

**Gettysburg Montessori Charter School
Board of Trustees Official Minutes
April 25, 2019**

Board Members Present

Jill Clinton, Chair
Becky Uppercue, Vice Chair
Rose Thornberry, Secretary
Tish Weikel, Member-at-Large

Board Members Absent

Lieucetia Swain (Family Commitment)
Diana Williams (Family Commitment)

Others Present

Dr. Faye Pleso, CEO
Tom Hockensmith, GMCS parent
Shanin Caplener, GMCS parent
Jesse Bean, Charter Choices (via telephone)

Executive Session

The Board met for executive session at 6:03pm to discuss student-related issues, which if conducted in public would violate a lawful privilege or would lead to a disclosure of information confidentially protected by law. Executive session closed at 6:10pm.

Call to Order

Jill Clinton called the meeting to order at 6:11pm. Introductions were made.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

No comment

Old Business

No old business

Finance Committee

Review of Budget

- Jesse Bean gave a detailed overview of the March balance sheet, which included an \$800,000 surplus with an expected \$500,000 down payment as our part of the

USDA building construction loan.

- Michael Snyder of Charter Choices will begin compiling the documents needed for the June audit.

2019-2020 Draft Budget Review

- Jesse Bean explained that we currently have a surplus of about \$800,000 of which approximately \$500,000 will serve to satisfy our part of the loan for our construction project. \$300,000 (and possibly more, all far above original projections) will remain as liquid surplus, an important sum when banks are considering bridge loans. They need to know that we have a satisfactory amount that is liquid in our reserves in order to be a solvent candidate for their loan.
- We are \$120,000 positive in our budget (income/revenue) due to conservative estimates and good financial stewardship. The Cleaning and IT line items are the only ones where we saw negative variances.
- Jesse Bean presented the preliminary draft of the proposed 2019-2020, which revised, and included information based on the discussion of the first draft which was extensively reviewed at the April meeting of the Board. The initial draft was based on 230 students and this second version is based on a revised enrollment of 237 students. Dr. Pleso is still expecting 240-255 to enroll for the next school year. Our total enrollment capacity is 285.
- Jill Clinton expressed concern about a 17% (\$300,000) expenditure increase due to new personnel costs associated with hiring five new positions: Assistant Principal/Instructional Coach; two RtI part-time teachers; one classroom teacher; and one classroom aide. The figure also includes a generous 6%-7% cost of living increase and commensurate health insurance premium increases.
- The role of the proposed assistant principal was discussed at length. Jill proposed that candidates considered for that position either have their principal certification or be enrolled in a program with a definitive timeline to earn that specialized administrative certification. Faye is unsure of what the candidate pool will look like at this point and said she is unsure she could guarantee that given our salary and benefits package, but is something to consider. The Board discussed the long-term potential of this position and would like to find someone that could be on-track to be considered for a leadership role in the future. There was also an in-depth conversation about this being a dual-role position and that this person will take on duties of instructional coach – including professional development of the faculty, systems development, classroom management, curriculum development, etc. Faye acknowledged that this dual-role may eliminate the need for other staff and Jill stressed that this is a key element in considering this costly staff addition. Our goal is not to duplicate administrative duties among staff.
- Jill expressed hope that the line item for ‘Support Staff’ in excess of \$10,000 will

eventually be phased out. She also questioned whether \$2,000 was enough in the 'Advanced Degree Bonus' line item, especially since a vice principal/instructional coach will likely have a Master's.

- Another major expense in the preliminary budget is the removal of the modular units in July 2021. Dr. Pleso has divided the enormous payments of approximately \$180,000 to Mobile Lease into two, one of which will be included in this 2019/20 budget.
- Charter Choices worked with Dr. Pleso to break out our LIU serves into line items identifying each therapy service. These new codes fall under Special Education and include ESL, Deaf/Hard of Hearing, OT/PT services, IU services, psychological services, and Speech therapy.
- There is also a significant increase for technology in the preliminary budget, from approximately \$2,000 in last year's budget to \$8,500 in this proposal. Dr. Pleso wants to be sure we don't invest in something permanent or difficult to move in light of the coming renovations to the building and removal of the mods in 2021, but several Board members discussed the need for more computers in the classrooms, given the investment in programs like Rosetta Stone. Without the hardware, the students can't access these on a regular basis. We also need to be mindful about mobile classroom technology that could be used as instructional tools for teachers and as research tools for students. Dr. Pleso reminded the Board that the Montessori philosophy does not include an emphasis on technology and that many of our families are mindful of that, so we need to try and maintain an appropriate balance.
- Rose Thornberry questioned where the Owner's Representative fee was in the proposed budget. Dr. Pleso was told by Digsau that we may not need to hire one this summer after all and may be able to wait until construction is imminent, pushing the expense into the 2020/21 budget. There is a line item in the proposed budget under the 'Architect' in the amount of \$176,000 that Dr. Pleso believes includes the Owner's Rep expenditure. Jesse Bean and Dr. Pleso will update the Board at the May meeting.
- The proposed budgeted surplus is \$157,000, which Jesse Bean believes will likely end up significantly higher. This figure is balanced with 3% increases across the board, 5% staff salary increases, and \$500,000 committed to the building project. Jesse Bean, Charter Choices, Dr. Pleso, Diana Williams, and Becky Uppercue stand behind the proposed preliminary budget and feel that it is consistent with past fiscally conservative and appropriate budgets.
- The final draft of the 2019/20 budget will be presented to the Board for a vote at the May Board meeting.

