

Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, October 15, 2019

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, October 15, 2019. The HGMICS facility, located at 1615 East Elm Street, Scranton, PA was the location for the public meeting. Dr. Susan Trussler, President called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM and then subsequently presided over the meeting. Dr. Trussler led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance and then took roll call for the board members and administrators.

The following Trustees attended: Dr. Susan Trussler, John Ezbiansky, Laila Kane, Stephanie Westington, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Aaron Nivert, and Dr. John Ruddy. Absent: Laurie Cadden, Susan Hennemuth and Dr. Fran Langan.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; Maria Rozaieski, Principal; TreeAnne McEnery, Assistant Principal; Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager; Janet Kania, School Secretary; and Kimberly Kost Scanlon, Esq., School Solicitor.

Dr. Susan Trussler announced at this time any visitor may comment or ask questions pertaining to items listed on the October agenda. At this time, the visitors in attendance had no comments or questions regarding the agenda. The meeting proceeded.

I. Minutes

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler presented the September 17, 2019 Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked if there were any corrections or additions. At this time, there were no corrections or additions and the **MOTION** to approve the September 17, 2019 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Dr. Clarence Lamanna. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the minutes as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

II. President's Report

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler reported on bids that are currently being submitted for Phase II of the Master Plan. Consideration of the bids will take place at next month's meeting.

Susan also invited all HGMICS Board members, administrators, faculty and staff to the Fall Gathering, which will take place on Friday, November 1st from 4:00 PM-6:00 PM at POSH in downtown Scranton. The event is hosted by the Board of Trustees. In addition, Susan reported that all committees are actively meeting and progress is being made on many fronts.

III. Finance Committee

Stephanie Westington

1. Financial Report

Chuck Wallinger

Stephanie Westington deferred to Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager who presented the report. Chuck Wallinger reported revenues are \$10,390.30 above budget for September 2019. The Tuition revenue was above budget by \$10,361.31; this was based on increased school district per pupil rates.

Expenses were \$17,938.42 above budget for September 2019. The Facilities costs were above budget due to Phase I of the approved Master Plan by \$7,575.02. Net Operating loss for September 2019 of \$27,817/04 was below budget by \$7,548.12 due to Phase I of the approved Master Plan. There is \$433,218 remaining on the FNCB loan at a fixed rate of 3.35%. The August 2019 School District billing was paid by Unipay in September 2019 for \$50,065. The July through September, 2019 Scranton School District Unipay billing is expected to be paid in October, 2019. In addition, Chuck added that the School had 112 days cash on hand at the end of the month.

The **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through September 30, 2019 as reported and submitted was made by John Ezbiansky and seconded by Dr. Susan Trussler. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Financial Report as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

2. Reimbursement Resolution

Dr. John Ruddy

Dr. John Ruddy presented the Reimbursement Resolution and Intent to pursue a tax-free loan for the purpose of supporting the construction of an addition to the School (Master Plan Phase II). The **MOTION** to approve the Reimbursement Resolution was made by Aaron Nivert and seconded by Stephanie Westington. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Reimbursement Resolution as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

IV. Development Committee

Susan Hennemuth

In the absence of Susan Hennemuth, Marie George, CEO reported that the Development Committee met and identified the need to fundraise for Phase III of the Master Plan. To address this need, it was decided that we need to hire a fundraising consultant. Marie was asked to issue a Request for Proposals to several fundraising consulting firms. Interested firms must submit their Proposals by November 1, 2019 after which time the Development Committee will review and decide upon next steps. Updates will be given at next month's meeting.

V. Academic Committee

Dr. Fran Langan

1. HGICS Educator Induction Program

In the absence of Dr. Fran Langan, Dr. Susan Trussler, President stated that the Academic Committee met last week to discuss the updated Educator Induction Program that complies with PDE requirements and includes a HGMICS mission-related component that will be implemented during the 2019-2020 school year. With no further discussion, **MOTION** which was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Stephanie Westington to approve the HGMICS Educator Induction Program as presented. All Trustees presented voted in favor of approving the motion as presented, with three Trustees absent.

