

Gettysburg Montessori Charter School  
Board of Trustees Official Minutes  
4/26/2018

**Board Members Present**

Kathy Johnson, Chair  
Diana Williams, Treasurer  
Lieucretia Swain  
AJ Warner  
Becky Uppercue

**Board Members Absent**

Jill Clinton, Vice Chair  
Tish Weikel, Secretary

**Others Present**

Faye Pleso, CEO  
Adrian Kavanaugh, School Nurse  
Nicole Rickell, 5/6 Teacher  
Evan Stare, 1/2 Teacher  
Megan Stough, 3/4 Teacher  
Amanda Jan, 3/4 Teacher  
Molly Cahill, 1/2 Teacher  
Heather Edmond, Kindergarten Teacher  
Sara Love, Dean of Students  
McKenna Hohman, School Counselor

**Executive Session**

The board met for executive session at 6:50 pm to discuss a student concern and employment related issues, which if conducted in public would violate a lawful privilege or would lead to disclosure of information of confidentiality protected by law. The board was joined by Faye Pleso.

**Call to Order**

Kathy Johnson called the April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting at 7:08 pm.

**Introduction of Members and Guests**

Introductions were made

**Public Comment on Agenda Items**

There was no public comment.

**Approval of Consent Agenda Items**

Lieucretia Swain motioned to approve consent agenda, Diana Williams seconded motion. It was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.

**Old Business**

No Old business.

## **Chair's Report**

Housekeeping: Lieucetia attended the staff meeting. They panic alarm training: the fire drill and hiding in place procedures. It went well. Additionally, they brainstormed field trips for the upper grades. They also discussed next year's proposed block schedule that would include afternoon specials each day for all kids and potentially adding guidance as a special. No one is designated to attend the May 29 staff meeting. Kathy will check with Faye as that date nears as it is possible that the staff meeting will be called off as it is just prior to the last day of school.

Kathy reported that Tish has asked to step down as secretary. She will remain on the board, but would like someone else to take over these duties.

Kathy let the board know she will not be able to attend the July 26 meeting. The board can meet as scheduled without her if they have a quorum or she is willing to call in to the meeting.

Kathy cautioned everyone to be careful when writing to each other through the board gmail accounts as sometimes gmail picks up an individual's personal email address instead of their board account. It's important that all board business be sent to the correct email account.

Kathy asked Faye about a comprehensive planning email that the board received today. Faye let everyone know that it's not necessary for the board to attend the meeting noted, that this message was meant for administration.

## **Finance Committee**

USDA Loan Update: Faye reported that Jeff (the USDA Loan Representative) has reviewed our paperwork and has notified Faye that all is ready to submit. He has made the request for us to go into "application status." This is good news. In 45 days the school should have a good idea if this loan is approved. Kathy asked if there is any money down required. Faye said she believed that we would not need to put any money down, but she will confirm that with Jeff. Jeff complimented GMCS and Faye for being so proactive and getting this loan process started so far in advance of our construction.

FY2018-2019 Budget: The only change between this projected budget and the one we reviewed previously is the change in estimated enrollment from 190 to 196. As a followup to last month's conversation with Jesse Bean, from Charter Choices, Faye reported that we need to bill the districts based on the rates set in the 2016/2017 school year. There is no change in tuition rates. The attorney advising GMCS is advising we do not participate in any litigation related to this issue.

SOFI Forms: Diana reported we have all forms completed and on file, except for that of Kirsten Johnson. She filed electronically and we are working to get an electronic confirmation of that filing. Faye and Diana will confirm which department/office needs to receive these forms.

Proposed Policy for Pay Increases with Advanced Degrees: Faye presented her research on how the local districts handle pay increases for those with advanced degrees. Gettysburg gives a salary increase of \$1,144 and Upper Adams gives \$300 per year per year for everyone (regardless of degree change). When moving from a bachelor's degree to a master's degree, Gettysburg provides a pay increase of \$2,832 and Upper Adams offers \$2,000. AJ offered to look up the pay structure for New Oxford and will report back to the board. The Finance Committee will work up a policy to recommend to the board for the 2018/2019 budget. This will be something we consider and vote on this summer.

