Lawrence Family Development Charter School

Minutes

LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting-Zoom

Date and Time
Wednesday June 10, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Location
Zoom

Trustees Present
C. Needham (remote), D. DeFillippo (remote), E. Nolberto (remote), G. Lopez (remote), J. Cedeno (remote), J. Henriquez (remote), J. Tejada (remote), L. McRae (remote), L. Perez (remote), R. Almanzar (remote)

Trustees Absent
None

Trustees who arrived after the meeting opened
G. Lopez, J. Tejada, L. McRae

Trustees who left before the meeting adjourned
R. Almanzar

Guests Present
A. Croes (remote), C. Parcell (remote), D. Thakkar (remote), Fanggit Matias-Parent (remote), H. Castleman (remote), Jeovanny Rodriguez-Parent (remote), L. Lawler (remote), M. Ventre (remote), N. Arpin (remote), Nicole Dean-Ward (remote), S. Stukuls (remote), Y. Rodriguez (remote)

I. Opening Items

A.

Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

E. Nolberto called a meeting of the board of trustees of Lawrence Family Development Charter School to order on Wednesday Jun 10, 2026 at 5:39 PM.
G. Lopez arrived at 5:40 PM.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Approve minutes from the May 13, 2026 BOT Meeting

C. Needham made a motion to approve the minutes from LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting-Zoom on 05-13-26.
D. DeFillippo seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Public Participation

A. Parent Participation

During the public participation portion of the meeting, Yulissa welcomed two parents of LFDCS who had joined the meeting.

Fangit Mathias introduced herself and shared that her daughter, Eliana Mathias, would be entering seventh grade. She was joining as a spectator.
Mr. Rodriguez addressed the Board during public participation and thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. He noted that this was his third appearance before the Board and referenced his previous comments regarding a school safety concern. Drawing on his prior experience serving as a board member at a Lowell school and of a local school committee, Mr. Rodriguez emphasized the importance of public participation as a tool for the Board to hear directly from families and community members. He stated that the purpose of public comment is for the Board to listen, gather information, and consider concerns raised by stakeholders rather than engage in debate during the public participation portion of the meeting.

Mr. Rodriguez expressed concern that direct exchanges between public commenters and administration during public participation may discourage some parents and community members from speaking. He encouraged the Board to preserve an environment where individuals feel comfortable sharing concerns and information that may not otherwise come to the Board's attention. He also noted the importance of communication and accessibility, stating that while Board meetings are public, he had difficulty locating meeting information and encouraged the school to continue efforts to increase awareness and participation among families.

Mr. Rodriguez concluded by thanking the Board for the opportunity to speak and reiterating the importance of maintaining a strong public participation process. Darshan T. thanked Mr. Rodriguez for his comments and acknowledged the importance of community engagement. He also clarified that Board meeting agendas and meeting information are publicly available on the school's website.
Darshan T. shared several updates and acknowledgments with the Board. He highlighted the recent publication of an article written by the school principal in the *Lawrence Eagle Tribune* focused on the importance of social-emotional learning and how it is implemented at LFDCS. Darshan T. expressed pride in the positive recognition of the school and thanked the team for representing the school's work. Dave D. also congratulated the school leadership on the article and its ability to highlight the importance of social-emotional learning. Darshan T. noted that the article is also expected to be published in Spanish through Rumbo.

Darshan T. then recognized several Board members for their service. He congratulated Dave DeFilippo on his retirement from Central Catholic School after 56 years of service and clarified that Dave D. will continue serving on the LFDCS Board of Trustees. Darshan T. also expressed appreciation to Jose Tejada and Lynette McRae, who were attending their final Board meetings after each completing three terms of service. He thanked Jose for his contributions to the Executive Committee and Nominating and Governance Committee and recognized Lynette's service on the Finance, Management Agreement, and Superintendent's Evaluation Committees. Darshan T. acknowledged both trustees' dedication, thoughtful questions, and commitment to the school and its families.

III. Business Items

A. Follow-up to Open Meeting Law Violation

The Board returned to a follow-up discussion regarding a prior Open Meeting Law concern involving communication among Board members. Linette P. introduced the item and explained that, following the previous Board meeting, she submitted the matter to the Massachusetts Attorney General's Division of Open Government for review and guidance. She provided supporting materials, including the original email thread, Board meeting minutes, recording and meeting audio, so that the Attorney General's Office could review the circumstances surrounding the communication.

Linette P. shared the response she received from the Attorney General's Office and explained that, based on their review, the communication did not constitute a violation of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. She stated that the response indicated that Board members cannot deliberate about Board business outside of a properly posted meeting when the communication involves a quorum of the public body. Linette P. explained that, because the communication involved only three Board members and the Superintendent is not a voting member of the Board, the communication did not reach the required quorum threshold for a violation.

Linette P. further explained that the Attorney General's Office did provide cautionary guidance that communications could become problematic if they were forwarded, expanded, or continued in a way that eventually involved a quorum. She noted that the Office also advised that Board members should be mindful that individuals serving as trustees are generally viewed as acting in their official capacity when discussing matters related to school business, even if they have another connection to the issue being discussed.

Linette P. stated that there had been no back-and-forth discussion among Board members in the communication at issue and that no deliberation occurred. She shared that she also completed the state's Open Meeting Law training and received updated certification. Linette P. offered to share the written response from the Attorney General's Office with any Board members who wanted to review it.

