APPROVED

Lawrence Family Development Charter School

Minutes

LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday September 9, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Location
Foley Library -404 Haverhill Street, Lawrence, MA 01841

Zoom

Annual Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting
https://zoom.us/j/99318117752?pwd=UhboHAj0HLo0yZXufyFhqgoNGcWIP2.1

Meeting ID: 993 1811 7752
Passcode: ZSvk5J

One tap mobile
+16465588656,,99318117752#,,,,*751120# US (New York)
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Trustees Present
C. Needham, D. DeFillippo, E. Nolberto, G. Lopez, J. Cedeno (remote), J. Henriquez, L. Perez, R. Almanzar (remote)

Trustees Absent
None

Trustees who arrived after the meeting opened
R. Almanzar

Trustees who left before the meeting adjourned
R. Almanzar

Guests Present
A. Croes, Arlene Garcia, C. Parcell, D. Thakkar, Fanggit Matias- Parent, Gregory Delrosario-Parent, H. Castleman, L. Lawler, M. Denu, M. Ventre, N. Arpin, Patricia Leon - Valdez-Parent, S. Stukuls, Tony Schumann, Y. Rodriguez

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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 Sep 9, 2026 at 5:33 PM.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Approval of minutes from the August 12, 2026 Meeting

E. Nolberto made a motion to approve the minutes from LFDCS Board of Trustees Meeting on 08-12-26.
C. Needham seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Public Participation

A.

Public participation

Jeovanny R. spoke to the Board about two items under the Board Chair section of the agenda, which are the extended-day snacks and the discussion regarding an employee who sent an email on August 24, 2026. He said he did not know the details of the employee discussion yet, but he was concerned about the mention of possible retaliation. Jeovanny R. said employees should feel comfortable reaching out to the Board when they have concerns without worrying that they could face retaliation. He stressed that the Board needs to have the trust of employees so they can receive honest, firsthand information about what is happening at the school. He said that if an employee is concerned about retaliation because they sent an email to the Board, the matter should be looked into carefully.

Jeovanny R. also connected the employee's concerns to questions parents have raised about student snacks and food. He said that at an earlier parent meeting, he had asked about snacks and was told that they were not covered by Chapter 70 or general allocation funds. He said the issue has become more concerning since the school changed food providers, especially based on pictures he had seen that appeared to show frozen food being served. Jeovanny R. questioned whether students are receiving snacks at all, or if snacks are only being provided to students who participate in the extended-hours program. He said this is a real concern for parents because students need to eat properly and that not eating well could affect their ability to focus and understand their classes. Jeovanny R. said he was glad the Board was going to discuss the issue and asked the Board to take the concerns seriously and look into them further.

III. Business Items

A. Re-elect Germinudy Lopez to a third term.

E. Nolberto made a motion to renew Germinudy Lopez for a third term as a board member.
D. DeFillippo seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

B. Board Executive Positions

D. DeFillippo made a motion to appoint Germinudy Lopez as Board Chair.

C. Needham seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

L. Perez made a motion to appoint Elizabeth Nolberto as Board Vice-Chair.
C. Needham seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

D. DeFillippo made a motion to appoint Chris Needham and Jose Henriquez to serve as Treasurers.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
Christopher N. said his service on the Board expires in August 2027. He asked if Jose H. will be willing to serve as Co-Treasurer again as part of a succession plan for when his term ends.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

R. Almanzar arrived at 5:49 PM.
C. Needham made a motion to appoint Linette Perez as Clerk.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

Linette P. thanked everyone for their service on the Board and acknowledged that new members would be interviewed that evening. She reminded the Board that serving is a commitment and comes with a responsibility to the students, staff, administration, and the community. She emphasized that Board members should keep these groups in mind when making decisions and voting, and that decisions should not be taken lightly. Linette P. also encouraged everyone to think about the long-term impact of their work and the future students, parents, and community members who will be part of the school.

C. Committee Compositions

Dave D. shared that the Finance Committee is very important, as are all of the Board's committees. He shared that serving on the committee over the past several years helped him better understand the school's priorities, administration, and financial matters, as well as the care and sensitivity that goes into those discussions. He said he appreciated the opportunity to serve again and encouraged others who share similar interests to consider getting involved.

Chris N. asked Jennifer C. if she would be interested in serving on the committee given her background in finance. Jennifer C. said she would be happy to serve but is unable to make the commitment at this time.

Chris N. said he would like to move forward with the current Trustees for now. He added that if any of the new Board members are interested in joining the committee once they officially become Trustees, they can be considered then.
C. Needham made a motion to nominate Dave D., Elizabeth N., and Jose H. to serve on the Superintendent's Review Committee.
L. Perez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

E. Nolberto Aye
J. Henriquez Aye
G. Lopez Aye
R. Almanzar Aye
J. Cedeno Aye
D. DeFillippo Aye
L. Perez Aye

Roll Call

C. Needham Aye

C. Needham made a motion to nominate Elizabeth N., Germinudy L., and Dave D. to serve on the Academic Advisory Committee.

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

Roll Call

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

Dave D. shared that Hali Castleman will serve as an ex officio member of the Academic Advisory Committee this year. He explained that this has been discussed over the past year and that Hali C. was open to making the committee more collaborative by bringing together Board members, teaching staff, and administration. Dave D. thanked Hali C. for being willing to participate and noted that she had also provided the names of the faculty members who will be involved, so they will be contacted. He also explained that the Academic Advisory meetings will likely continue to be scheduled three times a year, right before the Board meetings.

L. Perez made a motion to nominate Chris N., Elizabeth N., Germinudy L., and Linette P. to continue to serve in the Nominating & Governance Committee.

