

**Gettysburg Montessori Charter School**  
**Board of Trustees Board of Trustees Official Minutes**  
**888 Coleman Road, Gettysburg**  
**5/31/2018**

**Board Members Present**

Kathy Johnson, Chair  
Jill Clinton, Vice Chair  
Tish Weikel, Secretary  
Diana Williams, Treasurer  
Lieucretia Swain  
Becky Uppercue

**Board Members Absent**

AJ Warner

**Others Present**

Faye Pleso, CEO  
Kathleen Nagle, School Attorney  
Amanda Jan, 3/4 grade teacher  
Evan Stare, 1/2 grade teach

**Executive Session**

The board met for executive session at 6:10 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 and Kathleen Nagle.

**Call to Order**

Kathy Johnson called the May 31, 2018 meeting to order at 7:38pm.

**Introduction of members and guests**

Introductions were made

**Public Comment on Agenda Items**

- Amanda Jan commented on and encouraged providing teachers with contracts versus letters of intent. She recommended contracts for the following reasons: belief and faith in the teachers, teachers are well qualified, and stated they had awareness that contracts may still lead to being asked to leave after a completed remediation plan.
- Evan Stare mentioned need for contracts as well. He stated that if you truly have the faith in the teachers in the school a contract is not something you need to worry about. He also elaborated that a contract will keep the teachers at the school and happy.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Jill Clinton made a motion to approve the consent agenda as submitted, Lieucretia Swain the seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

**Old Business**

No old business.

## **Chair's Report**

### *Housekeeping*

- Kathy notified everyone that we will skip the July meeting due to the travel of various board members, however we may need to recess the June meeting in order to allow us to reconvene to address hiring motions Faye may need completed prior to the first day of school.
- One board member needs to complete board survey so the results can be reviewed during June meeting
- AJ needs to review his statement of financial interest form again.
- As there was no staff meeting this past Tuesday there is nothing to report.
- Tish has determined that she will need to step down as secretary, however she is remaining on the board. Kathy asked for all board members to consider taking on this role.
- Tish will retype the document outlining the secretary duties so we can have it as an electronic file. Kathy mentioned a need to develop officer notebooks. It would also would be beneficial to create committee timelines for future board members.

### *Contract vs. Letter of Intent Discussion*

- Kathy shared that the board further reviewed the issue of offering contracts vs letter of intent. After examining the issue from every angle the board believes we are very fair with all employees and to offer contracts would pose an additional expense to the school. The board has a fiduciary duty to GMCS to protect the assets of the school not only for this year, but for future years. The board is looking at compensation for advanced degrees and Kathy shared that the board will also look at integrating a merit based bonus structure informed by the Danielson Model evaluations in future budgets. Kathy reinforced how much the teachers and staff of GMCS are valued at the school and how grateful the board is for everything they do.
- Kathleen Nagle notes that most charter schools do not offer contracts. She also discussed the difference between a local school district offering a contract versus a public charter school offering contracts.

### *Tenure Discussion*

- Kathy reported that the board also researched the possibility of offering tenure and the board found that it is unheard of for a charter school to offer tenure at the elementary level.
- Kathleen also mentioned that tenure would not be transportable to other public schools because it would have been earned at a charter status and isn't transferable to a district public school.
- Mr. Stare mentioned concerns regarding job security. He expressed worry that from one year to the next he does not know if he will have a job until he signs that letter of intent once school has dismissed for the year.
- Kathleen responded that we hear this concern, and that the goal of the GMCS administration is to let each teacher know as soon as possible about their likelihood of returning to work the following year.
- Mr. Stare stated that it would be beneficial to know by March, if possible, as this is when other schools are hiring.
- Kathleen explained that the ability to hire staff back is driven by enrollment and that early in the spring enrollment numbers are not yet firmed up. However, without any behavioral remediation and if enrollment numbers do not drop dramatically, there shouldn't be any reason to worry about a loss of position.
- Kathy asked if Faye is updating the staff about enrollment trends during staff meetings. It was decided that it would be helpful for teachers to know so teachers and staff could get a sense of whether the school was currently experiencing or anticipating future financial difficulties.
- Mr. Stare asked what the protocol is for teachers to dismissed if enrollment drops. Kathleen and Faye responded it would be based on the grade band, certified teachers will be retained over non-certified teachers, and higher degree status is preferred. It was also noted that at the end of the day the administration would be looking at who is a good teacher.
- Mrs. Jan asked what it would look like if her grade band is losing enrollment numbers dramatically, but other grade bands are not, if the decision would be more merit based.
- Faye and Kathleen responded that having a merit based system is important for this reason.
- Becky Uppercue requested that Mr. Stare and Mrs. Jan pass along the information discussed tonight to the teachers and staff who were not able to attend this evening's meeting, and they agreed.

