

From: Trish <tbk229@comcast.net>  
Subject: **Fwd: Public Comment - Freire Charter School**  
Date: June 1, 2015 4:58:50 PM EDT  
To: lyndandbillm@comcast.net

fyi - sent at 4:57 p.m.

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**From:** "Trish" <tbk229@comcast.net>  
**To:** infocso@doe.k12.de.us  
**Sent:** Monday, June 1, 2015 4:57:26 PM  
**Subject:** Public Comment - Freire Charter School

Trish Kocher  
229 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Wilmington, DE 19801

My name is Trish Kocher. I oppose the proposed Freire Charter School at 201 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Street. I object due to the traffic constraints created by the landlocked site and the volume of students (560) and faculty/staff (50) that will arrive and depart each day on our narrow, crowded one-way streets. I challenge you to visit this site and explain how traffic will circulate once the school reaches full enrollment.

With Bill Porter's removal as Head of School, there is clearly a lack of experienced administrative leadership at the school with Ms. Davenport supervising remotely from Philadelphia along with her other duties.

The City has not enforced its own City Code, which requires a Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing to address the fact that there are not enough on-site parking spaces for this use. The neighborhood will try to legally compel the City to explain why these requirements have been dropped and to allow the neighborhood to be heard.

With the influx of over 600 people each day, the fragile balance of a residential neighborhood in the middle of the city is about to tip. Please stop this good school from being shoe-horned into a bad location.

From: Bob Hronsky <bob.hronsky@gmail.com>  
Subject: **Fwd: Freire's Charter**  
Date: June 1, 2015 5:02:08 PM EDT  
To: Amie Baker <amietv@yahoo.com>  
Cc: Marilyn Doto <lyndandbillm@comcast.net>

Not great but I wanted to get something in

Sent from my Phone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Bob Hronsky <[bob.hronsky@gmail.com](mailto:bob.hronsky@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** June 1, 2015 at 4:57:52 PM EDT  
**To:** "Infocso@doe.k12.de.us" <[Infocso@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:Infocso@doe.k12.de.us)>  
**Subject:** **Freire's Charter**

My name is Bob Hronsky and I am a resident of Midtown Brandywine and reside on W. 14th St. I am writing this email to you to express my concern regarding the inability or perception of inability I have observed regarding the school's ability to operate itself.

Since my first interactions with school personnel I have heard time and time again about how the Philadelphia perspective and model will work in Wilmington. I moved in that Wilmington in 2006 after having lived in various cities including Buffalo, New York New York City , New York and Colorado. I have learned that many locations share many qualities and have many differences.

I feel that the perspective the School administrators have had from the very beginning of this process has been to treat Wilmington as if it was exactly like Philadelphia. While this may work for certain facets of the curriculum the school wishes to put together it's certainly does not apply to all the logistics the school needs to put together to operate. Time and time again the administrators have shown either their refusal to understand and acknowledge the unique requirements that Wilmington has that they must abide by or are simply not ready to do so.

I strongly urge you to review their record of non-compliance, non-understanding of Wilmington logistics and Delaware laws, and last but not least the neighborhood they chose to place the school in.

It is clear that they have not given this the thought that and planning that this warrants for both the school and its students. Please do not allow the school to operate ineptly. Please hold them accountable. Please have the school articulate exactly how the are going to deal with logics issues, NOW.

Buses  
Traffic  
Special Ed  
Financing  
Governance

Sincerely  
Bob Hronsky

**From:** Rob <rb1974@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** **Comments on Freire Charter School**  
**Date:** June 1, 2015 12:16:28 PM EDT  
**To:** Infocso@doe.k12.de.us  
**Bcc:** Lyndandbillm@comcast.net

I have lived in Midtown Brandywine for nearly 20 years. Our neighborhood is basically the benchmark by which every small city neighborhood should function.

Now Freire Charter School, with the help of the State of Delaware and the City of Wilmington, seeks to open a high school right in the middle of Midtown Brandywine. At full capacity, the school will inject 600+ people in a neighborhood of 200+. That on its face, does not make sense.

Freire seems to be an organization that will teach our young children to be fair and play by the rules. Yet Freire, again with the help of the State and the City, has been allowed to bypass city zoning laws which require them to get a parking variance. The City claims a zoning board hearing is not necessary. Is this fair? Is it playing by the rules? I think you know my answer.

Somebody, somewhere higher up, in the State and/or the City wants this school to open at this location. Almost like it's a done deal. Why else would CSAC committee members fail to pay attention while Midtown neighbors spoke during the last review hearing? They have been told to approve this school at this location no matter what the rules or the opposition.

This is quite a message to send our young children. Work hard, play fair, but don't worry if you fall short, you can always "work the system" to get what you want.

I urge the CSAC to live up to the "accountability" part of their name.

Thank you.

Robert Butts  
1217 N. West Street

My name is Marilyn J. Doto, and I am submitting this testimony for review by the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC), the State Board of Education, the State Charter School Office, and the Delaware Department of Education.

I, along with many of my neighbors, am opposed to the location of Freire Charter School in the Midtown Brandywine Neighborhood. I believe that Freire erred in not submitting a **Request for a Major Modification to their Charter based on location.**

On December 31, 2014, our Neighborhood Association President, Ben Cohen, sent a letter to Secretary Mark Murphy of the Delaware Department of Education. In that letter he requested this Major Modification; however, the letter was never answered.