The Board discussed the information provided by Linette P. and the need to reconcile the difference between the guidance received from the Attorney General's Office and previous guidance provided by the Board's legal counsel. Chris N. thanked Linette P. for obtaining clarification but stated that the Board needed a clear and consistent understanding of the requirements moving forward. Chris N. explained that previous advice from the Board's attorney, Elka Sachs, had been more restrictive and indicated that communications involving two or more trustees discussing Board business could create an Open Meeting Law concern, even if a quorum was not present.

Chris N. explained that this issue has practical implications for Board operations. He provided examples related to his own work as Treasurer, including conversations regarding succession planning, financing, leases, and other responsibilities where trustees may need to coordinate or seek advice. He stated that the Board needs clarity on how trustees can effectively conduct their responsibilities while remaining compliant with Open Meeting Law requirements. He emphasized that he was not questioning the accuracy of Linette P.'s response from the Attorney General's Office but wanted confirmation from the Board's own counsel because the interpretations appeared different.

Linette P. agreed that the Board should seek guidance from legal counsel to ensure trustees understand the expectations specific to their role. She stated that if there is a difference between general guidance from the state and advice provided by the Board's attorney, the Board should rely on counsel to help interpret how the law applies in their specific circumstances.

Darshan T. provided additional legal context regarding the difference between the statutory language of the Open Meeting Law and how courts have interpreted those

requirements. He explained that the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law statute defines deliberation as communication through any medium, including email, among a quorum of a public body regarding public business. However, he explained that legal interpretations after the statute's adoption have expanded the understanding of what may constitute improper deliberation.
Darshan T. referenced a 2009 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court case involving the Wayland School Committee, explaining that the court determined that communications among public officials could violate the intent of the Open Meeting Law if they were used to avoid transparency requirements, even if the communication technically did not involve a quorum. He stated that this interpretation is the basis for the advice provided by the Board's counsel that trustees should avoid discussing school business outside of public meetings when multiple Board members are involved.
Darshan T. explained that the issue is not simply whether a quorum exists but whether trustees are exchanging opinions, discussing decisions, or engaging in deliberation outside of a properly posted meeting. He clarified that certain communications, such as distributing meeting agendas, scheduling information, or sharing documents that will be discussed at a future meeting, are permitted as long as no trustee expresses an opinion or attempts to influence other members outside the public meeting process.
Darshan T. also referenced a prior legal review involving trustee communications regarding a student matter. He explained that an investigation had reviewed communications among trustees related to whether a student should graduate after an issue involving the use of artificial intelligence in a capstone project. Darshan T. noted that the investigator found that some trustees did not recognize their communications as problematic because they believed they were acting out of concern for the student. However, Darshan T. stated that the report concluded that these discussions involved matters outside the Board's authority and demonstrated a need for stronger understanding of trustee responsibilities and Open Meeting Law requirements.
Darshan T. highlighted that the investigator's report specifically recommended additional Open Meeting Law training for the Board. He stated that although training had previously been offered and information about training opportunities had been shared with trustees, there was a need for a refresher to ensure that all Board members understood the requirements. He emphasized that lack of knowledge or uncertainty about the law is not a sufficient justification for noncompliance, particularly for individuals serving in public oversight roles.
Chris N. stated that the Board should be proactive and complete training before additional issues arise. He recommended that the session include time for trustees to ask questions about real-world scenarios, including committee work, agenda development, communications with administrators, and other situations where trustees may be uncertain about appropriate boundaries.
Chris N. noted that the Board has spent significant legal resources addressing Open Meeting Law questions and that additional training would be a more effective investment. He referenced the cost of the prior legal review and stated that preventing future issues through education would be preferable to continuing to address concerns after they occur.

Dave D. agreed that training should be considered a priority. He stated that trustees have an obligation to understand their responsibilities and that completing the training would help prevent future misunderstandings. He recommended scheduling the session during the fall and making every effort to accommodate Board members' schedules.
Darshan T. noted that some school staff had recently attended a session hosted by legal counsel that was shared with the Board, which lasted approximately two hours due to questions and discussion. Board members discussed whether the training could be recorded or otherwise made available to trustees who could not attend live.
Germinudy L. asked whether a formal Board action was needed regarding the original Open Meeting Law concern and whether a vote was required regarding the prior discussion involving Lynette Perez. Darshan T. clarified that the Board had already addressed the matter publicly during a prior meeting and that the public discussion served as the appropriate response. He explained that no additional vote was necessary regarding that specific matter.
Germinudy L. also emphasized the importance of obtaining a consistent interpretation moving forward. She stated that the issue highlighted the need for the Board to distinguish between what is legally required, what is permitted under Board policies, and what may simply be a misunderstanding during a difficult situation. She encouraged the Board to focus on obtaining clear answers rather than assigning blame.
Elizabeth N. added that the Board should not allow the matter to overshadow the positive work being done by trustees. She acknowledged that situations involving legal concerns can be frustrating for volunteers who are committed to supporting the school, but he encouraged Board members to view the experience as an opportunity to continue learning and improving governance practices.
The Board also agreed that Germinudy L. would follow up with legal counsel regarding confirmation that the prior process, documentation, and meeting minutes related to the original matter were sufficient. Germinudy L. stated that she would coordinate with Yulissa and legal counsel to obtain additional clarification.

