

**Gettysburg Montessori Charter School  
Board of Trustees Official Minutes  
10/25/2017**

**Board Members Present**

Kathy Johnson, Chair  
Jill Clinton  
AJ Warner  
Tish Weikel  
Diana Williams

**Board Members Absent**

none

**Others Present**

Faye Pleso, CEO

**Executive Session**

The board met for executive session at 6:45 to discuss two student concerns and an employment issue, which if conducted in public would violate a lawful privilege or would lead to disclosure of information of confidentiality protected by law. Faye Pleso was invited to attend.

**Call to Order**

Kathy Johnson adjourned the September 26th meeting and called to order the October 25th meeting at 7:06 pm.

**Introduction of Members and Guests**

There were no guests in attendance.

**Public Comment on Agenda Items**

There was no public comment.

**Approval of Consent Agenda Items**

Jill made the motion to approve the consent agenda as submitted, Diana seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

**Old Business**

There was no old business to discuss.

**Chair's Report**

Housekeeping: Diana attended the staff meeting on 10/24 and reported that the largest problem being reported by the teachers is the school lunch program. Faye reported that she plans to submit a new policy to help address the concerns that have been voiced. Kathy reported that the blurb for the board section of the fall newsletter is due on

10/26. Jill will provide some text to Kathy. AJ's wife has offered to edit the table of contents on the board manual. Kathy will provide AJ with the document.

### **Finance Committee Update**

- The finance committee decided to meet the second to last Wednesday each month at 3:30 pm, with the exception of November and December. Kathy will advertise the meetings and will send AJ and Tish copies of the advertisement.
- Health Benefits Review: GMCS needs to offer coverage comparable to GASD. Faye reported that Gettysburg Area School District will be switching to a high deductible plan. She also reported that the current plan offered by GMCS will only see a 2% increase next year versus 10% estimated in our budget projections. This will be a savings of approximately \$10,000. The recommendation of Faye and the board is to keep the coverage currently being offered to eligible employees.
- Q1 Budget & Quarterly Goals Review: AJ reported that everything is on track and in accordance with the approved budget.
- Faye reported that the school will need to look into hiring two personal care assistants at \$12/hr, 29.75 hours per week. Estimate of \$12,000 dollars per assistant.
- The current budget includes \$39,000 for a school counselor.
- Faye plans to pursue a program called the School Based Access Program which would bring in additional funding. This funding would not effect this year's budget, but could have an impact in future years.
- Kathy reminded the board that the upcoming traffic impact study could be an additional expense for this fiscal year. The study is scheduled to take place in November and we should have a good idea of it's potential impact by the December meeting.
- The board was reminded that our business manager, Ryan Schumm from Charter Choices, reported that the annual surpluses will not be the deciding factor on financing for the future addition. Any potential lenders will be equally focused on other factors such as enrollment and teacher turnover.
- Board discussed pros and cons of hiring a new school counselor. There is concern that the addition of another employee will dramatically cut the surplus given all of the other unexpected expenses this year. However, the school would greatly benefit from having this position filled. Hiring a professional dedicated to managing student behavioral issues would allow Dr. Pleso and Ms. Love to focus on the other aspects of their positions that have been
- Capital Campaign: Faye gave an update on the beginning stages of the capital campaign. She reported that Charter Choices would like to be a part of this process. They will pull together a proposal for presentation. Faye mentioned the need to potentially hire a part time director of development to help manage the process. This hire would likely take place in July 2018. Faye also suggested that we recruit potential former board members to help drive this process. The

committee would be established as an administrative one. As a reminder, these initial investments in this process will likely cost \$6,000-9,000.

### **Administrator's Report**

- Enrollment: There are 200 students enrolled as of today.
- Faye would like the board to review and adopt a policy for student meal accounts. She will present the written policy at the November meeting for consideration at the December meeting.
- Faye reported that the PA Department of Education hired someone to do a qualitative study on charter schools. They choose nine schools, our school being one of the charter programs chosen, and the representative was here for a few hours and toured school. The interview and tour went well.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Academic Progress Discussion: Faye reviewed the preliminary DIBLES data. This testing is done three times per year.
- PSSA Scores: Faye presented the PSSA scores from last spring 2017. The school performance profile has improved from 57.2 to 72.2 – a 15 point improvement! This is a very impressive leap for any school to report from year to year. Faye credits the diligent work of her entire staff, and particularly the implementation of RtI and the new handwriting curriculum. Additionally, last year's attendance average was up to 94.1 from 92.8 the previous year.
- Exit Survey: GMCS received three exit surveys from families who left the school. Two families had relocated and the other left the school due to the long bus ride for their child. The families reported being satisfied with GMCS. Faye will present the most current version of the exit survey for review and approval at the November meeting.
- Hiring Motion for School Counselor: The board agreed to delay the hiring motion for the school counselor until the traffic impact study is completed. The board would like the finance committee to look more thoroughly at the 2017/2018 budget to determine the feasibility of hiring a new employee. Diana made the motion to table the vote.

### **Governance Committee Update**

- The Governance Committee agreed to meet on Mondays at 3:30 pm. Kathy will advertise the meetings and will send Tish copies of the advertisement.
- Jill is looking at recruitment materials for new board members. She plans to stress the importance of a shared community and stress that you don't need to have a particular set of qualifications to be a valuable board member.
- The committee will work to have potential board members identified by the December meeting.

### **Personnel Committee Update**

Kathy reported that in May 2017 a Survey Monkey survey was sent to all parents and guardians of GMCS to assess their opinion of the school. 55% of all parents and guardians responded. The main reasons people report for sending their children to

GMCS are: educational philosophy and school atmosphere. Families reported that the greatest strengths of the school are: teachers and staff, the Montessori philosophy, and the teaching of social skills, independence and confidence. The school is considered a caring and nurturing place with a good to excellent quality of education. The majority of families feel GMCS lives up to its mission, values and goals. Over 90% of families would recommend GMCS to others.

The majority of families believe GMCS does a good job of blending Montessori curriculum and philosophy with state standards. However, some parents would like to see all the teachers prioritize the Montessori Philosophy.

Most families believe the principal has a visible presence, is accessible, welcomes comments, and is responsive to concerns. Families report that school personnel communicate effectively and courteously, and that any questions or concerns are addressed promptly.

While most families feel informed about how their children are doing in school, 20.9% felt report cards and written comments from teachers were not clear in helping to understand how the child's academic standing. Many respondents felt they needed a key to help interpret the "cryptic report cards" and that the report cards were vague and confusing. Additionally, 17.9% reported being uninformed about classroom activities.

Families reported liking the small school size, genuine care for students, safe environment, sense of community and the approachable administration among other attributes of GMCS.

Many would like to see additional technology in the classroom, art classes, performing arts, more outdoor activities, more feedback from teachers during the year, more Montessori methods being used in the classroom, shorter bus rides for students, and to receive more communication regarding day-to-day school work.

In the next five years, respondents would like to see the school have more students, more grades (adding 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>), complete the build out of the building, have an active parent organization, a large permanent playground, more technology integrated into the classroom, and more hands-on science, among other suggestions.

**New Business; For the good of the order**

There was no new business to discuss.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Adjourn**

Kathy Johnson adjourned the meeting at 9:19 pm.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tish Weikel', written over a horizontal line.

Tish Weikel, Board Secretary