

3-13-15
Public Comments

From: Eric J McNamsra
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: - 2014-15 Major Modification Application Public Comment
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2015 5:35:58 PM

Full Name: Eric J McNamsra

Email Address: ejmcmamara@aol.com

Charter School:

Comment: I am a resident of MidTown Brandywine living at 1223 N. West Street, and I oppose the Freire School's Major Modification request.

From: Marilyn J. "Lyn" Doto
To: infocso
Subject: Freire Charter School - 2014-15 Major Modification Application Public Comment
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2015 4:48:38 PM

Full Name: Marilyn J. "Lyn" Doto

Email Address: Lyndandbillm@comcast.net

Charter School: Freire Charter School

Comment: I am a Midtown Brandywine resident. I am writing to set the record straight about a statement that Ms. Davenport made at the CSAC's Final Public Hearing on Freire's Major Modification Request.

Ms. Davenport was late for the meeting, so did not hear the statements of all 19 of the speakers (neighbors and elected officials) in opposition to Freire's Major Modification Request (Hereafter referred to as "MMR").

Nevertheless, Ms. Davenport stated on 3-9-15, that some speakers were misinformed because they indicated that Freire "would not have a cafeteria or a gym." Let's explore why those speakers were "misinformed":

In Freire's 12-31-14 MMR they stated that there would be no cafeteria or gym in their first year, and no physical education programs or staff for three years. Students would be eating in their classrooms until Year 2.

CSAC's Initial Report requested, among other things, that Freire elaborate about the lack of a cafeteria.

At a Public Hearing on 2-3-15, I commented in opposition to the lack of a plan for a cafeteria or gym. On 2-6-15, Archie Heller posted a Public Comment in opposition to this lack.

On 2-18-15 Freire's response to the CSAC's Initial Report was posted online. Very few neighbors have the time or energy to read the online updates thoroughly. That was the first mention that a cafeteria was back in the picture: \$17,000 was budgeted for cafeteria tables. And there was mention that Phase 1 of the construction would include a cafeteria on the 1st floor.

Mr. Heller and I are happy that Freire apparently listened to our concerns, and that they agree that students need to have a cafeteria. But we still have neither seen, nor heard, anything about the addition of a gym or physical education program.

This 2-18-15 response was also the first time some neighbors read that Freire had removed the Receptionist position, and now the State-required, full-time nurse would also be a receptionist and security guard.

On 2-20-15 Daniel Walsh posted a statement on the Public Comment section that included his concern about the lack of a cafeteria or gymnasium. This is a further indication that Freire had not communicated this publicly.

CSAC held their final meeting on Freire's MMR on 2-24-15. I attended with two other neighbors, Faith McNamara and Nancy Cooper. We knew the rules; and we were not asked, nor did we request, to speak. (We did sign-in, and talked to some DOE officials afterward; but our attendance was not noted in the report from that meeting).

During the meeting, a CSAC member asked Ms. Davenport, "Whether the school has begun to make modifications to the building." Ms. Davenport stated that the school itself had not yet made any modifications -- but "the owner has done some demolition to make room for a cafeteria."

The CSAC report from that meeting was posted online on 3-2-15 (a week before the Final Public Hearing) and did refer to the demolition being done by the building owner, but did not mention that it was for a cafeteria. (I understand this, it's a report, not a transcript).

I did not immediately notify every neighbor about the cafeteria because I was more intent in getting that information to our neighbors who are working on Freire's lack of: permits, a request for a Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing, and a Certificate of Occupancy.

So, if Ms. Davenport is concerned that some neighbors were uninformed of Freire's recent decision to build a cafeteria, the fault is mine. But neither she, nor any other Freire representatives, have indicated that there will a gym or physical education program before year 3; which is what she seemed to be implying in her 3-9-15 statement.

Thank you!