C. Needham seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

Sally S. explained that last spring, after discussions about various school policies, she suggested creating a Policy Subcommittee that would meet a few times each year to review and vet policies before they are brought to the full Board.

C. Needham made a motion to nominate Elizabeth N., Jose H., Linette P., and Germinudy L. to serve on the Policy Committee.

L. Perez seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

R. Almanzar Aye

Roll Call

E. Nolberto	Aye
C. Needham	Aye
G. Lopez	Aye
J. Henriquez	Aye
L. Perez	Aye
D. DeFillippo	Aye
J. Cedeno	Aye

IV. Board Elections

A. Candidates that have confirmed attendance:

Elizabeth N. served as the facilitator for the election of new Trustees and shared that it had been a great experience working with the committee. She reminded everyone that the Lawrence Family Development Charter School Board is a public body governing a Commonwealth Charter Public School and that the election was being conducted in open session in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and the Board's bylaws. Elizabeth N. explained that the Board could have up to seven parent Trustees and six community Trustees. There were two open parent positions and three open community positions, for a total of five available seats. She noted that there were more interested parent candidates than available parent positions and explained that the Board would vote to fill the seats if it determined that suitable candidates were available. The Board was not required to fill all vacancies and could leave positions open until future candidates became available.

Elizabeth N. also reviewed the eligibility requirements and responsibilities of Trustees. She explained that each Trustee serves as a public agent of the Commonwealth and has a duty of loyalty and care to the school. Trustees must comply with Massachusetts ethics requirements, including the Conflict of Interest Law, and must complete required financial disclosures. She noted that individuals who are employed by an organization that is adverse to the school in contractual negotiations or potential litigation would not be eligible to serve because of an ongoing conflict of interest. Eligibility would be considered both when the application was submitted and on the date of the Board's decision. Elizabeth N. then explained the candidate presentation process. Each candidate would be invited to introduce themselves and provide a statement of five minutes or less, including their name, address, whether they are an LFDCS parent or Lawrence community member, why they are interested in serving on the Board, and any skills or areas of expertise they could bring to the Board. Candidates were also expected to submit a letter of intent, a resume listing their current employment, and a statement confirming the accuracy of the information provided in their resume.

Elizabeth N. reviewed the election instructions with the Trustees and members of the audience and explained that Trustees could ask candidates clarifying questions. She also reviewed how the deliberations and voting would be conducted. There were three

candidates present for the parent Trustee positions and no candidates for the community member positions. Elizabeth N. clarified that the Commissioner must provide final approval for individuals elected to the Board. She distributed the evaluation rubrics and other materials to each of the Trustees in attendance for use during the candidate review and election process.

Patricia L. introduced herself as a parent candidate. She resides at 9 Texas Ave, Lawrence, MA. She is also an alumna of LFDCS, Class of 2006. Patricia L. explained that one of the main reasons she is interested in joining the Board is because she wants to give back. She said that giving back to the community has been important to her throughout her career and her life, and that LFDCS has been a significant part of her life both as a student and now as a parent. She also noted that her younger brother attended the school and that she has maintained strong connections with the school and some of its educators over the years. Patricia L. said that her professional experience as an educator and in her current leadership role has given her skills that she would like to contribute to the school and Board. She identified her classroom experience, operational management, budgeting, and policy development as areas where she could be helpful.

Dave D. asked Patricia L. if she could provide some background about her educational journey after graduating from LFDCS.

Patricia L. shared that she attended LFDCS when the current science center was used as the kindergarten classroom and believes she was part of the second class of students to attend the school after it opened. She recalled that Patricia Karl would provide special lunches and breakfasts for the students and described the school as a very welcoming, home-like, and family-oriented environment. She said that she remains friends with many of the students she attended LFDCS with from kindergarten through eighth grade and that those relationships remain very meaningful to her. After graduating from LFDCS, Patricia L. attended Lawrence High School. She explained that she had been accepted to several private schools, but her family could not afford the cost. She said that, as a determined eighth grader, she decided she would prove that she could still succeed by attending Lawrence High School. She took AP and honors classes and graduated fourth in her class. She then attended UMass Amherst, where she initially planned to become a lawyer and earned a bachelor's degree in law.

While considering law school, Patricia L. was introduced to Teach For America. She decided to try teaching after learning that the program could provide a scholarship for a master's degree in education. She said that she told herself that if she was going to pursue teaching, she wanted to work in her own community. She was ultimately placed in Lawrence and developed a strong connection to the community through her work. She taught middle school at South Lawrence East, later taught at Phoenix Academy, an alternative high school, and then spent the remainder of her teaching career at Lawrence High School as an 11th-grade English teacher.

Patricia L. explained that her career path changed after the pandemic and after she had her daughter. During the summers, she volunteered with a community organization and helped create curriculum. An opportunity then became available for her to serve as Director of Curriculum, which she accepted. In that role, she worked with DESE, grants, and other program-related responsibilities. More recently, she was nominated for a new leadership opportunity and was asked if she would be interested in managing the entire department. She accepted the position and currently serves as Senior Director of School-Age Programs. She noted that she currently manages approximately 51 staff members and is responsible for matters including HR, contractual negotiations, budgets, and other operational responsibilities. Patricia L. also clarified that she earned her master's degree from Boston University through Teach For America and expressed appreciation for the scholarship opportunity.
Chris N. asked Patricia L. if she could talk more about her certification or experience related to nonprofit boards.

