



**LIONHEART CLASSICAL ACADEMY CHARTERED PUBLIC SCHOOL**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**Regular Meeting January 22, 2026**

**MINUTES**

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees (the "Board") of Lionheart Classical Academy Chartered Public School ("LCA") took place on 1/22/2026 at 10 Sharon Road, Peterborough, New Hampshire.

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 PM. The meeting was duly posted in accordance with law. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Attendance**

**Board Members Present:** Kukish, Walsh, Sweet, Nero, Somero, Woods

**Board Members Absent:** Finn (Secretary)

**Mission Statement & Mission Moment**

Kukish read the mission statement. Dobbs presented the Mission Moment highlighting the much-appreciated help from the Kuusisto and Goddard families, who helped us move into the Dublin Rd property. He also noted an upcoming event on Saturday, January 24, weather permitting, with one additional event scheduled thereafter.

**Public Comment**

The floor was opened for public comment. No members of the public came forward initially. Later in the meeting, Vicki Gulla circled back to address the Board regarding food guidelines from the CDCA. She noted that the guidelines have been officially updated in a better direction, but the 7th grade curriculum is still using outdated information. She recommended reviewing the curriculum.

**Secretary's Report**

In the absence of the Secretary, Chair Sweet offered the draft minutes from the previous meeting in December 2025. No changes were proposed.

**Motion:** To approve the minutes as presented.

**First:** Kukish | **Second:** Walsh

**Vote:** 6-0-0 (Finn absent)

*Motion Passed*

### **Treasurer's Report**

Somero presented the Treasurer's Report ([December 2025 Monthly Financial Report](#) and [December 2025 Budget Analysis](#)).

Key highlights:

- Revenue: \$3.6 million
- Expenses: \$1.9 million – finances are in good shape at this point
- Benefits expenses are higher than anticipated
- December saw significant donation revenue: \$25,000 and \$4,000 in donations
- January has three pay periods, so next month's expenses will be higher
- Sweet noted strong returns on the \$1 million investment

Before the motion to accept the budget, Sweet paused to acknowledge the passing of Dr. Fred Ward earlier this month. A donation was made in his memory. The Board expressed gratitude to Mrs. Merkt for her generosity, noting Dr. Ward was a generous member of the LCA community.

**Motion:** To accept the Treasurer's Report.

**First:** Walsh | **Second:** Kukish

**Vote:** 6-0-0

*Motion Passed*

### **Leadership Report**

Harner presented the Leadership Report:

#### **Enrollment & Registration**

- Current enrollment: 358 students
- 83 students pre-registered for next year – ahead of last year's pace
- Expectation to reach 110-120 pre-registrations, which is good news for the lottery
- Sweet asked about grade distribution; there is a quality spread across the board with 4 students for high school
- Report cards will be issued soon; January 23 is the last day of the quarter

#### **Athletics & Events**

- Boys participating in Winter Slam
- Middle school Winter Formal invitations sent; RSVPs due by next Friday
- Event to be held at American Legion in Jaffrey on February 13
- Slim chance to hold the event at the Dublin Road building if ready in time

### **8th Grade & Fundraising**

- 8th graders continue preparing for Washington DC trip
- Pizza fundraiser was successful; students were industrious
- Burns, Dobbs, and Harner developed a novel formula for fundraiser allocation – spreading funds among all participating kids by group category

### **Property Update**

- Hosted a parent night regarding the new property
- Progress is slower than hoped, but work continues on all requirements
- Hope to occupy the building prior to February break, though not guaranteed
- Great turnout for parent night

### **Upcoming Events**

- Numeracy Night scheduled for February 18 at 5:00 PM (following Literacy Night held in December) – will cover numeracy instruction for lower grades, Singapore Math methods, bar graphs, etc.

### **Finance Committee Report**

Nero presented the Finance Committee Report:

#### **Six-Year Plan**

- The six-year plan outline was distributed to all Board members
- Sweet noted the plan hit all high notes and will be added to SharePoint for editing
- Adjusted deadline: January 31 for 2025-26 architect and design team proposals (changed from January 15)
- Kukish suggested potentially extending to February 15 for the master plan

#### **Property Development**

- Sharon Road and MPR (Multi-Purpose Room) architectural plans expected tomorrow
- Electrical plans to follow shortly after
- Target: Summer 2026 for MPR construction
- The MPR buildout will transform the space into an actual multi-purpose room
- Construction projected to start in June; Nero noted it should be a relatively simple project

#### **Budget & Planning Process**

- Sweet asked if architectural plans come with budgets/quotes
- Kukish explained: The master plan comes first (at cost), then the design team (led by the chosen architect) creates architectural and engineering plans
- Budgetary numbers developed during that process; scenarios reviewed for selection
- If using a one-stop shop approach, timeline is 1-2 years as reflected in the report