In recent weeks another neighbor, Faith McNamara, asked Ms. Nygourney of the State Charter School office why Freire wasn't required to file such a request based on change of location, since that was required of the Delaware Design Lab Charter. Ms. McNamara was informed that this was because the other school was involved in a change of city, not just a change of building. However, upon further investigation, Ms. McNamara confirmed that **DOE rules do state that such a request is required simply for "a change of location."** Indeed, such language is quite appropriate, and if Freire had made such a request, the CSAC and the State of Board of Education may have heeded some of the many concerns that Midtown Brandywine residents and some of our local elected officials have raised.

Here are some of the reasons why I believe that **Freire School should have been required to file a Major Modification Request based on change of location:**

**Public Hearing:** The DOE rules require a Public Hearing before they approve a Charter. In Freire's original Charter application it was anticipated that they would be located at 920 French Streets in a building that was designed for school use and that is accessible from four surrounding streets, not just a single, narrow, one-way street as is the case in our tiny neighborhood. Unfortunately, this more appropriate location was secured by a competing charter school which is how Freire ended up with its proposed location in Midtown Brandywine. **Our neighborhood was not afforded a Public Hearing based on the location here.**

**inadequate Physical Building and Resources:** Freire's fall-back location, this office building at 14th & Orange Streets, is hardly an ideal structure for conversion to a school. **Freire received a zoning exception re: their elevator and fire tower.** Neighbors requested information re: these exceptions, but has received no information. Will this affect child safety?

Freire will have **no gymnasium, athletic fields, or Physical Education** programs for its active clientele -- unlike the former location's plan.

The students will have use of the first and third floors of the building. **There is a business, FedX Florists, located on the second floor of the building. Will those**

**employees interface with the students on the elevator and the stairwell? Will the employees undergo criminal background checks, as the school staff will be required to do? This is an issue that has not been addressed by Freire.**

Questions remain about the school's overall viability. According to the School's own testimony, their **"full-time" school nurse will double as the receptionist.**

Discussion at a recent CSAC meeting cast serious doubts about whether the school has a credible and affordable plan for addressing the educational needs of the special education students who will make up a portion of its projected enrollment. On 4-1-15, with an enrollment of 78, there were 18 Special Needs children, 4 of whom are "Intense and Complex." Now, Freire claims to have 208 students. **What is the number of Special Needs students now?**

At the last CSAC meeting Ms. Davenport, calling in from Philadelphia, stated, **"We see nothing wrong in sending Special Needs children across State lines to private schools in Chester County."** That conversation was wisely cut-off by Deputy Secretary Blowman.

But what is the plan for these children? And if, after these many months working through the Delaware Charter School process, the CEO of Freire's umbrella charitable organization is so uninformed about such an important and sensitive topic, **how can their leadership be given serious consideration?**

**The Board of Directors of the Midtown Brandywine Neighbors Association** voted at its May meeting to take the admittedly extreme, but unfortunately necessary step, **of hiring an attorney to assist us in challenging our own City government.**

The City Administration has repeatedly refused to require the proposed Freire Charter School to apply for a variance from the Zoning Appeals Board of Adjustment (ZBA) to prove that it can supply the amount of on site parking that is mandated by the City Code. **We believe construction should be halted until and unless Freire complies with the City Code.** This David and Goliath battle threatens the fragile quality of life that many neighbors have spent their lives nurturing and protecting in Midtown Brandywine.

**Many in our diverse and friendly neighborhood feel that their legitimate concerns have been ignored and that they are being strong-armed by a City administration that is unwilling to enforce its own zoning laws.** They are seeking protection from this charter school that proposes to bring 560 students in grades 8 through 12, and at least 50 teachers and staff (and the traffic generated by this intense use) to a hard-to-reach site in our residential enclave of 220 households at the dead-end of N. Orange and W. 14th Streets.

Freire has consistently minimized the impact that a school of this size will have on Midtown Brandywine. **They insist that the majority of students will arrive by DART buses that will drop students off, in all kinds of weather, five blocks away at Rodney Square or near the Emergency Room entrance of the Wilmington Hospital.** Many feel that Freire's reliance on this untested mass transit model is naive and extremely unrealistic, and that it is entirely likely that hundreds of cars will use the already congested local streets, producing a traffic nightmare not just for our neighborhood but for the adjacent central business district too.

I find quite ironic that those associated with a school named after the late socialist/Marxist activist and educational theoretician Paulo Freire, would be so **insensitive to the needs and opinions of their neighbors.**

Even more ironic is that Freire's **Head of School, which touts its zero tolerance approach toward violent words and actions by its students, has been arrested, arraigned and is facing a criminal hearing for a physical and verbal attack on one of the neighbors -- me.\*\*\***

**The Head of School has been given a "No Hostile Contact Order" and must remove himself from any public premises where I am -- I live just one block from the school. He, fortunately, has been removed from the school.** But now, Freire is a headless entity, with **two Co-Academic leaders with 4 years teaching experience and no administrative training or experience heading a school.** We have been told that Ms. Davenport will be "supervising" these young educators from Philadelphia. But in the past couple of weeks I have been at the CSAC meeting in Dover, the CSAC Public Hearing in Wilmington, and a TV interview near the school. Ms. Davenport was invited, but not present at any of these events. **If she is too busy in Philadelphia now, how will she be able to "supervise" her inexperienced staff when there are students and classes in the building?**

For all of these reasons, I strongly believe Freire's Charter should be revoked.

**\*\*\*Please see attached papers from the Attorney General's office.**