Lyn Doto

lyndandbillm@comcast.net

From: Claire Ford
To: infocso
Subject: Freire Charter School 2014-15 Major Modification Application Public Comment
Date: Thursday, March 12, 2015 10:26:28 AM

Before the end of public comment on the issue of the Freire Charter school in Wilmington, I want to add my voice *in support* of the school's coming to the Midtown Brandywine neighborhood.

I think Freire and Midtown Brandywine will make a good pairing and further believe that the residents' concerns about car and foot traffic can and will be resolved, over time. While the location is not ideal for a school of this size, the permanent good of bringing Freire to Wilmington and particularly of creating a relationship between it and our neighborhood, outweigh any temporary inconvenience.

Without doubt there will be growing pains in the coming years as the school gets off the ground. There will be unexpected situations that will call for creative solutions. Kelly Davenport and Bill Porter are seasoned professionals with myriad ways of dealing successfully with problems created by students, parents and neighborhood residents. Based on their track record in establishing their school in Philadelphia and forming a bond with their neighbors there, I am confident they can suggest solutions to meet everyone's interests and work collaboratively to see them through in Wilmington.

Further, Ms. Davenport and Mr. Porter have attended our neighborhood meetings and have remained calm and courteous in the face of outright hostility in the hope of advancing the dialog with us. Their respectful manner is a model for us all. Why wouldn't we want them and their students in our neighborhood?

We need to look beyond our own comfort and toward the greater good to be had from partnering with this outstanding school. I am excited to welcome Freire, its students, teachers and staff to the Midtown Brandywine community and look forward to working together to overcome the challenges such an opportunity presents.

Thank you,

Claire Ford
1223 West Street
resident for 19 years

From: [Christopher Tijerino](#)
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: Freire Charter School - 2014-15 Major Modification Application Public Comment
Date: Thursday, March 12, 2015 10:54:47 AM

Full Name: Christopher Tijerino

Email Address: chris.tijerino@gmail.com

Charter School: Freire Charter School

Comment: My name is Christopher Tijerino and I am writing to you today to voice my opposition to the Freire School's charter modification. There are many reasons why I feel this charter modification needs to be rejected, most of those reasons have been made very clear by countless Wilmingtonians already. Poor planning of the schools location, the absence of fundamental needs for students at the proposed building (cafeteria, green space, gym), huge negative traffic impact downtown, and lastly the apparent need to put our priority schools above any new Charters. Wilmington is saturated with mediocre to poor schools and federal and state funds are being strained on quantity- not quality. I would argue this adds more to the problem than that of the solution.

I attended the meeting held earlier this week at the Carvel State building and was happy to see many of my colleagues, neighbors and local representatives voice these same concerns. I am not a big fan of public speaking so did not speak myself. In attending I did notice something that should be very noteworthy to the Department of Education. The meeting consisted of about 50 Wilmington residents, but not one single resident was there to argue FOR Freire's charter modification approval. Well with the exception of Ms. Davenport whom I believe is on Freire's payroll. But, not a single parent was there with their child to voice their hope for the school to open, despite the low-enrollment. Now, I understand that parents are busy and schedules are hectic- but if parents in my community can carve out the time, than why couldn't 1 parent of the 150 pledged to Freire attend? And why would any community want a charter school which would attract such uninvolved parents? A school that hopes to have 500 plus students in very small, yet well established, neighborhood of 250 residents? We have consistently heard from Bill Porter and other Freire ambassadors how desperately Wilmington needs this school. How desperately parents and students want an establishment such as Freire of Philadelphia, yet not a single parent or potential Freire student was in attendance to argue this.

I ask the Department of Education to see this as a very clear sign that this so-called 'need and want' for Freire in Wilmington is just not there. The school has proven to be unsuccessful in its efforts of finding an appropriate location after losing its first site to another charter, it has been unsuccessful at recruiting students, and more importantly it has been unsuccessful in gaining the local communities trust through transparency and cooperation. Furthermore, the very existence of their school's Ethics code has now been practically thrown out the window to satisfy their application for federal grants monies. All of this before it's even opened. What kind of message does this send?

