APPROVED

Lawrence Family Development Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday March 11, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Location
Zoom

AND

Lower School Conference Room-34 West Street Lawrence, MA 01841

Trustees Present
C. Needham (remote), D. DeFillippo (remote), G. Lopez, J. Henriquez (remote), J. Tejada (remote), R. Almanzar (remote)

Trustees Absent
E. Nolberto, J. Cedeno, L. McRae, L. Perez

Trustees who left before the meeting adjourned
J. Henriquez

Guests Present
A. Croes, Allison Blount (remote), Anna Yuen (remote), C. Parcell, D. Thakkar, H. Castleman, L. Lawler, M. Ventre, N. Arpin, Nicole Dean Ward (remote), Pedro Macario (remote), S. Stukuls, Y. Rodriguez

I. Opening Items

A.

Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

G. Lopez called a meeting of the board of trustees of Lawrence Family Development Charter School to order on Wednesday Mar 11, 2026 at 5:36 PM.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Approve minutes from the February 11, 2026 BOT Meeting

Chris N. provided edits to the minutes from February 11, 2026. The following suggestions were made in Section 4A, Lease Update:

- In the first paragraph, it should state that Elka prepared the resolution.
- In the fourth paragraph, it should state that Mark V. reported what Tony C. presented to him.

One of the resolutions that was amended was #4, to remove the parenthetical reference. The motion should reflect that it was approved *as amended*.

In the Principal's Report, Section 5A (SY 2026–2027 Calendar), add the roll call vote details for the vote approving the calendar.

C. Needham made a motion to approve the minutes with the amendments. LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting-Zoom Only on 02-11-26.
D. DeFillippo seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

J. Cedeno	Absent
R. Almanzar	Aye
E. Nolberto	Absent
D. DeFillippo	Aye
J. Tejada	Aye
C. Needham	Aye
J. Henriquez	Aye
G. Lopez	Aye
L. McRae	Absent
L. Perez	Absent

II. Superintendent's Report

A. Update from federal and state.

Darshan T. shared that there are minimal updates in the Superintendent's Report, as the primary focus has been on finalizing the lease agreement between the school and the fund and the audit.

Regarding federal and state updates, a notification was received from DESE indicating that Title I and Special Education funding, originally expected to be fully funded, will be reduced. Schools have been advised to prepare for approximately 85% of the anticipated grant funding.

III. Assistant Superintendent's Report

A. Updates from the Assistant Superintendent

Sally S. reported that the Wellness Committee, led by Registered Dietitian and Wellness Coordinator Rachel Sanchez, has been actively working to review and update the school's wellness policy to ensure compliance with federal regulations and promote student health and well-being. The committee has also prioritized vaping awareness, collaborating with the Lawrence Police Department to host student assemblies and partnering with the Lawrence-Methuen Community Coalition to develop resources for students and families. Additional efforts include creating classroom lessons, student-led awareness campaigns, and engaging student council members in prevention initiatives.

The committee has also supported staff wellness through a professional development workshop on stress management and work-life balance. Student engagement remains strong through programs like the "Cook it Up" Club. Looking ahead, Rachel Sanchez is leading the planning of a "Breakfast in the Classroom" pilot program, funded by an EOS Foundation grant, which will launch in select grades this spring with the goal of expanding schoolwide next fall.

IV. Finance Department

A. Lease Update

Mark V. reported that the lease was signed and sent to Krokidas & Bluestein last week, along with supporting documents including the declarations, resolutions, and certification of vote signed by Jose Tejada. The lease is currently in escrow and pending final signatures from the Fund. Dan H. confirmed that he has signed the lease documents and is awaiting a clerk's certificate.

Katie Gravaglia from Krokidas & Bluestein noted that there have been no updates since the previous check-in with the Fund's attorney, Wayne Simmins. The Fund has a seven-day window to complete signatures, which expires this Friday. It is assumed that the Fund's Board does not need to reconvene to authorize the resolutions. Mark V. indicated that, since only the clerk's signature is pending, it is likely that the resolutions have already been approved and Dan H. has been authorized to sign.

B. Finances 6 month review through 12/31/2025.

Mark V. reviewed the school's financial reports for July–December 2025 with the full board. He has also been collaborating with department heads to create the budget for SY2026–2027, ensuring that the allocation of resources and time reflects the school's values and priorities and aligns with its mission.
Mark V. shared details of the school's cash flow, expressing concern about the trend. The school began the year on June 30, 2025, with a cash balance of $10,978,119 and ended on December 31, 2025, with $8,656,829.87, a decrease of $2,240,289.13 over six months. Based on current spending trends, the cash balance could be depleted within 23 months, which raises concerns given the school's goal of purchasing the buildings.