## **Administrator's Report**

### *CEO Report*

- Current enrollment: 194 students. For the 2018/2019 school year, we have 198 enrolled.
- Enrollment was looked at across all grade bands. The 3/4 grade band is capped for the 2018-2019 school year. Faye reported we are currently running a wait list and would consider adding another 3/4 class if we have at least 10 additional students register.
- Faye reported that there is not enough student enrollment in the 1/2 grade band to support three 1/2 classrooms.
- Faye is happy with current kindergarten numbers and would like to cap each class at 21.
- 5/6 has the lowest enrollment currently.
- Overall Faye is happy with enrollment numbers.

### *Student Wellness Policy Report*

- Faye and Diana reported that the wellness plan notes that students are making healthier choices.
- Becky Smith had a running club in the spring.
- GMCS has a garden now.
- Noted increase in sweets, and not being viewed as a special treat.
- Kathy mentioned that Vida had a pretty popular weekly fresh fruit and veggie program a few years ago that might be a good fit for GMCS.

### *Non-Criminal Justice Agency Audit*

- Faye reported that any organization that has access to FBI clearances must meet FBI guidelines.
- The representative that came to preform our audit said GMCS was complaint with everything. All teachers must do a level 1 training. Curb tech technicians must complete up to a level 4.

### *Conference*

- State department of education offers a conference for parents to attend; this year it will be at Seven Springs Resort in Champion, PA.
- Faye reserved a space for a GMCS representative and has asked Megan Matson to attend with her kids.
- This is a symposium on how to make school better. When Megan comes back in the fall she will present on her experience.

### *Approval of Typing Master Curriculum*

- Typing Quest is a program for K-6.
- Faye reported that she could not find a separate standalone program for library science.
- Faye feels this program works well with the Montessori philosophy the following ways:
  - Offers choice
  - Colorful and aesthetically appealing
  - Self-correcting
  - Engaging
- Will cost \$549 annually.
- Faye believes this program will really make a difference for grades 5/6 when they work on research projects.
- Lieucetia Swain made a motion to approve typing master curriculum, and Jill Clinton seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

### *Building update*

- Faye reported that we need to make sure the water tank on the property will be large enough to provide sprinkler system in building so that we can keep insurance rates reasonable. A sprinkler system may help to bring the rates down. Kathy shared that from the first phase of building construction we learned that it is not, however our architect indicated that the existing building and the addition can be joined in such a way as to negate the need for sprinklers. It will depend on the state building regulations and final design of the project when GMCS is ready to build. Kathy noted that it will be expensive to upgrade the water tank if it becomes necessary. Ultimately, it may make sense to upgrade the water tank eventually if we can get a reasonable loan from a USDA and take care of that project at the same time we do the addition.
- Faye reminded everyone that we are only able to host up to 285 students at the school due to our well water capacity.
- We may be asked to submit a contingency plan - if something (i.e. a fire, etc.) happens where would the school go? Faye mentions possibility of use of local hotels to use as back up. She will work on a contingency plan.