VI. Personnel Committee

Dr. Marie George

1. Teacher Aide

Marci McDermott

Dr. Marie George presented the request to appoint Marci McDermott as Teacher Aide effective

October 16, 2019 at a prorated salary based upon an annual salary of \$20,600 with estimated benefits not to exceed 30%, or \$6,180, for a prorated annual total of \$26,780. The **MOTION** to appoint Marci McDermott as Teacher Aide was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Aaron Nivert. With no further discussion, all Trustees presented voted in favor of appointing Marci McDermott as Teacher Aide, with three Trustees absent.

VII. School Matters

1. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Marie began her report by stating that it has been a busy start to the year with many exciting projects underway. Marie was pleased to report that there has been steady progress on goals of the 2019-2020 Strategic Plan – Expand, Engage and Enhance. Marie noted the increased time needed to address the government relations due to the negative political climate towards charter schools. However she pointed out that this is another opportunity to increase awareness about our School in the media, in the legislature and in our local community.

Marie now issues “Action Alerts” to the Howard Gardner Community (staff, parents/guardians and trustees) to inform them of current legislative issues. Recent communications conveyed the outcomes of Governor Wolf’s press conferences regarding his actions to address charter school reforms. All HGMICS stakeholders were encouraged to contact their local legislators. Marie reported that she recently met with Senator Balke and Rep. Kyle Mullins; Rep Mullins also visited the school. Rep. Marty Flynn has not yet returned any of Marie’s calls to his staffers. To assist with this, Marie drafted a ‘parent letter’ that was sent out with envelopes pre-addressed to four legislators. The copies and envelopes were donated by Rosemary Bohenek (parent), Center City Print, and Northeastern Envelope Company. Parents Karen McKeon and Kristina Grego assisted in collating and distributing.

Marie met twice in recent weeks with Sarah Hofius-Hall, Scranton Times Education Reporter. During Sarah’s second visit last Tuesday she visited classrooms, interviewed several students and had numerous photos taken in preparation for a feature story on charter schools. The feature story is expected to appear in the Sunday, October 27th edition.

Marie announced that HGMICS is a member of Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools (PCPCS), along with 130 other PA charter schools, Marie also serves on their Advisory Board. Last week, Marie and Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager attending the PCPCS Annual Conference in Harrisburg. Marie attended their quarterly Board meeting prior to the conference. Important conference take-aways included 1) the anti-charter school movement is being fueled by the Pennsylvania Teachers union and their powerful lobbying efforts, 2) informed parent/family actions and involvement are essential in reaching legislators, who now are hearing only from the traditional public school sector, and 3) inaccurate information is being circulated to legislators who don’t fully understand the complexities regarding charter school funding and accountability.

The last week of January is National School Choice Week. HGMICS will participate in recognizing the importance of the right to school choice. January 27-31st also coincides with the annual time for our school enrollment. On January 30th, HGMICS will host our first “Open House” from 6-7:30 PM for which appropriate advertising and public relations will be pursued.

Michael Abballe, IT Specialist is developing a new look for our website and expects to have it completed by December. The web page will have more information about our academic program.

Mike and TreeAnne are working closely to incorporate this information. Our aim is to have an updated and informative website in advance of our “Open House” on January 30, 2020.

Marie reminded the Board that TreeAnne McEnery, Assistant Principal presented an overview of the updated Educator Induction Program at the September Board meeting. This program is required for all newly hired teachers at HGMICS and is a prerequisite for Level II Certification from the PA Department of Education (PDE).

As reported and approved earlier in this meeting, the proposal for the Reimbursement Resolution and Intent to pursue tax-free loan to assist in financing Phase II of the Master plan has been approved. Brian Koscelansky, Esq. (Stevens and Lee) will direct the tax-free loan process. The Finance Committee continues to evaluate which banking institution will be selected to assist in the financing of Phase II of the Master Plan. The goal is to have a Board decision at the November Board meeting, which will trigger architectural design and construction plans according to a timeline recently reviewed with Hemmler +Camayd.

Marie provided several personnel updates. The search for a full-time School Psychologist is underway. The position has been posted on our website, advertised in the Scranton Times and distributed through PennLink. One of our newly-hired Teacher Aides William Shiver, resigned on October 7th and Kim Wall is currently on maternity leave since having her beautiful baby girl, Isabella on September 21st. Two substitutes, who regularly provide coverage for HGMICS are available while Kim is on leave.

