FREIRE CHARTER WILMINGTON

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2026 | 8:30 AM
ZOOM: MEETING ID: 874 0505 8058
LOCATION: FREIRE CHARTER SCHOOL WILMINGTON | 201 W. 14TH ST., WILMINGTON DE 19801

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, David Singleton, Ta'Neka Thomas, Clint Walker, Nathan Will

OTHERS PRESENT: Leigh Botwinik, Kelly Davenport, Pam Dougherty, Chris Moore, Paul Ramirez, Melanie Reiser, Madeline Weckel, Beth Yirga, Nathan Yufer

Meeting Start, 8:30 AM

I. Public Comment

II. Resolutions

A. Consideration & Election of Ta'Neka Thomas as parent representative to the Freire Charter School Wilmington Board of Directors *(Attachment 2A)**
   1. Clint Walker introduced Ta'Neka Thomas to the board.
   2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Rob Healy seconds.
   3. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, David Singleton, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.

B. Review & Approval of Minutes, June 11, 2026 (*Attachment 2B*)*
   1. The board reviews the minutes from June 11, 2026.
   2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Rob Healy seconds.
   3. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, David Singleton, Ta'Neka Thomas, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.

C. Review & Approval of Amended Conflict of Interest Policy (*Attachment 2C*)*
   1. Leigh Botwinik explains the updates to the Conflict of Interest Policy.
   2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Brad Crouch seconds.
   3. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, David Singleton, Ta'Neka Thomas, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.

D. Review & Approval of June 2026 Financial Report (*Attachment 2D*)*
   1. Nathan Yufer presents the June 2026 Financial Report. As of June 30, 2026, Freire Wilmington has received all of their revenue from the state and local school districts. Overall, Freire Wilmington closed FY26 with $10.4M in revenue, approximately $946K above the original budget. The school received $665K in unrestricted fundraising, including $300K from the Freire Schools Network. Freire Charter School Wilmington ended the year with a surplus of $10K. These numbers are unaudited but we don't expect any material changes.
   2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Jilian Mackenzie seconds.
   3. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, David Singleton, Ta'Neka Thomas, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.

E. Review & Approval of Section 127 Educational Assistance Plan (*Attachment 2E*)*
   1. Madeline Weckel presents the Section 127 Plan, which allows the school to provide up to $5250 in tuition assistance to employees without it counting as taxable income.
   2. Brad Crouch makes a motion to approve. David Singleton seconds.
   3. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, David Singleton, Ta'Neka Thomas, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.

III. Executive & Network Update

A. Freire Network Academic Plan 2026-27 (*Attachment 3*)
   1. Paul Ramirez presents the Academic Plan. He reviews the academic data from the previous year.

He notes that in ELA there was a large increase in proficiency for 8th grade, though the growth was lower than expected. In Math, there was a decrease in Math proficiency for 8th grade, however our 8th graders had the 3rd highest amount of growth of all charters. We have less information about the SATs from the state, though we had slight decreases in proficiency in both math and reading.

2. Paul Ramirez provides a broad overview of the strategies for the year::
    a) We have honed in on Instructional Coaching as a lever for growing academic outcomes. We have created a specific and opinionated list of skills that teachers need in order to grow students academically. We have already trained our instructional coaches on these core teacher skills, and on how to develop them in teachers, specifically through practice.
    b) We are doing a curriculum revamp with Mathematics. We did a pilot of the curriculum last year and have rolled out a full implementation at all high schools. We will also begin doing this work with our ELA curriculum.
    c) We have implemented data-driven instruction with interim assessments that mirror the types of high stakes assessments they take in the spring.

B. Academic Review Meeting
    1. Paul Ramirez invites all board members to attend an academic review meeting, which is expected to be held in late October or early November.

