

Gettysburg Montessori Charter School
Board of Trustees Official Minutes
July 30, 2020

Board Members Present

Tom Hockensmith, Chair
Rose Thornberry, Vice Chair
Jill Clinton, Secretary
Becky Uppercue, Treasurer
Ashley Reid, Member, at-large
Diana Williams, Member, at-large
Traci Elligson, Member, at-large

Board Members Absent

none

Others Present

Dr. Faye Pleso, CEO
Christine Kirkpatrick, Assistant Principal
Jay Appleton, Greyhawk
Brittany Lawrence, Teacher, Kindergarten
Samantha Keller, Parent
Gerard Elligson, Parent
Melinda Fishel, Parent
Jason Officer, Parent
Jessica Officer, Parent

Executive Session

The Board met for Executive session at 5:31pm via Webex conference call to discuss several employee-related matters, which if conducted in public would violate a lawful privilege or would lead to a disclosure of information confidentially protected by law. Dr. Pleso was invited to join the Board in Executive session to discuss these matters. Executive session closed at 5:48pm.

Call to Order

Tom Hockensmith called the meeting to order at 6:04pm via Zoom conference call, in accordance with PA state health guidelines during the COVID-19 crisis. All information regarding public access to the meeting was advertised in the Gettysburg Times. Introductions of all attendees were made.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

No comment

Old Business

No old business

Approval of Consent Agenda

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

Building Committee

Jay Appleton from Greyhawk reported that tomorrow, July 31st, is the bid deadline. He will be at the school and will open and read the bids aloud at 3:00pm, as is customary in this process. He said that often contractors stay to hear the bid pricing. He mentioned that four addendums, due to design modifications, have been passed on to the contractors.

After bidding closes, Jay Appleton will get the bids to GMCS and write letters of recommendation for each of the four prime contractors. He expects to deliver these letters by noon on Monday, August 3rd. He will also forward to Kathy Nagel after a discussion with Dr. Pleso.

The next step will be bonds and certificates presented by the contractors to Greyhawk and GMCS. Afterwards, contractors will apply for their building permits. Jay Appleton will work with Rebecca at Members 1st to make sure they have what they need from the bidding process for our loan.

Jay Appleton reports that, unfortunately, we were missing our “Geotechnical Report” and this has significantly slowed our progress. This is something that Digsau had not done in advance, but that Jay felt was crucial for the bidding process so that there would not be any surprises when it came to foundations and construction. He noted that finding huge boulders, for example, can lead to large, expensive change orders. Ultimately, Jay received an excellent Geotechnical report and the news turned out to be very good. The bad news, however, is that we lost a month’s time.

This delay and other factors have now moved the renovations to the existing building to the end of the project in spring/summer 2021.

Administrator’s Report

Dr. Pleso reports that enrollment is at 226 as of July 16th (up from 222 in June) with 38 Kindergarteners; 42 first graders; 35 second graders; 33 third graders; 33 fourth graders; 23 fifth graders; and 22 sixth graders. Dr. Pleso has a deadline of tomorrow (July 31st) for families to

decide whether they want to send their children to GMCS five days a week or do distance learning. Right now, 38 students will be doing distance learning and that includes three Kindergarteners; 16 first and second graders; 11 third and fourth graders; and 8 fifth and sixth graders.

Dr. Pleso reported that our two weeks of academic summer camp went very well and it served as a good test run for the school year.

Teachers will be back on August 10th in anticipation of an August 19th school opening.

Dr. Pleso and our new assistant principal, Christine Kirkpatrick, discussed some of our safety measures and plans to handle distance learning. The plan is to do live streaming throughout the school day, with all lessons recorded. We will be using Google Classroom for synchronous learning, and this year, each student will be assigned a Chromebook. Dr. Pleso envisions an evolved role for the classroom assistants; they will monitor any technical issues or other things that may prevent a student at home from following or participating in the lessons.

Becky Uppercue brought up the issue of privacy and the issue of how much parental supervision will be going on at home – and how this may affect the rest of the class online or in-person. Dr. Pleso hopes that the teacher will have a lot of control with the Google platform. She said that Nicole Gulden, our 5th/6th grader teacher, will be the teacher/student/tech liaison and will be leading the efforts to ensure a smooth transition to synchronous learning. In addition, recorded tutorials on expectations and troubleshooting will be prepared for caregivers at home.

Dr. Pleso was told that there will be no aftercare program at GMCS this year. While this is a hardship for many families, it will cut down on the time and expense of extra cleaning.

