

**Linn Christian Education Association  
Isaac Newton Christian Academy  
Board Meeting Minutes  
2024-08-27 6:00-9:15pm**

**Attendance**

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

**Opening**

Katie opened the meeting in prayer. Neil shared a devotional about discernment from multiple scriptural passages, with the assertion that discernment is the application of wisdom, involves humility toward God and faith to trust God, all of which are key responsibilities for the board. Stephanie volunteered to prepare a devotional for the next board meeting.

**Secretary's Report**

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

The board also approved via email the hiring of Miss Alexis Bowe for the open elementary PE teacher position and Mrs. Riley Greene for the open 5th grade teacher position.

**Head Of School's Report**

Dean presented three policies for review:

- 5.05, Class Size and Class Placement
- 5.10, High School Graduation Requirements
- 7.02.02, Absence Due to Family Issues–Students

Changes were proposed to 5.05 for policy to reflect practice. No changes were proposed to the other policies. Stephanie made a motion to update policy 5.05 as proposed, and John seconded the motion; the motion passed by unanimous verbal vote.

Dean shared the results of the board self-evaluation which was conducted at the July meeting.

Dean provided an update on staff hiring and insurance coverage, with all positions filled and almost all of the insurance coverage secured, some of which is at a drastically increased cost.

Having submitted multiple sample job descriptions for a Director of Operations from other Christian nonprofit organizations, Dean suggested that the potential job description for an Isaac Newton Director of Operations would likely include facets of all the examples, but that none of them completely covered the needs we have for that position. The board agreed in principle that the examples could be used to conglomerate the result for our school, and Dean was going to try to work on preparing a draft job description toward that end.

Dean reported that the staffing allocation for Resource has been expanded this year to meet a growing need, but that additional need for resource staffing is anticipated next year, particularly in the secondary grades.

Security enhancements were made over the summer, including both physical and electronic security, and some are still in the process of being installed. Gabe suggested that the insurance broker should be informed about our security upgrades to see if it might apply some downward pressure to our premiums.

ACSI no longer requires a CSIP (Continuous School Improvement Plan) for accreditation to demonstrate strategic planning at the board level, but an Accreditation Action Plan (AAP) will be developed after an accreditation team visits Isaac Newton in Spring 2026. The board can and should still have a strategic plan, but is free to develop one in whatever format is appropriate.

The board professional development article provided this month was "Sustainable Schooling in a Rapidly Changing World" by Timothy Wiens, from [The CACE Roundtable Blog](#), published by the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education.

### **Director Of Development & Enrollment Report**

Tracy provided an update on donations, with almost \$10k received already for 24/25.

A total of \$4,500 has been raised so far toward the \$299,511 STO allotment for Isaac Newton Christian Academy, with \$32k in roll-over funds undistributed from 23/24. Donations are still being sought and there will still be STO-eligible families that are unable to receive ESA for legitimate reasons, and STO will be made available to them.

A \$1,000 classroom equipment grant was received from International Paper, and Tracy is working with Mrs. Ridder to use it effectively.

Dr. Kathy Koch has been secured for the 2025 Annual Banquet, which will be held April 25th at the DoubleTree Convention Center downtown.

Capital campaign update: a meeting is scheduled for September 4th with the advisor from Amperage, who is helping with the feasibility study. The feasibility study committee has been organized and has 7 members. The feasibility study itself could take 3-4 months, but will be expedited if possible. The current rough estimate for the new facility construction is \$3-5M, but a more specific goal/budget will be solidified prior to formally kicking off the campaign.

Enrollment update: there are currently 399 students enrolled across all grades. Projected enrollment for next year, with 8 seniors graduating this year and two classes of kindergartners starting next year, is expected to require at least one additional classroom. Applications for the 25/26 school year will begin to be accepted on September 1st, but placement won't be finalized until enrollment opens in late winter.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Neil presented a preliminary budget for the 24/25 year:

- Income is projected to rise 16% over the 23/24 actuals
- Expenses is projected to rise 23%
- A new, more intentional plan for cash is being developed to maximize strategic benefits
- Cash plan includes capital expansion, capital maintenance, and endowment investment

While walking the board through each line of the budget, some adjustments were discussed based on information not previously available. Neil will make updates accordingly and resend the final proposal to the board. Approval will occur at the next meeting or via email in advance of it.

Stephen asked about delinquent student accounts. Dean said some accounts were brought current before the school year started and others that agreed to payment plans have been following through on those payments.

## **Protect The School Committee**

Dean provided an overview of the current standards and method for background checks on employees for potential and current staff. John shared some information about the benefits of staff review and background checks, especially social media research in particular. The board discussed the merits and pitfalls of social media, the potential for subjectivity when evaluating its content. John had researched some professional vendors of such services, but additional information and possibilities will be sought by Gabe with local background check provider C4 Operations, and Dean will look into a Christian background check vendor named Shepherd's Watch.

## **Strategic Plan Next Steps**

1. *Facility & security improvements* – Actions have already been identified and are underway.
2. *Make 5- and 10-year plans* – Katie proposed a new ad hoc committee to work on assembling this strategic plan, outside of the normal monthly board meetings. Stephen agreed that an outside effort would be more effective, and agreed to participate. Neil will meet with Dean to review the existing CSIP and identify how a Strategic Financial Plan could be applied to fund the strategic priorities identified in the strategic plan.
3. *Mature the High School* – The board will schedule a mid-year check-in with Mrs. Harlan at the November meeting.
4. *Expand resource availability* – Actions have already been taken.
5. *Operations Director* – A proposed job description will be developed and approved by the board at a future meeting.
6. *Committee Assignments* – Stephen is chairing the facilities committee. Other committee assignments will be revisited at a later date.

## **Facilities Committee**

Stephen provided a summary of the summer facility work:

- Floor work is complete.
- Water leaks are likely resolved, with windows possibly not needing replacement.
- Parking lot striping and gym floor refinish were both completed.
- Security upgrades are in progress, with steady progress being made.

- Exploring a small playground improvement to increase accessibility for physically limited students.

Stephen also provided an overview of the facility expansion plan:

- Willett, Hofmann & Associates is working on a proposal for a phased construction plan for an onsite addition, with final concept review expected September 6th and submission to city for review immediately following.
- Discontinuing the search for a second site to acquire, focusing energies on the most likely outcome: building on our existing property.
- Planning to need at least one more classroom for 25/26, and working to develop a short-term backup plan if the new facility is not ready in time for the start of school.
- Stasha will be working on communicating facility intentions. At this point, the construction plan from WHA, city approval, and funding are the main roadblocks.

Stephen also reviewed a list of general needs for our existing facility:

- Substantial settling of the ground around the east and north sides of the building was discovered and confirmed by a structural engineer. Repairs are estimated at \$50k and initial work will occur as early as Thanksgiving break.
- The facilities committee recommends that a formal budget be set aside for facility maintenance, both short term ongoing needs and long term major maintenance projects.

### **Nominating Committee**

With three current board members whose terms expire (unless re-elected) in June 2025, in addition to an early resignation from a board member whose term would have expired then, there is a need to recruit willing individuals to serve on the board. Steve shared some names of potential individuals to recruit for service on the board, and board members brainstormed several others. The nominating committee will make initial contacts to determine interest, availability, and willingness of the candidates.

### **Community/Communications Committee**

Patriot Connections is live and rolled out school-wide. The Director of Communications has been a vital resource to enable a more informed and engaged school community.

### **Closing**

The meeting closed in prayer.

### **Future Board Meetings**

- September 24th, 6-8pm
- October 22nd, 6-8pm
- November 19th