

**The Classical Academy Charter School of Clifton
Board of Trustees Public Meeting**

June 20, 2016

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

I: Introductory Exercises:

President Punita Meghani (hereafter referred to as the ‘Chair’) convenes the meeting at 7:06pm. She leads the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Thereupon she directs the Recording Board Secretary, Vincent De Rosa, to call the Roll of both voting and non-voting members.

II: Attendance Roll Call:

<u>Voting Members</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Non-Voting Members</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Punita Meghani -----	X		Vincent De Rosa, Lead Person ----	X	
Wafa Al-Rimawi -----		X	Sandra Giordano, Assit. Lead ----	X	
John De Vita -----	X		Bima Baje, SBA -----	X	
Hetal Sopariwala -----	X		Magda De Rosa, Adm. Assit. ----	X	

Also present at this meeting is Brenda Liss, school attorney.

III: Quorum and compliance with Open Public Meetings Act:

The Recording Secretary confirming that at least 3 of the 4 voting members being present, a Quorum exists to pass resolutions and transact business. The Chair recognizes Magda De Rosa, Administrative Assistant who asserts publically that she placed notices of this June 20, 2016 Board meeting in the Public Announcements Sections of both the ‘North Jersey Herald’ and the ‘Record’ newspapers and that such announcements appeared at least one calendar week before this meeting, and that this meeting therefore complies with the Open Public Meetings Act. Recording Secretary and Lead Person, Vincent De Rosa, declares that each employee was informed several days ago by placing a ‘Notice’ of this meeting in each employee’s work mail slot.

IV: Approval of Last Board of Trustees Meeting (May 10, 2016) Minutes:

The Recording Board Secretary, Vincent De Rosa, sent to all Board members several days before this meeting the Minutes for the May 10, 2016 Minutes for their review. The Chair now motions for a vote to approve the Minutes of the May 10, 2016 meeting; Hetal Sopariwala seconds the motion; the Chair directs the Recording Secretary to call the vote for approval.

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Abstain</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Punita Meghani -----	X			
Wafa Al-Rimawi -----				X
John De Vita -----	X			
Hetal Sopariwala -----	X			

The Chair declares the Minutes for Board meeting of May 10, 2016, hereby Approved.

V: Bylaws Changes and Mr. De Rosa’s Voting-Board Member Ballot Candidacy:

The Chair declares that Mr. De Rosa’s candidacy on the Ballot with five other persons is invalid since he is currently an employee, serving as Lead Person. Mr. De Rosa retorts, to no avail, that if elected he will not take a voting member role until after formally retiring and that his candidacy on the ballot is valid, or could be so construed if the Board chooses. The school attorney did not offer any comment on this issue and there was no Board vote on the legitimacy of Mr. De Rosa’s candidacy. The Chair’s ruling thus prevailed.

Lead Person Mr. De Rosa also provided minor changes in the Bylaws allowing the Board to expand its voting Board membership from the present 4 to at least 7 voting members, an expansion which the ongoing situation, in his opinion, with employee unionization justifies if not demands more Board resources and more available persons to serve on collective bargaining committee and other ad hoc committees, such as ‘contract monitoring’, school enlargement into the lower grades, etc. The suggested changes in the Bylaws which allowed for a greater number of voting Board members was tabled and otherwise disregarded.

VI: Board of Trustees Ballot (Vote) Counting for Persons to Serve as ‘Voting Member’ on the Classical Academy’s Board of Trustees for a Two-Year Term

The Chair now directs Lead Person and Recording Board Secretary, Vincent De Rosa, who, having collected and preserved unopened all Ballots in a locked closet, now to deliver the Ballots. The Chair assigns John De Vita the task of opening each Ballot while the Chair makes an ongoing tally on the Board—each person in the meeting is also encouraged to keep a running tally of votes cast for each candidate. The school attorney recommends that although Founder and Lead Person Vincent De Rosa’s candidacy on the ballot may not be valid as he is a current Board employee, the number of votes cast for him should be recorded.