In all honesty, a few months ago I did not feel as opposed to Freire Charter school as I do today. I kept an open mind to the possibility of a great school coming into Wilmington. I believe great schools are indispensable to any community. I'm not so convinced Freire will be one of those schools now. A lot has happened in the last few months. The Freire Charter school has demonstrated a huge lack of organization, poor community outreach, and a complete abandonment of their core values for the almighty (taxpayer) dollar. Unfortunately at this point I feel the Freire Charter schools mission is more aimed at securing jobs for those who will work there, rather than serving the students, parents and residents of Delaware. I ask you to please reject their charter modification. If what I say is wrong than hopefully Freire can silence my concerns with solid enrollment numbers.

3-13-15
Public Comments

From: Braxton, Johnnie
To: info@csa
Subject: 2014-15 Major Modification Application Public Comment
Date: Friday, March 13, 2015 9:55:28 AM

Charter School Advisory Committee

I am writing in reference to the Freire Charter School Major Modification application.

I have serious concerns that this modification will be approved over the clearly stated, reasonable objections of neighbors of the proposed location. I question how Freire has been allowed to begin work in the building when this latest and second modification has not been approved. How is the renovation being allowed to proceed? It's as if someone has given school officials the green light although residents are under the impression that our concerns are being taken seriously and no official decision has been made.

I fear this charter school is being rubber stamped over neighborhood opposition and even though stated enrollment goals are not being reached. Freire leaders are asking that initial enrollment numbers be lowered and on top of that it seems the charter will be granted even if an even lower percentage, of that decreased number is reached. In what world does this make sense?

What purpose does a public comment period serve, if the entity seeking the modification is continuously given opportunities to circumvent the opposition? Why not make charter schools meet the bar they set for themselves?! If they can't achieve their own stated goals from the outset, why should we take for granted that they will reach the goal of providing the type of education they say they will provide to students?

You have heard many arguments concerning the impact the vehicular and foot traffic will have on the neighborhood. These are quality of life issues that I hope you will seriously consider. The quality of life of hundreds of residents is in the hands of members of the Charter School Committee who do not live in our neighborhood. This is a weighty decision, impacting people you don't know, but who clearly care enough to come out in person and submit concerns in writing imploring you to consider their side in this matter.

Lastly, I understand that educational opportunities for Wilmington children need improvement. Will this one school with decreased enrollment goals really make that big of an impact on the education of Wilmington children? There are already three charter schools within blocks of this one, that do seem to be meeting their goals and enrolling larger numbers of students. Isn't that enough educational choice? I spoke at the last meeting of the committee and want to restate my request that you not let this school open in the midst of significant changes already being considered for education in Wilmington.

Sincerely,

Midtown Brandywine Resident
Johnnie Braxton

From: FaithMc0@aol.com
To: infocso
Subject: Fwd: Denial for Freire/CSAC Major Modification Response to Initial Report.pdf
Date: Thursday, March 12, 2015 5:32:01 PM
Attachments: [CSACMajorModificationResponsetoInitialReport.pdf](#)

I am a resident of Midtown Brandywine. I am oppose to granting Freire their request for major modification. In their request, they summarized how they are changing their location from 920 French Street to 201 W. 14th Street. One of the many reasons I believe their request to be denied is that in order for that building to be renovated into a high school, they have applied for a 1.1 million dollar loan from the Barkley Bank. Should a school charter organization be allowed to borrow so much money to renovate a sight that, in my opinion, is in an unsuitable location in the first place. Aren't we, as tax payers, through public funds going to be paying for this loan? Is this what DOE is allowing? The loan application is attached. It can be found in Appendix 2, pages 13 to 15 in Freire's Major Modification Response.

Freire has not to date applied for the zoning variance that they will need for parking. Neighbors have formally requested from the Zoning Board of Adjustment this action to clarify this issue. This is another reason that the request should not be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

Faith McNamara
1213 N. West Street
Wilmington, DE 19801
302 545-8207