Patricia L. explained that she participated in a nonprofit board governance program with Joan Kulasch, whom she described as well-known and respected in the community. Through the program, participants were able to take courses and apply some of the credits toward a certificate through Northern Essex Community College. Patricia L. completed the program with Joan Kulasch and also completed the courses to obtain her certificate at Northern Essex Community College. She said that the program taught her a great deal about Board governance and exposed her to different organizations and boards. At the time, however, she did not feel that any of the boards she encountered were a good fit for her or aligned with her interests. Patricia L. explained that she is selective about the commitments she takes on because she wants to make sure she can follow through and that her skills will be useful. She said that she had declined opportunities to serve on other boards and that LFDCS is the first Board for which she has formally expressed interest.

Chris N. also asked Patricia L. if she had any association with Lawrence Family Development, given that the school is currently involved in contractual negotiations with the organization.
Patricia L. confirmed that she has no association with Lawrence Family Development.
Elizabeth N. asked Patricia L. how she handles confidentiality.

Patricia L. said that she handles confidential information very well because it is a regular part of her current work. She explained that managing approximately 51 staff members requires her to handle sensitive HR matters, contractual negotiations, budgets, and other confidential information. She emphasized that confidentiality is important to maintaining a positive workplace culture and building trust within a team. She explained that some information can be shared immediately, while other matters require gathering all of the necessary information before information is gradually communicated to the broader team.

Elizabeth N. asked Patricia L. how does she feel she can separate her role as a parent and her role as a Board member when there is an issue involving her child at the school.

Patricia L. said that she would be able to separate the two roles and explained that she viewed them as separate responsibilities. She indicated that she would not approach an issue involving her child as a Board member or expect special treatment because of her position on the Board. She initially had difficulty understanding how the two roles could become mixed but confirmed that she would be comfortable maintaining the necessary separation.

Elizabeth N. asked Patricia L. how does she handle disagreement and conflict in general?
Patricia L. described her leadership style as collaborative and said that she approaches conflict in the same way. She noted that her background in law and her certificate in social justice mediation have provided her with training that helps her manage disagreements. She explained that her approach is to first listen to both sides, understand the situation, assess what is happening, and then determine what can be done to address or alleviate the conflict.

Elizabeth N. asked Patricia L. what is her vision of an effective Board is.

Patricia L. said that, specifically for LFDCS, she believes it is important to maintain the family-oriented and collaborative environment that has been part of the school's identity since it opened. She said she wants the school to continue to feel like a family and a place where people care about one another. She also emphasized the importance of integrity and honesty, particularly being realistic and transparent about what the Board can and cannot accomplish. Patricia L. said that Board members should assume positive intentions when making difficult decisions.

Elizabeth N. asked Patricia L. if she would be able to commit to the time needed to fulfill Board responsibilities.

Patricia L. said yes and explained that this was one of the first questions she had considered for herself. She stated that she did not believe the Board commitment would be overly burdensome and felt comfortable making the necessary time commitment.

Chris N. explained that LFDCS is one of the few charter schools where the majority of the Board knows the parent community and that the parent perspective is an important part of the Board's role. Patricia L. thanked the Trustee for the clarification.
Gregory D. introduced himself as a parent candidate, he resides at 46 Juniper Street in Lawrence, MA and has lived in Lawrence for approximately 35 years. Gregory D. explained that his reason for wanting to serve on the Board is to give back to the school and community for everything the school has done for his children. He has three children who have attended LFDCS. One of his children has moved on to a boarding high school

in Boston, while his two younger children currently attend LFDCS, one in seventh grade and one in fourth grade. Gregory D. said that he believes he can bring an additional perspective to the Board through his experience as a Lawrence City Councilor representing the district where the school is located. He explained that, as a City Councilor, he listens to residents and brings their concerns forward, and that as a parent at LFDCS, he also listens to what is happening at the school and tries to support the school. He said that serving on the Board would give him an opportunity to bring forward concerns and information that some community members may not otherwise be able to bring directly to the Board, with the goal of discussing those issues and making things better for families.

Gregory D. continued by describing himself as a parent, community leader, and elected City Councilor for District C. He said that he is committed to the success of the school's students and families and believes his experience in community service, engagement, and advocacy would allow him to make a meaningful contribution to the Board and help continue LFDCS's success. He explained that education has always been a priority in his family and reiterated that he currently has two children attending LFDCS and one child who previously attended the school and has moved on to high school. Throughout his years of community service, he said he has worked closely with families, schools, youth organizations, and community stakeholders on issues involving education, public safety, and quality of life. He also emphasized that he is bilingual and fluent in English and Spanish, which he believes allows him to understand the importance of supporting the school's multilingual community and ensuring that all families have an opportunity to have their voices heard.

Elizabeth N. asked Gregory D. to clarify whether he had a high school-aged child. Gregory D. explained that he has a high schooler who graduated from LFDCS. He has a child in the seventh grade and one in fourth grade.

Dave D. asked Gregory D. how he would separate his role as a parent and Board member, particularly since he also serves as a City Councilor. How would he make sure each role receives proper consideration without one role influencing or interfering with the others?

Gregory D. said that he believes it is important to first believe in and remain committed to the work being done on the Board and to follow the policies and interests of the school. He clarified that he does not view his role as a City Councilor as simply a political position, but rather as a community service role. He explained that he listens to the community and tries to understand the concerns people bring forward. As a parent, he said that the teachers know him and are aware that there have been issues involving his children in the past. When those situations arise, he said he listens to the teachers and follows their recommendations regarding what is best for his children. He emphasized that he has never brought his role as a City Councilor into those situations or created a

conflict. Gregory D. said that he listens carefully and would take the same approach when serving on the Board.

Linette P. asked if he were selected to serve on the Board, what would be his goal. What would he want to be able to say he accomplished for LFDCS because he served on the Board?