## Finance Committee

### *FY 2018-2019 Budget*

- Budget changes since month prior; elimination of planned extra 3/4 classroom and 1/2 classroom due to enrollment.
- Instructional coach position eliminated
- Extra two PCAs eliminated
- After these eliminations the proposed budget showed a \$81,905 surplus.
- However, as Faye began to work on the budget today and was issuing letters of intent, she noted a current teacher was missing from the 2018-2019 budget.
  - Faye contacted accountant and learned the teacher was mistakenly left off.
  - After that staff member was added back in, the proposed budget was now showing a budget deficit of \$6,000.
  - The board asked Faye where she felt she could find enough money to get the budget back to a surplus as close to the \$81,000 we had been working on previously. Faye felt the only option for finding this money would be in Administration and she would work to identify a solution. One possible place to look was to decrease the cost of living increase this year from 3% to 2%, however it is doubtful this will make up enough of a difference in the budget. Faye and Diana will work on this with Charter Choices.
- Kathy reminded Faye and Diana to replace the currently posted budget with the one they work up in the next few days.
- The average surplus recommended for a charter school of our size is 3% to 4% percent, which equates to \$75,000 to \$100,000.
- The Finance Committee has been working on a policy that outlines the pay increase for any employee earning an advanced degree.
  - The recommendation of the committee is to offer a raise of \$2,000 for anyone earning a master's degree (if someone comes in with a Masters they will get the extra \$2,000 added to their base salary at employment). This is comparable to other schools in the district.
  - The committee will continue to research how much to offer for PhDs and any advanced certificates (i.e. Instructional II) that are relevant to employment.
  - Currently five individuals at the school have a Master's degree.
  - Research conducted around local salaries: Gettysburg superintendent \$149,500, GASD business manager \$119,086, Lincoln Elementary Principal \$90,000.
  - Finance committee will write up a policy for raise structure for advanced degrees. The board will review at the June meeting and vote on this at the August meeting.
  - Diana will write to Ryan and Jesse to request recommendations for PhD salary increases.

### *USDA Loan Update*

- Faye submitted all necessary documentation thus far.
- She received notice from Jeff Stauffer, our representative, and we had a red flag. 2016 we had a loss on budget line.
  - This was due to the purchase of the building in June which made us look as though we had a loss of income, but loan came through in July in next fiscal year, it amounts to bad timing.
  - Because of this USDA loan representative wanted to know EVERYTHING about the board, background, etc and a good deal of additional information.
- The USDA also requested letters of community supports, already have five; RSG, Adams County Arts Council, Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve, State Rep. Dan Mohl, attorney Yanetti, and the Rotarian Club.
- GMCS was required to submit a letter explaining our assets, and is asking that we show good will that we are investing too.
  - We will need to commit to a down payment/sharing of costs for things like a library, additional legal fees, play ground area, and parking (Faye is estimating approx. \$300,000).
- The USDA is requesting a financial study which will cost about \$12,000.
- The accountant who does our audit is working with the USDA representative. This accountant will accept Charter Choices reports.
  - Then the accountant will draft their own opinion and a projected five year forecast. This process will cost \$3,000 to \$4,000 for Charter Choices and another \$6,000 for the accountant.
- After discussions with Charter Choices Faye reports we can responsibly manage a \$5 million loan, but we are

requesting no more than \$4.5 million.

- Next steps with USDA; state level team has approved us to move on to the federal level (we are still in the pre-application stage) and Jeff will let us know when he hears back from the federal office.
- The feasibility study should be completed by June. Faye is not expected to hear anything until July or August.

#### **Governance Committee**

- Jill reported that she reached out to three people who showed an interest in joining the board. One never responded and one decided they were not going to be at the school, and another decided against it.
- However, we have three new candidates and we have reached out to them. All three have been provided with the informational packet.
- Lieucetia Swain will not be returning to board, but Diana would like to return to serve another term.
- In order to vote on new board members at the June meeting, Kathy needs full packages by a week prior to the June meeting so everything can be included in the meeting package we send to the district.

#### **Personnel Committee**

- Kathy reported that one board member needs to complete board self-assessment survey.
- The staff survey has been administered and only 25% of staff have responded. Kathy will send a reminder to staff.
- The parent survey has a 55% response rate.
- Kathy reported that the personnel committee will work to summarize the parent survey responses for presentation to the board. Additionally, the parent and staff survey responses feed into the year-end evaluation of the CEO/Principal.

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

No new business

#### **Public Comment**

No Public comment.

#### **Adjourn**

Kathy Johnson adjourned meeting a 9:31pm.



Approved:

Tish N. Weikel, Secretary