

# MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OCTOBER 16, 2025 | 8 AM

ZOOM: MEETING ID: 819 6413 1508

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

Board Members Present: Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, Clint Walker, Khaliah Walker, Nathan Will

Others Present: Leigh Botwinik, Olivia Burgess, Tanza Pugliese, Paul Ramirez, Melanie Reiser, Nathan Yufer

Meeting Start: 8:01 AM

- I. **Public Comment**
  - A. No public comment.
- II. **Executive Session**
  - A. Slate of Staff
    1. David Singleton makes a motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:01 AM 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. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, Clint Walker, Khaliah Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against or abstentions.
    3. David Singleton makes a motion to exit Executive Session at 8:04 AM. Sheela Dattani seconds.
    4. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, Clint Walker, Khaliah Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against or abstentions.
- III. **Review & Approval of Minutes**, September 18, 2025 (Att.3)
  - A. The board reviews the minutes from the September 18, 2025 board meeting.
  - B. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
  - C. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, Clint Walker, Khaliah Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against or abstentions.
- IV. **School Report**
  - A. Staff & Student Update
    1. Rob Healy notes that the school has experienced some challenges following recent staff reduction.
    2. At this time community is important and staff are striving to keep their spirits high for the students.
    3. Homecoming Dance was a hit in the gym last week and Rob gives thanks to Marley Luke for being at the helm of the planning and execution of the event.
  - B. Heads Report
    1. Slate of Staff (Att. 4A)\*
      - a) The board reviews the Slate of Staff.
      - b) David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Sheela Dattani seconds.
      - c) Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, Clint



Walker, Khaliah Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against or abstentions.

2. Admissions Update
  - a) Leigh Botwinik shares that the school is finalizing its strategy for the 26-27 admissions cycle. Currently, we are focused on the choice period, and planning events that highlight the college prep academic program as well as the extracurricular options. We are also investigating new digital strategies.
3. October Freire Dashboard ([Att. 4B](#))
  - a) Nate Durant shares it has been a tough week for staff and students recently, adjusting to the new changes but attendance is up in comparison to last year's numbers.
  - b) Yesterday at the board visit the students stepped up and showed how important community and culture is within the school.

## **V. Financials**

### **A. August 2025 Financial Report ([Att. 5A](#))\***

1. Nathan Yufer shares that as of the end of August, Freire Wilmington has collected 71% of expected state funding.
2. No local or federal funds have been received to date; however, both are expected over the next few months.
3. Freire Wilmington is projecting approximately \$9,400,000 million in total revenue for FY26. With only two months of data available, all expenses are currently in line with the approved budget.
4. As the year progresses, year-end forecasts will be updated based on actual spending trends.
5. Two areas of focus are noted:
  - a) Alternative Placement: In prior years students requiring alternative placements were sent to Positive Changes. For FY26, the school has shifted to an in-house model to serve the most of these students directly.
6. In regard to repairs and maintenance, the school continues to experience ongoing issues with the HVAC system. In the previous fiscal year, Freire Wilmington spent approximately \$75,000 on HVAC repairs and maintenance. The same was budgeted for this year. Nathan notes that these costs will continue to be closely monitored throughout the year.
7. Overall, FY26 is expected to be a tight budget year; however, the school is projecting to end the year with a \$50,000 surplus.
8. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Sheela Dattani seconds.
9. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, Clint Walker, Khaliah Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against or abstentions.

### **B. Review & Approve Revised FY26 Budget ([Att. 5B](#))\***

1. Nathan Yufer presents the revised FY26 budget. He reminds the board that in June, two versions of the budget were approved based on projected enrollments of 410 and 420 students.
2. The official enrollment count is 370 students, resulting in the need to reduce staffing by 7 FTEs. Nathan clarifies that the goal was to minimize programmatic impacts in making these reductions.
3. To help balance the budget, the Freire Foundation will increase its annual donation by \$65,000, contributing a total of \$165,000 this year (up from the typical \$100,000).
4. Additionally, the Freire Network Office will provide approximately \$90,000 in financial

- support by covering the school's advertising costs and payroll consultant expenses.
5. These combined adjustments allow the school to project a \$50,000 surplus for FY26.
6. Nathan confirms that Freire Wilmington will meet all loan covenants with its bank. Although the surplus is modest, he emphasizes that with continued financial discipline, the school is expected to end the year in a stable financial position.
7. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
8. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, Clint Walker, Khaliah Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against or abstentions.

**C. Audit Report**

1. Nathan shares that the audit is finalized and will be presented to the board at the next meeting.

**D. HVAC Update**

1. David Singleton shares that the control system in the gym is not functioning properly.
2. The team is exploring options with the subcontractors to fix the system.

**E. CBOC Report**

1. CBOC met and had a solid meeting. The School was able to recruit a parent participant so the committee is complete.

**VI. Advancement**

**A. Advancement Report (Att. 6)**

1. Melanie Reiser shares that the unrestricted fundraising target for FY26 is set at \$600,000 which is \$350,000 for the Philadelphia campuses and \$250,000 for Freire Wilmington.
2. To date currently the Advancement Team has raised \$209,920 in donations and pledges toward the goal which leaves approximately \$390,000 left.
3. A few Advancement Team updates:
  - a) The network-wide Advancement Committee is set to meet on Tuesday, October 14, 2025 to develop a fundraising plan for FY26.
  - b) Recently received a \$9,750 grant from M&T Bank to fund the peer mediation program at the Philadelphia Freire campuses.

**VII. Policies & Agreements**

**A. Approve Amended MLL Policy (Att. 7A)\***

1. Tanza Puglise presents proposed changes to the Multilingual Learners (MLL) Policy.
2. A recent review revealed some outdated terminology in the current policy.
3. Terminology updates include:
  - a) English Language Learners (ELLs) are now referred to as Multilingual Learners (MLLs). This terminology is additive, recognizing that these students already possess language proficiency, though not in English.
  - b) English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and supports are now referred to as English Language Development (ELD).
4. The policy also clarifies processes for identifying and exiting MLLs.
5. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
6. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, Clint Walker, Khaliah Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against or abstentions.

**B. Review & Approve Schoolwide Plan (Att 7B)\***

1. Leigh Botwinik shares this year's SchoolWide Plan, which outlines how Freire Wilmington will strengthen academic outcomes for all students, with a particular focus on students with



disabilities. The plans align with federal Title I and TSI (Targeted Support and Intervention) requirements and build upon the Network-Wide Academic Plan introduced earlier this year.

2. Key efforts include enhanced teacher training particularly around special education topics, refined MTSS interventions, a strategy to embed literacy across the curriculum, and increased time for practice problems in math.
3. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Nathan Will seconds.
4. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, Chenelle McQueen, Clint Walker, Khaliah Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor of the motion. There are no votes against or abstentions.

**VIII. Midtown Brandywine Committee Update**

- A.** Brad Crouch shares the block party was successful.

Meeting Adjourned 8:30 AM