Gregory D. said that he would like to sit down with the Board members, stakeholders, teachers, and Superintendent to understand the vision for the future of the school. Because his children attend LFDCS, he wants to understand where the school is going and be part of the effort to move the school forward. He said that one of his biggest accomplishments would be helping the Board and school community reach agreement on the direction that is best for the school. Gregory D. acknowledged that Board members will not always agree, but he believes they can work through their differences, find common ground, and move forward with the primary focus being on the students. He said that reaching that point of agreement and moving the school forward would be a significant accomplishment not only for him, but for all Board members, stakeholders, teachers, and the Superintendent.

Elizabeth N. noted that the same question would be asked of each candidate to ensure that the process was fair and consistent. She explained that Gregory D.'s response also addressed how he sees himself contributing to the Board, but that she wanted to make sure all candidates were given the same questions and opportunity to respond.

Elizabeth N. asked Gregory D. how he handles confidentiality.

Gregory D. said that he handles confidential information on a daily basis. He explained that he works for a nonprofit organization that works with children and that his position requires him to receive information that must be kept confidential. He said that confidentiality is part of his everyday responsibilities. He also referred to his work as a City Councilor and explained that there are confidential sessions during which information discussed must remain private. He said that he has been handling confidential information in this capacity for years and feels comfortable maintaining confidentiality.

Elizabeth N. asked Gregory D. how he handles disagreements and conflicts. She noted that he answered the question about separating roles earlier.

Gregory D. said that his approach is based on communication, talking, and listening. He believes that people involved in a disagreement should communicate with one another, discuss the issue, and work toward a middle ground where they can understand the disagreement and find common ground. He emphasized again that the ultimate goal should be what is best for the school and finding a way to move the school forward despite differences of opinion.
Elizabeth N. asked Gregory D. what his vision of an effective Board is.

Gregory D. said that he believes an effective Board is one that can find common ground even when members do not always agree. He explained that on important decisions, particularly decisions intended to move the school forward and provide a better education for students, Board members should be willing to work together to reach an agreement. He said that finding common ground and being able to reach effective votes on important matters would be an important part of an effective Board.

Elizabeth N. asked Gregory D. if he is able to commit the time needed to fulfill Board responsibilities.

Gregory D. confirmed that he is able to make the necessary time commitment to fulfill the responsibilities of a Board member.

Elizabeth N. asked Gregory D. to clarify his employment with Lawrence Prospera. Gregory D. confirmed that he is still employed by Lawrence Prospera. Elizabeth N. explained that she wanted to clarify the relationship between Lawrence Prospera and Lawrence Family Development Inc. and noted that Lawrence Prospera is a DBA connected to the organization.

Chris N. asked Gregory D. if he would consider himself part of management at Lawrence Prospera.

Gregory D. said that he does not consider himself part of management. He explained that his position is focused on community engagement and serving as a resource specialist. He works specifically with the youth program and said that his responsibilities have nothing to do with management, food services, buildings, or other areas of the organization. He emphasized that his work is limited to the youth program and is based in Methuen.

Fanggit M. introduced herself as a parent and mother of three. She resides at 25 Lenox Circle in Lawrence. Her oldest son has graduated from college and attended Central Catholic High School. Her second son attended Greater Lawrence Technical School (GLTS), and her youngest child, Eliana, is currently in seventh grade at LFDCS.

Fanggit M. explained that she has been involved in the Lawrence community for many years. She currently works for the Department of Career Services and previously worked at the Lawrence Career Center for approximately ten years. In that role, she assisted community members with unemployment services, helped individuals find training programs, and connected people with employment and career opportunities.

Fanggit M. said that her goal in joining the Board would be to become part of the team and support the school and its students in any way she could. She highlighted her

experience working with the community and her ability to speak both Spanish and English, noting that many members of the Lawrence community are Spanish speakers. She described herself as a “people person” who listens and communicates well. She also said that she has experience resolving conflicts in her workplace and believes that skill could be helpful as a Board member.

Linette P. asked Fanggit M. if selected to serve on the Board, what is her goal? What does she think will be better when she leaves because she was here?

Fanggit M. said that she would like to help the Board strengthen its connections with students and parents. She said she would be willing to help in any way the Board requested and use her experience to support the school community.

Chris N. asked Fanggit M. asked her if she had any prior Board experience?
Fanggit M. responded no.

Elizabeth N. asked the other candidates the same questions. Gregory D. explained that he had, due to his position as City Councilor. Patricia L. explained that she had some experience working with a small advisory group focused on fostering support for young children. She described this as community service and said she provided some assistance to the group, although she did not describe it as formal Board experience.

Elizabeth N. asked Fanggit M. how she handles confidentiality.

Fanggit M. explained that her work with the Department of Career Services has required her to handle sensitive information for many years. She has worked with unemployment cases and has dealt with confidential information, including Social Security numbers. She said that through this experience she understands the importance of protecting confidential information and the potential consequences of failing to do so.

Elizabeth N. asked Fanggit M. is she feels she can separate her role as a parent and as a Board member when there is an issue involving her child at the school.

Fanggit M. said yes. She described herself as a firm person who listens carefully and said she believes she can separate her role as a parent from her responsibilities as a Board member. She explained that she would be able to step back from her role as a parent and focus on helping the school when serving in her capacity as a Trustee.

Elizabeth N. asked Fanggit M. how she handles disagreement and conflict.

Fanggit M. said that dealing with people in her job can sometimes be challenging. She explained that she tries to be fair and to help in whatever way she can. She indicated that her experience working with people has helped her develop the ability to handle disagreements and conflicts fairly.

Elizabeth N. asked Fanggit M. what is her vision of an effective Board.