## **Administrator's Report**

- Enrollment: Current enrollment: 194. Registered for 2018/2019: 196.
- Faye reported that one of our students won a state level handwriting contest for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. She is in the running for the national contest. The school will be notified by May 1 if she advances. Great news!

- Thrivent Financial gave students flowers for Earth Day and invited Faye to two galas to represent the school.
- Students from the Messiah School came to observe in our classroom.
- Dancing Through History is a program offered as part of the school's wellness policy effort to incorporate more family activities. GMCS is working with the Artist in Residence Program to open this event up to parents and families.
- Adams Electric has donated \$100 to go toward the BINGO event and State Farm Insurance donated \$250 for the 5k Fun Run event.
- Faye is still looking for an appropriate and effective Montessori teacher training program.
- Hiring Motion for Lunchroom Aide: Faye recommended Margaret Middaugh to be retroactively hired as the lunchroom aide. Becky Uppercue made the motion to retroactively hire Margaret Middaugh back to March 28, 2018 at a rate of \$10/hour, working less than 15 hours per week with no benefits. Lieucetia Swain seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.
- Contract vs. Letter of Intent for Teachers & Tenure Discussion: Faye reported that some teachers have approached her with the request to be offered contracts instead of letters of intent and whether a tenure program is a possibility at GMCS. In August 2016 the board, upon advice from counsel, voted to approve the use of letters of intent instead of contracts. The school has never offered a tenure program. Faye contacted the school's attorney and the attorney strongly advised against offering contracts to teachers and staff.
- At this point, the board heard public comment from Evan Stare, Amanda Jan, Adrian Kavanaugh, McKenna Hohman, Heather Edmond, and Nicole Rickell.
- Mr. Stare reported that he had been hired as an assistant under a contract (when GMCS offered all teaching staff contracts prior to August 2016). He pointed out that the interview process asks you to describe where you see yourself in five years. He said that he wanted to plant and grow at GMCS and he feels a contract allows him to grow. It is a sign that the school is invested in him and he in the school. The letter of intent says the employees are at will employees. He really wants to be here, but not having a contract and not having tenure is not comparable to other schools in the district. The lack of a contract gives him job security concerns in a field that he loves. Mrs. Stare reported that a contract would show investment in him as an employee.
- Mrs. Jan stated that she has been working at GMCS for six years and she came here with high expectations of working with kids in a dynamic environment you can't get anywhere else. She is dedicated to what she does and gives it everything she has. She feels that a contract would be the school's way of saying that all she puts in and does is noted and that GMCS wants to invest in her. She said other districts in the area can offer that to her. Mrs. Jan loves this school and wants to be offered the same things as her public school peers. Nurse Adrian asked if job security was the only difference between a letter of intent and a contract. Mrs. Jan responded that a contract outlines progression of salary and provides job security.
- Ms. Hohman said that she recently started at GMCS and knew when she was hired that she would not receive a contract. She traveled a great distance to take this job and recognizes that her presence here is really riding on enrollment (if enrollment drops significantly, she would be one of the first to be laid off) and she is experiencing a good deal of outside pressure. A contract would show we are respected and GMCS wants her to be here. Ms. Hohman states that she would feel safer to grow and continue to grow if she had the backing of the school fully outlined in a contract.
- Mrs. Edmond said that those who have chosen to work in a charter school have done so because of their passion for the school. There is an inherent lack of security in working at a charter school - due to a budget driven by enrollment and the cycle of charter renewal. She believes that the act of offering a contract cements in place for a period of time that this is what you will be making, etc. Having that legal piece of paperwork would give staff greater security.
- Mr. Stare concluded the comments by saying they understand what the lawyer is advising and the staff are asking the board and administration to put their faith in the teachers that you hired.
- Faye noted that the attorney said that if we do give a contract to one employee we would need to give a contract to everyone. Kathy asked her to define everyone. Does that mean if the teachers get a

contract, would every staff member at the school need one as well? Faye will confirm that language with the school's attorney.

