



Frederick Classical Charter School, Inc.

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

January 09, 2023

*Meeting held by video conference
Minutes submitted by Lei Sun*

Present: Nkechi Ileka-Adeoye - Chair
Debbie Nnameka
John Funderburk
Lei Sun
Tom Olivero
Debbie Shoffner

Other Participants: Laura Taylor
Christine Samuels
Jen Schneider

At 7:03pm, Ms. Jennifer Carbaugh, a professional grant writer with over 13 years experience, provided an overview of her grant writing services. For clarity, Ms. Carbaugh does not work on fundraising.

Called to order and Welcome at 7:50pm.

1. Agenda

Dr. Sun motioned to amend the agenda by adding 1) 8th grade fundraising events and 2) a closed session to discuss personnel. The motion passed unanimously. Amended agenda was approved.

2. Public Comments

- Ms. Aimee Meier submitted a public comment via email in advance and read it during the meeting. She also added that she reached out to some parents within the PTA group

and she hopes the BOT can bring a handful of families together and create unification within the community.

“Hello board, admin, and fellow families.

I wanted to vocally thank the board and the admin team for all of the communication this year. It’s our family’s fifth year at the school and the communication has been on a whole new level this year. Thank you

Aimee Meier”

- Ms. Cortney Krauss submitted a public comment via email in advance and read it during the meeting.

“The PTA was formed with the intention of being an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of the school community. We are stronger when we work together. In December, the BOT was directed by FCPS Central Office staff to meet with members of the PTA, in an effort to better understand the goals of the PTA, as well as to heal some of the grievances that remain from this past October. The BOT members have not reached out to the PTA leaders to schedule this meeting, which makes the messaging sent to the community over the weekend about the BOT's meeting with Dr. Dyson not only confusing, but further deepens the distrust I have in the board members to operate ethically and transparently within the school community. Additionally, the BOT claims that the reason for choosing to move forward with a PTO, instead of a PTA, is boiled down to membership fees. Anyone willing to engage with PTA members, in its current stage or pre-formation, learned that we are committed to ensuring that membership dues are not cost prohibitive to any interested member. We stated repeatedly that we were committed to finding ways to subsidize membership costs, and we accomplished this by finding a donor to cover membership dues for members who expressed the need for assistance.

I want to challenge the idea that a PTO has always been in existence at FCCS. For the past two years, since I became a community member here, I have not seen or heard any information from the PTO to engage families. Who are the leaders? What are the activities being organized by the PTO? When are the meetings? How do families receive communication from the PTO? Only since the legitimate formation of a PTA in November have I started to hear about the existence of a PTO. I am left to believe that a PTO existed in name only prior to the mobilization of a PTA, and at this point, I can only assume the board has scrambled to activate the PTO as a way to dismiss and override a PTA.

I would like to highlight a few efforts organized by the PTA to date. We have supported two staff members in need with meal trains, appreciated our teachers through treats in the staff room, rallied for parent volunteers in the cafeteria, advocated for several FCCS families to better connect them to resources for their scholars, and coordinated a personalized welcome basket for our new head of school, Dr. Samuels. We met with the school administration to share our

vision, but also to hear their vision for the school community. Our goal is to complement the efforts of the BOT and to serve in contribution to the school community.

Finally, I want to share publicly the encouraging feedback about FCCS that I heard in a meeting last week with Central Office staff. It is a counterpoint to the fear narrative that is often shared and felt by community members in regards to FCCS shutting down, if we engage with FCPS or fight for more transparency and checks and balances of power at our school. The staff member said, "FCPS wants FCCS to THRIVE; we are one of the BEST schools in the county. FCPS wants a positive community and culture around promoting the success at FCCS." So, once again, I ask the BOT to open the lines of communication with the PTA, hear our concerns, and work together to find not only resolution but a more inclusive vision for family and community engagement at FCCS. I firmly believe that there is room for everyone at this table, but it requires those who are currently seated to move over a little and make room for more people. Thank you.

Cortney Krauss”

- Ms. Jackie Kotei submitted a public comment via email in advance and read it during the meeting.

“We celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King's day one week from today so I think it's only fitting that I begin my public comment with something he once said - “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Which brings me to your actions, Board of Trustees: the path you continue to take is an injustice to our entire school community. Instead of sitting down at the table with our PTA leaders to discuss how we can collaborate and be in contribution at the school (in the spirit of all Dr. King stood for)...you continue to use fear tactics, spread disinformation, enlisted a lawyer to allege copyright infringement, and your latest move is to initiate a PTO (parent-teacher organization) as a way of undermining the PTA.

