



**LIONHEART CLASSICAL ACADEMY CHARTERED PUBLIC SCHOOL**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**Regular Meeting October 1, 2024**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees (the "Board") of Lionheart Classical Academy Chartered Public School ("LCA") took place on 10/1/2024 at 10 Sharon Road, Peterborough, New Hampshire. The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Chair Kim Lavallee. Board members present included: Chair Kim Lavallee, Vice Chair Bailey Sweet, Treasurer Kristie Greenwood, Secretary Lori Finn, Trustee Jason Nero (via Zoom), Trustee David Somero, and Trustee Brian Walsh. Principal Kenneth Dobbs and Attorney Robert Best from Sulloway and Hollis were also in attendance. Accountant Caitlin Blundell was present via Zoom. The Chair noted that this was a public meeting and that notice of the same had been duly posted in accordance with state law.

The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Chair Lavallee, followed by a reading of the mission statement by Principal Dobbs.

Principal Dobbs shared two Mission Moments: 1) a student was overheard saying, "I've had a hard time figuring out summer vacation was over, I've been having so much fun 2) two employees reported how respectful LCA students speak to them.

**I. Public Comments**

**A. Leo Plante** – Lionheart Founder – Mr. Plante thanked the 25 founders, trustees, and parents who showed up in Concord to defend the honor of our school against the rather unfortunate events in the press. It was very uplifting. He also thanked the 30 parents who sent letters of support to the State Board of Education. He said it is gratifying to see the support and spirit we have from a founder's point of view.

**B. Richard Merkt** – Lionheart Founder – Mr. Merkt indicated that he had been exhilarated by the reception and strong support shown for our school by the State Board of Education. They are the regulatory body charged with making sure that schools are doing what they are supposed to be doing. They took the time to study the issue, and the expression of support we received from them warmed his heart. He said that he salutes every member of the board. He saw the original board, which was a good board, but he happens to think the current board is even better.

**C. Fred Ward** – Lionheart Founder – Mr. Ward indicated that he had been asked to supply a significant amount of money to get LCA from K-5th grade to K-6th grade, which he did. A year later, he was asked again, and he wasn't too happy, but he donated again. He said that he feels that the board went a long period of time without a reasonable, "likable" plan to get

from K-5 to K-12. He is pleasantly surprised that we appear to agree with him that we need a plan, funding, and a building. Now we have done that, he made it a point to talk to the press again, and his main point to them was that we are now appear to have some plan to get from K-12. He and his group would be willing to help but he needs the plan.

**D. Tim Traffee** – parent – Mr. Traffee asked what the plan to get to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, because the current facility isn't large enough. He also asked what the restrictions to the room the meeting was being held in, because it cannot be used for children. While Chair Lavallee indicated that the board couldn't respond to questions during public comment, LCA staff present at the meeting informed him that the restrictions were to the multipurpose room.

**E. Fiona Byrne** – Director of Student Support – She shared that there are wonderful, beautiful, rigorous things that are happening in the building.

**II. Secretary's Report:** Secretary Lori Finn presented the Secretary's Report.

**A. Approval of Minutes, 9/12/24 Regular Board Meeting.** Draft minutes from the Board's Regular Meeting held on 9/12/24 were posted on the LCA website. Treasurer Greenwood motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Trustee Walsh. No further discussion. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavallee (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

**B. Unsealing Non-Public Minutes.** Vice Chair Sweet made a motion to unseal the minutes from the following non-public sessions: 4/7/22, 3/9/23, 3/23/23, 4/13/23. Motion was seconded by Treasurer Greenwood. No further discussion. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavallee (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

Trustee Sweet stated that she would update the log of non-public meetings and submit for posting on the LCA website. The log begins in 2023 when the law was passed. Attorney Best confirmed this is accurate.

**Action Items:**

- Secretary Finn will submit minutes from the 4/7/22, 3/9/23, 3/23/23, and 4/13/23 non-public sessions to LCA for posting.
- Vice Chair Sweet will update the log of non-public meetings.

