

**Linn Christian Education Association
Isaac Newton Christian Academy
Board Meeting Minutes
2024-10-22 6:00-9:25pm**

Attendance

- staff: Dr. Dean Ridder, Erin Harlan, Stasha Padgett, Tracy King
- board members: Bob Mosey, John Garbes, Katie Warner, Steve Howard, Stephanie Prochaska, Stephen Pitts, Gabe Rohwedder, Neil Gutschmidt
- guests: Dr. Barbara Perry, Anna Schneider, Denise Jorgensen, Dr. Disa Awah

Opening

Bob opened the meeting in prayer. John shared a devotional about waiting on the Lord, unlike Saul in 1 Samuel, with exhortations from Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 27:14; Lamentations 3:25-26; Psalm 37:7; Phiippians 4:13; and Habbakuk 2:3. Stephen volunteered to prepare a devotional for the next board meeting.

Secretary's Report

The board reviewed and approved the minutes from the September meeting in advance via email.

A special board meeting was held on October 10th to discuss an issue related to the Student Entrepreneur Fair. During the meeting, Stephanie made a motion, which Gabe seconded, to officially document support from the board of Mrs. Harlan's leadership in coordinating the Student Entrepreneur Fair. A verbal vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

The results of the LCEA vote to acquire the property adjacent to the school at 2141 Coldstream were shared for the record: 202 yes, 7 no. A quorum for the vote was reached, and the purchase was approved, enabling the contingency on the sale contract to be met.

Head Of School's Report

Dean presented one policy for revision and two policies for review:

- 7.11, Student Enrollment Process and Waiting List
- 8.06, Political Candidates
- 8.15, Emergency Response Plan

Changes had been requested by the board to policy 7.11 during the September meeting, and a recommended final wording was proposed at this month's meeting. No changes were proposed to policies 8.06 and 8.15, and none were made. John made a motion, which Stephen seconded, to accept the updated policy 7.11 as proposed; the motion passed by unanimous verbal vote.

Dean provided an update on the status of insurance coverage for all aspects of the school's operation. All insurance is in place now, and the insurance agent is aware of the pending acquisition of 2141 Coldstream.

Dean provided an update on High School academic concerns. Mrs. Harlan has been watching academic performance intently, and implementing new policies and practices to improve

performance and student engagement in their studies, to great effect. Accountability among students has increased dramatically and the academic probation policies already in place are being enforced and proving effective.

Dean provided an update on the facility security upgrades, which are still ongoing. Access Control Vestibule and visitor management system were recommended and are already being implemented.

Dean provided a preliminary draft of a job description for the new Director of Operations position. Neil noted that the budget included funds for the Director of Operations, so there is nothing budgetary preventing this position from being hired. The board acknowledged that the position is ready to be hired using the proposed job description.

Dean explained the Faculty Culture Profile to the board, which is an annual mechanism to anonymously get a sense of the customs, ideas, and assumptions driving the faculty's attitudes and behavior. The result was generally quite positive, with one apparent outlier. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, it was not known whether the one negative response was genuine or a result of misinterpreting the survey prompts.

Dean reminded the board that whether to pursue ACSI Exemplary Accreditation was a decision that had been deferred from last month. Due to other priorities competing for time during this month's meeting, with accreditation not an urgent concern, this discussion and decision was again deferred. Before discussing with the board again, Dean will attempt to get a pulse from faculty about their appetite for exemplary accreditation.

The board professional development article provided this month was "Being a Board Member is a Tough Job," which is an excerpt from the book Guiding Schools to Flourish: Board Governance and School Leadership, by Henry Contant and Edward Noot.

Before moving on to the next report, Dean was asked what specific lessons were learned from this year's entrepreneur fair. He explained that submission deadlines and formal approvals are being put in place for future events, and that the entrepreneur fair went very well and interest was very strong afterward.

Director Of Development & Enrollment Report

Tracy provided an update on current enrollment, with 398 students currently enrolled. Applications for the 25/26 school year are open. An open house is scheduled for January 23rd, with a snow make-up date to be announced later.

Tracy also provided an update on donations, totaling almost \$73k, including \$30k toward the school nurse wages, and a \$2,700 AED grant.

Relevant staff completed initial training on the new donor management system, FACTS Giving.

The annual year-end giving campaign, to be applied toward campus security, is now public and \$750 has been received so far.

The 2025 Annual Banquet is scheduled for April 25th, and Tracy is working with Jeff Westrom on a theme. The event will be located at the Doubletree downtown, and Dr. Kathy Koch will be the keynote speaker.