There are those who have asked me recently, "why don't you just work with the board" and "why start a PTA at all".

My answer is that this started with us trying to work with the board and create change from within and that resulted in the termination of our entire committee. We asked to present the PTA at one of these meetings as an agenda item...its been 60 days & still no response to my email. FCPS asked you to grant us a meeting...their guidance ignored. (Yes they gave reasons for the termination but isn't it interesting that never did they even ask what were the qualifications of the volunteers that were on that committee...nor did they ask how much time those volunteers had to work on fundraising. At the very least we could have kept fundraising until a firm had been hired or we could have offset some of the fundraising firm's work so that we wouldn't have to be spending upwards of \$8,000 a month to retain a firm that the board is now considering.)

What's even more unsettling is that everywhere I turn, I hear from one parent to another of the issues they have working with this board. Those who have stepped down as committee chairs or stopped volunteering at the school altogether because of this BOT. There is an overall perception of "that's just how the BOT is."

Because of this, it became apparent to me and other parents that instead of trying to change a system that has given you absolute power to govern, why not create a way for parents to still fundraise for the scholars, collaborate, have open dialogues and engage without fear of retaliation or retribution. Let me just say that we applaud the efforts of the parents who are continuing to work within the framework of the parent committees. We support what you are doing. We believe that the uptick in social activities, volunteerism and meetups are a byproduct of us challenging the status quo to begin with and is a cause and effect of our PTA forming.

As it stands, our PTA followed all of the steps to properly form and even asked that the PTA be shared with the entire school community. Our access to the official school communication channels, unfortunately, keeps being delayed which is why we have had to spread the participation of the PTA via word-of-mouth.

Nevertheless we have a thriving and growing group of members and as you have heard or will hear tonight, some of the initiatives we have already done, including a donor who has made it possible for families and staff to join the PTA who might have a financial challenge.

Which brings me to this Dr. King quote...

"Freedom is never given voluntarily by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.

We will not abandon our pursuit to freely operate the PTA without constant interference from the BOT. We demand that you stop the attempts to shut us down!

We believe that parents should be free to discuss the things that you are voting on as a Board before they are approved. Is the admin and staff even in the loop on items you vote on prior to so that the Griffin Triangle is truly upheld?

We believe that people should be free to give public comment without submitting it in writing beforehand. Heaven forbid English is not my first language or I'm not good at writing but have something to comment on. (Thus one of the reasons more people don't engage in these meetings).

We believe that parents should have a forum where they can freely engage with one another...that we should have a "real" town hall meeting where once again you're not pre-screening everything.

We demand that you stop trying to put all our money in a general fund and justify it. That there is transparency. I for one represent a growing number that will never give another dollar to FCCS Inc until there is a change in how you govern. Let's not even discuss the damage all of this is doing to our reputation which again is why I can't help but wonder why you won't swallow your pride and work for the good of the school.

We need to start asking ourselves long term where will this school be in ten years? I have a two year old who hasn't even started kindergarten and when I do the math, my family will likely still be here in 10 years. All those with scholars who are K, 1st, 2nd, 3rd graders...I encourage you to think about the next 5 to 10 years.... I'm not asking you to take sides...I'm just asking you how do we create the best version of FCCS possible? Is it in the spirit of divisiveness and fear or one that honors Dr. King's legacy and ultimately our virtues?

I'm committed to creating change long-term and my hope is that we can do it together.
#abetterfcss

Jackie Kotei
Publicity & Media Strategist
Award-Winning Journalist
CEO of MoreGood Media
www.MoreGoodMedia.com ”

- Mr. Alex Kotei submitted a public comment via email in advance and Ms. Jackie Kotei read part of it on his behalf during the meeting.

“My wife started with one powerful Dr. King quote and I would like to begin my comments with another....this Dr. King quote...

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My wife and I are committed to creating change long-term and my hope is that we can do it together. #abetterfccs

-Alex Kotei
Parent of two scholars at the school"

- Ms. Dawn Onley Bowman submitted a public comment via email in advance and read it during the meeting.

"To the FCCS Board of Trustees,

My name is Dawn Onley Bowman and I'm mom to a 4th grade student at FCCS. We learned of this great school through DeAngelo's cousin, Mia Hall, who graduated three years ago from FCCS and is now a junior at TJ High School.

