



LIONHEART CLASSICAL ACADEMY CHARTERED PUBLIC SCHOOL
Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting September 12, 2024

DRAFT MINUTES

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees (the "Board") of Lionheart Classical Academy Chartered Public School ("LCA") took place on 9/12/2024 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, Trustee David Somero, Trustee Brian Walsh, and Principal Kenneth Dobbs. The school Attorney Robert Best from Sulloway and Hollis was also in attendance. 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 Trustee Somero.

Principal Dobbs shared several mission moments demonstrating the virtue of respect, in particular, respect shown by students upon first meeting him at the Open House, during the moment of silence on 9/11. He also acknowledged the founders ringing the bell at the start of the school year.

I. Public Comments: Chair Lavallee summarized the Policy BEDH regarding expectations for public comments.

A. Richard Merkt – Lionheart Founder – Spoke about the reaction of the founders and donors on the first day of school. He said it was magical. In the first year, students were excited and enthusiastic to start their new school. This year, they were still happy to see people and ring the bell, but some of them were so anxious to get into school that they just ran by the founders. This was different from the first year and showed that they now register the school as their home. He gave thanks from the founders and donors to the faculty, staff, administration, trustees, and students.

B. Fred Ward – Lionheart Founder. Requested clarification of 5a and 7b on agenda. Chair Lavallee indicated that 5a on the agenda would include a high-level overview of negotiations with the landlord in public session, and that 7b on the agenda would include specific details of negotiations with the landlord in non-public session.

II. Attorney Best was invited to clarify some of the myths that continue to be circulated by individuals:

A. Board Constitution: He began by addressing comments that the board constitution is not in compliance with the law and/or the charter.

1. Parent Trustees. Attorney Best indicated that there is no limit on the number of parents that can be on the board. There are some guidelines provided in the charter, and the statute requires boards to have a minimum of two or more parents on the board. Both documents need to be read in harmony. Parents may have other qualifications aside from being parents, and if so, that person can be elected for another role. Each person doesn't have a label. The entire board needs to meet requirements in aggregate. When you read the statute, it embraces parent involvement. There is no upper limit on parents on the board. The concept that one parent is sufficient as stated in the charter is not compliant with a minimum of five board members.

2. Multiple Boards. Attorney Best indicated that RSA 194-B:5 is frequently misinterpreted. The statute prevents overlap between the Board of Trustees of a charter school and a school district school board, as this can create conflicts. There is no limitation on boards of charter schools. There is no conflict of interest when a trustee serves on more than one charter school board. He also addressed the comments that our board members, past and present, have received payments resulting in pecuniary benefits. Caitlin Blundell, LCA accountant, confirmed that there has never been any payment made to a trustee at any point in the history of LCA.

3. Qualifications. Attorney Best indicated that the LCA Board of Trustees, when electing a board member, is the body that decides whether someone meets the qualifications. The Board has the discretion to apply as it sees fit. Every current trustee is qualified to be on the Board.

B. Committees: Attorney Best addressed concerns about the establishment of the succession committee to plan for future board members. He indicated that it probably should have been formed by motion and vote originally, but that this has already been corrected. The function of this committee was re-established in the Organizational Committee in February 2024. Regardless, a committee like that doesn't have the authority to make any decisions, they only advise the board. So even if the original committee wasn't formed properly, it didn't make any decisions, there there is no problem. Chair Lavallee requested clarification on recommendations vs. decisions. Attorney Best indicated that charter schools use committees that are advisory only. Recommendation by a committee may not be reflected by a motion and vote. Many actions taken by boards aren't reflected in a motion and vote. He noted that the LCA by-laws reference Robert's Rules of Order. He recommended removing that reference from the by-laws, as they are absolutely paralyzing to follow.