- Faye also reported that the attorney did advise that giving contracts puts GMCS at a greater risk for liability.
- Kathy referred back to the minutes from August 2016 to bring everyone up to speed on the process, discussion, and decision that took place when this decision was originally made. She pointed out that whether you have a contract or a letter of intent, you are still considered an At Will employee. Additionally, if there's probably cause, Faye will need to show all documentation with or without contracts.
- Faye also noted there would be a cost associated with having the attorney draft the contracts each year.
- Mrs. Jan pointed out that her husband is a teacher as well and has a contract in his district and has tenure. She said she is aware if she were a danger to the school she could be fired, but a contract will prove that we have faith in the staff. Kathy asked what tenure in a public school offers. Mrs. Jan reported that it prevents GMCS from letting teachers go even if we have a financial responsibility that requires it. GMCS could fire teachers for a cause, but not necessarily a competence issue. She also stated that an added benefit of tenure is that once it is achieved here, wherever a teacher decides to work next, it would follow them. Mr. Evan added that if there is an issue with competence with a teacher who has tenure, you can put them on a plan for three years and if there's still an issue, they can then be removed.
- AJ asked if we could contact the attorney for the May meeting and get a better understanding of the issues surrounding contracts and tenure. AJ thought it might be down to keeping a teacher on through three evaluations, not three years before dismissing a teacher with tenure. Kathy said she and Faye would contact the attorney and ask her to attend or call in for the May meeting.
- Mrs. Rickell said she recognizes there is a concern with adding tenure as a benefit, but asked if there could be restrictive language added into the contract.
- Mr. Stare stated that if he had the option for tenure, he would rather resign if the school was experiencing financial difficulty instead of being fired, so he could take his tenure to another job with him.
- Faye reported that tenure is not something that a charter school of our size offers. That it is a rarity and doesn't happen at the elementary level or a school our size.
- Kathy said that we will continue this discussion and will work to have our attorney available to advise at the May meeting. She also reminded everyone that we hire professionals (attorney, business manager, etc.) to advise GMCS and the board in these areas because they are the experts and can provide us the most sound recommendations possible to ensure the fiscal and regulatory health of the school.

### **Governance Committee**

- Jill reported that she has reached out to a few people to gauge their interest in serving on the board and she is waiting to hear back.
- Mrs. Jan is serving on the committee as the staff representative while Mrs. Stough is out on maternity leave.

### **Personnel Committee**

- Kathy reported that the parent survey is nearly prepared and will be sent home via email in the next week or so. The committee will also finalize the staff survey and have that ready for mid May.
- Faye suggested shortening the survey if possible. There probably isn't time this year to revamp the parent survey, however it's a project that next year's personnel committee will take on.
- The committee will also add a question or two regarding Movie Nights to find out how to improve attendance.
- Kathy, Diana and Lieucetia discussed next steps.

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

There was no new business.

## **Public Comment**

- Ms. Hohman asked about the discussion the board had regarding pay increases for Master's Degrees. She pointed out that counselors already have master's degrees, and the equivalent to an advanced degree would be licensure or a PhD. She asked if that would be included in the new pay structure policy we are considering. Faye looked at the research she had gathered and said it's something the committee could look at including.
- Nurse Adrian spoke about grant funding for GMCS. She has been putting together a small portfolio of potential grants for the school. She mentioned that many grants if your school has 100% board support - meaning whether we are contributing to the school as individual board members. The monetary amount isn't the issue, it's whether the board is contributing at all. Kathy mentioned that we could put this on the board calendar for the August meeting.

## **Adjourn**

Kathy Johnson adjourned the meeting at 9:08 pm.

Approved:



Katherine Johnson, Chair