

**Gettysburg Montessori Charter School
Board of Trustees Official Minutes
June 26, 2019**

Board Members Present

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

Board Members Absent

Tish Weikel, Member, at-large (Family Commitment)
Lieucetia Swain, Member, at-large (Resignation Submitted)

Others Present

Dr. Faye Pleso, CEO
Shanin Caplener, Member Elect

Executive Session

The Board met for executive session at 5:46pm to discuss employee-related issues, 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 attend for the entire session. Executive session closed at 6:03pm.

Call to Order

Jill Clinton called the meeting to order at 6:04pm. Introductions were made.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

No comment

Old Business

No old business

Approval of Consent Agenda

Rose Thornberry 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.

Report of the Chair

There was a brief discussion about Board content for the next newsletter, which is due in October.

Staff meetings will resume in August and will be held on the last Tuesday of the month during the 2019-20 school year. Becky Uppercue will attend the August 27th meeting; new Board member Shanin Caplener will attend the September 24th meeting; and Diana Williams will attend the October 29th meeting.

Tom Hockensmith was the second Board member, after Rose Thornberry, to complete the online Act 55 training. He submitted his reflections to Dr. Pleso in return for his certificate, which will be placed on file with the school. He felt the training was beneficial.

Shanin Caplener, a new Gettysburg parent at GMCS, was sworn in as a new member of the Board of Trustees to fill the seat vacated by Lieucetia Swain this month. Shanin's term will expire in May 2020.

Jill Clinton will contact Jesse Bean at Charter Choices to inquire about Shanin Caplener's Act 55 compliance requirement date.

Jill and Dr. Pleso will work together to update the Board calendar by August.

Jill previewed summer tasks for the Board, which include the Executive Committee compiling all proposed policy updates and changes to present at the July Board meeting, along with Dr. Pleso's proposed changes.; updating the student/parent handbook; approving the PDE report; and reviewing records retention procedures. We also need to prepare a report on the Parent Survey and review the results of the Staff Survey. In addition, the evaluation for Dr. Pleso needs to be prepared and completed by August.

The Finance Committee meeting has been rescheduled from July 17th to July 24th at 3:30pm. Jill will place an ad in the *Gettysburg Times* for notification.

The Governance Committee meeting will be rescheduled from July 1st to July 9th at 4:30pm to accommodate everyone's work schedules. Jill will place an ad in the *Gettysburg Times* for notification.

Administrators Report

Current enrollment stands at 231, down from 237, for the 2019-2020 school year.

Dr. Pleso has begun the process to re-vamp the school's website.

Dr. Pleso has submitted a flyer to *The Merchandiser* to run in mid-July concurrent with an article to be featured in the Family section.

Dr. Pleso is planning to have a 6th grade ‘graduation’ ceremony for students beginning in the 2019-20 school year.

The review of last year’s exit surveys revealed that the top reasons for students leaving GMCS included a family move, too long of a bus ride to the school, the desire for more homework and traditional grading, and going with a sibling to a different school.

The Lincoln Intermediate Unit (LIU)’s Dr. Brad Sterner, Director of Educational Services, has offered a contract for the coming school year with services for teacher evaluations, classroom observations, curriculum development, instructional coaching, and specific professional development for identified staff at a cost of \$30,000. Dr. Pleso feels that this is the prudent route to take instead of hiring an assistant principal at this time. The Board discussed the benefits of this vastly lower cost option, saving approximately \$80,000 in salary and benefits, and agreed that during this time when we are trying to secure funding for our building, this is a good idea. Becky Uppercue mentioned that it was a good discovery to find that the LIU has the professional staff to offer these kinds of services to school’s like ours. Jill Clinton offered that this would be wise at this time when we are preparing for charter renewal and Dr. Pleso may not have the time to adequately train an integral new administrator, however all Board members agreed that this layer of administration needs to be put in place down the road if enrollment continues to grow. Rose Thornberry also said that it would be a good idea for ‘succession’ to have another high-level administrator in place in the coming years.

Charter Choices is in agreement with Dr. Pleso’s assessment that we need to change the school’s insurance broker every 3-5 years. This year, they have recommended David E. Skarbek, Investment Advisory Representative of Commonwealth Financial Network, due to his accommodating schedule, access, and availability; an improvement of dental insurance benefits at no additional cost; and no cost for administering COBRA benefits.

