

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE

February 2026 Board Communication

❖ You've Got Mail

Board member, please make sure to regularly check your inbox of the email address you provided to our office. Periodically we have important communication specifically targeted to individual board members or all board members, which may require a timely response. Also, your school leader, management company and/or Board President may send information to you via email. If you change your email address, please provide it to the school leader, management company, Board President and FSU Field Representative so we all have the most current contact information for you.

❖ Board of Directors Question Toolbox

The Ferris State University Charter Schools Office is happy to provide you with a few questions to help further your conversations this month. The question focus could come from one or more of our four School Support Pillars: Academics, Fiscal, Operations, and Compliance.

Please note that this is meant as a reference, some items may not apply to all schools, and that there are many questions a board member may choose to ask. If you have questions, please reach out to your Field Representative or the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office.

We will focus on Pillar #4 Compliance:

- Are certificates/licenses/permits for teaching staff and instructional paraprofessionals current and on file?
- Are criminal background checks for all staff on file?
- Are unprofessional conduct reports for all staff complete and on file?
- Did the school's insurance policies comply with all coverage requirements for public school academies?
- Have Epicenter requirements been submitted on time? Were they accurate submissions?
- Has the MDE or ISD reported to the FSU CSO any non-compliance issues with any state or federal laws?

❖ Important Dates

February 10, 2026 – Board Professional Development Webinar Growth Planning: Expanding Impact, Not Just Enrollment
February 11, 2026 – Student Count Day
February 13, 2026 – Ferris State University Board of Trustees meeting

❖ Important Epicenter Deadlines

March 1, 2026 – Annual Education Report
March 16, 2026 – Board Candidate Application (for consideration at the 5/8/2026 FSU BOT meeting)

❖ Closed Session

The Michigan Open Meetings Act allows a closed session during an open meeting, but only for specific purposes (see limited list below). If one is needed, there would need to be an agenda item titled *Closed Session*.

In the open meeting a board member makes a motion to go into a closed session specifically citing one or more permissible purposes for a closed session. The motion is seconded and then a roll call vote. A 2/3 vote is required to call a closed session. Record in the regular meeting minutes start and stop time of closed session, as well as cite the permissible purpose of the meeting. Once the closed session is done a board member makes a motion to go back into the open meeting, then seconded and voted on.

Any vote on matters discussed in the closed session must occur in the open meeting. For example, in closed session the details around a student's discipline are discussed. Then when the Board returns to the open meeting a board member makes a motion to discipline student number #123456789, seconded and voted on, but no details are shared.

Staff and others may join the Board in a closed session because the Board may rely upon others for assistance or information. For example, the Board may invite a school leader to a closed session when that person may have details about a student's behavior, prior interactions, etc.

The OMA requires a separate set of meeting minutes to be taken in the closed session. These minutes are only furnished to the board members. A board member's dissemination of closed session minutes to the public is a violation of the OMA and risks include criminal prosecution and civil penalties. Closed session minutes may be destroyed one year and one day after approval of the minutes of the regular meeting at which the closed session occurred.

Limited Purposes for Closed Session During an Open Meeting

- To consider the dismissal, suspension or discipline of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, or to consider a periodic personnel evaluation of, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent ***if the named person requests a closed hearing.***
- For strategy and negotiation sessions connect with the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement ***if either negotiating party requests a closed hearing.***
- To consider the dismissal, suspension, or disciplining of a student ***if the student or student's parent or guardian requests a closed hearing.***
- To consider the purchase or lease of real property up to the time an option to purchase or lease that real property is obtained.
- To consult with an attorney regarding trial or settlement strategy in connection with specific pending litigation, ***but only if*** an open meeting would have a detrimental financial effect on the litigating or settlement position of the public body.
- To review and consider the contents of an application for employment or appointment to a public office ***if the candidate requests that the application remain confidential.***
- To consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute.
- To consider security planning to address existing threats or prevent threats to the safety of the students and staff.

❖ Virtual Board Professional Development Opportunities

Mark your calendar for the next webinar in the 2025-2026 board professional development series, *Governance Growth: Strengthening Boards, Empowering Schools*. This session, *Growth Planning: Expanding Impact, Not Just Enrollment*, is scheduled for Tuesday February 10th at 7pm.

Boards are tasked with the responsibility of sustainable growth of the school, which is more than about enrolling more students. This webinar will help board members focus on growth rooted in the school's mission and strategic plan. To register for this session, look for an email invitation from AirWin Educational Services with registration information.

In case you missed the previous virtual board professional development sessions, below are links to the recordings. If you would like a copy of a presentation or handouts, please contact Sharon Hopper at SharonHopper@ferris.edu.

[Navigating Your Role as a New Board Member](#)

[Leading with Purpose: Mission-Driven Decision-Making](#)

[Strategic Oversight vs Micromanagement](#)

[Data-Driven Governance for Student Achievement](#)

❖ Public Comments During a Board Meeting

While it is infrequent that a member of the public attends and addresses the board at a school board meeting, it is imperative that the board be prepared and adopt best practices for managing the public comment portion of a board meeting.

A board meeting agenda usually includes two public comment opportunities during the meeting; one for agenda items only and the other for non-agenda items. Most boards include the following statements, or something similar, on their meeting agenda.

This is a meeting of the Board of Directors in public for the purpose of conducting the school's business and it is not to be considered a public meeting.

Individuals wishing to address the Board of Directors are requested to sign in with the Board Secretary prior to the start of the meeting. Individual comments are limited to no more than three (3) minutes each with a total time allowance for public comment not to exceed thirty (30) minutes. The board will not verbally respond to public comments, but may follow up in the most appropriate and time-effective manner.

If the board president is aware that there are members of the public at a board meeting, it is recommended that they read the public comment notation aloud in case the public does not have access to or have a copy of the meeting agenda. It is an opportunity to emphasize the parameters of public participation in the school board meeting.

But what happens if the public comment portion of the meeting does not go smoothly or exceeds 30 minutes? Does your board have a plan for these types of situations? It is best practice for boards to be prepared just in case things go awry at a board meeting. School leaders and board presidents should have a conversation and plan how to manage public comments that get contentious, out of control or go too long.

Typically, board policies provide the Board President with basic guidance, such as:

- Prohibit public comments which are frivolous, repetitive, or harassing
- Interrupt, warn or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, personal, directed, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant
- Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person behaves in a manner that is disruptive of the orderly conduct of the meeting
- Request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person's conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting
- Call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum so interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting as to warrant such action

Please refer to your board policies for guidance that are specific to your board. Discuss how you would manage certain situations that may occur during a board meeting. What are the roles and responsibilities of the school leader, board president and individual board members? It is imperative that the board be prepared for public comments, have a plan and review it periodically especially when there are changes in board membership or school/board leadership.

❖ **Any Questions?**

You may contact your FSU Field Representative or Sharon Hopper if you have any questions regarding this Board Communication. Important and/or urgent information that cannot wait until the next Board Communication will be sent to you by email.