1. Nathan Yufer shares each year, the school budgets to receive a donation from the Freire Foundation as a contingency to support year-end budget balancing.
 2. The Freire Foundation typically donates up to \$100,000 as needed to balance the school's budget.
 3. This year's memo reflects a request to accept a donation of up to \$200,000.
 - a) The reason for this higher amount is that the school did not require the \$100,000 donation last year, so the funds were not transferred.
 4. Only the amount necessary to balance the budget will be moved. Any unused funds will

remain with the Freire Foundation for future use.

5. The Freire Foundation Board will vote to authorize the donation at their meeting on June 23, 2025.
6. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
7. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

III. Policies & Agreements

A. Review & Approve Employee Handbook (Att. 3A)*

1. Katie Pollard shares updated Employee Handbook for the upcoming school year.
2. Minor updates and revisions were made this year, including:
 - a) Organizational Chart – Updated to reflect recent leadership changes and updated contact information.
 - b) Instructional Principles Summary – Revised to align with the school's most recent Deeper Learning Rubric.
 - c) Cultural Principles and Anti-Bullying Policy – Now included in the handbook; these updates were previously approved but had not yet been incorporated into the most recent handbook version
3. Policy Adjustments:
 - a) A brief section on conflicts of interest was removed and replaced with the full Conflict of Interest Policy, now included directly in the handbook.
 - b) Appendix A was removed, with its content now integrated into the Employee Handbook Acknowledgement Form, which staff sign at the end.
4. Additional Items Added to the Handbook:
 - a) The full Conflict of Interest Policy
 - b) The Secondary Employment Disclosure Form, which was previously a separate document, is now included for convenience and streamlined sign-off.
5. These updates aim to consolidate documents, reduce redundant signatures, and ensure staff have access to the most current policies in one place.
6. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
7. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

B. Review & Approve 2025-2026 Student Handbooks (Att. 3B)*

1. Tanza Pugliese shares an updated Student & Family Handbook proposed for the 2025-2026 school year, with a focus on improving user accessibility for families.
2. In addition to the standard cosmetic and formatting changes, the primary goal this year was to condense the handbook to make it easier for families—especially those accessing it via mobile devices—to navigate. This change reflects feedback from families and aligns with practices observed among peer schools and districts.
3. Key revisions include:
 - a) Relocated 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.
 - b) For significant but lengthy policies, such as Title IX, included a short summary in the handbook with a link to the website for the full policy.
 - c) Condensed the Emergency Procedures section into a more readable chart.
 - d) Modified 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.

4. Feedback from Sheela Dattani regarding inconsistencies in terminology will be incorporated following board approval but do not represent changes to policy.
 5. Handbook Distribution:
 - a) The handbook will be distributed digitally through the school newsletter and parent emails.
 - b) It will also be posted online once updates are finalized.
 - c) Physical copies will be made available upon request.
 - (1) Lissa Brutus requests a QR code linking to online resources will be added to any physical copies distributed.
 6. David Singleton makes a to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
 7. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
- C. Review & Approve Amended Title IX Policy (Att. 3C)***
1. Tanza Pugliese shares that on February 19, 2025, U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor issued a decision that vacated the Department of Education's 2024 final rule for Title IX.
 - a) This ruling prevents enforcement of the 2024 Title IX revisions and reinstates the 2020 regulations.
 2. In response, the school has worked with legal counsel to propose amendments to the existing Title IX policy to reflect compliance with the reinstated 2020 rules.
 3. Key changes to the Title IX policy include:
 - a) Terminology:
 - (1) "Sex-based harassment" is now referred to as "sexual harassment."
 - b) Scope of Coverage:
 - (1) Discrimination or harassment claims based on sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, and pregnancy-related conditions are no longer covered under Title IX.
 - c) Definitions:
 - (1) Definitions of quid pro quo, hostile environments, sexual assault, and formal complaints have been abbreviated and generalized.
 - d) Procedural Adjustments:
 - (1) The timeline to review evidence and reports has been extended from 5 to 10 days.
 - (2) The decision-maker in Title IX investigations must now be separate from both the Title IX Coordinator and the Investigator.
 4. While these updates may appear to limit protections, the school maintains its commitment to a safe and inclusive environment through other board-approved policies, including:
 - a) Non-Discrimination Policy
 - b) Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students Policy
 - c) Bullying and Cyberbullying Policy
 - d) Married, Pregnant, and Parenting Student Policy
 - e) Student Code of Conduct and other related policies
 5. These existing policies provide the framework for addressing and responding to harassment and discrimination outside of Title IX.
 6. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
 7. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

IV. Executive & Network Update

- A. FSNO CEO Transition & Vision Draft from Paul Ramirez
 1. Paul Ramirez shares an abbreviated summary of the recent Board Retreat for members who were unable to attend.