Dr. Pleso submitted the final 2019-20 Personnel Report, which includes several new postings not in the last report: promotion of a long-term sub to 3/4 aide; two new aides for 1/2 classrooms; new lead teacher for a 1/2 classroom; new Kindergarten aide; new PE/Health teacher; and new Breakfast/Lunch server. Dr. Pleso has also decided to put the request for two new part-time RtI Learning Support teachers on hold until evaluations are done at the beginning of the year. She will instead offer more hours to the current part-time RtI teacher. Jill Clinton raised an objection, saying that it is hard to staff these positions during the school year and that she believed the learning support population at the school did support these new positions, but deferred to Dr. Pleso in this matter, as is appropriate.

GMCS parent and former Board member Melissa Ring will attend the Title 1 state parent conference July 8-10 at a cost of \$373. She will share what she learns with the school upon her return.

Dr. Pleso recommended hiring Hope Lansford as 1/2 classroom teacher. Becky Uppercue made a motion to approve the hiring of Hope Lansford at \$39,000 a year, with benefits. Jill Clinton seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Dr. Pleso also recommended promoting Kim Barber from long-term substitute to aide in Megan Stough's 3/4 classroom at \$17.50/hr, less than 30 hours, with no benefits. Becky Uppercue seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Dr. Pleso has presented several policy changes to be discussed in the Executive Committee portion of the meeting.

The Board reviewed the three contracts included in this month's Consent Agenda: Martin Water/Wastewater services contract; the Lincoln Intermediate Unit curriculum and professional services contract (discussed extensively during the earlier portion of the Administrative Report), and the SEK Certified Public Accountants auditing contract (also later discussed during the Finance Committee portion of the meeting).

Finance Committee

Becky Uppercue gave a detailed overview of the May balance sheet, which includes a net income of approximately \$250k for the year, up from the total income the prior year.

The contract with Charter Choices expires July 1, 2019. After reviewing several options, Dr. Pleso will be recommending renewing our contract with them and bring it to the Board for a resolution in July, along with a cleaning contract with ServiceMaster and the LIU contract outlined elsewhere in these minutes.

Dr. Pleso and Jesse Bean from Charter Choices had a conference call with Members 1st to discuss the possibility of a construction loan while the USDA loan is on hold. The school's banking services will move to Members 1st on August 1, 2019.

Dr. Pleso spoke with Ryan Schumm from Charter Choices regarding changing the school's auditor every 3-5 years. SEK is currently offering a significant discount to complete our audit in July/August because we are a new client and used SEK to complete our loan application audit for the USDA.

Dr. Pleso will look into the status of our record audit with Leigh Gugliette.

Statement of Financial Interest forms have been received by all except AJ Warner, who is no longer a parent at the school. Becky Uppercue has been unsuccessful in her attempts to reach him about this matter. A certified letter, including the SOFI, was prepared for AJ Warner and sent out at the end of May. It was received back at the school in June, marked 'returned to sender' and 'no forwarding address.' Dr. Pleso will file that and the enclosed paperwork to document our many efforts over time to get the SOFI signed by AJ Warner, who resigned from the Board and left the school in June 2018.

Personnel Committee

Becky Uppercue will present the 2018/19 Staff and Parent Survey analysis at the July Board meeting.

Tom Hockensmith will prepare the CEO/Principal evaluation based on materials from last year's evaluation, the results from this year's staff, parent, and Board surveys, and guidance from Jesse Bean of Charter Choices. Members discussed meeting prior to the next Board meeting on July 25th to finalize the evaluation. Jill Clinton will coordinate.

Members held a lengthy discussion of the results of the Board Self-Assessment survey. There were several detailed suggestions and critiques in the survey results and members decided to focus on three key areas for improvement in 2019-20: documentation, procedures, and succession planning.

The Board agreed that we need to do a better job of documentation and continue to put procedures in place to make sure that everything lands in Dropbox for easy access. Megan Parks is helping us with this, but it would be helpful to have several members have an area of responsibility (minutes, advertising/notices, committee minutes, handouts, etc.)

Procedural improvement was wide-ranging and could include closer adherence to Robert's Rules of Order when conducting meetings or more detailed resolutions, all of which are important to the Board.

Lastly, members agreed that we need to have periodic discussions and 'check-ins' about succession and have a plan for what would occur should the CEO/Principal leave for medical, personal, or employment reasons, either temporarily or permanently. We need to talk about how that would be handled and who on the staff could be moved into positions of greater responsibility. We also need to think about what we would look for in a replacement CEO/Principal. We have precedent and documented history we could call upon in these discussions. Jill Clinton will follow up on this particular matter.