D. DeFillippo made a motion to consult with council regarding training for the board regarding open meeting law.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

L. McRae arrived at 6:04 PM.
R. Almanzar left at 6:31 PM.

IV. Superintendent's Report

A. Progress report on Superintendent's goals for 2025-2026

Darshan T. presented his annual progress report on the Superintendent goals as part of the Board's evaluation process. He explained that the current year's requirement was to provide a progress update on established professional practice and student learning goals, while a more comprehensive evaluation would take place the following year. Darshan T. reviewed the structure of the report, explaining that each goal is followed by evidence indicators used to measure progress, with ratings ranging from "not met" to "made some progress," "made substantial progress," or "met." He noted that the report includes supporting explanations and data for each rating determination.

Darshan T. reviewed progress on his professional practice goals and then discussed the student learning goal focused on the implementation and effectiveness of online counseling services through Cartwheel. He explained that the report included participation data, session information, family survey results, and academic data demonstrating student progress. Darshan T. noted that two evidence indicators related to the student learning goal showed substantial progress, while one area, gathering direct feedback from students, families, and staff regarding the effectiveness of the counseling program, showed some progress and will remain an area of continued focus. He also reviewed data showing that many students demonstrated improved MAP assessment scores after participating in counseling services, while emphasizing that the data currently shows a correlation rather than proof that the counseling services directly caused the academic improvements. He stated that additional analysis will be needed to determine the program's impact and identify strategies that can be replicated to support more students.

Darshan T. also highlighted his participation in a year-long senior leadership program for superintendents, noting that the 17th cohort included educational leaders from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. He shared that the experience provided valuable opportunities for collaboration, professional growth, and discussion of leadership practices with other superintendents, including Stephen Drake, who has since been appointed Massachusetts Secretary of Education. Darshan T. concluded by thanking the Superintendent evaluation committee for reviewing his progress report and noted that the following year's evaluation would include a more in-depth review of goals, outcomes, and overall performance.
Chris N. asked for clarification regarding the members of the superintendent evaluation committee. Yulissa identified the committee members as Elizabeth N., Jose H., and Lynette M.
Chris N. explained that the committee would need to identify a replacement member for Lynette M. Dave D. volunteered to serve on the evaluation committee.

B. City Councilor email to MA Legislature regarding complaints against LFDCS Administration.

Darshan T. introduced a discussion regarding an email received from City Councilor Gregory Del Rosario dated May 30, 2026, titled “Concerns Regarding Leadership Changes and Direction at Lawrence Family Development Charter School.” He explained that he brought the matter forward because two Board members, Germinudy L. and Linette P., were copied on the email and he did not want the issue to remain unresolved or create confusion regarding Board involvement. Darshan T. noted that no Board member had responded to the email and that the purpose of the discussion was to determine how the Board should handle the communication, including whether a response was necessary.

Darshan T. reviewed the recipients of the email and noted that it was sent by Mr. Del Rosario using his official City of Lawrence email address to House Leader Frank Moran, with copies sent to Senator Payano, members of the Lawrence legislative delegation, Mayor Brian DePeña, members of the Board of Trustees, and school leadership. He noted that several recipients were included using their municipal or official email addresses rather than school or personal email addresses. Darshan T. questioned the purpose of distributing the email broadly to elected officials and community leaders, particularly because the concerns raised involved school operational matters. He also confirmed that no one had responded to the email at that time. Linette P. clarified that, although she was copied on the email, she had not communicated with Mr. Del Rosario regarding the matter and had no involvement in drafting or submitting the concerns.

Darshan T. read the email into the record. In the correspondence, Mr. Del Rosario expressed concerns regarding leadership changes, staffing decisions, program changes, student services, and communication with families at Lawrence Family Development Charter School. Mr. Del Rosario identified himself both as a District C City Councilor representing families who attend the school and as a parent of students enrolled at the school. He stated that his office had received concerns from parents regarding staffing changes, program adjustments, and the direction of the school. He specifically referenced changes to the Opening Doors program, stating that families were concerned about continuity of services and communication regarding personnel changes. He also raised concerns regarding the school’s nutrition program, stating that parents and students had previously expressed concerns about food quality and that families had received limited information regarding changes to the program.

In the email, Mr. Del Rosario also expressed concern regarding the elimination of the Director of Special Education position held by Sean Reardon. He stated that parents had concerns about how special education services would continue and asked questions regarding the school’s future vision, the impact of staffing reductions, and how student support services would be maintained. He requested greater transparency and asked that

a meeting be scheduled with the Superintendent and Board Chair, stating that the Board should be included because it ultimately approves school decisions. Mr. Del Rosario concluded by requesting that parents, community leaders, and school leadership have an open conversation regarding the future direction of the school.
Following the reading of the email, Board members discussed the concerns raised. Elizabeth N. asked for additional clarification regarding the elimination of the Director of Special Education position and expressed interest in understanding how the responsibilities associated with that role would continue. Dave DeFilippo explained that the staffing changes referenced in the email were primarily related to budget decisions that had previously been discussed during Finance Committee meetings and Board meetings. He stated that reductions were focused on preserving classroom and student-facing positions while addressing budget pressures caused by lower tuition reimbursement and increased expenses.