Fanggit M. said her vision is to be part of the team and help with whatever the Board needs. She emphasized her willingness to work collaboratively and support the Board in its responsibilities.
Elizabeth N. asked Fanggit M. if she is able to commit the time needed to fulfill Board responsibilities.

Fanggit M. indicated that she is able to commit the time necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of a Board member.

Dave D. asked whether Fanggit M. currently had a child attending LFDCS. She confirmed that her daughter is currently in seventh grade.

Elizabeth N. thanked all of the candidates for their interest in serving on the Board and also acknowledged the individuals who had expressed interest earlier in the process. She noted that approximately ten people had initially shown interest and thanked them for their willingness to serve. Elizabeth N. also thanked Sally S. for her efforts in reaching out to businesses and organizations throughout Lawrence to identify potential Board candidates.

Elizabeth N. then opened the meeting for Board deliberation and explained that Trustees would have an opportunity to discuss the candidates before proceeding to a vote. She explained that each candidate would be presented individually for a yes-or-no vote.

Linette P. asked if the candidates should remain present during the deliberation and voting process. Elizabeth N. noted that the bylaws did not specifically address whether candidates were required to leave, and the Board agreed that the candidates would not participate in the deliberation and voting.
E. Nolberto made a motion to have discussion without the candidates present.
L. Perez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

It was decided that the candidates will not come back.
E. Nolberto made a motion to take a 5 min recess.

D. DeFillippo seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

Returned to open session at 6:56 PM.

Elizabeth N. explained that the next step would be to vote on the candidates in the order in which they had been interviewed. Trustees would vote yes or no for each candidate, and the votes would be counted and recorded. She reminded the Board that there were two parent Trustee openings and three parent candidates, meaning the Board would need to select two of the three candidates. She also reminded Trustees that they needed to approach the vote objectively and vote in their capacity as Trustees.

Linette P. expressed that she had not previously received or reviewed the candidates' resumes and letters of intent and had only seen them for the first time that evening. She felt that she needed additional time to review the materials and consider the candidates' interviews, letters, and resumes together before making a decision. Elizabeth N. acknowledged that concern and noted that Trustees had the opportunity to review the materials during the meeting. She also stated that, although the intention had been to complete the election that evening, the Board could take additional time if necessary.

Rita A. also asked whether the Board was required to make its decision that night. Elizabeth N. clarified that completing the election that evening had been the original intention. Dave D. expressed that he felt comfortable making a decision based on the candidates' interviews and the ranking process, noting that there were only three candidates for two available positions. He felt that the candidates had been given an opportunity to be heard and that he was prepared to vote.
Elizabeth N. offered to summarize her notes and observations about each candidate before the Board began its discussion of the individual candidates. Dave D. also reminded Trustees that the usual practice is to vote on new Trustees during the annual meeting. Dave D. suggested a compromise. Rather than voting immediately, the Board could table the vote until later in the meeting and proceed with the remaining agenda items, giving Trustees additional time to review the candidate materials and consider their decisions while still completing the election during the annual meeting.

Elizabeth N. agreed with the proposal, and the Board agreed to postpone the vote until later in the agenda.

D. DeFillippo made a motion to move the vote to the end of the meeting.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

C. Needham	Aye
D. DeFillippo	Aye
G. Lopez	Aye
E. Nolberto	Aye
R. Almanzar	Aye
J. Henriquez	Aye
L. Perez	No
J. Cedeno	Aye

V. Board Chair Items

A. Extended Day Snacks

Germinudy L. asked for an update regarding the concerns raised in the August 24 email sent to LFDCS families, including the concern about retaliation.

Sally S. explained that the after-school snack issue had been resolved. Snacks had been provided during the previous several weeks and would continue to be available not only to students participating in the extended-day program, but also to students participating in clubs and sports.

Dave D. stated that, to his understanding, the snack issue was temporary and was resolved quickly. Mark V. explained that by Thursday, August 26, all students at the Academy were receiving an after-school snack, and by Monday, August 31, snacks were available to all students participating in after-school programming.

Linette P. spoke on the importance of being mindful of the Lawrence community and the different circumstances of the families the school serves. She spoke on middle school students and concerns related to self-esteem, body image, and body-shaming. Linette P. explained that she had recently spoken with several girls who were discussing the school’s lunch and snack expectations. One student expressed that being told what foods they could or could not eat made her feel as though she was being called “fat.” Linette P. said that although the intention is to encourage healthier choices, students may interpret the message differently, particularly those who already struggle with self-esteem or body-image concerns. She emphasized the importance of staff understanding how students may perceive these messages and of educating students about the reasons behind healthy food choices.

Elizabeth N. shared that she had previously participated in the school's wellness committee and recalled the work that had been done with the school nutritionist, who provided nutrition and wellness education to students. Elizabeth N. noted that the nutritionist had conducted cafeteria surveys and made numerous presentations over the years and had devoted significant effort to the school's nutrition education. She felt that the school had already made a substantial effort to provide students with nutrition education, although she acknowledged that it was worth considering whether additional education or reinforcement was needed.

Dave D. spoke on the challenge of delivering positive health messages to students in an environment where they are constantly exposed to outside influences concerning appearance, food, and self-image. Students should be encouraged to make informed choices, understand the benefits of nutritious foods and exercise, and recognize how outside messages can influence their perception of themselves.

Elizabeth N. shared that her own children had recently stopped eating school lunch and were bringing lunch from home because they did not like the meals being served. She explained that she planned to look further into the issue while also giving the new food service program time to develop. She emphasized that one or two students' experiences should not be viewed as representative of the entire student population but felt it was important to understand why some students were not choosing the school meals.