At the next Executive committee meeting, members will examine the Students Responsibilities and Rights Policy. In the fall, the committee will tackle the Instruction Conducted in the Home and Homebound Instruction Policy.

Dr. Pleso worked with our attorney, Kathy Nagle, to craft a new Personal Relationships policy and presented it to the Board for review. After discussing the policy, no changes or additions were made. The Board will vote to adopt the policy or not at the July Board meeting.

The Executive Committee also presented their findings after reviewing the Health & Safety and Substance Abuse policies and the Students with Disabilities policy.

- The Health/PE teacher was named on page three (3) of the Health & Safety and Substance Abuse policy. The committee suggested that the position be referred to by title only, rather than the name of the current teacher. Dr. Pleso concurred and this policy change proposal will be voted on at the July meeting.
- Rose Thornberry point to a passage on page five (5) that states, “student artwork is to be displayed in the service and/or dining areas.” Dr. Pleso reviewed this and has re-committed to having student artwork displayed as outlined in this policy for the upcoming school year.
- There was also a discussion about fundraising referenced on page seven (7). The committee felt that it should be kept to healthy options when it involved food, and the annual Gertrude Hawk fundraiser may not fall within those guidelines. Dr. Pleso feels that this particular fundraiser doesn’t violate the policy due to the products not being sold in school.
- When referring to the schools Nurse/Nurses’ Aides, the policy outlined care that they could perform at the school, including “starting IVs,” which the committee questioned. Dr. Pleso would like to keep this part of the policy in place, just in case it may be needed someday.

Dr. Pleso is going to present another proposed change at the July meeting, involving several wording changes.

Governance Committee

Becky Uppercue made a motion to add newly sworn in Board member Shanin Caplener to a position on the Governance Committee. Diana Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The Governance Committee, now consisting of Board members Tom Hockensmith, Tish Weikel, and Shanin Caplener; parent representative Shannon McConnell; and staff representative Megan Stough, will meet at a rescheduled meeting on July 9th at 4:30pm in order to accommodate work

schedules. Jill Clinton will place the public notification ad in the *Gettysburg Times* for the rescheduling. Tom will prepare and post the agenda and circulate the appropriate minutes and documents by July 2nd in order to re-vet Rose Thornberry for re-election at the meeting.

The committee has decided to recommend Ashley Reid to the Board to fill the vacancy left at the end of Tish Weikel's term at the end of August. This new term will expire May 2022. Ashley has been vetted by the committee and has submitted all clearances and necessary paperwork to the committee.

Jill Clinton made a motion to accept the committee's recommendation and elect Ashley Reid to the Board of Trustees, to fill the term of Tish Weikel when it expires August 31st. Rose Thornberry seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Ashley will be sworn in at the August meeting.

The following Board members' terms expire August 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.

Jill Clinton and Becky Uppercue were re-interviewed at a June 3rd meeting of the Governance Committee, although it was not required to do so according to our Bylaws. They have also re-submitted their clearances to the committee.

Building Committee

Our new CPA firm, SEK, has provided a list of possible issues and questions based on the feasibility study they did, for Dr. Pleso to bring to the USDA to try and find out more about why our loan application was put on hold. Something in that study halted our loan process, but they cannot say what it was. With these questions, Dr. Pleso may be able to identify it if the USDA provides answers. She is not spending a lot of time and effort on it, but is trying to keep the possibility alive.

The USDA has told us that we cannot move forward with extensive renovations if we expect them to fund a new building. Bob Sharrah, our civil engineer, and Jamie Unkefer from Digsau believe that it is already too late in the summer to start to plan for renovations to start and so we will wait and see and plan for 2020.

Dr. Pleso and Jesse Bean from Charter Choices approached our new banking partner, Members 1st Federal Credit Union, via conference call so see if they may be interested in providing the entire construction loan if the USDA loan does not come to fruition. The credit union is open to

a possible fixed-rate conventional loan and is gathering information using all of our studies for a proposal, which will hopefully be put forth around July 8th .

In the meantime, Jesse is going to come up with an enrollment number we can ‘survive’ on if we go forward with a conventional construction loan and making interest and principal payments. He will also calculate the interest payment differences between a 25-year and 35-year loan.

New Business; for the good of the order

None

Public Comment

None

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair Jill Clinton at 8:04pm.

Approved:



Rose Thornberry, Secretary