2. At the retreat, the CEO presented a first draft of a multi-year vision for the organization and outlined plans to gather community input and finalize the vision for release in January 2026.
3. The draft vision includes four main components:
 - a) Renewed focus on core academics
 - (1) Reaffirming the importance of reading, writing, math, and critical thinking as foundational learning.
 - (2) Acknowledges the ongoing public debate about the purpose and focus of schools.
 - b) Professional preparation and career exploration
 - (1) Expanding students' awareness of career pathways, in addition to college preparation.
 - (2) Creating a vibrant advising ecosystem that reflects the evolving job market.
 - (3) Aims to give students a stronger sense of purpose from grades 8–12.
 - c) Strengthening community and belonging
 - (1) Recognizes school as one of the last institutions where students find belonging and form social connections.
 - (2) Commits to fostering relationships and a sense of meaning in students' school experiences.
 - d) Preparing students for the era of Artificial Intelligence
 - (1) Proposes a new focus on helping students thrive in a world transformed by AI.
 - (2) Raises concerns about the impact of AI on critical thinking, identity, and purpose.
 - (3) Compares the scale of change to the impact of the internet, cell phones, and social media—but exponentially larger.
 - (4) Stresses the need for schools to lead—not lag—on AI integration and its psychological, academic, and ethical implications.
4. Paul clarifies that the first three components represent renewals of long-standing values, while the fourth (AI) introduces a new, urgent focus.
5. A roadmap to finalize and share the vision includes:
 - a) At the September board meeting, two proposed dates will be shared for small group discussions in October and November.
 - b) These vision working groups will include board members, staff, students, and community members.
 - c) Sessions will include readings, discussion, and critical interrogation of the draft vision.
 - d) Feedback and insights from these groups will be brought to the CEO's Council for review and finalization.
 - e) A final version of the vision will be shared with the broader community in January 2026, supported by the communications team.

V. School Report

A. Staff Update

1. Robert Healy shared reflections on the 2025 graduation ceremony, which took place the previous evening.
2. Rob describes the event as incredible, with outstanding participation from students, staff, and families.
3. Rob commended the graduating seniors as a strong class, with many receiving significant scholarship opportunities.
4. He emphasized the students' character, calling them a great group of kids.
5. Shared general spring semester highlights:
 - a) Numerous successful field trips contributed to a sense of excitement and engagement among students.

- b) Noted strong student morale heading into final exams.
- 6. Reported that finals are currently underway and that both students and staff are preparing for summer break.
- 7. Closed with a positive note on the overall success of the school year, expressing appreciation for the collective efforts of the school community.
- 8. Nate Durant celebrates Coach Healy's leadership and contributions beyond athletics
- B. Heads Report**
 - 1. Nate Durant shares that he recently encountered a student who asked whether they could return even without finals, which was seen as a powerful indicator of school culture—a place where students want to be.
 - 2. Reflected on the significance of fostering a community where students feel valued and connected, a testament to staff efforts throughout the year.
 - 3. Nate commends the graduation ceremony, held the night prior, as a seamless and meaningful event for students and families.
 - 4. Extended special thanks to Ms. Brandi for her leadership and behind-the-scenes coordination. Nate noted her ability to navigate challenges gracefully and execute an event that honored the school's scholars with excellence.
 - 5. He also acknowledged all staff who contributed to the event's success.
 - 6. Nate reports significant academic growth across the school year, noting that while the journey continues, progress has been made:
 - a) Highlighted increased performance reflected in dashboard data.
 - b) He thanks Director of Intervention and Support, Ms. Mindy, for her impactful advising and personalized student follow-ups (e.g., phone calls, meetings, flagging alerts).
 - c) He also noted the importance of targeted interventions in ensuring students do not fall through the cracks.
 - 7. The school achieved a 97% participation rate on the SAT assessments, one of the highest in recent years. Nate highlighted this as a testament to both student investment and staff persistence and noted that some families even returned from vacation to ensure students took part in assessments.
 - 8. Looking Ahead – Summer & Fall Planning:
 - a) Expressed optimism about the academic trajectory heading into the next year
 - b) Fall book selection: All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely—chosen to prompt discussion around race, identity, and social justice.
 - c) Stressed the importance of literary engagement and deeper academic preparation as the school continues to evolve.
 - 9. Closing Acknowledgments:
 - a) Nate thanks Sheela Dattani for her leadership of the VIP program, offering tech-enabled services to students with consistency and care.
 - b) Reaffirmed the school's commitment to continuous growth, emphasizing that the work of serving students is ongoing and without a finish line.
 - c) Celebrated the end of the school year with gratitude for the staff, teachers, students, and families who contributed to a successful year.
 - 10. Admissions & Enrollment Update
 - a) While applications are down compared to last year, intents to enroll have held steady as compared to this time last year.
 - 11. Freire Network Dashboard ([Att. 4A](#))
 - a) *See V.b.1-11*
 - 12. College Report ([Att. 4B](#))
 - a) The board reviews the college report.