Dave D. discussed the new breakfast-in-the-classroom program, which ensures students are offered breakfast in their classrooms, even if they initially do not feel they need or want breakfast. That is a nutritional component that wasn't there previously. Elizabeth N. shared that, from her own experience as a parent, the program has been helpful because her children sometimes say they do not need breakfast at home but will eat when breakfast is provided at school.

Germinudy L. shared that her older children, who attended the school in previous years, became familiar with making healthier snack choices, while younger students may now be more likely to choose items such as Takis. She noted that the changing preferences between generations make nutrition education more complicated and reinforce the need for continued guidance.

Jennifer C. made a comment regarding school lunch. Her child mentioned they stopped Pizza Fridays. Mark V. clarified that pizza is being served but had not initially been offered on Fridays. The school planned to reestablish "Pizza Fridays.
Germinudy L., Chris N., Jennifer C., and Dave D. asked for clarification regarding the reference to retaliation in the August 24 email and whether the concern was related to the staff member who had raised concerns about the availability of snacks for students.

Jennifer C. expressed support for the staff member and stated that, in her view, the employee was concerned about the students and was not attempting to overstep

anyone's authority. She explained that she had known the employee for many years and believed she genuinely cared about the children. Jennifer C. felt that the employee's email was motivated by concern that students could potentially be at school from approximately 11:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. without receiving a snack.

Mark V. provided additional context regarding the timeline and the school's efforts to address the snack issue. He read an email he had sent to the employee on August 19, prior to the start of school, explaining that the school would investigate all possible options for providing snacks and potentially dinner. He noted that the school subsequently determined that it was eligible for a dinner program and was also exploring parent interest and other available programs. Mark V. explained that any program would need to be reimbursable and available to all eligible students. He also noted that the new food service provider, Whitson's, had experience working with schools and that the school was working to maximize reimbursement and identify alternative programs or exceptions.

Mark V. explained that the school had spent approximately $230,000 on snacks the previous year and had lost money on the food service program, making it necessary to identify a sustainable and reimbursable program. He stated that the school would continue looking for a program that could cover extended-day snacks but that the program could not be implemented immediately.
Mark V. explained that snacks had historically not been reimbursed for all students during the school day. Previously, the school had only been able to claim reimbursement for approximately one-third of afternoon snacks provided to students participating in academic remediation programs. Under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), the school would now be able to provide snacks to all students participating in after-school programming, with those snacks being reimbursable. The school would be able to extend the snack program to all eligible after-school students. The new breakfast-in-the-classroom program was also expected to help address students' nutritional needs in the morning.

Mark V. further clarified the timeline. He explained that his email to the employee was sent on the morning of Wednesday, August 19, at approximately 6:31 a.m., before the school year began. The employee's email to after-school parents was sent on Monday evening, August 24, after the parent coffee held that morning on the first day of school. Mark V. felt that the timing was important to understanding the circumstances and the school's efforts to address the issue before the employee sent the message to families.

Jennifer C. reiterated that she did not believe the employee intended to overstep or cause harm and maintained that the employee was acting out of concern for the students. Mark V., however, explained that the issue was not necessarily about the employee's intent but rather the approach taken to addressing the concern. He noted that there had been opportunities between the August 19 communication and the August 24 email for the employee to continue discussing the issue directly with administration. Instead, the

employee sent an email to all after-school parents, which Mark V. characterized as inflammatory and alarmist and felt was not a productive approach to resolving the issue.

Jennifer C. pointed out that the employee was not present to explain or defend herself and felt that this should be considered during the discussion. Mark V. responded that the employee had opportunities to participate in addressing the issue and reiterated that the concern was about the approach taken to problem-solving.

Linette P. asked whether the employee had received a consequence as a result of the email. Jennifer C. shared that the employee had been placed on a warning. Sally S. explained that the email had been sent in error and that the situation had been addressed, but any disciplinary action was a personnel matter and therefore confidential.

Germinudy L. explained that, from her perspective, the employee may have believed that the school was not going to provide snacks and was trying to make sure the issue was addressed. She also acknowledged that, regardless of the employee's intentions, the email had an impact and resulted in concerns among families.

Dave D. shared that an individual may not intend for an action or communication to have a negative effect, but the action can still create unintended consequences or "fallout. Administration has a responsibility to address those consequences and determine an appropriate response, even when the original intent was not negative.

B. 580 Haverhill Street

Mark V. provided an update regarding the gym at 580 Haverhill Street. He explained that the school has a lease with the Lawrence Housing Authority, with the original lease expiring on December 31, 2027. There is an extension that could continue the lease through December 31, 2030.

LFDCS students do not currently use the gym. The gym is currently used exclusively by Lawrence Prospera, which operates a basketball program and has expressed interest in continuing to use the space.

The school is currently in discussions with Lawrence Prospera regarding a potential sublease arrangement, with the Lawrence Housing Authority also expected to participate in the negotiations. The school is paying approximately $10,000 per month for the gym, which is a significant expense given that LFDCS students are not using the facility. While the school could potentially develop programming that would make use of the gym, the transportation costs associated with moving students to and from the location would be

prohibitive. The cost would outweigh the benefit for the limited number of students who would likely use the space.

Mark V. noted that Lawrence Prospera is interested in using the gym but is not currently in a position to assume the full $10,000 monthly cost. If the school is unable to reach a sublease agreement and remains obligated under the lease through 2027 or potentially 2030, the school would need to identify an appropriate use for the space.

