

**Linn Christian Education Association
Isaac Newton Christian Academy
Board Meeting Minutes
2025-02-18 6:00-9:30pm**

Attendance

- staff: Dr. Dean Ridder, Erin Harlan, Stasha Padgett, Tracy King, Denise Jorgensen, Beth Ngo
- board members: Bob Mosey, John Garbes, Katie Warner, Steve Howard, Stephen Pitts, Neil Gutschmidt, Gabe Rohwedder; Stephanie Prochaska was absent due to illness
- guests: (none)

Opening

Dean opened the meeting in prayer. Katie shared a devotional about the benefits of hearing from God, and wisdom in listening to His voice. Stephanie will share the devotional at the next board meeting.

Secretary's Report

The board reviewed the minutes from the January meeting in advance via email and the majority of board members voted to approve, with some small clarifications which were incorporated prior to publication.

After the Director of Operations position was posted in November and applicants were interviewed, Dr. Ridder recommended Beth Ngo for the position. A vote to approve the hire of Mrs. Ngo was taken via email and passed.

Bob recommended May 12th as the date for the LCEA Annual Meeting, and suggested that board members review the draft minutes from the 2024 Annual Meeting so any glaring deficiencies can be addressed before being read aloud at the 2025 meeting. Bob made a motion to set the LCEA Annual Meeting date on May 12th, which Stephen seconded; a verbal vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Head Of School's Report

Dean presented three policies for review:

- 3.02.05, Board of Directors Conflict of Interest Policy
- 4.05.02, Overdue Bills
- 05.04, School Calendar and Schedule

No changes were proposed, and none were made.

The campus security upgrade is ongoing. The next phase is to fortify the exterior of the building in certain locations around the building during Spring Break. Initial performance will be monitored and, if the results are positive, be extended to other exterior locations in the buildings.

The 25/26 School Calendar was prepared by administration and reviewed by several office staff, and presented to the board for approval. Stephen made a motion to approve the school calendar as presented, and John seconded the motion; a verbal vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Beth Ngo has started her role as Director of Operations and is already very involved in the school operations processes. She has excellent ideas for how to improve things, and they will be implemented

by the school administration without board involvement (because they are operational and not strategic).

Dean sought guidance from ACSI on the process for Exemplary Accreditation and explained the next steps to the board. After some discussion, Steve made a motion to apply for ACSI Exemplary Accreditation, which Stephen seconded; a verbal vote was taken and passed unanimously.

The board professional development article provided this month was “Duties of Board Leaders,” which comes from Appendix B and C of Trustee Handbook, by Donna Orem and Debra P. Wilson, published by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

Director Of Development & Enrollment Report

Tracy provided an updated admissions total for the 25/26 school year. There are 384 students enrolled, plus an additional 7 offers for enrollment pending. The 2nd and 4th grades are currently full. There are 19 current (24/25 school year) students not planning to return next year (for 25/26).

The Annual Banquet is just over two months away. Tracy has secured 8 sponsors so far. Over the next couple weeks, a team will be working on the videos to present at the Annual Banquet.

Tracy completed an application for a \$100k Rotary Club grant. Three finalists will be interviewed about their project, and a recipient will be selected on May 12.

Treasurer's Report

Neil provided an update on how the treasurer role will be updated to reflect the involvement of the Director of Operations going forward. He presented a monthly statement showing year-to-date income within 1% of budget and expenses within 3% of budget.

Neil prepared some scenarios for the upcoming capital campaign and resulting debt load, in conjunction with committed cash on hand. ISM recommends the debt service commitment from operating expenses remains below 5%.

Facilities Committee

Stephen provided an update on the structural settling of the original Adams Elementary building. A formal report should be received from the engineering contractor in the next few weeks.

The more detailed traffic analysis and report was submitted to the city in preparation for the facility expansion project, but the City of Cedar Rapids is still reviewing the traffic study.

Stephen also shared some feedback the Facilities Committee had received from faculty about continuing to conduct student lunch time in the classrooms, and frustration given that it was originally expected to be a short-term workaround to the problem of needing more classroom space. The facility expansion will not be completed in time for the start of the 25/26 school year.

Willett, Hofmann & Associates is working on site renderings to be the face of the upcoming capital campaign and be shared with potential donors. The results of that effort are expected any day.

Strategic Plan

In order to unleash additional energy to rapidly develop a formal strategic plan, Katie will be working to construct a committee of interested board members to invest focused effort. The Strategic Plan Committee will solicit input from the school community for what priorities should be focused on, assemble a proposed plan, and bring it to the board for adoption. The goal is to have a ratified strategic plan prepared before the LCEA Annual Meeting in May.

Capital Campaign

With structural renderings available soon, details for the pending capital campaign will be announced at the Annual Banquet. The presentation will be careful not to imply that banquet gifts are capital campaign gifts, so donors are not confused about whether they have participated in the capital campaign.

Tracy led a discussion of whether to hire Amperage to facilitate the capital campaign. She reported that Abby Riggs has been helping offload some responsibilities since Tracy is a bit overloaded in her roles as Director of Development (with a looming capital campaign) and Director of Enrollment (with record enrollment and ever-increasing interest from families of potential students). Dean, as Head of School, will evaluate whether the existing team (possibly augmented with one or more additional staff) is the right place to manage a capital campaign. His vision, in the medium term, is to create a Director of Advancement position, with the Directors of Enrollment, Development, and Communication as direct reports.

Nominating Committee

Steve provided some updates from the committee, and reminded the board that we are seeking to add 3 new members, with 2 rolling off in July.

The committee received several “no” responses from potential treasurer candidates. They are meeting with one interested treasurer candidate next week.

Steve provided a completed application and biography from Nick Dose, and made a motion to include Nick on the ballot for the Annual Meeting, which was seconded by John; a verbal vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Closed Session

All staff were dismissed from the meeting to enter into closed session to discuss incentive plans for Head of School retention over a longer time horizon.

The closed session concluded, and no formal actions resulted from it.

Closing

Gabe closed the meeting in prayer.

Future Board Meetings

- March 25th, 6-9pm
- April 15th, 6-9pm
- May 20th, 6-9pm