III. Treasurer's Report

A. Annual Audit – Nathan Weschler Presentation: Chair Lavallee indicated that she was rearranging agenda items to accommodate a guest presentation by Kelli D'Amore and Samantha Henrichon from Nathan Wechsler & Company to present the results of the recent audit of LCA. They indicated that they currently work with nine charter schools and gave credit to the schools for all of the hard work. They said that Lionheart understands what makes for a good control, that there are really good people watching out for the school.

Ms. D'Amore and Ms. Henrichon stated that everything was in accordance with government reporting standards. They had a great experience during the audit process—everything was available, and everyone was cooperative. We can expect them to issue a clean opinion. There were no issues in the areas of contribution recognition and receivables, banking and creditor relationships, capital assets, accounts payable and accrued expenses, fund net position, and lease reporting.

The actual per-pupil cost is the lowest of all of the schools they work with, and less than what is received by the state. Specifically, in FY 24 the school spent \$7,862 per pupil, and received \$9,000 per pupil from the state of NH, resulting in positive difference of \$1,138.

The only material weakness found was in ability to prepare GAAP compliant financial statements. 100% of the schools they work with receive this comment. It is a potential risk, but having the audit team helps. They said hiring someone for this role it isn't where you want to spend your money.

B. Financial Report: Accountant Caitlyn Blundell presented the [Budget Analysis](#) and [August 2024 Financial Report](#). Everything is in line with the budget. Cashflow forecast through November show no issues. According to Ms. Blundell, we are in great shape—even better than expected.

C. Financial Announcement: Chair Lavallee announced that LCA has received a \$5 million endowment from an anonymous donor. LCA will receive the proceeds from this for 20 years. It will come to about \$200,000 per year. She also indicated that we are expecting other significant donations in January 2025. We continue to have a strong donor base committed to the school.

D. Gratitude: Chair Lavallee expressed sincere appreciation to Ross Kukish and Caleb White, who have put in countless hours in getting us ready to start the school year. Their time and donations of material and labor are appreciated. She thanked Kevin McDonald for his donation of so many hours to the facility, working with contractors, etc. He has provided amazing support. She thanked Triumph Interiors as well for their generosity. She also thanked Kara Nero, Ashlee Wheel, and Phillip Wheel for their help painting cubbies and classrooms. She expressed general thanks to Principal Dobbs and all faculty and staff for all of their hard work and dedication.

IV. Secretary's Report: Secretary Lori Finn presented the Secretary's Report. She also expressed appreciation to Leah Seymour for her hard work in posting all of the new content on the website. Chair Lavallee noted the new added burden of posting to the website for Ms. Seymour due to the number of Right to Know requests, responses, organizing the information etc, and indicated that we have found someone who can help with this task who has experience with charter schools websites.

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Regular Meeting, 8/8/24. Draft minutes from the Board's Regular Meeting held on 8/8/24 were posted on the LCA website. Vice Chair Sweet requested that we add that Attorney Christopher Pyles, from Sulloway & Hollis, was in attendance and noted a typographical error in the spelling of Leo Plante's name. Trustee Nero motioned to approve the minutes from the 8/8/24 meeting pending these revisions, seconded by Trustee Walsh. No further discussion. The minutes were approved pending that correction by a vote of 7-0-0.

2. Special Meeting, 8/19/2024. Draft minutes from the Board's Special Meeting held on 8/19/24 were posted on the LCA website. Trustee Somero motioned to approve the minutes from the 8/19/24 meeting as written, seconded by Treasurer Greenwood. No further discussion. The minutes were approved as written by a vote of 7-0-0.

3. Special Meeting, 8/30/2024. Draft minutes of the Board's Special Meeting held on 8/30/24 were posted on the LCA website. Vice Chair Sweet motioned to approve the minutes from the 8/30/24 meeting as written, seconded by Treasurer Walsh. No further discussion. The minutes were approved as written by a vote of 7-0-0.