Darshan T. added that staffing and budget discussions had been addressed through established communication channels, including Parent Coffees, Board meetings, and school communications. He stated that the school had sent thousands of messages to families through BrightArrow and had posted information on the school website. He explained that while families may want additional information, personnel decisions cannot be publicly discussed in detail due to confidentiality requirements. Darshan T. also stated that the matters raised in the email primarily involved school operations, personnel decisions, and programming, which fall under the authority of school administration rather than City Council. He noted that City Council does not have jurisdiction over school operational decisions and that the school has no requirement to consult City Council regarding these matters.

Linette P. asked specifically whether the elimination of the Director of Special Education position would affect services for students receiving special education support, including IEP and 504 processes. Darshan T. clarified that while the school could not discuss individual personnel matters or name specific individuals, all responsibilities associated with eliminated positions would continue to be fulfilled and student services would not be discontinued as a result of the staffing changes.

The Board discussed whether a response to Mr. Del Rosario's email was appropriate. Darshan T. stated that, in his view, a formal response may not be necessary because the concerns raised involved operational matters outside the Board's authority and City Council's jurisdiction. Germinudy L. questioned the purpose of including state and local officials in the communication and asked whether a response might help clarify the appropriate process for addressing concerns. Darshan T. stated that this was not the first instance in which Mr. Del Rosario had contacted legislators and other officials regarding school matters rather than first seeking information directly from the school. He stated that school leadership would welcome direct communication and opportunities to address questions but noted that previous attempts to clarify the school's authority and decision-making process had not prevented similar situations.

Dave D. suggested that, if a response was provided, the Board could invite Mr. Del Rosario to meet directly with the Superintendent to discuss his concerns and receive information from the appropriate school authority. He stated that involving City Council in school operational matters was not appropriate but that providing an opportunity for dialogue with school leadership could be productive. Board members discussed the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between the roles of parent, elected official, and potential Board member.

Chris N. and Elizabeth N. shared that Mr. Del Rosario had expressed interest in Board membership and that they had provided information regarding the Board application process and responsibilities. Elizabeth N. stated that encouraging parents to become involved in Board service is positive and that parent participation is welcomed. Dave D. emphasized that any individual serving on the Board must clearly separate personal, political, and Board responsibilities and ensure that Board decisions remain independent from outside political influence.

Sally S. provided an update regarding Board recruitment and stated that approximately nine individuals had expressed interest in serving on the Board. She explained that she has been meeting with interested candidates to provide information about Board responsibilities, encourage attendance at Board meetings, and help candidates understand the commitment involved. She noted that Board recruitment materials had been completed and would be distributed to new families during the summer. Sally S. stated that after gathering additional interest, the school would provide next steps to candidates. Darshan T. concluded the discussion by noting that there would be five Board positions to fill, including two positions becoming available due to members leaving the Board and three existing vacancies.

V. Assistant Superintendent's Report

A. SOP for BOT Attendance

J. Tejada arrived at 6:47 PM.
Sally S. reported that the finalized Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Board of Trustees attendance has been attached to the meeting materials for trustees' reference. She explained that the SOP was the result of several months of collaborative work between her and board members. Sally S. noted that the purpose of the update was to ensure trustees were aware that the final version of the document was available and reflected the board's collective decisions regarding attendance procedures.

B. BOT June Report 2026

Sally S. reported on several initiatives she had committed to updating the board on at the end of the school year. Sally S. shared that the Breakfast in the Classroom pilot program began in early May and was introduced in phases, starting with Grade 3, followed a week later by Grade 7 and Grade 1, and then Kindergarten the following week. Sally S. stated that the implementation proceeded smoothly overall, with only minor challenges that were addressed along the way. Sally S. said teachers provided positive feedback, noting that students enjoyed the opportunity to socialize while eating breakfast, creating a welcoming start to the school day that helped students remain focused and engaged in their learning. Sally S. explained that reflections and feedback were collected throughout the pilot to identify improvements for full implementation, and that this information would be shared with staff in August as the district prepares to expand the Breakfast in the Classroom program schoolwide beginning in the fall.

Sally S. also provided an update on the Vaping Awareness Committee, noting that the committee's vaping awareness toolkit had been distributed to families the previous month and was available on the district's website. Sally S. explained that the toolkit includes frequently asked questions, conversation starters, educational resources, and contact information for organizations that can assist families seeking additional information or support. As a culminating activity for the school year, Sally S. shared that the committee displayed student-created anti-vaping slogans, developed during classroom lessons presented in April, on pledge walls installed in both the lower and upper school cafeterias. Sally S. stated that students were invited to voluntarily sign the pledge wall as a commitment to remaining aware of the dangers of vaping. Sally S. noted that the pledge walls had already received numerous student signatures and expressed enthusiasm about continuing the committee's prevention and awareness efforts during the upcoming school year.
Sally S. provided an update on the district's efforts to recruit prospective Board of Trustees members. Sally S. shared that informational brochures are now available in both English and Spanish and have been placed at the reception desks of each school. Additional brochures have been reserved for evening events, and copies have also been distributed to the district's family liaisons to share with new families. Sally S. noted that the recruitment effort has also been promoted through the district newsletter and reported that nine individuals had already expressed interest in learning more about board service. Sally S. explained that she has met with most of the interested individuals, meetings with the remaining prospective candidates have been scheduled. During these informational meetings, Sally S. provides an overview of the expected monthly time commitment, reviews the Board of Trustees webpage, introduces the current board members, and encourages prospective candidates to contact current trustees directly if they have questions about serving. Sally S. stated that she will continue maintaining a list of interested individuals and remain in contact with them throughout the summer as they learn more about the role and determine whether they wish to pursue board membership. She added that, despite the strong interest already shown, additional interested community members are welcome, and trustees were encouraged to refer potential candidates by sharing Sally S.'s contact information.