IV. School Report

A. Staff & Student Update
    1. Rob Healy provides a staff report. He notes that the start of the school year has been extremely smooth and he credits Head of School Pam Dougherty's extremely strong work ethic and organization, as well as the support of Chris, and the addition of other strong administrators like Rayna.
    2. Beth Yirga introduced three student leaders to the board: Sakai Wylie, Autumn Chase-Saunders, and Rykier Richards.
        a) Sakai Wylie shared "being at a small school means that I get to work closely with teachers and leaders. This school feels like family to me. I'd like to see more after school programs."
        b) Autumn Chase-Saunders shared: "I appreciate that we have more opportunities to go outside during lunch. Having time to go outside for a breath of fresh air is appreciated. I would appreciate having more after school programs and think having an additional after school bus could potentially enable more students to stay for activities."
        c) Rykier Richards shared: "I appreciate the feeling from the staff–everyone supports you and brings joy into your life. It feels like a family."

B. Heads Report
    1. Pam Dougherty identifies the core priorities of the year:
        a) Enrollment and Retention: we're working to ensure that our students want to be at Freire and return year after year. Part of keeping students here is about helping students feel that they belong.
        b) Student Achievement: our students are coming to us below grade level and we must meet students where they are. Our instructional coaching will help develop our teachers and enable them to support all students in their classes and increase student achievement.
        c) Teacher Certification and Teacher Quality: we are creating a plan to ensure that every teacher that needs certification gets support to do that. We are also providing instructional coaching to ensure teachers are growing in the core teaching skills we've identified.
    2. Kelly Davenport shares that on Saturday, September 12, Freire Wilmington successfully hosted its first ever Community Day, in partnership with the Food Bank of Delaware. Many staff members and several board members volunteered throughout the day, providing food and school supplies to local families.

C. Admissions Update
    1. Pam Dougherty reports that we currently have 313 students enrolled, 2 students enrolling today, and 4 additional students signed up for an upcoming open house.

D. Strategic Plan (*Attachment 4D*)
    1. Pam Dougherty presents the strategic plan, and identifies core focus areas:
        a) Increasing enrollment
        b) Improving student achievement
        c) Increasing after school programming

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d) Improving student attendance
e) Increasing the number of certified staff

2. David Singleton makes a motion to approve. Brad Crouch seconds.
3. Brad Crouch, Sheela Dattani, Rob Healy, Jilian Mackenzie, David Singleton, Ta'Neka Thomas, Clint Walker, and Nathan Will vote in favor. There are no votes against or abstentions.

V. Financials

A. CBOC Report
1. Nathan Yufer reports that the CBOC has not met since our last board meeting, so there is no report at this time.

B. Audit Update
1. Nathan Yufer shares that the audit process has gone smoothly, and that we've had another clean audit.

VI. Advancement

A. Advancement Report (*Attachment 6)*
1. Melanie Resier presents the advancement report. She notes that it was a challenging fundraising year and invites board members to join the advancement committee meeting happening later in the month to dive into deeper analysis of the data.
2. We set an ambitious goal of $675K. We came about $272K short of that goal. Some factors that may have contributed to this include the lack of a major fundraising event; board member resignations and previous donors giving at lower levels; and the loss of a major donor.
3. Melanie notes that 100% of non-parent board members made financial contributions. The board discussed alternatives to requiring financial contributions by parent board members.
4. We had two successful smaller fundraising events, were successful in raising restricted donations through EITC, and received several grants.
5. We have entered a heavy grant-writing cycle. Specifically, we are seeking a Longwood grant for a major capital improvement project for Freire Wilmington. We are also submitting a grant to Laffey-McHugh.

VII. Governance

A. Annual Board Visitation Day
1. Madeline Weckel invites all board members to attend Board Visitation Day at TECH Freire on Wednesday, October 21 (tentative start time 8:30 AM).

VIII. Midtown Brandywine Committee Update

A. Brad Crouch reports that Midtown Brandywine had their neighborhood rummage sale the same day as the FCSW Community Day. He also invites the board to join the neighborhood block party on October 18.

B. Kelly Davenport extends gratitude to the Midtown

Meeting adjourned, 9:27 AM

*Requires Vote

The next board meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 15, 2026 at 8:30 AM**

The agenda items may not be considered in sequence. This agenda is subject to change to include additional items such as executive sessions or the deletion of items, which may arise at the time of the meeting.