VOTE COUNT

<u>Board Candidate</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Preference Indicated on Ballot</u>
Christina Blanco -----	64	10	3
Punita Meghani -----	59	16	1
Bahaa Housni -----	58	13	5
Hetal Rao -----	51	22	4
Renee Mendez -----	42	30	5
Vincent De Rosa -----	41	33	4

Board Secretary’s Note: 78 people returned ballots, or about 71% of all eligible voters. Numbers may not add to a neat total of 78 for any candidate as some names were not marked ‘Yes’, ‘No’ or ‘No Preference’ for the candidate.

After the results were calculated, Lead Person De Rosa, who received the least number of 'YES' votes, asks for and is granted a brief adjournment to speak privately with the school attorney and a parent present in the audience. Upon his return Founder and Lead Person, who receives the most 'NO' votes of any candidate, makes the following observation based on unsolicited information coming to his attention from concerned parents, namely, that at least two named teachers have been attempting to influence the outcome of the election by misusing their role as teachers and ordering students to: 'tell your parents not to vote for Mr. De Rosa.' Other more threatening comments reported to by students' parents to Mr. De Rosa, is that another named teacher told students on multiple occasions during the voting period: *'If you [students] want to have a good year next year, tell your parents not to vote for Mr. De Rosa.'* Such teacher statements and attempts at influencing the vote against Mr. De Rosa are reported to have taken place in school, during and between classes, and at the field/park (when Mr. De Rosa was not present).

Mr. De Rosa told the Board that more than one parent has complained to him about the highly questionable conduct of teachers in this manner and their concerned about exploiting or using their children in a very unprofessional way to influence the outcome of a Board of Trustees election. Mr. De Rosa told the meeting that since he founded the school 18 years ago, the school and the school administration never advocated, endorsed, or tried to influence a Board election; nor has the school ever opposed or endorsed a Board candidate. It left the decision solely to the parent voters based on their knowledge of the candidates.

Mr. De Rosa said he would not challenge the vote or the election, nor would he conduct a detailed investigation the findings of which may justify filing of 'ethics complaints' with the NJDOE, but he pointed out that the Board should be aware of the sort of unethical, unprofessional, untrustworthy, and even bullying conduct in which some of its employees are reported to have allegedly engaged.

VII: Minor Changes in Board of Trustees Bylaws--Tabled:

Founder and Lead Person Vincent De Rosa provided the Board with minor changes in the Bylaws which, if adopted, would allow the Board's expansion if it was deemed advantageous in the future to 7-9 voting members, and would also permit Mr. De Rosa's delayed addition after retirement to the Board as a voting member, assuming he would garner enough 'Yes' votes by parents.

The Board of Trustees decided with little discussion not to approve these Bylaws changes but to table the matter.

No Board Expansion Beyond Five(5) Voting Members: New and Continuing Voting Board Members:

By discussion and verbal consensus, the Board, deciding not to expand voting membership to 7 or even to 9 members, but to keep the number at five voting members, proclaimed the top three vote recipients as 'winning' the election for the three open seats necessary to keep the

voting Board member number at five(5). Thus Christina Blanco and Bahaa Housni were named to the Board for a two-year term, and incumbent Punita Meghani installed to another two-year term. Not receiving voting member Board seats were Hetal Rao (4th place); Renee Mendez (5th place), and Vincent De Rosa, (sixth place).

VII: Financials Reports:

School Business Administrator Bima Baje takes the floor to present and discuss the following monthly financial reports and other financial transactions:

1: Safety Grants (NJIG); Board vote to approve the application for grant the monies of which is to be spent on equipment; the amount of grant is undetermined but will be in the range of several thousand dollars.

The Chair motions to vote on the application for and receiving the Safety Grant (NJIG) money; Hetal Sopariwala seconds the motion:

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Punita Meghani	-----X			
John De Vita	-----X			
Wafa Al-Rimawi			-----X	
Hetal Sopariwala	-----X			

The Chair declares the motion to apply for and receive the Safety Grant approved.