Sally S. also announced that Extended Day Coordinator Sandy Calandrella is working to establish a parent-led Boosters Club for the upcoming school year under her guidance. Sally S. explained that the organization is intended to support the district's expanding athletic program and athletic events. She invited anyone interested in learning more about becoming a Boosters Club member to contact Sandy C. directly through her district email or provide their contact information to Sally S. and she can connect them with Sandy C.

VI. Finance Department

A. FY27 Budget

Mark V. presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 operating budget, explaining the framework used to develop the financial plan and the principles that guided difficult resource allocation decisions. He stated that the administration's primary objective was to protect classroom instruction and student preparation while maintaining the financial stability of the school. Mark V. explained that the budget was built around several guiding priorities: recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and staff, providing competitive compensation to attract and keep top talent, raising expectations for student achievement, reducing administrative costs wherever possible, eliminating expenses that do not directly support the school's educational mission, improving operational efficiencies, and positioning the school financially to acquire its campus. He emphasized that the administration reviewed every area of spending, including routine operational costs such as garbage bags, to identify savings that could be redirected toward instructional programs and student services.

Mark V. reviewed the primary financial risks facing the school during the upcoming fiscal year. He explained that the school experienced an unexpected reduction of approximately $450,000 in state revenue during the current fiscal year, despite budgeting based on approximately $23 million in anticipated state funding. He cautioned that although the proposed state budget includes funding at expected levels, there is no guarantee it will ultimately be approved without reductions. Should another unexpected reduction occur, the school may be required to implement incremental spending cuts, including possible reductions in administrative expenses, while continuing to protect instructional programming whenever possible. Mark V. noted that enrollment remains strong and continues to generate stable revenue because student demand for enrollment remains high. He contrasted this with many charter schools across Massachusetts, where declining enrollment has become a significant concern, adding that public school districts are also experiencing enrollment declines. He emphasized, however, that while enrollment remains favorable, the school has little control over state funding decisions, making fluctuations in state revenue one of its greatest financial risks.

Mark V. also identified employee health insurance costs as another significant budget concern. He explained that reductions in Affordable Care Act and Medicaid funding resulted in an increase of 18 employees participating in the school's health insurance plan, creating approximately $1 million in additional health insurance expenses beyond original projections. He further discussed facilities-related risks, explaining that many of the school's HVAC systems are approximately 20 years old and could require major repairs or replacement. Although contingency reserves have been established to address unexpected maintenance costs, he cautioned that multiple equipment failures could exceed available reserves and require additional budget adjustments.

Mark V. reviewed the proposed revenue projections, reporting total anticipated revenue of approximately $23.2 million. This includes approximately $22 million in state funding, relatively flat federal grant funding, and modest increases generated through extended day programming and student fees. He explained that salaries and employee benefits total approximately $16.5 million, representing nearly 72 percent of total revenue, making personnel costs by far the largest component of the operating budget. Because salaries and benefits account for such a significant percentage of overall expenditures, Mark V. noted that any meaningful reduction in overall spending would inevitably affect personnel costs.

Mark V. then reviewed major operating expense categories. He explained that legal expenses are projected to decrease significantly from approximately $200,000 during Fiscal Year 2026 to approximately $120,000 during Fiscal Year 2027 following the completion of extensive lease negotiations. During discussion, he noted that outside legal counsel currently bills approximately $525 per hour and credited Board Chair Darshan for assuming additional responsibilities that have helped reduce reliance on outside legal services. Mark V. stated that controlling legal expenses will remain an ongoing priority.

Mark V. discussed membership and subscription costs, explaining that the school's membership in the Massachusetts Charter School Association represents approximately $62,000 annually but provides substantial value to the organization. He noted that the Association successfully advocated for an additional $100 per student in supplemental facilities funding for charter schools, providing a direct financial benefit that exceeds the cost of membership. He also reviewed printing expenses, which are budgeted at approximately $75,000 for the coming year, noting that the administration continues to identify opportunities to reduce printing costs. Other administrative expenses have similarly been reviewed to identify efficiencies wherever possible.

Mark V. reported that instructional expenses are projected to decline slightly as the district shifts more professional development activities from out-of-district conferences to in-house training opportunities. He also highlighted the continued partnership with Merrimack College, explaining that the collaboration has proven valuable in developing a pipeline of future teachers for the district.

Transportation expenses were also reviewed in detail. Mark V. explained that the district made a deliberate decision during the current year to discontinue using its aging school vans, instead relying more heavily on contracted transportation services. He noted that approximately $100,000 was spent transporting students to private placements, athletic competitions, and field trips, resulting in projected transportation costs of approximately $710,000 next year. He stated that the administration plans to explore additional cost-saving measures, including potentially seeking competitive bids for transportation services while continuing annual contract negotiations with the current provider.