I've volunteered at FCCS for the past five years — ever since my son was in kindergarten. Early on I would drop in at least once a week to read a book to the class and to help out with activities. Over the past year, that volunteer support has included raising funds for the school by way of a concert, auction, read-a-thon, penny wars, restaurant nights, etc.

Last fall, this BOT dismantled the Fundraising Committee after all the great work we have done. The explanation was you were getting rid of it to move to a new focus of targeting businesses for larger donations. In fact, I think a few of you mentioned this move was done to both raise more money and to not have to continue to rely on the same families year in and year out for funds.

So, when you got rid of the Fundraising Committee, a group of parents (myself included) established a PTA. It was only after we established this PTA that we now learn of a supposed PTO that was already written into the charter (but not executed until now). It's hard for me to see this as anything but retaliatory because of the timing.

This year we celebrate 10 years that FCCS has been in existence. My question is why wasn't the PTO initiated prior to now if that is the case? Why did it take 10 years for the BOT to suddenly see the value in a PTO?

Also, the PTA has met with the Administration and has corresponded with FCPS — both of whom favor the idea of the BOT members and PTA members meeting to discuss ways we can work together. Yet a meeting has STILL not been scheduled. Meanwhile, the BOT has scheduled two public meetings, met with our new superintendent, etc. This appears like there's no good will to meet with some of the school's parents who, like me, have done this volunteer work for YEARS, not just the past few months.

I think there should be room at ANY table for people who want to do good. What school isn't in favor of parents giving back and helping their kids, teachers, programs thrive?

We're still waiting to be invited to your table.

Sincerely,
Dawn Onley Bowman"

- Ms. Ionie Martin submitted a public comment via email in advance and read it during the meeting.

"Members of the Board -

I recently read an article published by Forbes in November 2022 which outlined the four ways charter schools undermine good education policy. The first is establishing coherent education systems. Next, addressing the educational challenges of child poverty and disadvantage. Then, racial segregation and isolation. Finally, appropriate accountability for use of public funds. As I read this article, I couldn't help but think on and compare my experiences here at FCCS with the article's content.

Specific to the formation of the PTA, the Board's position is that the "PTO/PTC model does not require membership fees." Surely that cannot be the end of the discussion (as to the opposition of a PTA). Nor can the Board assert that the founders did not intend there to ever be a PTA. I have neither the data nor the conversations to support such a claim (that none of the founders ever wanted a PTA within the FCCS Community). Historically speaking, the founders of the United States did not consider non-whites to be full citizens and as such, they were never granted the right to vote. Over the years, thankfully, both have changed.

While I can understand wanting to "alleviate any financial burden on our community members," I certainly do not understand the exclusion of all potential partners. Any PTA formed is done so with the guidelines set forth at the national level. Such an organization is also a 501(c)(3) entity, independent of the Board's PTO/PTC model. Under the umbrella of the PTA, FCCS would have access to another fundraising stream that wouldn't otherwise be available. The Board's desire to partner with a fundraising firm and spend thousands of dollars (without any guarantees on the investment) seems financially irresponsible to me.

Since the Read-a-Thon earlier this year, have there been any funds raised for the school? In October, both the Fundraising and Grant Committees were disassembled, without a plan to move forward. Since then, the community was presented with two fundraising proposals. One of the firms quoted an \$8000 monthly rate with a 6-month minimum commitment. That same firm also mentioned that about 97% of their clients do end up in partnership with them for the long-term. That's a \$96,000 commitment from FCCS, Inc. How can that be justified when a permanent Head of School is not yet in place? In addition to the Head of School position, we have vacancies for a Spanish teacher, an Art teacher, and a Math specialist.

The Board's unwillingness to work in collaboration with all potential partners will be costly. Not just financially but costly to the school's reputation. The school's financial stability has already been shaken with the 2021 probation.

The desire to move the FCCS forward and potentially expand into a high school (much like MVMS will be doing in the fall) will require considerable funding and a sustainable plan. It took MVMS over 20 years to get a high school. FCCS is now 10 years old. What are the next steps? What is the plan to minimize our overheads and increase our income? Surely the per-pupil-allocation (PPA) received yearly from FCPS is not enough....

Thank you for your time.

Thanks,
Lonie

"..Walk in the newness of your "not yet" of 2023..." "

- Ms. Purvi Pandya submitted a public comment via email in advance and requested a BOT member read it on her behalf during the meeting.