**III. Treasurer's Report:** Chair Lavallee noted that there is no Treasurer's Report yet, because we moved this meeting forward. She asked Accountant Caitlin Blundell if she had anything to add, and Ms. Blundell indicated she did not.

**IV. Principal Dobbs' Report:** Principal Dobbs presented his report.

**A. Playground:** Approval has been obtained for the playground. Approximately three weeks after work begins, the playground should be usable. Principal Dobbs thanked Trustee Somero and Trustee Nero for this accomplishment.

**B. Dress Code:** There has been some concern about the dress code of late. Principal Dobbs sent out an email in August clarifying some points to the dress code, but there was some confusion. As such, the dress code requirements from 2023-2024 will remain in effect until changes are made. While the previous dress code remains in effect, there is a difference in that last year the code was not consistently enforced and now it is. A survey on dress code was sent

to parents on Friday. Some results have been received, it will remain open until this Friday. A committee will be formed with parent representation to complete the dress code, but in the interim, Principal Dobbs suggested a few changes that will allow parents more flexibility.

**1. Shoes.** Black, brown, grey, navy, and white shoes with minimal branding and in the color pallets of the school. Grandfather in the following brands for AY 2024-2025: Converse, New Balance, Vans, and Reebok even if the logos have non-pallet colors, provided the logos are small. There was some discussion about whether this will address parent concerns. His goal is to avoid families purchasing new items. Principal Dobbs indicated that it would, based on the 104 people who have responded to the survey so far. He said this is the compromise that seems most reasonable. Trustee Walsh motioned to adopt the language regarding shoes for the 2024-2025 handbook, seconded by Trustee Greenwood. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavalley (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

**2. Socks.** It is difficult to follow last year's dress code guidelines for socks, because there are multiple versions of the handbook from last year, and the sock requirements differ across them. One version of the old handbook states that only two colors are allowed (black and navy), but others allow more. Principal Dobbs suggested that we expand the colors to include black, brown, white, grey, and navy. Socks may be crew, dress, trouser, or knee, and he suggested removing the part that said "ankle needs to be covered" because some crew socks may show ankle. Trustee Sweet motioned to adopt this change in the dress code related to socks, seconded by Trustee Finn. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavalley (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

**3. Jewelry.** The handbook from 2023-2024 does not allow any jewelry at all at school, listing it with "items that must remain at home". Principal Dobbs suggested that we add to the dress code the allowance of a single chain with a pendant smaller than a quarter. He also indicated he will consider allowing other jewelry meeting certain criteria. Trustee Finn motioned to add this statement about jewelry to the dress code, seconded by Trustee Sweet. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavalley (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

**4. Nails.** Principal Dobbs suggested the following: no artificial nails, natural nails ¼ inch in length, color neutral or understated, solid in design. Trustee Finn motioned to add this to dress code, seconded by Trustee Greenwood. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavalley (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

**5. Makeup.** Principal Dobbs suggested the following: makeup should be subtle and natural. Trustee Finn motioned to add this to dress code, seconded by Trustee Sweet. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavalley (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

**6. Piercings.** Principal Dobbs suggested the following: lobe piercings only, only small hoops or studs, no more than two per ear, no cartilage, no other visible body piercings. Trustee Greenwood motioned to add this to the dress code, seconded by Trustee Walsh. Approved by roll call (6-1-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavalley (Yea), Somero (Nay), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

## Action Items:

- Josh Prather will select parents to join the dress code committee
- Principal Dobbs will work with committee to draft updated dress code.

**V. Finance Committee Updates:** Trustee Nero provided an update on the Finance Committee activities.

**A. Facilities:** The playground fence will be extended, and the playground equipment will be moved into place. Crashbars have been installed on all doors, so we are now in compliance with fire code. Also, some handles were missing on doors, those have been fixed as well. Security updates will be done during Thanksgiving week.