Mark V. also discussed ongoing efforts to review software licensing and maintenance contracts. Working with the Information Technology Director and compliance staff, the

administration is evaluating software utilization to determine which systems provide the greatest value to the school while identifying programs that can be discontinued because they contribute less to instructional or operational needs.
Mark V. shared the advantages of purchasing the school's campus. He explained that rent will increase to approximately $2.2 million annually as the school assumes occupancy of the entire campus. By comparison, purchasing the property for approximately $18 million, financed over 30 years at an estimated fixed tax-exempt interest rate of 6.25 percent, would result in annual debt service of approximately $1.035 million, or roughly $86,000 per month. Based on those projections, purchasing the campus would generate nearly $1.2 million in annual savings during the first year alone.
Mark V. further explained that because the current lease requires annual rent increases of 3 percent while debt service payments would remain fixed, the financial benefit of ownership would continue to grow over time. He emphasized that acquiring the campus remains one of the administration's highest strategic priorities because it would significantly strengthen the school's long-term financial position.
Mark V. also updated the board regarding the lease for the gymnasium located at 580 Haverhill Street. He explained that while the administration had anticipated the lease expiring on December 31, 2027, it was recently discovered that an amendment had extended the agreement through December 31, 2030. The school is currently working with the Lawrence Housing Authority to determine whether the amendment is enforceable and to pursue early termination of the lease if possible.
Facility operating expenses were also reviewed. Mark V. explained that utilities currently total approximately $450,000 annually and stated that planned capital improvements, including replacement of windows and aging HVAC equipment following acquisition of the campus, should significantly reduce future utility costs through improved energy efficiency. He reiterated that unexpected HVAC failures remain one of the largest maintenance risks affecting the operating budget.
Mark V. reported projected non-payroll operating expenses of approximately $6 million and an operating surplus of approximately $500,000. He explained that approximately $480,000 in one-time acquisition-related expenses are anticipated, resulting in a projected increase in net assets of approximately $18,000. Mark V. emphasized that maintaining a positive operating surplus is critical because the school must rebuild its cash reserves before seeking approval from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to finance the campus acquisition. He explained that the acquisition will require an estimated $4 million down payment and that DESE will evaluate whether the school maintains sufficient cash reserves after the transaction to continue operating as a financially healthy institution.
Chris N. asked whether the approximately $480,000 in acquisition-related costs could ultimately be incorporated into the long-term financing package. Mark V. responded that the administration intends to capitalize those costs whenever possible but explained that the budget conservatively assumes the expenditures will initially require cash outlays in order to demonstrate adequate financial capacity and preserve the school's financial position during DESE's review. Chris N. agreed that the conservative approach was

appropriate while noting that financing those costs would ultimately preserve additional cash reserves without significantly increasing annual debt service.
Mark V. shared with the board the impact of the unexpected state funding reduction that occurred during the current fiscal year. Darshan T. explained that the Governor exercised reserved veto authority over discretionary charter school funding after federal COVID-19 relief funding expired and economic conditions tightened. Approximately half of the $40 million discretionary charter school allocation was ultimately vetoed, resulting in reduced funding for charter schools statewide. He noted that similar discretionary funding remains subject to gubernatorial veto in the upcoming fiscal year, creating continued uncertainty in future state aid projections.
Mark V. concluded by reiterating that, should additional revenue reductions occur, the administration would continue following the same guiding principles used throughout the budget development process, protecting instruction and student preparation while seeking reductions in administrative and non-instructional expenses whenever possible. He reminded the Board that the Finance Committee had voted on June 4 to recommend approval of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget and requested formal Board of Trustees approval of the proposed operating budget.

C. Needham made a motion to approve the FY27 Budget.
D. DeFillippo seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

Mark V. reported that the school is implementing ADP for payroll and benefits management, which will provide improved reporting capabilities and greater visibility into financial data. He noted that this enhanced reporting will help with monitoring expenses, including overtime costs, following a question from Trustee Jose H. regarding the ability to track overtime charges more effectively. Mark V. explained that controlling costs remains a priority and that the administration is focused on identifying areas where spending can be better managed. He specifically noted that facilities expenses increased more than anticipated during the current year and that facilities-related costs will continue to be a key area of focus moving forward.
Mark V. also reported that planning for the current fiscal year's audit has begun. He explained that the auditors are expected to begin onsite work during August and September as part of the annual audit process.

Mark V. further updated the board on preparations related to the anticipated campus acquisition. He shared that on June 24, he and Darshan will meet with prospective financing advisors, QPD, who will assist the school with navigating the financing process for the acquisition. Mark V. explained that the advisors previously supported Community Day Charter Public School with financing and construction management for its $50 million middle school project. As part of the meeting, Mark V. and Darshan plan to tour the construction site of Community Day's new middle school on Andover Street to gain additional insight into the financing and construction management process.

VII. Principal's Report

A. Principal's Report

Hali C. provided a presentation highlighting several recent accomplishments, events, and updates from LFDCS. Hali C. began by sharing that she wanted to celebrate some of the many positive activities and achievements that had taken place over the previous several weeks and shared photos and videos with the board.