"Good evening,

I would like to thank our Board of Trustees, administration and all of the families that pulled together in making FCCS a priority. The recent update was what we needed to hear in order to move forward as a community. I hope that the school can now come together and move forward in a positive direction to make our school even more successful than it is now. We have some amazing scholars, staff, families, administrators and board of trustee members.

I just want to take this time to send a heartfelt thank you for your continued efforts on making our school amazing. The long and many hours you put in have not gone unnoticed. We see you. So again, thank you.

-Purvi Pandya”

- The BOT President, Ms. Ileka-Adeoye, made a public comment via Webex. She clarified the misconception that FCPS directed FCCS to meet with the PTA. During BOT’s meeting with the Superintendent Dr. Dyson on 1/5/23, FCPS confirmed that it was only a recommendation, and they never forced, tasked or charged BOT to meet with the PTA. With regards to the vacant staff positions, no candidates have been identified. For instance, the math specialist position is still open, because, per FCPS central office, there is currently a national shortage of math teachers. This challenge is not specific to Frederick County. Additionally, the PTA claims they want to work collaboratively with the BOT. However, before the PTA was formed, FCCS Inc. was not notified. The BOT was not aware of the PTA’s plan, and did not hear anything officially from the PTA. Moreover, the FCCS founders made it clear that they did not want a PTA due to membership fees. Last but not least, the discussion about outsourcing fundraising was initiated in April, 2021.

3. President’s Report

Ms. Ileka-Adeoye presented a report including the followings:

- The BOT met with Dr. Dyson and FCPS leadership on 1/5/23. The highlights were sent out to the community via Find Out First.
- HOS search is still in progress.
- There are two upcoming town hall meetings scheduled for 1/17/23 (in person) and 1/25/23 (virtual), respectively. The notification was sent out to the community via Find Out First in advance.

4. Accounting Report

Ms. Jen Shneider presented the below report on financials and investments through 11/30/2022.

“Financial Report as of 11/30/2022:

For the five months ending November 30, 2022, Frederick Classical had a net surplus from operations of \$118,032. The period ended with Working Capital of \$1.99M and Net Assets of \$2.1M. Working Capital measures the amount of funds available for expenditure that is not invested in an asset such as facilities. Net Assets is a running total of all surpluses (deficits) since inception where the value is not necessarily liquid.

The result for the first five months included some unanticipated events as compared to budget, however, the overall financial health of the organization is strong and continues to anticipate a surplus for year-end. An updated forecast will be provided at the completion of the 2nd quarter. The forecast’s summary will itemize line items with material changes to budget. These changes

are expected to add to the budgeted surplus of \$80,127. For the five months of actuals, variance to budget included the following:

- The school's total enrollment at September 30, 2022 was 375 or one seat short of full enrollment. The budget assumed a 2-seat shortfall so an added \$11,536 will be available to support this year's operations.
- Staffing vacancies from the Math Specialist and IA positions are presently adding to the budgeted surplus. The recently filled IA position will reduce the impact of this for the second half of the year.
- Services provided by FCPS and incurred as a buyback have yet to be recorded for the fiscal year. This typically occurs in the second half of the year and should be recognized as a timing variance to budget at five months.
- Utilities continue to run ahead of budget due to somewhat higher usage but largely due to a marked increase in pricing by the supplier.
- Charges to the remaining ESSER grant have been lower than anticipated. This does not affect the current year's operating surplus but it does allow for additional funds to be available for the 2023-24 school year.

Audit Update:

The external accounting firm, K.L. Hoffman & Co., PC, has completed their audit of the school's financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. The audit resulted in an unqualified opinion, meaning that the statements are sound and free from material misstatements. Ms. Hoffman will present a summary of the school's audited financial position at the February, 2023 public meeting.

Account Changes:

FCCS, Inc. will begin the work of transitioning the school's Student Activity Fund to FCPS. FCPS will become the administrator and legal owner of the account on behalf of the school and its scholars. This change will not negatively impact students or parents or donors to the non-profit. Donations made to the charity will continue to be owned by FCCS, Inc. and will retain their tax-deductible eligibility. The requested change in administration of the Student Activity Fund was for consistency with the other traditional and charter schools in the district and was not punitive in nature.

Investment Report as of 11/30/2022:

FCCS, Inc. currently maintains an investment portfolio valued at \$1.75M. Its purpose is to support capital expenditures associated with the existing facility as well as the pursuit of a non-leased facility.