Jill Clinton inquired as to how specials will be handled this year. Dr. Pleso said that art classes will continue to be held in the classrooms and that they will be recorded for distance learners. Gym classes will also continue as normal, with Ms. Boehner holding them outside as often as possible. She will provide links for distance learners. Dr. Pleso reports that she is still searching for a music teacher, so plans for that special are on hold for the moment.

Dr. Pleso presented the Personnel Report for 2020-2021 and the Board discussed the changes and recommendations.

Dr. Pleso is currently interviewing for a Breakfast/Lunch Server, a part-time RtI Learning Support Teacher, a Music Teacher, a new Classroom Assistant in 3rd/4th grade, and a long-term sub for a Classroom Assistant in 5th/6th grade.

She also recommended promoting part-time RtI Learning Support Teacher Melanie Kansagra to fill a full-time opening as RtI Learning Support Math Teacher; Kristine Gelazela from Breakfast/Lunch Server to Classroom Assistant in 1st/2nd grade; and Tiffany Shetter from PCA to Classroom Assistant in 3rd/4th grade.

Dr. Pleso also recommends hiring Chrissy Donahue to fill an opening as a Kindergarten Teacher and April Taylor to fill an opening as a 3rd/4th grade teacher. She also recommends moving Lauren Auchey to a Classroom Assistant in 1st/2nd grade from that same position in 3rd/4th grade.

Jill Clinton made a motion to hire Christine Donohue, who has her Level II certificate and several years of experience as a parochial schoolteacher and preschool director, as a full-time Kindergarten teacher (effective August 10th) at a salary of \$41,000 with full benefits. Becky Uppercue seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Ashley Reid made a motion to hire April Taylor, who has three years of experience as a third grade teacher, as a full-time 3rd/4th grade teacher (effective August 3rd) at a salary of \$41,375 with full benefits. Becky Uppercue seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Becky Uppercue made a motion to promote Tiffany Shetter and Kristine Gelazela to classroom aides in 3rd/4th grade and 1st/2nd grades, respectively, effective August 3rd, at \$17/per hour for under 30 hours per week with no benefits. Jill Clinton seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Tom Hockensmith made a motion to hire Melanie Kansagra, who has her Level II certificate as well as a master's degree and seven years' experience, to full-time RtI Learning Support Math teacher (effective August 10th) at a salary of \$47,965 with full benefits. Diana Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Dr. Pleso presented the proposed 2020-21 school calendar to the Board. Tom Hockensmith made a motion that the Board approves the 2020-21 calendar as presented, with the understanding that changes may have to be made throughout the school year to maintain consistency with the GASD as required by our charter. Becky Uppercue seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Dr. Pleso presented the Emergency Instructional Time Template to the Board, as required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. It includes a mandate calendar, as approved by the Board, and a sample of our proposed daily schedule to show how GMCS will be conducting instruction. Becky Uppercue made a motion to approve the Emergency Instructional Time

Template as presented. Diana Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Report of the Chair

Traci Elligson has begun her Act 55 training. Diana Williams is the remaining Board member who needs to start and complete the training.

Jill Clinton, Ashley Reid, and Traci Elligson need to complete their Trauma-Informed training. Tom Hockensmith will send out the link to them again.

Dr. Pleso submitted our annual report to the state. She and Tom Hockensmith are currently working on the annual report for the GASD.

Tom Hockensmith will get survey results from our Parent, Board, and Staff surveys out to the Board members via email and we will prepare to discuss the results at the August Board meeting.

Tom Hockensmith announced that meetings of the Board and its committees will continue to be virtual via Zoom through August. Jill Clinton will contact the Gettysburg Times to provide public notice of the Zoom id and passwords for the next Board meeting on August 27th. He and Dr. Pleso determined it is not necessary to provide that type of public notice for the Governance and Finance committee meetings, as per our attorney, Kathy Nagel. She advised that notice of the Zoom access information for those public committee meetings need only be posted with the agenda on the school's door and on the school's website. In-person Board and committee meetings will likely resume in September, but that will be announced after discussion at the next Board meeting.

Finance Committee

A Finance committee meeting was held on July 22nd via conference call to review the June financial statements, which showed that GMCS wrapped up the school's fiscal year with just under \$3.7 million in gross revenue and \$555k net profit, reflecting a 15% overall profit. Jesse Bean of Charter Choices noted that this is the best fiscal year he has ever seen for any charter school he has ever worked with!