Hali C. first highlighted the school's third annual Culture Night, recognizing Elizabeth Jarvis, an eighth-grade paraprofessional and long-term substitute teacher, for organizing the successful event. She described the evening as a wonderful celebration of the diverse cultures represented within the LFDCS community. The event included student performances, cultural dances, a fashion show featuring clothing and traditions from around the world, and numerous cultural booths showcasing food, posters, and displays. Hali C. noted that teachers, staff members, students, and families all participated by sharing aspects of their cultures, creating an engaging and meaningful community event. She also acknowledged the participation of board members who attended the evening.

Hali C. next shared an update on the return of the seventh-grade science fair, which had previously been an annual tradition before being paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. She credited STEM Curriculum Specialist, Delaney Hooper and seventh-grade science teacher David Granmason for bringing the event back. Hali C. expressed pride in the students' efforts, explaining that students completed projects independently, with partners, or in small groups and invested significant time both in and outside of school. She highlighted several impressive projects, including a project in which students trained an artificial intelligence device to recognize different grocery store cans to assist individuals with visual impairments. She also shared a project that tested the accuracy of the "five-second rule" for dropped food and noted that students determined the rule was closer to a "one-second rule." Hali C. recognized seventh-grade student Camila Miguel, who earned first place for her project on the water filtration process in Lawrence. She explained that Camila worked with the City of Lawrence to learn about the local water filtration system, recreated the process, and conducted water testing as part of her presentation. Hali C. congratulated all seventh-grade students for their dedication and the quality of their work.

Hali C. also highlighted the eighth-grade student portfolio presentations, noting that the presentations had been particularly impressive this year. She explained that all eighth-grade students are required to complete and present a portfolio as part of their graduation requirements. Students present on their academic growth and personal growth during their time at LFDCS, with one of those reflections required to be presented in Spanish. Students also discuss their eighth-grade civics projects, share dedications, and reflect on their plans for the future. Hali C. stated that the presentations took place over three days and expressed how proud she was of the students' preparation, maturity, and accomplishments.

During the discussion, Lynette M. shared her positive experience attending the portfolio presentations, stating that she believed board members should have the opportunity to attend in the future because the presentations demonstrate students' growth firsthand. She described the experience as emotional and inspiring, highlighting the students' creativity, courage, and ability to speak confidently in front of an audience. Linette P. shared a similar experience, explaining that even without having a child in eighth grade, attending a student's presentation was deeply moving and demonstrated the students' maturity, preparation, and growth. Hali C. agreed, noting that the presentations are always a highlight of the school year and that this year's group of students performed exceptionally well.

Hali C. then provided an update on the school's new staff mentoring program. She explained that LFDCS provides mentors for all new staff members, including teachers who are new to the profession and those who are new to the school. Mentors and mentees meet throughout the year through monthly meetings and ongoing support. This year, the program included a special reflection activity where mentors and mentees recorded messages for one another, which they shared during their final meeting. Hali C. shared excerpts from the messages, highlighting the appreciation new teachers expressed for the support, encouragement, and sense of community they experienced at LFDCS. She shared comments from first-year teacher Chris, who described LFDCS as an exceptional environment for beginning teachers and expressed gratitude for the support he received from his mentor and colleagues.

Hali C. recognized the work of all mentors and mentees and specifically thanked Tracy Mara, the teacher coach and mentor coordinator, for organizing and managing the mentoring program throughout the year. She also shared that all new teachers who participated in the mentoring program and were celebrated at the end-of-year event will be returning to LFDCS for the following school year. Hali C. stated that the retention of these teachers reflects the positive experience they had during their first year at the school.

Hali C. also celebrated student achievements in a statewide mental health awareness contest. She explained that she challenged the specials team to create a project with students for the competition, and middle school students collaborated with the art, music, physical education, health, and social-emotional learning teams to develop submissions in three categories: writing, visual arts, and video. Four LFDCS students submitted entries, and all four received recognition. Two students earned third place in the writing category, while Isabella and Annabel Norberto won first place statewide in the middle school video category. Hali C. shared that their video incorporated music and storytelling and praised the students for their creativity and effort. She also thanked the students'

SEL and health teachers, particularly Ms. Morgan, for supporting the project and encouraging student participation.

Hali C. provided a summer school update, explaining that the annual summer school program would begin on Monday, June 29. She noted that the program start date was slightly later than usual due to snow days during the school year. Approximately 269 students were registered, representing nearly one-quarter of the school population. Hali C. explained that participation includes students attending for academic support and attendance-related needs, as well as students choosing enrichment opportunities and English language support. She shared excitement about a new enrichment offering this year: an afternoon theater program led by first- and second-grade teacher Ms. Pollock. Students participating in the theater program will conclude summer school with a performance, with additional details to be shared at a later date.

Hali C. concluded her report by thanking the board and community for their support throughout the school year and highlighting upcoming end-of-year events. She shared that field day would take place the following day, encouraged volunteers and attendees to prepare for the hot weather, and noted that eighth-grade students would be attending their class trip to Canobie Lake. She also mentioned that fourth-grade students would be presenting their state fair projects and that the following week would include graduation and awards ceremonies.

