

Hello, my name is Lyn Doto. My husband, Bill Montgomery, and I have been residents of Midtown Brandywine for 40 years. For the past five months I have been engaged, along with many others in our small neighborhood, in a struggle to convince State and City officials that the location of Freire Charter School at 201 West 14th Street will do a disservice to the neighborhood and the potential students who will attend Freire.

We have been unsuccessful in getting the City of Wilmington to hold a public Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) Hearing on the lack of parking at Freire School, in part because Freire has provided the City with only their 3rd year enrollment figures, not the full 4th year build-out figures. We know there are not a sufficient number of parking spaces at the building; but our letters, emails, and phone calls have fallen on deaf ears in the City administration.

Last week, Midtown Brandywine Neighbors Association's Board of Directors voted to retain legal counsel to assist us in challenging the legality of the City of Wilmington's repeated refusal to allow our neighbors to protest the location of Freire Charter School in our community .

We believe that the change of re-location of Freire from 920 French Street to 201 West 14th Street has had a major impact on the quality of education that will be available to Freire's students. In December 2014, the Midtown Brandywine Neighbors Association wrote to Department of Education Secretary Mark Murphy, requesting that Freire be required to request a Major Modification to their Charter due to the change in location, as required by DOE rules. We never received an answer to that letter; but we continue to believe that such a Major Modification Request is required.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak and provide online comments to the CSAC, the State Board of Education, and the Department of Education. But we are well aware that few of our very real concerns have been heard. Up until last week, the major focus that we have heard from CSAC has been on enrollment figures.

At last week's CSAC meeting several other issues were identified by CSAC as topics for review. I would like to address just one of them: Viability of School Leadership. Since November 2014, I have attended many neighborhood meetings; several Charter School Advisory Committee (CSAC) meetings, and a State School Board meeting. This is the third time I have spoken at a Public Hearing on Freire.

At none of these meetings has any non-staff member of Freire's Board of Directors appeared, spoken, or submitted written public comments. I know that at least two neighbors sent letters to the President of the Board and other Board members. No response was received to those letters. In one telephone conversation I had with a Board member, I mentioned the problem with traffic and parking She replied that the Board did not get involved with that, they rely on the staff members. This is truly a hands-off Board that is not interested in communicating or working with the community.