Key drivers of cash usage include IT expenditures, such as classroom display upgrades and Chromebook updates, as well as increased staffing costs, stipends, overtime, health insurance, rent, and facilities expenses.

Mark V. noted that this has been a transition year due to the school's separation from the Fund. While the school received $2.6 million in grant allocations last year, it is projected to receive only $845,000 this year, with an additional 15% reduction anticipated for Title I funding. Prior to this school year, the school had limited visibility into its finances. Lease negotiations with the Fund were contentious, and the school was repeatedly told it had no right to financial information. Additionally, there were multiple conversions of the financial management systems that impacted the availability of reliable financial data and history.

Despite these challenges, the FY25 audit was filed on time with DESE, aided by an extension granted due to the government shutdown. Significant effort was required to complete the audit, as the Fund was unable to provide the promised audit-ready financial package. The school had to recreate FY25 transactions and financial statements during the audit process.
From July 2025 to December 2025, the school received a total revenue of $10,451,130.68, including grants and tuition. Federal reimbursements for the Nutrition Program amounted to $384,037.46, with vendor billing ahead by $140,000 but state reimbursements lagging. Revenue from the Extended Day program totaled $93,845, and revenue from the Extended School Year program was $15,600. The school is planning to increase program participant costs in the next school year for these programs.

Salaries and wages for the first six months of FY26 totaled $6,607,758.18, including $2,510,873.86 for teacher salaries. Stipends amounted to $360,003.38 and is proyected to reach $700,000 by the end of the school year. The school is considering rewriting job descriptions to incorporate some stipend responsibilities and adjust compensation accordingly.

Health insurance expenses totaled $1,042,912.33, higher than budgeted due to increased headcount, while the 403(b) match was $129,393.30, with considerations to delay or pause contributions depending on FY27 results.

Legal fees totaled $136,590, primarily related to lease negotiations. Professional services of $31,986 for the survey completed by Feldman Geospatial should be capitalized as an acquisition cost. Property and liability insurance amounted to $70,428.66, membership dues and subscriptions totaled $64,095.68, largely for the Mass Charter School Association, and catering expenses were $34,032.82 for an eight-day in-service training for staff in August.

Office equipment leases totaled $31,150.55. Special Education services came to $96,491.75, well below the Fund’s incorrectly budgeted $750,000. The Fund was using the Special Education GL line to track 1099 vendors leading to inaccurate reporting on the expenses in that department. The partnership with Merrimack College was $28,000 for two fellows.

Curriculum expenses totaled $255,210.64, which is expected and was budgeted. Instructional supplies were $74,857.56, with plans to implement charge codes for individual teachers to better track spending in Amazon.

Transportation costs, including daily pick-ups, drop-offs, field trips, busing to the Upper School for specials, and Opening Doors high school visits, were $374,413.67.

Administrative systems such as BambooHR, NetSuite, and QuickBooks totaled $25,957.93, while student data management systems, including PowerSchool, amounted to $71,533.11. Staff technology expenses were $67,252.77, largely for laptops and other equipment that can be capitalized.

Rent expenses totaled $1,060,565.75, paid to LFD and the Lawrence Housing Authority, with plans to end the lease with LHA early, as it provides no benefit to the school, and the Fund has no intention of reimbursing the school for using the space. Utilities were $93,219.94, significantly lower than last year’s nearly $500,000, suggesting the school may have been subsidizing utility usage that wasn't only at the school buildings.

Facilities expenses, including physical plant costs, payroll, and overtime, totaled $2,643,327.33 for the first six months of the school year. This includes $60,620.16 for cleaning supplies, $30,839.16 for routine repairs, $139,595.71 for building improvement project supplies, $11,056.10 for vehicle repairs, $3,245.68 for fuel, $4,077.00 for uniforms, $8,520.21 for landscaping and snow removal supplies, and $3,647.84 for inspectional services. Facilities contracted services totaled $682,839.49 due to renovations at the admin building, though the majority of this cost should be capitalized. Mark V., Darshan T., and Pedro M. plan to meet to discuss and break down the expenses further.

Chris N. clarified that most of the upcoming expenditures are expected to be capitalized, though exact amounts will depend on further details. Current capitalized estimates include $822,435 for facilities capital projects, $67,000 for IT, and $32,000 for a survey, which will be shifted to the balance sheet. Mark V. noted he is also exploring the possibility of capitalizing some legal expenses, pending consultation with auditors.