VIII. Department Highlight

A. MAP and Panorama Results

Nicole D. presented the spring MAP assessment results and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) survey data for the school year. Nicole D. explained that MAP results are categorized into three tiers representing all students: Tier 1 students are performing on grade level, Tier 2 students are considered borderline and may need additional support, and Tier 3 students are performing below grade level. She also explained that advanced students represent the percentage of Tier 1 students who scored at an advanced level.

Nicole D. reported that in reading, 16% of students scored in Tier 3, which was an improvement from the fall assessment as the number of students in Tier 3 decreased. She shared that Grades 2, 7, and 8 achieved RIT scores at or above the national norm in reading. Nicole D. noted that the grade levels not meeting the national norm were generally very close, with most only one or two points below the benchmark.

In mathematics, Nicole D. reported strong performance across multiple grade levels, with Kindergarten through Grade 2, Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5, Grade 6, and Grade 8 achieving RIT scores at or above the national norm. She explained that while some grades did not appear on the list, many were still very close to the national norm. In Spanish, Nicole D. shared that no grade levels reached the national norm at this time but emphasized that students and teachers are continuing to work toward

improvement. In science, Grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 performed at or above the national norm, while fourth-grade students, who are the only other grade level taking the science assessment, were three points below the benchmark. Nicole D. noted that science results showed a decrease in Tier 3 students and increases in the other performance areas.
Nicole D. recognized teachers whose students demonstrated strong growth by meeting or exceeding their projected RIT scores. She highlighted Ms. Pollock's class, where 80% of students exceeded their projected math growth goals; Mr. Matos's class, where 85% of students exceeded their projected goals in both math and reading; Ms. Hidalgo's fifth-grade math class, where 83% of students met their reading growth goals; and Ms. Dufenette's class, where 91% of science students achieved their projected RIT goals. Nicole D. explained that these goals are established at the beginning of the year and measure whether students achieve their expected academic growth.
Nicole D. then presented the spring SEL survey results collected through Panorama, the school's platform for managing social-emotional learning data, grades, and assessment information. She explained that students in Grades 3 through 8 complete the survey themselves, reporting on areas such as supportive relationships, social awareness, challenging feelings, emotion regulation, and, for Grades 7 and 8, self-efficacy. For students in Kindergarten through Grade 2, teachers complete perception surveys based on observations of students' emotion regulation, social awareness, classroom effort, grit, and self-management skills.
Nicole D. reported that students in Grades 7 and 8 showed increases in all SEL areas, with the largest growth occurring in self-efficacy. When asked what teachers and other adults at school could do better to support them, students most frequently mentioned the importance of being listened to, feeling understood, and having adults recognize and support their emotions. When asked about the most challenging aspects of their lives, students identified portfolios and preparation for high school as significant areas of stress.
Nicole D. shared that Grade 6 students complete a separate version of the survey with different wording. Sixth graders showed the greatest increase in emotional regulation and a decrease in challenging feelings. She explained that when students discussed difficult experiences, grief was one of the most common themes. Students described grief broadly, including coping with emotions, family challenges, and finding ways to express their feelings. Sixth graders identified that adults could better support them by giving them time to explain their concerns, listening to their experiences, discussing solutions openly, and helping them work through challenges.
For Grades 3 through 5, Nicole D. reported that the greatest increase was in supportive relationships, while challenging feelings decreased. Students in these grades identified struggles related to balancing home responsibilities, school expectations, sports, and other activities. They expressed that teachers and adults could better support them by providing breaks, helping them process emotions, giving them opportunities to talk through challenges, and helping them manage difficult feelings.
For Kindergarten through Grade 2, Nicole D. shared that the greatest increase was in grit, while the largest decrease was in social awareness. She noted that the SEL survey was administered shortly after students returned from April vacation and during the testing

period, which may have influenced student responses and contributed to some changes in scores.
Nicole D. reviewed next steps for the upcoming school year. She reported that approximately 20% of students are currently scoring in Tier 3, with the greatest areas of need identified as emotion regulation and self-management. To address these needs, teachers will receive additional opportunities during staff training week to strengthen SEL strategies, with a focus on morning meetings and advisory periods to enhance Tier 1 classroom supports.

IX. Executive Session

A. Grievance

Germinudy L. requested a motion from the Board of Trustees to enter into an executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A, Section 21A. She explained that the purpose of the executive session was to discuss a complaint regarding an individual, as permitted under the provisions of the law. Germinudy L. asked for a motion from the board members to enter executive session for the stated purpose.
Darshan T. requested clarification regarding the procedure following the motion to enter executive session. He asked whether the Board would need to return to the open meeting before adjourning or whether the motion to enter executive session would conclude the meeting for all members except those participating in the executive session. Linette P. also inquired whether minutes would be recorded for the executive session. Germinudy L. clarified that the motion would conclude the open meeting, and once the executive session concluded, the meeting would be adjourned.

D. DeFillippo made a motion to enter executive session.

C. Needham seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

C. Needham made a motion to to affirm that only restricted persons to the board of trustees are listening to this session.

D. DeFillippo seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

X. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

C. Needham made a motion to adjourn the executive session.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Y. Rodriguez

Documents used during the meeting

- DT Goals 2025_2026 Progress Report.pdf
- SOP for BOT attendance (1).pdf
- BOT June Report 2026.pdf
- Board Presentation 6.10.26.pptx