B. Conflicts of Interest Policy: Secretary Finn presented the Conflicts of Interest Policy that was approved at the May 2024 Regular Board Meeting. Part of the policy includes board members signing annually. The policy was signed by all board members in attendance at that time, and the original was unable to be located. Secretary Finn requested that the policy be signed again. All board members signed the policy.

C. Non-Public Meetings

1. Log of Non-Public Meetings. In reviewing requirements for boards, Vice Chair Sweet discovered that a log of non-public meetings is required. Vice Chair Sweet has created this log, including all non-public meetings that have been held since the start of LCA. Minutes are not included as part of the log. This log will be posted on the LCA website.

2. Sealed Minutes. Vice Chair Sweet also discovered that it is best practice for boards to periodically look back at non-public minutes that have been sealed to see if any can be unsealed. Secretary Finn recommended unsealing the minutes from the following four (4) non-public meetings: 4/7/2022, 3/9/2023, 3/23/2023, 4/13/2023.

3. Addendum to 11/9/2023. Vice Chair Sweet discovered that the minutes from the 11/9/2023 regular board meeting, written by former ED Kerry Bedard, did not indicate a motion to go into non-public session or the RSA. She requested an addendum to the original minutes indicating that the board went into non-public under RSA 91-A:3, II, (c) – 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. Chair Lavalley asked Attorney Best if this is appropriate and he indicated that if something needs to be added to the minutes, an addendum is the proper way of doing it. Vice Chair Sweet motioned to include the addendum to the original minutes from the 11/29/2023 meeting, seconded by Trustee Nero. No further discussion. Approved by a vote of 7-0-0. Trustee Sweet also noted that the minutes to that non-public session were not sealed, so they will be available and posted on the website.

Action Items:

- Secretary Finn will make corrections to minutes from the 8/8/24 meeting, and submit to Chair Lavalley for posting on LCA website, along with minutes from 8/19/24 and 8/30/24 meetings.

- Signed Conflicts of Interest Policy will be kept at the school. Document will be scanned and emailed to all board members.
- Trustees will review sealed minutes from 4/7/2022, 3/9/2023, 3/23/2023, 4/13/2023 non-public sessions. Discussion on unsealing these minutes to be held at 10/7/24 Regular Board Meeting.
- Vice Chair Sweet will submit addendum to 11/9/2023 meeting minutes to LCA for posting.
- Secretary Finn will scan minutes from non-public session on 11/9/2023 and submit to LCA for posting.

V. Principal Dobbs' Report: Principal Dobbs presented his report: Chair Lavallee commended Principal Dobbs for his attention to detail regarding the handbooks and following up with revisions and transparency with Lionheart parents and students. She also expressed appreciation for beginning faculty observations so early in the year.

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:dc2c8f10-bc5a-4800-ab05-f8ed0fe7cabb>

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

A. Gifts, Grants, and Bequests Policy: Policy was discussed at the August 2024 Regular Board Meeting and a draft has been posted on the website for over a month. Trustee Nero motioned to approve the policy as written, and Secretary Finn seconded. There was no discussion. Policy was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

B. Endowment: Regarding the \$5 million endowment announced earlier in the meeting, Trustee Nero motioned to accept the endowment, and Treasurer Greenwood seconded. No further discussion. Approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

C. Facilities: There has been a lot of construction and repairs completed, and we are now able to meet in this room again. Two items that are outstanding are the playground and multipurpose room. Trustee Nero continues to work with the town and Fieldstone. Because projects were completed without permits, the inspector is working on the issue but not as fast as he would ordinarily.

D. Facility Negotiations: Several meetings with the landlord, and there are multiple options to consider. Several lawyers are reviewing all options. Trustee Nero reminded us that the school started with no children and no building. The founding board from Monadnock Freedom to Learn Coalitions did the best they could with what they had. Two years in, we now have 313 children, and we need to make revisions. We are making progress in the negotiation process, and we will hopefully have more information to announce at the October meeting.