2: NCLB: Authorization to submit application for the 2016-2017 school year:

The Chair motions to vote to approve submitting NCLB grant for 2016-2017 school year; John DeVita seconds the motion: The Chair calls for the vote:

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Punita Meghani	-----X			
John De Vita	-----X			
Wafa Al-Rimawi			-----X	
Hetal Sopariwala	-----X			

The Chair declares the motion to submit the NCLB application for 2016-2017 approved

3: The Chair motions to approve both the Treasurer’s Report and Secretary’s Report for the month of May, 2016; Hetal Sopariwala seconds the motion; the Chair asks Recording Secretary to take the vote:

Treasurer's Report:

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Punita Meghani	-----X			
John De Vita	-----X			
Wafa Al-Rimawi	-----X			
Hetal Sopariwala	-----X			

Secretary's Report:

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Punita Meghani	-----X			
John De Vita	-----X			
Wafa Al-Rimawi	-----X			
Hetal Sopariwala	-----X			

The Chair declares both the Treasurer and Secretary's report hereby approved

The Chair motions that the Bill list to June 20, 2016 be approved; John De Vita seconds the motion; the Chair directs the Recording Secretary to call the vote:

Bill List:

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Punita Meghani	-----X			
John De Vita	-----X			
Wafa Al-Rimawi	-----X			
Hetal Sopariwala	-----X			

The chair declares the Bill List to June 20, 2016 Approved.

VII: School Physician's Contract:

The School Business Administrator brought forward the renewal contract for the school physician at the same terms as the existing contract. The Chair motions that a vote be taken; John De Vita seconds the motion; the Chair directs Recording Secretary to call the vote:

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Punita Meghani	----- X			
John De Vita	-----X			
Wafa Al-Rimawi	-----X			
Hetal Sopariwala	-----X			

The Chair declares the school physician's contract approved for the 2016-2017 school year

VIII: 'IT' Contract with Passaic County Educational Services Commission'

Lead Person Vincent De Rosa offers the contract renewal sent to him from the PCESC to continue supplying 'Informational Technology' resource services and technical support by having a technician from PCESC work at the school for 4-6 hours weekly, assist with the PARCC technical preparations and be present full time during the PARCC 2017 testing days. A brief discussion regarding the terms and cost of the contract, and Mr. De Rosa and Mrs. Sandra Giordano's positive assessments of the work performed by PCESC during the school year, the

Chair motions that the Recording Secretary call the vote:

Voting Member Approve Disapprove Absent Abstain

Punita Meghani ----- X

John De Vita -----X

Wafa Al-Rimawi -----X

Hetal Sopariwala ----- X

The Chair declares the PCSEC contract to supply 'IT' services and technical resources to the Classical Academy for the 2016-2017 school year approved.

IX: Hiring of CPA/Auditing Firm to conduct the state-required 2016 CAFR Audit:

The School Business Administrator said we need to consider what firm we should hire to conduct the state-required CAFR report by August for the 2015-2016 school year. She recommended a CPA/Auditing firm with whom she presently works. Lead Person Vincent De Rosa said the CPA/Auditing firm of 'Barre & Co' who performed last year's Classical Academy audit did a very fine job. Its findings needing 'corrective action' were very minor and there were no problems with their CAFR report; nor was there any negative feedback from the Office of Charter Schools or the NJDOE on the school's financial practices or any content (findings) in the Barre CAFR report. Additionally the professional services cost for Barre & Co is \$3,000 less than the firm the SBA favors. The Lead Person advocates re-engaging Barre & Co for the school's 2015-2016 school year Audit/CAFR

The Board decided not to make a decision or sign the 'Barre & Co' engagement contract at this time, preferring to table the matter pending further discussion and decision on hiring a CPA/Audit firm to conduct the school's CAFR 2015-2016 audit.

Lead Person's 'Monthly State of the School Report'

I: Driveway Re-paving:

Lead Person Vincent De Rosa obtained three estimates for Driveway repaving to be performed during the summer. After a brief discussion, Board member Sopariwala, concerned with cost of work and guarantee of workmanship, said she would handle the matter. Mr. De Rosa provided her the three estimates, citing the one he believed the best offer, which he solicited

and the contact information of each of the firms interested in the work. All present Voting Board members agreed to this way forward.

II: Replacement of window Air Conditioner in room 203.

Lead Person Vincent De Rosa informed the Board that the air conditioning unit in room 203 is not operating and students and staff complain about this failure to cool. Mr. De Rosa received a cost estimate of the all inclusive cost of \$675 from Lijoi Appliance of Woodlawn Park to replace the unit with a new one, disposal of the old unit, and the cost of carpentry work needed to properly fit the new unit.