Building Project Funding Update

- Jesse Bean from Charter Choices and Dr. Pleso led the discussion on the four lenders vying to provide our bridge loan. The contenders are: The Reinvestment Fund, Citizens Bank, Members 1st FCU, and Centric Bank. There was a long discussion, during which the Board narrowed the choice to Centric Bank and Members 1st. Jesse reminded us about our previous relationship with Centric Bank, who was crucial in helping to purchase our new campus. They are also offering the highest CD and saving rates, which may factor into our overall banking services decision. However, Members 1st is offering the best interest rate and the lowest fees. But, Members 1st wants to require us to hire a Construction Manager. The Board and Dr. Pleso believe that an Owner's Representative serves the same purpose. In addition, the USDA already requires the State Architect to conduct oversight for our project, providing an additional layer of management. Dr. Pleso has asked Members 1st if these two positions would satisfy their requirement – and she will provide them with the State Architect's contact information – and is waiting to hear back.
- The May Board meeting will include three resolutions for the loan provider selection; the banking services selection; and the \$500,000 construction fund appropriation.

Statement of Financial Interest forms have been received by all except AJ Warner, who is no longer a parent at the school. Becky Uppercue will continue to try and reach him. The next Finance Committee meeting will be May 15th when they will finalize the budget in preparation for the Board meeting.

Report of the Chair

Jill Clinton gave an Act 55 explanation to guests, including the information that any new Board members, along with Rose Thornberry, will need to complete their online training by June 30th. Jill sent the link to all Board members.

Dr. Pleso had some grammatical corrections to the website FAQ/Q&A. Rose Thornberry will correct these and return to Dr. Pleso.

Jill will attend the next staff meeting on April 23rd and Rose will attend the one on May 26th.

The May 30th board meeting is changed to May 29th at 6pm.

The next Executive Committee meeting is May 14th, with the agenda due May 7th. The committee will be reviewing the Students' Rights and Responsibilities Policy. The committee will collect and submit all proposed policy changes to Dr. Pleso all together during the summer.

The Board's self-assessment needs to be completed; there will be an update at the May meeting.

Administrators Report

Current enrollment stands at 220. There are 237 students currently enrolled for the 2019-2020 school year.

GMCS was just awarded a Hoffman Foundation grant in the amount of \$15,000 for materials for the school's new library. Jill Clinton will sign paperwork to accept the grant. The foundation has been notified that the expenditures related to the grant will be deferred to 2021.

Dr. Pleso has also applied for a Small Rural School Achievement Grant from the US Department of Education.

Dr. Pleso and Jesse Bean have a meeting on May 6th with the USDA. The application is almost complete – we now have the financial feasibility study; proof of insurances; mortgage statements; SAM registration renewal; verification of our 20% down payment; and legal services agreement. We are just waiting for the architect's feasibility study to be completed and that should be finished soon.

Dr. Pleso recommended hiring Kim Barber as a long-term substitute in Megan Stough's 3/4 classroom. Becky Uppercue made a motion to approve the hiring of Kim Barber, retroactive to April 25th at \$17/hour, with no benefits, for the remainder of the school year. Tish Weikel seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Dr. Pleso renewed our one-year contract for billboards with Kegerreis for \$5,825. Some marketing language was changed, but there was no increase over last year.

Personnel Committee

The committee completed the revisions to the Parent survey and it will be ready before deadline. It will be sent out by the end of April.

Governance Committee

The committee held a special meeting on April 17th to interview two parent candidates, Tom Hockensmith and Shanin Caplener. After deliberation, the committee recommended that Tom fill Melissa Ring's vacant seat, which will be up for re-election in May 2020. Tom has submitted all clearances and necessary documents to the committee. The committee also recommended that Shanin fill the upcoming open seat, which is being vacated by Lieucetia Swain at the end of June. Her term will also expire in May 2020. Shanin has submitted all clearances and necessary documents to the committee.

The committee continues to recruit potential Board members. One parent has moved forward in the process and is ready to be vetted by the committee. Ashley Reid has begun to submit her clearances and other documents. She will be interviewed at the committee's next meeting on May 6th.

The following Board members' terms expire May 31st: Jill Clinton, Tish Weikel, Becky Uppercue, and Rose Thornberry. Jill is running again, with the caveat that she will be unable to continue in the Chair position. Becky and Rose will also run again. Tish will not seek re-election.

Becky Uppercue made a motion to approve Tom Hockensmith for the term on the Board vacated by Melissa Ring. Tish Weikel seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Tom Hockensmith will be sworn in at the May 29th Board meeting, at which time the committee plans to recommend Shanin Caplener for Lucretia Swain's upcoming open seat.

Board members running for re-election need their clearances checked by the Governance committee and may re-interview them, as well, although it is not required to do so according to our Bylaws.

While the committee is vetting Ashley Reid for the next open Board seat, it will continue to encourage interest amongst community members and parents, and will hopefully have additional candidates by the time Tish Weikel's seat becomes open at the end of August.

Building Committee

The committee shared the design scheme that was chosen with the Board. The committee will not meet again for 4-6 weeks while refinements and adjustments are made, the feasibility study is completed, and information is forwarded to the USDA.

As mentioned in the Financial Committee's report, \$500,000 for construction funding will be appropriated by the Board at the May meeting and a bridge loan provider will be selected.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Becky Uppercue made a motion to approve the consent agenda as submitted. Tish Weikel seconded the motion. The consent agenda was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

New Business; for the good of the order

None

Public Comment

None

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair Jill Clinton at 8:32pm.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rose Thornberry".

Rose Thornberry, Secretary