The Board credits excellent fiscal management from Dr. Pleso and Charter Choices, conservative estimates, and unexpected cost savings related to daily operations when school had to close to physical instruction in March. We also received about \$110k more than we budgeted for from sending districts. Additionally, over \$600k in budgeted expenditures were not used – for example, Jesse noted that we saved \$314k in personnel costs, including \$226k in total salary costs for unfilled positions. There were also lower health insurance and operating costs as a result of the school closure.

Becky Uppercue reports that we currently have over \$1.5 million in checking and savings accounts, with another \$800k yet to contribute to the \$4.2 million dollar loan. We have spent about \$245k so far in construction costs from the 2020-21 budget.

Becky Uppercue also noted that we have almost doubled what we need for the construction project/loan. Jesse Bean will look into bank rates and see what we may be able to invest into a short-term (3-to-6 month) certificate of deposit, so that we may earn money on these funds, rather than sitting in low-yield checking/savings accounts until needed.

Becky Uppercue reports that we have 147 days “cash on hand,” which gives us the ability to operate on this alone for about five months. Jesse Bean added that this is a great position to be in given the uncertainties with enrollment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jesse Bean led the committee’s review of our agreement with our auditors, SEK. Their total cost is approximately \$6,000 to complete the audits and accompanying paperwork and forms. Jesse noted that this is a very reasonable rate. Becky Uppercue reported to the Board that this will begin in September or October of this year.

There were no updates to the 2020/21 budget, which was approved by the Board at the June meeting. Dr. Pleso noted that there will likely be changes and updates in September, as is customary.

Governance Committee

With the recent swearing-in of member-at-large Traci Elligson, the Board is now full. Traci filled a vacated seat that expires next month. Our attorney, Kathy Nagel, reported to Tom Hockensmith that the Board would not have to swear Traci in again at the start of her first, full term on August 27th. She will, along with other approved candidates for open seats, need to be voted on by the Board at that meeting, however.

Tom Hockensmith was re-interviewed and his current clearances submitted at the June 11th meeting of the Governance committee. The committee decided to recommend Tom for a two-year term on the Board, after he finishes the term vacated by Melissa Ring. Becky Uppercue made a motion to approve Tom Hockensmith’s appointment to a first, two-year term on the Board of Trustees. Ashley Reid seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote. Tom will be sworn in at the August Board meeting.

Jill Clinton reported that the Governance committee will meet as scheduled on August 13th. They will re-interview Diana Williams and review her clearances. The committee will then discuss her qualifications and vote whether to recommend her to the Board at the August Board

meeting. If recommended, the Board will vote whether to appoint Diana to a final two-year term on the Board. If not, more candidates will be solicited.

Traci Elligson was able to pick up her Board handbook in the last week. Jill Clinton is still trying to get Shanin Caplener to return her copy of the Board handbook for Diana Williams. She asked Dr. Pleso to please ask Shanin to do this if she has contact with her.

Personnel Committee

Tom Hockensmith expects to have the results of the Staff survey, Parent survey, and Board survey for the Board at the August meeting, but may decide to hold a Personnel committee meeting to go over the data prior to the Board meeting.

Executive Committee

Nothing new to report.

New Business; for the good of the order

Public Comment

Jason Officer inquired about an in-person back-to-school event, particularly for incoming Kindergarten families. Dr. Pleso will consider it, but the biggest obstacle is that it would necessitate another deep cleaning prior to opening, as a result of having so many people in the building. Her plan was to have a virtual event (also recorded) with teachers in their classrooms.

Dr. Pleso also mentioned her idea of setting up a “buddy” system to partner new students with a 5th or 6th grader to help them acclimate. She noted that this year may not be the best year to launch that program, but Board members and guests responded positively to the idea.

There was also an inquiry about the transportation system for the upcoming year and concern about the distance learning people informing their home districts that they will now not need transportation to GMCS. Dr. Pleso said she would also touch base with Leigh Gugliette to make sure these districts are notified that our distance learners will not need busing.

Tom Hockensmith suggested a compilation of commonly asked questions from Dr. Pleso, noting that he’s seen the same questions asked on Facebook and at the meeting – and suspects the school has gotten a lot of calls and emails about those same subjects. Dr. Pleso said she is working on something like this that will address transportation, specials, Google Classroom/remote learning platforms, cleaning, playground, special education, and other topics that families want answers to before the start of the school year.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair Tom Hockensmith at 7:40pm.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read "Jill Clinton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jill" and last name "Clinton" clearly distinguishable.

Jill Clinton, Secretary