Since the start of school, we had one security drill (Lock Out) as required by PDE within the first 30 days of school. We had two fire drills including the required one with the Fire Department present on October 10th; we evacuated the building in 1 minute and 25 seconds. All drills that take place over the course of the school year are reported to PDE in July for the previous school year and are included in our annual safety report. All faculty and staff have been asked to complete ALICE Training and submit their certificates to the Human Resource department to be kept on file.

The Wellness Committee launched a new initiative “Eat a Rainbow”. Each month of the school year there will be a different color featured as the theme and corresponding colored foods will be featured during a designated day at the lunch period. Thanks to Patty Biko and parent volunteers a tasting table replete with apples, tomatoes, radishes and red grapes was available on Johnny Appleseed Day, September 26th.

Finally, the demolition of the three lower lot structures is complete, although final removal of debris and grading remains to be done. The bathroom sinks for all classrooms have not been installed yet due to the unexpected complexity of that project. Further updates will be provided on these outstanding facility projects.

2. Principal Report

Maria Rozaieski

Maria reported that it has been an extremely busy month in the day to day events at HGMICS. Maria highlighted the school activities as:

- The Safety Committee continues to meet monthly and continuously reviews safety procedures. Maria reiterate the Lockout security drill and announced fire drill that took place in September.

Faculty and staff were made aware of our current, temporary evacuation routes and procedures. Maria stated that she and the administration are very concerned over the recent bomb threats that have been plaguing surrounding school districts. Faculty and staff have been asked to be vigilant when conducting outside activities with the students.

- School happenings included the Intermediate through Senior classes participating in a week of outdoor education during the month of September. Teachers utilized the campus grounds, nearby Robinson Park and in some cases Lackawanna State Park, Goose Pond Scout Camp and downtown Scranton. Kindergarten and Primary classes do not have a dedicated week for outdoor education; however, teachers are encouraged to incorporate the outdoors in lessons plans whenever possible. The HGMICS 2nd Annual Curriculum Night took place on September 19th. Parents came to hear presentations from teachers about their classrooms. Positive feedback was received both from parents and teachers. In the future, schedules will be revised to accommodate families that have children in more than one class or grade level. The Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) team held its first monthly Spirit Day and reward blowout of the school year entitled “Fall Fun Festival”. Students gathered in the multi-purpose room for the announcement of STAR students of the month on September 27th. The blowout consisted of three stations: The Adrenaline Rush Obstacle Course, a music karaoke station and a Caramel Apple Station. Faculty and staff dressed in their fall flannel shirts for the event.
- A number of extracurricular clubs are underway this fall. They include: Community Service, STEAM, Everything Pumpkin, Pep Squad, Book Club, Science Fun and Video Club. All clubs are developed by teachers and are after school from 3:15-4:15 on various days. A Basketball Clinic and Cross-Country Team are also planned for the near future.
- The Parent Forum will be hosting its annual Trunk or Treat in the Parking lot on Sunday, October 27th.

VII. Educational Presentation

Student Achievement: PSSA Results Spring 2019

Maria Rozaieski

Maria Rozaieski, Principal presented the “Student Achievement: PSSA Results Spring 2019”. The slide show presentation began by explaining the results are a snap shot of a “Moment in time” over a three-year period. Each year was represented by a designated color to show the progress or regress of each subject area. There are three major subject areas that are tested and scored in the PSSA’s. These subject areas are ELA, Math and Science. Maria went on to explain that the grade levels participating in the testing from the period of 2017, 2018 and 2019 were grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Maria stated that in some cases even though the grade level had been less proficient in a subject area; overall results were above state averages. Maria said that these data are useful when projecting future curriculum, enrollment expectations and future educational plans. Further analysis will be conducted to determine the best educational format.

IX. New Business

Second Public Hearing of Visitors to any school-related topics.

At this time, there was no new school business that needed to be addressed.

At 8:04 PM, no further items of business were raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Dr. John Ruddy and accepted by all Board of Trustees present, with three Trustee absent.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 19, 2019 at 7:00 PM.**