

**Advocates for Academic Excellence in Education, Inc.**  
**(Benjamin Franklin High School)**

**Board of Directors Meeting**

April 20, 2017 at 4:00PM

Benjamin Franklin High School Library

1. **Call to Order:** 4:07 PM
2. **Roll Call:** Present: Les Alexander, Mark Baum '77, Alea Cot, Duris Holmes '80, Richard Ireland, Jr., Sandra Katz-Levy '65, Tandra LeMay, Dr. John Nicklow, Todd Ragusa, Daniel Schenck '94, Dr. Maureen Shuh, Allen Square, and Carlos Zervigon  
Excused: Ingrid Labat, M.D. '87 and Todd Slack  
Absent: Jyric Sims
3. **Announcements**  
Mr. Alexander welcomed new board members, Ms. Tandra LeMay and Mr. Todd Ragusa. He also reminded members of the requirement to submit Tier 3 Financial Disclosure statements by May 15, and about Board members making development calls immediately following the meeting.
4. **Approval of Agenda:** Approved.
5. **Approval of Minutes of March 23, 2017:** Approved as distributed
6. **Information / Discussion**  
Robotics team recognition (Dr. Widhalm) - The team's sponsor and member of the science faculty, Ms. Teresa Burchette shared the amount of work and complexity of the robot built, and announced that Rebekah Travis '18, the team's captain, was nominated for a national award from FIRST. Goals for next year's team are to build two robots—one for completion and a second for regular problem-solving and experimenting. They are also planning to start a program for incoming students, which would allow for two types of robotics teams and to expand to a curriculum, and to add outreach programs. Space and funding remain a challenge. Board members stepped into the hallway where students performed a demonstration of the robot.

Academic Integrity Initiative presentation (Dr. Widhalm) - Creating a culture of integrity is necessary and has been mentioned as an area of focus in Strategic Planning. A committee of 5 students and 2 faculty members formed in the fall, and Ms. Isabelle Schneidau, from the faculty, and Calder Altman, current junior class president, spoke about the work done, proposal prepared, and plans to move forward. Beginning with 9th grade students in the fall of 2017, any suspicion or incident of academic dishonesty will be referred to an Honor Court made up of students. For the initial year, these students will be nominated by the faculty. The Honor Court, with Ms. Schneidau as its advisor, will have full authority to review, determine whether or not academic dishonesty

occurred, and establish the consequence, short of official school disciplinary action. Calder Altman expressed his belief that in order to build a culture of integrity, it must come from the students, and not just the administration. There was consensus that this was a valuable idea, and that it will take time to shift the culture. Dr. Widhalm and the board acknowledged the work and ideas of the committee.

Monthly Report on Facilities Assessment from Trapolin-Peer/VMDO (Mr. Baum) – Paula Peer and Jennie West were able to share an update of the plan. Jenny West stated that “the bones” of the building are positive: tall, north/south facing classrooms, formation of a courtyard. They are planning for a capacity of 1,200 students. They developed 4 preliminary schemes to share with differing campus footprint expansions. Plans for new buildings would be determined around a renovation schedule. Plans varied the amount of new athletic space/fields, placement of academic room expansion, amount of parking, and the consideration of closing of St. Anthony. Maintaining the courtyard was consistent in all plans. Moving this to formal plans would be developed in further discussions. Dr. Nicklow brought up the potential of Bienville Hall as an available space. The specifics will develop in subsequent planning and discussions. The architects shared they are developing 5-year, 10-year and 30-year plans. Capital campaigns are also a part of the planning and future discussions. Both board members and architects shared how much they value and have enjoyed this process.

7. **Head of School Report (Dr. Widhalm)**

Dr. Widhalm reminded Board members of the upcoming International Festival, which coincides with the Alumni Crawfish Boil. He also announced that the Drew Brees Foundation is giving Franklin \$200,000 for athletic facilities as well as working to secure matching grants. All agreed that this is timed well with the facilities masterplan. He thanked Françoise McHugh for her tireless work on these grants. All board members were invited to graduation and the after-party on campus that night.

8. **CFO Monthly Report (Ms. Bent)**

The preliminary budget for the 2017-18 academic year was discussed at the Finance Committee meeting and monthly financial packets were given to the board. Ms. Bent explained some variance to budget in utility expense, which has come in lower than budgeted, and salaries, which show higher than budgeted numbers primarily stemming from five maternity leaves and the hiring of teachers and para-teachers to help provide coverage. Funding for summer professional developments and student competition trips also explain some budgetary changes. In preliminary work for the 2017-18 budget, the increase in the salary line will come from the addition of several new faculty positions. Forthcoming technology, furniture, and classroom are also being considered in developing the new budget.

9. **Action Items**

- a. Election of Wayne Collier as a Class D board member representing the Alumni Association (Mr. Alexander). Mr Schenck shared that Wayne Collier has attended multiple alumni and school events. His passion and dedication to the school are evident. Motion made and seconded. Approved unanimously without discussion.
  - b. Approval of the Operating Reserve policy (Ms. Bent). Materials were circulated and updates to the policy recommended at the Finance Committee meeting were discussed. The need for a formal policy is needed to match the ongoing conversation about the amount of reserves maintained. Motion made and seconded. There was discussion about OPSB's requirement for reserves, currently 3 months, but that this is being revisited, especially for small charters. There was also discussion about not making reserves too restrictive. The determination was that this reserve would be a resource and would not be unnecessarily restricted in its use. The need for a target amount and minimum amount was also discussed. The reserves are currently invested in a savings account and are moving to other investments now that the school has changed financial institutions. No public comment. Unanimously approved.
10. **Strategic Planning Discussion**  
Organizational Health (Mr. Ostroske, Mr. Ferris, Mr. Parauka and Dr. Widhalm) Due to the length of the meeting, this discussion was postponed for a future meeting. Dr. Widhalm agreed to provide materials to the board via email for their review and future discussion.

**Motion to adjourn: 5:41 PM**