### **Turn Lane & Phase 2**

- Sweet asked about the need for a turn lane; this is not currently in the plan
- Nero explained they are working with Fieldstone; Phase 2 will address this
- Next year won't require a turn lane for fewer than 100 students
- Harner noted that significant interest may change requirements

### **Second Mortgage & Budget Considerations**

- Nero discussed the second mortgage and extra funds in the budget for change orders on the building
- Option to pay off the mortgage in full, leaving \$150,000-\$175,000 available
- Potential discussion about vestibule project
- Kukish suggested waiting to occupy the building to assess actual needs before paying off the mortgage
- Sweet noted there may be enough projects requiring funds NOT to pay off the other mortgage
- Goal: Obtain three contractor estimates with due diligence over the next 60 days

### **Investment Policy Statement**

- Discussion of withdrawal rates for endowment funds: recommended 3.5-5% depending on the year
- Not to exceed 5% per year; more likely to be 3.5-4.5% on an annual basis
- Discussed options for Schwab, Vanguard (likely lowest cost)
- Recommended allocation: 65% stocks / 30% bonds / 5% cash – diversified to protect Board fiduciary obligation with lower internal fees
- Woods expressed concern about maintaining in-house management if Board members with financial expertise leave
- Nero suggested annual reviews of investment approach with option for external hourly advisor (a couple times per year) rather than ongoing fees
- Consensus: Board-managed with hourly external professional advice on approximately quarterly basis
- Sweet will include language for approximately April distribution timing, Board determination each July, and language on external advisor

**Motion:** To approve the Investment Policy Statement with review of edits.

**First:** Sweet | **Second:** Walsh

**Vote:** 6-0-0

*Motion Passed*

**Motion:** To create a Vanguard account, with the Board to manage investments but solicit an external manager (CFP) to verify quarterly and check in with the Finance Committee and Board annually.

**First:** Sweet | **Second:** Woods

**Vote:** 6-0-0

*Motion Passed*

### **Fundraising Committee Report**

Kukish reported the committee is working with Harner and Kristin Duncan on a fundraising packet for donor solicitation. The goal is to expand fundraising efforts. Harner is bringing expertise from Hillsdale, including sample packets.

### **Organization Committee Report**

#### **Confidentiality and Student Privacy Policy**

Sweet presented the Confidentiality and Student Privacy Policy, noting it is brief and compliant with FERPA. Language was largely adapted from another NH charter school.

**Motion:** To approve the Confidentiality and Student Privacy Policy.

**First:** Walsh | **Second:** Sweet

**Vote:** 6-0-0

*Motion Passed*

#### **Additional Policies**

Sweet noted that three policies from two months ago (DAF, EHB, JICI) are existing policies in place for compliance. No feedback was received.

**Motion:** To approve policies DAF, EHB, and JICI.

**First:** Sweet | **Second:** Walsh

**Vote:** 6-0-0

*Motion Passed*

### **Academic Committee Report**

The Board received a report from Mrs. Byrne on DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) – the school's literacy assessment tool for K-5 literacy progress.

**Key Points:**

- This is the 4th year using DIBELS; November was the 2nd assessment walkthrough of the year
- There were some concerns identified and adjustments made
- This is Mrs. Byrne's 3rd presentation to the Board, but tonight focused specifically on K-5 literacy
- Professional development for staff and students has been very beneficial
- October initiative: 10-minute reading blocks per grade level; sending home age-appropriate books to help with book selection
- December Read-A-Thon completed; January professional development for teachers
- DIBELS (from University of Oregon) does not extend past 8th grade; need to find a new assessment tool for grades 9 and above

**Note:** Discussion of Chapter 9 "Governing for Greatness" was moved to next month.

### **Non-Public Session**

**Motion:** To enter into non-public session under RSE 91-A:3, II, (a), (e), and (i). [(a)The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, (e) Consideration or negotiation of pending claims or litigation; (i) Consideration of matters relating to the preparation for and the carrying out of emergency functions;

**First:** Walsh | **Second:** Sweet

**Roll Call Vote:** 6-0-0

*Motion Passed*

Mrs. Byrne and Mr. Dobbs were invited to the non-public session to discuss personnel. Mr. Harner was also invited to review security.

Non-public session began at 7:32 PM.

The Board returned to public session at 8:10 PM.

**Motion:** Seal the Minutes

**First:** Sweet | **Second:** Walsh

**Roll Call Vote:** 6-0-0

*Motion Passed*

In the non-public session, the Board agreed to extend a teaching contact through the end of the academic year.

### **Adjournment**

**Motion:** To adjourn.

**First:** Walsh | **Second:** Sweet

Vote: 6-0-0

*Motion Passed*

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm.

Minutes approved 2/12/26