VI. Executive Session

- A. Personnel Matter - Review Head of School Evaluation (ND) ([Att. 5](#))

1. David Singleton makes a motion to move into Executive Session at 9:01AM to discuss 29 Del Code § 10004(b)(9) "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 Will seconds.
2. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.
3. David Singleton makes a motion to exit Executive Session at 9:10 AM. Lissa Brutus seconds.
4. Lissa Brutus, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, David Singleton, David Tuminaro, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

VII. Financials

A. CBOC Report

1. No updates

VIII. Advancement

A. Advancement Report (Att. 6)

1. Melanie Reiser shares that the FY25 unrestricted fundraising target is set to \$775,000 which is \$150,000 per Freire campus.
2. Currently, the Advancement Team has raised \$538,079 in donations and pledges toward the goal.
3. FY25 fundraising progress surrounds the following:
 - a) The success of holding the Bridge to Wisdom event which honored Kelly Davenport and the 25 years of Freire Schools on May 13, 2025 at the Independence Visitor Center.
 - b) The Advancement Team notes that they raised approximately \$195,000 as part of the Bridge to Wisdom campaign, which included sponsorships and sponsor-level gifts to the Kelly Fund, which includes:
 - (1) \$180,000 in event sponsorships and sponsor-level gifts to the Kelly Fund.
 - (2) \$5,182 in ticket sales.
 - c) The event cost approximately \$62,000 to produce, about \$4,000 more than last year's event.
 - d) There were over 217 people in attendance which included 112 guests, 19 board members, 56 staff/staff volunteers, 4 parents, and 26 students.
4. Other advancement updates include:
 - a) The Advancement Team is finishing out the year with additional personal donor solicitation.
 - b) Recently, the advancement team received \$58,000 in EITC donation, which supports innovative and educational programming at our Philadelphia campuses, namely our professional prep forward slash career exploration work. This brings our EITC to nearly \$117,000 for the fiscal year of 2025, which is then to be spent in fiscal year 2026.
 - c) There was a \$30,000 grant request under consideration with the Laffey-McHugh Foundation to support student interventions at Freire Wilmington. A decision will be made by the end of June.
 - d) Also, the Advancement Team is preparing to do a "Meet the Grads" Class of 2025 donor update, which will then go out in late June/early July.
 - e) Melanie notes her team is nearing the end of a multi month transition to Victorious Comma, the new donor database and communications platform.

IX. Governance

A. Board Member Self Evaluation (Att. 7A)

1. Leigh Botwinik shares for those who attended the board retreat, the self-evaluation document referenced is the same version discussed during the session.

2. Paul Ramirez notes one key takeaway from the evaluation and retreat discussion:
 - a) The board's most important governance priority moving forward is building and sustaining a strong, diverse pipeline of future board members.
 - b) All board members are encouraged to identify and recommend strong candidates as we seek to expand and strengthen the board.
- B. Annual Evaluation Results of Freire Network (Att. 7B)**
 1. Leigh Botwinik shares that each year, both board members and Heads of School are asked to complete surveys evaluating the support provided by the Network Office to schools.
 2. This feedback informs efforts to strengthen internal services and responsiveness.
 3. The Finance and Business Operations team, led by Nathan, received notably high marks for the quality of service and support provided to schools.
 4. Appreciation was expressed for the team's professionalism and consistency.
 5. Areas for Improvement:
 - a) Special Education Compliance
 - (1) Cited as an area needing enhanced support; steps are already being taken to address it.
 - (2) The network is in the process of hiring a new position to be housed in the Network Office specifically to strengthen special education support and compliance across schools.
 - b) External Affairs:
 - (1) Feedback pointed to the desire for increased visibility and relationship-building with local political figures and key community stakeholders.
 - (2) Leadership acknowledged this and committed to exploring ways to strengthen external engagement.
 - c) IT Communication:
 - (1) From Heads of School: a need for improved coordination between the Network IT team and school-based IT teams.
 - (2) The team will evaluate structures and processes to better align communication and support systems.
- C. Resignation of Kate Bayard (Att. 7C)**
 1. The board acknowledges the resignation of Kate Bayard.
- D. Resignation of John Kane (Att. 7D)**
 1. The board acknowledges the resignation of John Kane.
- E. Resignation of Robert Mansell (Att. 7E)**
 1. The board acknowledges the resignation of Robert Mansell.
- F. Resignation of David Tuminaro (Att. 7F)**
 1. The board acknowledges the resignation of David Tuminaro.
- X. Midtown Brandywine Committee Update**
 - A. Kate Bayard has resigned and the board is vetting Brad Crouch (Midtown Brandywine Committee) to take the position.

Meeting Adjourned, 9:15 AM