The investment plan developed jointly with Wells Fargo Bank and in accordance with the investment policy of the state of Maryland supports utilizing brokered CDs for the preservation of capital and maintenance of FDIC insurance. The deposits are structured so that a minimum of \$250,000 will always be available for use on a rolling quarterly basis. Twelve-month yields are currently between 3.2 and 4%. At the time of this report, January 2023, 3 CDs, each valued at \$250,000 will come to maturity. Each will be reinvested to maintain the approved investment

model. Interest earned on prior maturities will remain in the brokerage account as cash. At November 30, 2022, \$1.75M was fully invested. The distribution of funds is as follows:

<u>Issuer</u>	<u>Purchase Date</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>YTM</u>	<u>Principal</u>	<u>Interest at Maturity</u>
American Commercial Bank & Trust	10/12/22	4/12/23	6 mo.	3.850%	250,000.00	4,812.50
Discover Bank	10/11/22	1/10/23	3 mo.	3.350%	250,000.00	2,093.75
First Republic Bank	10/6/22	1/6/23	3 mo.	3.200%	250,000.00	2,000.00
JP Morgan Chase Bank N.A.	10/11/22	1/11/23	3 mo. Call	4.000%	250,000.00	2,500.00
Ally Bank	10/6/22	10/6/23	12 mo.	4.000%	250,000.00	10,000.00
Wells Fargo Bank N.A.	10/11/22	4/11/23	6 mo.	3.850%	250,000.00	4,812.50
Morgan Stanley Bank N.A.	10/13/22	10/13/23	12 mo.	4.060%	250,000.00	10,150.00
Positions at 11/30/22					\$1,750,000.00	\$36,368.75

Contracts:

The contract with Elite Football Club to use the school’s gymnasium was completed in January. The club will use the space on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 6-8pm.”

5. Head of School’s Report

Dr. Samuels presented the HOS report including the following details:

- The school lottery is open.
- The 1st staff meeting after the break took place today (1/9).
- On 1/10, there will be a prospective parent information session.
- 1/11 will be the teachers’ work day. The staff can telework and will be available to answer any questions during the day.
- Dr. Samuels will host a scholar assembly on 1/12.
- The next leadership meeting is scheduled for 1/23.
- The report cards will be issued on 1/24.
- Math specialist, 0.5 art and 0.5 spanish positions are still vacant. A candidate was interviewed for the Spanish position, but the candidate took a position elsewhere.
- Our new Instructional Assistant Julie Ellis started today.
- As of Jan. 5th, there are 195 kids on the waiting list, including K 52, 1st 24, 2nd 30, 3rd 23, 4th 18, 5th 14, 6th 20, 7th 12 and 8th 2. Dr. Samuels will continue to provide updates on the numbers.
- iReady data collected at the beginning of the year and the middle of the year will be shared during the next BOT meeting .
- Dr. Samuels will collect several funding request forms and provide them to the BOT for review.

6. Vote on consent agenda

Dr. Sun motioned to approve the consent agenda, which includes approval of 12/05/2022 BOT public meeting minutes and closed session minutes. The motion passed unanimously. Consent agenda was approved.

7. Discussions and Vote

- Fundraising strategy: The Board has received bids from two fundraising consultants till date, both

organizations will provide fundraising and grant writing services. Since Ms. Carbaugh does not work on fundraising, the Board will be soliciting for a third bid to finalize the engagement of a consulting firm that would be a good fit for FCCS. Once a third consulting firm has been identified, the Board will make a decision and have a formal vote during the next public meeting.

8. Discussions

- History curriculum: The Board will be scheduling a meeting with Dr. Colleen Bernard to discuss and review history curriculum feedback. Admin and FCCS staff will be consulted for input and feedback regarding alternative history textbooks. Selected textbooks will be made available in the library for community members to review.
- The job description for the FCCS Executive Director position was proposed and discussed. The Board will finalize the job description and will vote to approve the job description during the February meeting.
- The 8th grade fundraising events were proposed by Ms. Jackie Wilson. These have been traditionally done in the past. The events include, but are not limited to, dance, DJ, hershey park trip, T-shirts and popcorn. Fundraising events are usually done to raise money. If the funds are insufficient, Ms. Wilson is encouraged to reach out to BOT and request funds by submitting a funding request form. Dr. Sun motioned to approve the 8th grade fundraising event as presented. The motion passed unanimously.
- Dr. Sun motioned to adjourn the public meeting and go to a closed session to discuss personnel. The motion passed unanimously.

Public meeting was adjourned at 8:17pm.