A total of \$11,500 has been raised so far toward the \$299,511 STO allotment for Isaac Newton Christian Academy, with ~\$31k in roll-over funds yet undistributed from 23/24. STO allocations to students will be finalized by the end of this month to meet the deadline for using the roll-over funds.

Treasurer's Report

Neil reported that the normal monthly financial statements are not yet available, because the month-end closing has not been finalized. Neil expects that the responsibilities that will be transferred to the new Director of Operations position, along with new tools that will be acquired for that role, will help the month end process to become more efficient.

Neil has started working on scenarios for the 25/26 tuition proposal, which will be presented at the November meeting, for consideration by the board. The final 25/26 tuition rates will be decided at the November meeting.

Neil highlighted the fact that a Strategic Financial Plan needs to be formalized at the board level, in order for the Director of Operations to implement and maintain.

Gabe shared some summary information on the current endowment state. He also made a few suggestions of actions to shore up the way the endowment is managed and utilized, such as identifying and potentially updating any governing documents, as well as formally defining an investment policy if there isn't one currently. He will work with Lance McDonald, whose accounting business is currently managing the endowment, to better understand the current state, and propose endowment/investment policy at a future board meeting.

Newton's Pies Committee

Stephanie reported that online sales are now closed, but a waitlist is open to take requests if more pies are made than we have paid orders for. Pie sales did not hit this year's goal of 6,000, but we did beat last year's total.

Strategic Plan

It was agreed that the agenda item for the strategic plan discussion is important but not immediately urgent, so was deferred to next month's meeting.

Financial Committee

Neil shared a strategic question that the financial committee is wrestling with: evaluating the time horizon for the investment in a new building. It is unlikely that the full cost of the construction will be given as donations, so some amount of the total will need to be financed. The duration of the loan affects the size of the payments, but we don't want the LCEA to be under the burden of paying off a loan for an unreasonable length of time. The board discussed options for duration, with consideration of when we might outgrow this property completely and/or when we fully utilize the

new building and need to expand again. There was a general consensus that somewhere between 4-10 years might be reasonable, but the exact details will vary based on many factors including how much is raised via donations in the capital campaign.

Facilities Committee

With the acquisition of the property at 2141 Coldstream now approved by the LCEA and pending formalities, Stephen conveyed a request from multiple unnamed faculty to possibly rent the house rather than immediately using it for offices or storage. The board discussed the pros and cons, and ultimately concluded that the property was acquired to release pressure on our current facility, and becoming a landlord is not in the best interest of the LCEA, the board, or the Head of School.

Also on the topic of 2141 Coldstream, there have been some minor delays in the actions required to clear remaining contingencies. The board discussed and decided that the timeline for closing can be flexible to allow those actions to be completed as soon as practical.

There was a brief discussion of how vital the involvement of Emalee Nemitz is to Isaac Newton Christian Academy, and how the board can demonstrate appreciation for the many volunteer hours that Emalee invests in such a big, unpaid job. Katie made a motion for a \$2,500 gift be given to Emalee as a thank you for everything she does for the school's facilities, which Stephen seconded; the motion passed with a unanimous verbal vote.

Stephen reported that Willett Hofmann & Associates will be doing a formal analysis and report for the structural settling mentioned in a previous meeting, but it won't be available for a few months.

Stephen also shared some concept drawings for a playground accessibility improvement, with a pavilion, which is being considered with the involvement of a school family. Nothing is finalized yet and refinements to the idea will be ongoing.

Stephen reported that, after sharing the output from the earlier traffic study that was performed, a more detailed traffic study is being required by the city to grant preliminary approval for onsite construction of the new building. Stephen made a motion, which Neil seconded, to approve \$13k for a secondary, more in-depth traffic study to appease the city and inform future decisions; the motion passed with a unanimous verbal vote.

Capital Campaign

Tracy and Gabe reported that 27 meetings have been scheduled with potential donors as part of the feasibility study being conducted in advance of the formal capital campaign. Some of the meetings have already occurred, and results from the conversations will be available in December.

Nominating Committee

Steve provided information about three potential candidates. One of them, Pastor James Perry, had completed the board candidate application. After a brief discussion, Steve made a motion, which John seconded, to include James on the ballot for the annual meeting, to join the board in July 2025 if approved at the annual meeting; the motion passed with a unanimous verbal vote.

Sports Advisory Committee

John provided context from the cooperative agreement with the Marion Independent School District, and reported that Isaac Newton Athletic Director, Thad Joyce, is updating the sports participation policy to include disciplinary guidelines, consistent with the agreement.

Closing

The meeting closed in prayer.

Future Board Meetings

- November 19th, 6-8pm
- January 21st, 6-8pm
- February 18th, 6-8pm