

**Advocates for Academic Excellence in Education, Inc.**  
**(Benjamin Franklin High School)**  
**Special Board of Directors Meeting**

September 29, 2016 at 4:00PM

Benjamin Franklin High School Student Center

1. **Call to Order:** 4:12 PM
2. **Roll Call:** Les Alexander, Mark Baum '77, Richard Ireland, Jr., Dr. John Nicklow, Gary Ostroske, Daniel Schenck '94, Dr. Maureen Shuh, and Carlos Zervigon  
**Excused:** Todd Slack, Duris Holmes '80, Sandra Katz-Levy '65, Ingrid Labat, M.D. '87, and Alea Cot
3. **Approval of Agenda:** Approved
4. **Approval of Minutes of August 25, 2016:** Approved as distributed
5. **Information/Discussion**
  - a. **Student Council report (Calder Altman '18 and Allison Lee '20)** - The junior and freshman class presidents summarized experiences from the recent Student Council retreat where they worked on the Council's mission and discussed their community values. Dr. Widhalm shared that the idea of a retreat grew out of last spring's Student Council and their work with Dr. Hightower. As reported by Mr. Altman, among the results of the retreat were building more effective student leadership and creating positive change. In decision making, the question will be asked, "How does it benefit every member of the student body?" Dr. Widhalm described the conversations he heard as moving Student Council from being logistically oriented and event planning, to building service and community values. Mr. Altman added that student council wants to create a service project every week. They have already volunteered in a food bank and animal shelter this year. Board members thanked the students and expressed their appreciation their commitment and vision. Mr. Alexander offered the board as a resource for Student Council.
  - b. **College Admission report** - Ms. Flair was not able to attend so Dr. Widhalm distributed her written report. This year's data is consistent with projections and past trends. One piece of data that Dr. Widhalm will add for future reports is the percentage of graduates who are offered a merit scholarship. It is another way of looking at the very impressive \$30+ million offered to Ben Franklin students. Mr. Alexander commended the counseling department for serving the students so effectively.
  - c. **2015-16 Development report (Christy Read)** - Ms. Read provided handouts with both marketing and fundraising programs and results. She reminded the Board that Franklin came in 5<sup>th</sup> overall in the amount of money raised and in the number of donors during GiveNOLA Day, raising \$67,953 which exceeded the target goal. Other points of interest were the publishing of the first ever *Bifocal* alumni magazine, which has almost paid for itself from the donation envelope in the magazine. Partnering with the Alumni Association, the next issue should be mailed by mid-November. Ms. Read shared that board participation in this year's annual giving campaign is 77% so far. Mr. Alexander added that board giving is important, but it is also important to facilitate introductions to groups or people that could contribute to the school.
  - d. **Alumni association presentation (Daniel Schenck)** - Mr. Schenck reported from the first meeting of the Alumni Association that a new treasurer was elected and that there

will be an emphasis on the importance of donating with civic responsibility and financial contributions. The Alumni Association annual holiday party will again be at Southport Hall and is seen as gift to faculty and all employees. For this year's homecoming, rather than a tailgate for members, the association will help offset the cost of the field lighting for the game. Mr. Schenck stated that his goal as Alumni Association president is to facilitate the connection between alumni and assist the school-through volunteering and donating.

e. **Athletic Association (Maureen Shuh)** - The Ben Franklin Athletic Association has a new executive team. Bylaws and subcommittees have been developed. They are still running Ben's Books. Dr. Shuh also reported that this year the BFAA donated \$5,000 to the locker room renovation and is working to improve communication about athletic events. Falcon Feast has been changed to March 23 and will be held at UNO. There will again be a silent auction as a part of Falcon Feast.

6. **Head of School Monthly report (Pat Widhalm)** - The primary Franklin event being planned is the Admissions Open House, and Dr. Widhalm reported that Lynn Jenkins has been preparing for that, along with visiting schools throughout the city. He also pointed to the very commendable results with 10% of the senior class qualifying for the National Merit Semifinals. The Robotics Team was invited by UNO to participate in programming with a NASA engineer and the prototype of the Mars rover. *Riverbend Review* was given a Crown Award by Columbia Student Press Association. Finally, Dr. Widhalm mentioned the annual visit from the GAPP exchange program and that two faculty on maternity leave have had their children.

7. **CFO report (Allison Bent)** - Ms. Bent distributed the August financials. She also noted that the audit report will be presented to the board at the October meeting. She reported that the Finance Committee met prior to the board meeting and discussed the school's cash flow. Ms. Bent also discussed some of the difficulty in projecting revenue because of the change in the MFP formula and timing of payments from OPSB. There was discussion about the amount held in reserves, which is nearing an amount equal to cover six months of expenses. There was some discussion about the need to review and discuss a policy for a reserve fund, endowment fund, capital outlay fund, etc.

8. **Committee Reports**

a. **Strategic plan committee (Gary Ostroske)** - Mr. Ostroske recalled the process used in establishing the current strategic plan and the need for it to be implemented and utilized as a "living" document. Among the ideas discussed were improving the communication plan; a technology plan; strengthening the working relationship between board and other school leadership; improving the relationship with the community; increasing the ability to teach multiple languages; and meeting the needs of the language lab. Mr. Ostroske reminded everyone that the vision of the school is to be the best high school in that nation, which requires a knowledge of what other top performing schools are doing and how they are measured.

b. **Parents Association (Les Alexander)** - About 40 parents attended the August meeting. All were engaged and many signed up for a variety of volunteer responsibilities. International Fest has been scheduled for April 22<sup>nd</sup> and is actively being planned. Class representatives for each grade level have been assigned and are ready to work. A VP of communications has been selected, has set up a Facebook page, and is actively working to improve communication between parents.

9. **Committee charter discussion**

a. **Academic committee (Carlos Zervigon)** - Because of the history and culture of the school, there has always been strong cooperation between faculty and administration; which the committee wants to continue by bringing together board members, faculty, and administration for academic issues. Mr. Zervigon emphasized that the Board does not want to interfere with the administration, so there needs to be clarity about what is a board issue and what is an administrative issue.

10. **Action Items**

a. **Approval of the Academic Policy and Development committee charters as modified: Motion to Adopt:** No board discussion or public comment. **Approved.**

b. **Election of Dr. John Nicklow as a member of the Academic Policy Committee:** No board discussion or public comment. **Approved.**

c. **Election of the Board President and Head of School as Ex-Officio members of all of the committees of the board:** No board discussion or public comment. **Approved.**

d. **Approval of the Social Media policy for employees as modified:** Dr. Widhalm asked for approval of a policy modeled after OPSB's electronic communications policy, but added additional phrasing that Facebook should not be used. Google classroom is more relevant, thorough, and private. It was recommended that the policy be modified slightly to allow the Head of School to appoint a designee if an employee's social media or electronic communications use were ever to come into question. No board discussion or public comment. **Approved**

11. Motion to adjourn. 5:22 PM