E. Fundraising: Treasurer Greenwood provided an update on the Fundraising Committee that meets under the Finance Committee. There is a committed group coming to the meetings and planning, trying to plan for the future as the school grows. There are two focuses—major donors/contributors and fundraising events. A letter announcing the first fundraising campaign, Cub Club, will be sent out shortly.

F. Safe Grant: Monadnock Security will be contracted to make all security upgrades in November, using up the Safe Grant funds.

VII. Parent Council Update: Josh Prather provided an update on Parent Council. They had a great first meeting, with 40 or so parents in attendance. It went very well overall.

VIII. Organizational Committee: Vice Chair Sweet provided an update on the activities of the Organizational Committee.

A. Stone Educational Consulting. To invest in further leadership development for Principal Dobbs, Vice Chair Sweet recommends contracting with Stone Educational Consulting for nine (9) consulting sessions (total \$675). Chair Lavallee indicated that because it doesn't impact the budget, a vote is not needed. Also, Title 2A funds can likely be used. Principal Dobbs expressed interest in participating in these sessions and will follow up.

B. Executive Director Search Update. Vice Chair Sweet noted that we are working with two more candidates. A fourth candidate is flying in later this month. It will cost about \$1000. Chair Lavallee said it was already in the budget, so no vote is needed. Trustee Nero confirmed that there is money in the budget for it.

C. Maintenance Policy. The work on the playground a unfinished MPR that was done without building permits prompted the development of this policy. The draft is posted on the LCA website, and the Board will vote at the October 2024 Regular Board Meeting. In the future all improvements requiring a permit will need to be presented to the board with the permit prior to starting the work.

D. Transportation. The committee is conducting research on what transportation services might look like for the school. Principal Dobbs will send an interest survey to parents.

Action Items:

- Principal Dobbs will follow up with Stone Consulting.
- Principal Dobbs will send out survey to parents.

IX. Academic Committee: Secretary Finn provided an update on the Academic Committee.

A. Assessment: Students from Grades 3-7 will be taking the Classical Learning Test in the fall to establish benchmarks. Principal Dobbs and team are currently determining best methods for benchmark assessments for both literacy and math for all grades. He will present a report on assessment results to the Board at the October or November Regular Board Meetings.

B. Professional Development: Principal Dobbs and team are working on refining a rubric to use when conducting classroom observations.

C. Science Cabinet: Science materials and materials for other subjects are now stocked and organized in one location.

D. Classroom Bookshelves: There is a need for a policy on what books can be on classroom bookshelves. We have contacted Hillsdale for suggestions.

Action Items:

- Principal Dobbs will present assessment data at October or November Regular Board Meeting.

X. Board Business: Chair Lavallee indicated that we still need to confirm a date for the board retreat. She will be sending another email.

Chair Lavallee announced the next Regular Board meeting for 10/7/24 @ 6 pm. She announced the board will be entering non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II, (c), (d), (l).

Trustee Somero motioned to enter into non-public session at 7:42 under RSA 91-A:3, II, (c), (d), (l), and Secretary Finn 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, and Fiona Byrne were invited to attend. Fiona Byrne attended remotely. Board approved by roll call: Walsh (Yea), Nero (Yea), Somero (Yea), Lavallee (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Finn (Yea).

Secretary Finn motioned to exit non-public, and Treasurer Greenwood seconded. Approved by roll call: Walsh (Yea), Nero (Yea), Somero (Yea), Lavallee (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Finn (Yea), Greenwood (Yea). The Board returned to public session at 9:11 pm. Vice Chair Sweet motioned to seal the minutes from the non-public session, seconded by Trustee Greenwood. Approved by roll call: Walsh (Yea), Nero (Yea), Somero (Yea), Greenwood (Yea), Lavallee (Yea), Sweet (Yea), Finn (Yea).

Chairman Lavallee asked for a motion to adjourn. Vice Chair Sweet made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Treasurer Greenwood. Approved by a vote of 7-0-0. Public meeting adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Finn