Chris N. observed that the school is now reviewing finances in much greater detail than in previous years. During the first two months of the fiscal year, before school opens, tuition reimbursements are low, resulting in an approximate $2.2 million revenue decline over the summer. Mark V. added that the school is accruing wages and sick time for this period.

Regarding revenue projections, Mark V. reported that DESE's expected tuition revenue for the next year is $22.4 million. Revenue for the rest of the school year is anticipated to accelerate compared to the first six months. He expects over two-thirds of what's left of the federal grants to be received during this period. Chris N. noted that numbers are still volatile, and a clearer outlook will be available once February's expenses are finalized, hopefully providing more information by the next board meeting.

Chris N. said the school's cash position is strong with no immediate concerns and stressed the importance of maintaining a healthy cash balance for financing. Mark V. warned that current spending levels are not sustainable. Chris N. explained that short-term drops in cash flow are normal and that capitalizing expenses will give a clearer long-term picture. Mark V. noted that money already spent can't be recovered, highlighting the need for the budget committee's efforts to manage and control future spending.
Darshan T. noted that per-pupil funding has not been included in the State Budget in either the Senate or House versions for the past eight years. This year, The Massachusetts Charter Schools Association made a significant advocacy effort to increase funding. The Governor proposed an $100 per student, while the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association is advocating for $200 per student. Advocacy efforts are ongoing, with final determinations expected in June.

Mark V. observed that many expenses incurred at the start of the school year are not expected to continue throughout the year. Chris N. added that there are typical seasonal expenses that occur over the school year, and a clearer understanding will emerge as more information becomes available. He expressed confidence that school management will be able to address these issues effectively.

Dave D. expressed support for the approach taken by the budget review committee, describing it as rational. Mark V. noted the challenge of planning when reliable monthly expense history is not available.
J. Henriquez left at 6:30 PM.

C.

Title Insurance Engagement

Mark V. informed the board that the school is required to obtain a title insurance policy when considering the purchase of the campus. The Leasehold Title Insurance costs $45,000 and is a standard requirement for any lender before financing. For acquisitions of $25 million or more, the policy can eliminate the need for a second title review. While the title credit decreases after 24 months, it still covers the full five-year lease term. Krokidas & Bluestein recommends purchasing the title insurance if the school intends to acquire the campus.

The Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve the proposal.
C. Needham made a motion to acquire title insurance for a premium of $45k with the understanding that there can be a credit if the school is successful in purchasing the building in 24 month period.
J. Tejada seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

C. Needham	Aye
L. Perez	Absent
D. DeFillippo	Aye
G. Lopez	Aye
L. McRae	Absent
R. Almanzar	Aye
J. Cedeno	Absent
J. Henriquez	Absent
E. Nolberto	Absent
J. Tejada	Aye

Chris N. mentioned the $1.4 million scholarship account currently housed and managed by the Fund. Darshan T. shared he is meeting with Dan H. to discuss this. The expectation is to transfer the funds to the school.

V. Principal's Report

A. PAC Meeting- March 4, 2026

Sean R. and Elaine F. hosted a PAC meeting on March 4, 2026. It was rescheduled from it's original date in February due to the snow storms. The meeting covered the rights of ELL and Special Education parents.

B. Lottery Update- March 4, 2026

The school's second virtual lottery took place on March 4, 2026. There were over 360 applicants, 87 K1 students were given spots. 50 of which are siblings of current students.

There are 279 students on the waitlist for grades K1-4.

VI. Department Highlight

A. Digital Learning

Digital Learning Coordinator Anna Yuen provided the board with an update on digital learning at LFDCS. She explained that the department's primary purpose is to centralize instructional technology and digital platforms in order to support and advance academic achievement. In collaboration with Digital Instruction Specialist Kara Malo, the team works closely with both teachers and students to establish consistent digital structures and streamline the student experience across all buildings. They also conduct annual reviews of digital platforms to ensure alignment with the evolving needs of the school.

For the 2025–2026 school year, key initiatives include implementing Digital Learning Walks to increase visibility into classroom practices and developing building-specific digital learning goals that align with the school's broader vision for digital learning.

VII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

D. DeFillippo made a motion to adjourn.
C. Needham seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

E. Nolberto	Absent
D. DeFillippo	Aye
G. Lopez	Aye
J. Tejada	Aye
R. Almanzar	Aye
C. Needham	Aye
J. Cedeno	Absent
L. Perez	Absent
J. Henriquez	Absent
L. McRae	Absent

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Y. Rodriguez

Documents used during the meeting

- March 2025 BOT Report.pdf
- Digital Learning Update (BoT).pptx