A discussion occurred, led by member Sopariwala, about the possible installing of 'central air conditioning' in the building or at least replacing many if not all of the present wall unit air conditioners with new units or with a different mode of cooling rooms. She said she would look into this and get some costs parameters. Mr. De Rosa expressed his reservations as to excessive cost and questionable need.

III: Widening of Driveway; mention was made by Punita Meghani of widening the driveway and reconfiguring it so that there is only one way from Valley Road into the school grounds and a different way to exit onto Valley Road from the school. Mr. De Rosa expressed his reservations as to excessive cost and critical need.

IV: Purchased from 'Title I Exemplar Reward School' Grant: three Lab-Top Projectors Purchased: we now have four of these same lap-top projectors for teachers' instructional use; we shall keep two on first floor and two on second floor. We also purchased for teachers and students 25 new Chromebook computers and a new charging unit for the new Chromebooks.

V: Algebra I Textbooks: Need to purchase 10-20 (New or slightly Used) Algebra I textbooks; we have only 1 spare book available for replacement.

Two-Minute Open Mike

Teacher Kathy Weber reminded the Board its agreement that copies of the monthly financial documents be placed in the Teachers Room on a regular basis has not yet taken place. Teacher Kathy Weber expressed concerned that the school may suffer 'charter renewal' implications if we do not replace the 8th grade 'World History' class; we are out of compliance, she says, because we do not address the 'world history' topics specified in the NJ core curricula social studies standards from K-8.

Teacher Barbara Cavelli said the new science standards and the emphasis on the 'STEM' instruction has become the basis for science instruction in New Jersey and that the Classical Academy is not doing enough to prepare its students for these standards and instruction. She also pointed out a possible defect on the exterior stairs top landing which could cause a fall.

Member Comments

Lead Person De Rosa suggested that the SBA Bima Baje who sends via email to all Board members the monthly financial documents before Board meetings, also place on her distribution Liss Kathy Weber who could download hard copies and place them in Teachers' Room. The Board should decide if the financial documents forwarded to Miss. Weber should be before or after they are approved by the Board. He briefly responded to Miss. Weber's 'world history' concerns by reminding all a number of 'World History' or 'World Civilization' topics are studied in Latin classes, grades 6-8--Ancient Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome civilization, all of which are included as 'world history' topics cited in the NJ core curricula social studies grade 6-8 standards.

Lead Person De Rosa informed the Board that the reported 'defect' on the exterior stair top landing has been referred to building maintenance and will be addressed during the summer.

The Chair, citing no other business in public session, motions to adjourn the meeting; John De Vita seconds the motion, there being no objection, the meeting is adjourned at 9:10pm

Members now proceed to Close Session.

Closed (Executive) Session

Post Closed Session (Re-opened Public Session):

On advice of Attorney Brenda Liss, the Board reconvenes in Open Session in order to approve the contract of new 'Math Supplemental Teacher' Fadia Terminini.

The Chair motions that there be a vote on hiring Fadia Terminini as the new 'Math Supplemental Teacher' and successor to Teresa Grillo; John De Vita seconds the motion; the Chair directs the Board Secretary to call the vote:

<u>Voting Member</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Punita Meghani	-----X			
Wafa Al-Rimawi	-----X			
John De Vita	-----X			
Hetal Sopriwala	-----X			

The Chair declares the employment contract of Fadia Terminin for 2016-2017 school year approved and that the school resume offering in September, 2016, the ‘Math Supplemental Class’ to assist struggling math students. Lead Person De Rosa repeats that the supplemental math class is important for students, some of who would be ‘special ed’ students in other schools and who would otherwise be taken out of ‘regular’ math classes for an easier subject; and that, as he emphasized, the ‘math supplemental class’ is essential to our ‘non –tracking’ program which does not offer lower, less demanding subject-matter classes for weaker students.

Adjournment: Punita Meghani motions that the meeting be adjourned; Hetal Soporiawala seconds the motion; the meeting is adjourned at 10:15pm.

Transcription Date(s): June 29-July 2, 2016

Recording Board Secretary, Vincent De Rosa

Assistant SBA, Magda De Rosa