Germinudy L. asked for the Board to be kept informed regarding the ongoing negotiations.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Scholarships

Darshan T, brought concerns to the Board regarding the scholarships awarded to graduating eighth-grade students and presented a letter addressed to the Board Chair for consideration by the full Board. He explained that administration was asking the Board to formally demand a complete accounting and greater transparency from the Board of Directors of Lawrence Family Development, Inc., also known as Lawrence Prospera or the Fund, regarding scholarship funds raised on behalf of LFDCS students. Darshan T. explained that each year, the school identifies graduating eighth-grade students to receive scholarships to private high schools. Donations are collected on behalf of the school and held by the Fund in a separate account, with the Fund responsible for making tuition payments directly to the students' receiving schools by July 1 each year. This year, however, the Fund did not make the scholarship payments by the July 1 deadline, and many schools had still not received payment into August.

Darshan T. explained that, as a result, scholarship families reported that their high schools were requesting full tuition payments, charging late fees, and, in some cases, threatening to rescind their children's admission because the scholarship payments had not been received. He emphasized that the delays were causing significant stress for students and families and were also damaging the school's credibility with the receiving high schools. He expressed concern that if schools lose confidence in the school's ability to fulfill its scholarship commitments, it could affect future scholarship recipients and potentially jeopardize admission opportunities for LFDCS students. Darshan T. stated that administration had repeatedly contacted the Fund, including making weekly requests for an explanation and an accounting of the scholarship funds. He said that the Fund initially indicated that checks had been sent, but families and schools continued to report that payments had not been received. By mid-August, communication from the Fund had stopped altogether. Administration had not received information regarding the current balance of the scholarship funds, the amounts received and paid out, the account in which the funds were being held, or confirmation that the scholarship funds were being kept separate from the Fund's operating funds.

Darshan T. explained that administration had exhausted the steps it could take independently and that the matter had therefore become a governance issue requiring Board involvement. He stated that the Board has responsibility for overseeing the school's finances and protecting the school's reputation, and that the scholarship program is a school program funded by donations raised in the school's name, even though the funds are administered by an outside organization. He asked the Board to formally communicate with the Fund's Board of Directors and request a complete accounting of all scholarship donations received, held, and paid out on the school's behalf; information regarding the bank account and current balance where the funds are held; and written confirmation that the scholarship funds are maintained separately from the Fund's operating funds. He also asked the Board to request a written explanation for the failure to make the payments by July 1, a firm date by which all outstanding tuition payments and any late fees incurred by families would be resolved, and a specific deadline for the Fund to respond. Darshan T. further recommended that if the Fund did not provide a full and timely response, the Board consider additional steps to protect the school, its students, and the scholarship funds in consultation with legal counsel.

Darshan T. emphasized that these were reasonable accountability requests because funds raised and held specifically for student tuition should be used for that purpose, and an organization holding funds on behalf of another entity has an obligation to account for those funds.
Linette P. asked if the scholarship funds had been distributed appropriately. Darshan T. explained that the school had received calls from both families and receiving high schools asking about missing payments. Administration initially contacted the Fund and was told that the checks had been sent. However, weeks passed without schools receiving the payments. Linette P. asked if the payments go to the institutions or families. Darshan T. answered that they are sent directly to the institutions. Darshan T. reiterated that administration had attempted to resolve the issue directly with the Fund before bringing the matter to the Board.

Darshan T. explained that when scholarship payments are not received by the schools, the institutions understandably turn to the parents for payment, and the parents then contact LFDCS because they believe the school is managing the scholarship funds. LFDCS has never managed these funds and Lawrence Prospera has historically served as the custodian of the scholarship account. Darshan T. noted that there have been occasional issues with scholarship payments in prior years, including delays related to mailing, holidays, or other administrative matters, but those situations were generally resolved. This year, however, the issue became significantly more difficult to resolve.

LFDCS provided Lawrence Prospera with detailed spreadsheets identifying all students who had been awarded scholarships, the schools they would be attending, the amounts committed, and where the payments needed to be sent. Administration continued contacting Lawrence Prospera through mid-August in an effort to obtain information about the payments. When the organization stopped responding to the school's calls,

administration asked families to contact Lawrence Prospera directly. The organization initially responded to families for a short period but then stopped responding to them as well. As a result, administration could not confirm whether all scholarship payments had been received by the appropriate schools. Darshan T. stated that although it was possible that some payments had eventually been made, the administration simply did not know, which was the primary concern.

Darshan T. emphasized that the situation was affecting both families and the school's credibility. He explained that families should not have to experience anxiety or financial pressure because a scholarship payment intended for their child has not reached the receiving school. He noted that administration had made extensive efforts to resolve the matter, including maintaining spreadsheets, sending emails and text messages, making phone calls, and holding meetings, but those efforts were ultimately unsuccessful once communication from Lawrence Prospera stopped. Because administration had exhausted the avenues available to it, the matter was being brought to the Board for further action.

Germinudy L. expressed concern about the long-term impact of the situation, particularly for future students receiving scholarships. She noted that if a student's scholarship payment is not received by the school they are attending, the institution could require the family to pay the tuition upfront.

Darshan T. also explained that LFDCS had previously requested that Lawrence Prospera transfer management of the scholarship funds to the school, but that request had been refused. He noted that donors may believe they are donating directly for the benefit of LFDCS students and may not fully understand that Lawrence Prospera is the custodian of the funds. He emphasized that the donations are intended for the benefit of students and that there should be clear accountability regarding the funds and assurance that they are maintained separately in a scholarship account.

Elizabeth N. asked about the history of why Lawrence Prospera manages the scholarship funds. Chris N. shared that Lawrence Prospera is a 501(c)(3). Darshan T. explained that the arrangement dates back many years, potentially 20 years or more, and originated when Lawrence Prospera served as the school's financial partner. Darshan T. clarified that Lawrence Prospera is currently the custodian of the scholarship account specifically and noted that it had managed all of LFDCS's finances until the previous year.