Trustee Sweet asked Trustee Nero to clarify the previous issues with the room we were meeting in and the multipurpose room. He indicated we couldn't use it temporarily because the emergency lights were not functioning. They have since been replaced and now the room meets code. The landlord hasn't charged us rent for the past two years on this space, which was very generous of him. In terms of the multipurpose room, it needs to be engineered to capacity, with proper egress, and it needs to be 100% finished before it can be used. We are working on that. We are also waiting on FEMA because it is in a flood zone. If approved, it would still need to be built out, likely next summer, so it would be for future use.

**B. Facility Negotiations:** Trustee Nero noted that we have been working very diligently with the landlord. He emphasized that we will have a signed lease, which is a legal document, a binding contract. We are working with the landlord to see where he might be able to be flexible. He had originally pledged to donate \$100k a year for 10 years. He is moving forward, giving us \$100k in rent relief for this year. After that, he will continue to honor the remaining \$800k over the next six years.

Trustee Nero confirmed that LCA pays approximately \$50k monthly in base rent, around \$610,000, as per the original signed lease. However, it is important to note that this will be offset by approximately \$14,500k in rent (about \$174k annually) received by the tenant in the warehouse space (which is non-taxable to the school), that comes off the lease payment to bring the monthly lease payment to around \$35,500 for an approximate annual adjusted cost of \$436,000. In addition to all of the this the landlord has agreed to give us rent relief from Sept 1-Aug 31 2025 in the amount of \$100k, which is \$8,333.33 per month. All of this brings our annual lease obligation to approximately \$336,000. In addition to the lease there is a CAM payment of approximately \$75,000 per year which brings our total building lease and CAM expenses to \$411,000 for the current 24-25 school year. Our budgeted number was \$428,000 for the 24-25 school year. Trustee Sweet motioned to accept \$100k in rent relief at \$8333 per month, seconded by Trustee Greenwood. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavalley (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

**C. Payroll:** Trustee Nero reported that the Finance Committee discussed the need for a payroll company to take over payroll, health insurance, and retirement benefits. Also, changing to a payroll company may bring better health benefits with better rates for employees.

**D. CSP Grant** has been extended from 9/2024. It will now run out 2/14/2025.

**E. Brokerage Account.** Trustee Nero recommended opening a brokerage account in the event that we receive future donations of stock or securities. Patrick Shea, an advisor who works at Benson Wealth Management (affiliated with Raymond James) agreed to work with LCA to place any trades and do the transfers. This would result in a better overall cost to the school. In a regular firm, the costs depend on the size of the donation. Trustee Nero disclosed that Drew Benson, who is the owner of Benson Wealth Management, is a business partner of Trustee Nero in another business, however, it is a separate business, and Trustee Nero would not benefit in any way from this arrangement. Trustee Nero will get a written fee schedule and submit it to the board. Attorney Best indicated that this would not be considered a conflict of interest, as Trustee Nero wouldn't profit in any way.

**Action Item:** Trustee Nero will get a written fee schedule from Benson Wealth Management and submit to the board.

**VI. Organizational Committee:** Trustee Sweet provided an update on the activities of the Organizational Committee.

**A. Maintenance Policy:** This policy was first brought before the board last month and has been posted on the website for over a month. It is designed to ensure that we properly care for our facility and that all permits are seen before the board before any work is initiated. Trustee Finn motioned to approve the policy, seconded by Trustee Greenwood. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavalley (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

**B. Volunteer Policy (IJO) and Background Investigation and Criminal Records Policy (GBDC)** - Approved by committee, and the draft was posted on the website for review. Trustee Sweet motioned that both policies be moved forward to the November 2024 Regular Board Meeting, seconded by Trustee Walsh. Motion passed. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavalley (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea).

**C. LCA Charter Documents:** Trustee Sweet reported on the positive meeting with the State Board of Education. They agreed that the LCA Board of Trustees, as it is comprised today, is fully within the charter language as it stands. We could keep the charter language as it is. We do want to increase the maximum number of board members from eight (8) to nine (9) members. According to the feedback given to us by the SBOE, while it isn't a rule yet, they are suggesting that new charter applications and renewals be more specific about trustees serving in specific roles. Lionheart agreed to draft new language to accommodate. The new charter language was re-drafted with Attorney Best's help. It indicates that the board should have at least one trustee that represents each of the following areas: 1) academic, 2) financial management/accounting, 3) contributors to the school who support outreach, fundraising, grants. Other knowledge can be sought as the board determines is necessary. We also removed the sentence that required two individuals serving in the role of parent. Any member of the board can be a parent or not, but according to the statute, a minimum of 25% of the board must be parents. We also indicated that first year trustees may have a 1-, 2-, or 3-year term. We defined external member as someone not being a parent of an LCA student. For someone in one of the specific categories, we recommend beginning with 2- or 3-year terms. These changes have been posted on the LCA website. Trustee Walsh noted that the SBOE was very supportive of us, and said that other schools are being asked to make these changes as well. They want to ensure that charter schools have a continuity plan for excellence. We will submit this back to the

SBOE. Trustee Finn motioned to accept the new language in the draft to present to the SBOE regarding board make-up, seconded by Trustee Greenwood. Approved by roll call (6-1-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavallee (Yea), Somero (Nay), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed.

**D. Transportation and Meals.** The Organizational Committee sent out a survey to parents on transportation and meals. Trustee Sweet asked Trustee Nero to continue to hold CSP grant funds earmarked for vehicles while the committee discusses.

**E. Executive Director Search.** The fourth candidate came in to LCA. We will talk about it in non-public session.

**Action Item:** Chair Lavallee will present the revised charter documents to the State Board of Education for review.

**VII. Academic Committee:** no update, as the committee won't be meeting until next week. Principal Dobbs reported that the Classical Learning Test has been completed.

### **VIII. New Business**

**A. Board Retreat.** Trustee Sweet reported that we have been offered the Blake Center for Faith and Freedom facility free of charge, including overnight accommodations if needed. None of the first four dates initially proposed work for any one trustee, so new dates will be explored.

**B. Robert's Rules.** It has been recommended that we remove from the charter that we use Robert's Rules of Order, as they are cumbersome. Attorney Best noted that the general approach in NH is to develop your own set of rules, unique to your own needs. RSA 91-A sets up some of those rules. There is a good article by the Municipal Association that guides the development of your own rules, this is recommended to schools. (They agree in the article not to use Robert's Rules.) We will find some samples to start working on our own. This work will be done in the Organizational Committee.

**C. Next meeting:** Chair Lavallee announced that there will be a Regular Meeting on 11/14, and there may be another meeting in October as well. Chair Lavallee announced that we will be moving into non-public, and that no one needs to leave until the non-public session begins.

#### **Action Items:**

- Trustee Finn will create Doodle poll to help determine a date for the retreat that is convenient for all board members.
- Chair Lavallee will obtain samples of procedural rules from other schools.

Trustee Finn motioned to enter into non-public session at 7:42 under RSE 91-A:3, II, (c), (d), (l), and Secretary Walsh seconded. [1. Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant. 2. Consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community. 3. Consideration of legal advice provided by legal

counsel, either in writing or orally, to one or more members of the public body, even where legal counsel is not present.] Attorney Best, Principal Dobbs, Josh Prather, Fiona Byrne, and Clint Beisinger from Roundtable were invited to attend. Approved by roll call (7-0-0): Nero (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavallee (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed. The non-public session began at 8:10 pm.

Trustee Somero motioned to exit non-public, and Trustee Greenwood seconded. (Trustee Finn had left the meeting at 9:20 pm). Approved by roll call (6-0-0): Nero (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavallee (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion Passed.

The Board returned to public session at 10:02 pm. During the non-public session, the board authorized further action regarding a potential acquisition opportunity. Trustee Somero motioned to seal the minutes from the non-public session, seconded by Trustee Walsh. Approved by roll call (6-0-0): Nero (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Lavallee (Yea), Somero (Yea), Walsh (Yea). Motion passed. Vice Chair Sweet made a motion to adjourn. Public meeting adjourned at 10:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Finn