Chris N. added that the Board was aware of Lawrence Prospera's financial difficulties and explained that, as part of the school's separation from the organization, approximately $250,000 in school funds remained unaccounted for. The lack of accountability regarding the scholarship funds makes it important for the school to act promptly to gain control and ensure proper oversight of the funds. Chris N. stated that addressing the matter would likely require legal action.
R. Almanzar left at 7:37 PM.

Linette P. asked how the school will manage the transition and donations in the future. Chris N. suggested the finance committee discuss the plan for how to transition custody of these funds.

Dave D. asked if the payments have been made to the schools. Darshan T. stated that he is not sure, but calls from schools and families have dropped off now.

Mark V. stated that there is a way to restrict the charter of a nonprofit to be exclusively for the benefit of the school and students.

Elizabeth N. asked whether the letter confirms that all the payments have been made and how much is sitting in the account.
C. Needham made a motion to send a letter to LFD demanding these items, signed by the chair and followed up by legal counsel.
L. Perez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

C. Needham made a motion to direct the finance committee look at how to handle donations and get custody of the funds.
E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

VII. Assistant Superintendent's Report

A. Federal Grant Updates

Sally S. shared that she looks forward to working with the new Policy Subcommittee and has several draft policies ready for review. She will reach out within the next few weeks to

coordinate an October meeting to review, edit, and vet the drafts before presenting them to the Board.

Sally also provided a follow-up regarding federal grant allocations discussed at the previous meeting. She reported that all allocations have been officially approved by DESE and that the school has begun working with the approved funds.

VIII. Finance Department Update

A. Campus Acquisition Update

Mark V. explained that the school intends to acquire the campus from Lawrence Prospera. The school currently pays approximately $2 million annually in rent for the four buildings. To support the acquisition, the school selected QPD as its financing advisor and reached an agreement with the firm. The agreement was finalized too late to be included in the Board meeting packet.

Mark requested that the Board delegate authority to the Finance Committee to approve the QPD contract. QPD will advise the school on the acquisition strategy, guide the due diligence process, and manage a competitive procurement process to secure financing for the purchase.
C. Needham made a motion to review the contract prior to approval of the QPD contract. A contract that is not to exceed $150,000.
D. DeFillippo seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

IX. Principal's Report

A. Professional Development Week Recap

R. Almanzar arrived at 7:48 PM.
Hali C. presented an overview of the school's summer professional development program, highlighting new staff orientation and the professional development week held August 17–21, 2026.

New staff orientation included 17 teachers, two paraprofessionals, two Merrimack fellows, and one school adjustment counselor. The three-day program covered mentoring, family engagement, classroom management, evaluation procedures, and student support systems. Survey results were positive, with 100% of participants reporting that the first day helped them feel welcome and prepared, and 92% indicating increased confidence in classroom management and social-emotional learning strategies. Participants also valued the student panel and requested additional training on educational applications and Schoology.

The full staff professional development week included crisis prevention, curriculum training, vertical team collaboration, and the introduction of professional learning communities to provide more individualized, interest-based learning opportunities. Staff also received training on the school's new math curriculum, special education requirements, positive behavior interventions, morning meetings, and advisory practices. Survey results were particularly positive for sessions led by the heads of school, which received a 100% helpfulness rating. Professional learning communities, common planning time, and math curriculum training each received 98% positive ratings.

Hali C. identified additional training needs for the February professional development day, particularly regarding IEPs, including accommodations, modifications, goals, and participation in IEP meetings. Staff also requested more guidance on structuring needs-based small groups to support student interventions and enrichment activities.

X. Board Member Nominations Continued

A. Board Nominations Continued

Elizabeth N. asked the Trustees if they had any comments before proceeding with the votes.

Dave D. thanked Elizabeth N. and Sally S. for identifying candidates and working through the process.

Elizabeth N. gave a brief summary of each candidate before the vote.
Candidate #1: Patricia Leon

Dave D. voted yes.
Jose H. voted yes.
Linette P. voted yes.
Elizabeth N. voted yes.
Chris N. voted yes.
Rita A. voted yes.
Jennifer C. voted yes.
Germinudy L. voted yes.
Candidate #2: Gregory Delrosario

Chris N. has expressed concerns about how Gregory D. has behaved towards the school as a City Councilor. He also expressed concerns about him working for Lawrence Prospera due to the business the school has to do with them. He has also expressed how this can affect the school and the Board.

Dave D also reiterated what Chris N . said and his concerns about conflict of interest at two levels and his use of that role to try to influence the Board and school administration in a way the Charter does not permit.

Rita A. also expressed her concerns about his behavior, noting she has never seen this in her years as a Board member.

Dave D. voted No.
Jose H. voted No.
Linette P. voted Yes.
Elizabeth N. voted No.
Chris N. voted No.
Jennifer C. voted Yes.
Rita A. voted No.
Germinudy L. voted Yes.

Candidate #3: Fanggit Matias

Chris N. expressed that, based on Fanggit M.'s background, she has something to the finance committee.

Dave D. voted yes.
Jose H. voted yes.
Linette P. voted yes.
Elizabeth N. voted yes.
Chris N. voted yes.
Rita A. voted yes.
Jennifer C. voted No.
Germinudy L. voted yes.
Elizabeth N. reported that Patricia L. and Fanggit M. received the majority of votes during the nomination process. She explained that all of the candidates will be notified of the results. The two new nominees will then be submitted to the Commissioner for final approval and instructions on the final steps.

XI. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

C. Needham made a motion to adjourn.

E. Nolberto seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Y. Rodriguez

Documents used during the meeting

- Composition of Existing Committees.docx
- FY27 Federal Grant Allocations_Information.pdf
- PD Week Board Presentation 2026.pptx