

Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a virtual Public Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, May 19, 2020. The HGMICS facility is located at 1615 East Elm Street, Scranton, PA; however, due to the state mandated closure this meeting was held virtually. Dr. Susan Trussler, President called the meeting to order at 7:06 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, Laurie Cadden, Sam Ceccacci, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Aaron Nivert, Dr. Fran Langan, Dr. John Ruddy and Stephanie Westington.

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

Dr. Susan Trussler welcomed visitors and stated at this time any visitor could comment and ask questions regarding May's agenda items; however, visitors must state their name and school district affiliation. At this time, the visitors in attendance virtually had no comments or questions regarding the agenda. The meeting proceeded.

I. Minutes

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler presented the April 21, 2020 Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked if there were any corrections or additions. With no corrections or additions, a **MOTION** to approve the April 21, 2020 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the minutes as submitted.

II. President's Report

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler announced that the Board of Trustees held its Executive Board meeting session on Monday, May 19th. Dr. Trussler extended a heartfelt "thank you" to all staff, faculty, families, and Board members who stepped up in any way they could to help out over these last months with the state mandated closure of educational institutions.

Dr. Trussler announced with great sadness, that this would be the last Board meeting that two esteemed colleagues would be attending. Dr. Trussler said with a heavy heart, that it is sad for us but joyful for them that we say "Good bye and thank you for all you have done over the past 20 plus years" to Jaci Sandercock, Kindergarten teacher and Maria Rozaieski, Principal who both will be leaving at the end of the school year, June 5, 2020.

Dr. Trussler continued to inform the group that the next Board meeting in June would be the last Board meeting for the 2019-2020 academic school year. Dr. Trussler said that the next year is just around the corner and the Board looks forward to a very exciting year with hopes to get school back to

normal. Dr. Trussler stated that a main purpose of next month's meeting will be to present the proposed budget for 2020-2021 for approval, as well as explore major plans for the 2020-2021 academic year.

1. III. Finance/Facilities Committee

Stephanie Westington

Financial Report

Chuck Wallinger

Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager reported revenues were \$6,460 below the budgeted amount for the month of April 2020. The Tuition revenue was below the budgeted amount by \$2,204.23; this was based on a decrease in enrollment to 273. The Food Service revenue was below the budgeted amount by \$2,777.78 due to COVID-19. The Student Activities revenue was below budget by \$1,392.82 due to the cancellation of Spring Clubs because of COVID-19.

Expenses were \$6,096.86 below the budgeted amount for April 2020. The Substitute Teacher costs were below budget by \$2,405 due to COVID-19. The NEIU-19 (Northeast Intermediate Unit) costs were below budget by \$3,500 due to COVID-19. The cleaning costs were below budget by \$843.44 due to the elimination of the daily cleaning services during closure. The Net Operating Revenue for April 2020 of \$25,407.03 was below budget by \$366.09. The Fiscal Year Net Operating Revenue budgeted amount is expected to be reached.

The School has 165 days of cash at the end of April 2020, which places the School in a very positive solvency position. The aggregate cash balance recorded has caught up to the recorded reserve through April 2020, which was questioned by some Board members. There is \$389,775 remaining on the current FNCB loan at a fixed rate of 3.35%.

The March 2020 School District billing was paid by Unipay in April 2020 for \$256,485.03. The five School District's that pay us directly are up to date through March 2020. The Federal Grant Title I, Title II, and Title IV have been paid through April 2020. Parents/Guardians have been refunded the appropriate Spring School Club payment amounts due to COVID-19.

Dr. Trussler asked if there were any questions at this time regarding the Finance Report. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Year-To-Date Financial Report through April 30, 2020 as reported and submitted was made by Dr. Fran Langan and seconded by Aaron Nivert. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Financial Report as submitted, with no Trustees absent.

2. Legal Services/Solicitor

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington announced that in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP) and after review of proposals by the Finance Committee, the law firm of McKenna Snyder, LLC will serve as solicitor providing legal counsel to the Howard Gardner MI Charter School effective July 1, 2020. An Agreement of Service defines the services and hourly rates for the duration of this annual agreement. Stephanie presented the motion for approval by the Board of Trustees.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve McKenna Snyder, LLC as solicitor to HGMICS was made by Dr. Susan Trussler and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees present voted

in favor of approving McKenna Snyder, LLC as legal counsel and solicitor effective July 1, 2020, with no Trustees absent.

Stephanie Westington asked Dr. John Ruddy, Facilities Committee chairperson to present the follow two policies.

1. Purchases Subject to Bid Policy

Dr. John Ruddy

Dr. Ruddy began by stating that the policy pertains to advertising and obtaining competitive bids for products and services where such bids are required by law or where such bids may be believed to bring about a cost-saving to Howard Gardner MI Charter School.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Purchases Subject to Bid Policy as submitted was made by Laila Kane and seconded by John Ezbiansky. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Purchases Subject to Bid Policy as submitted, with no Trustees absent.

2. Disqualification, Suspension or Debarment of Bidders Policy

Dr. John Ruddy

Dr. John Ruddy presented the Disqualification, Suspension or Debarment of Bidders Policy for approval that sets forth standards to determine which bidders are considered non-responsible as well as procedures to disqualify or suspend or debar non-responsible bidders from contracting or subcontracting with the Howard Gardner MI Charter School.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Disqualification, Suspension or Debarment of Bidders Policy was made by Dr. Susan Trussler and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Disqualification, Suspension or Debarment of Bidders Policy as submitted, with no Trustees absent.

IV. Academic Committee

Dr. Fran Langan

Dr. Langan informed the group that the Academic Committee has been meeting frequently during the month and presented the Board of Trustees with the Teacher Evaluation Policy that will become effective in the 2020-2021 School Year that outlines responsibilities and guidelines for all teaching levels.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Teacher Evaluation Policy as submitted for approval was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Stephanie Westington. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Teacher Evaluation Policy as submitted, with no Trustees absent.

V. Development Committee

Susan Hennemuth

Susan Hennemuth informed the group that the Development Committee will be meeting on Thursday, May 21st at 5 PM virtually to discuss the fundraising possibilities. The Development Committee will also discuss possible ideas for annual events to supplement lost revenue from the canceled Golf Tournament. In addition, the Development Committee will be exploring grant opportunities for health-related equipment for the school.

VI. Personnel Committee

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Trussler reported that the Personnel Committee met several times over the last few weeks to discuss concerns regarding teacher retention and increasing salaries and benefits. All faculty were invited to a meeting with the committee, originally scheduled for March but postponed to May 6th, which was very productive. The Personnel Committee will consider their discussions as part of the budget planning and pass recommendations on to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee will then submit the recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval at the June meeting. It was also clarified that hiring for open positions is underway and openings will be placed on the web site and advertised.

Dr. Trussler announced that due to the increased responsibilities she assumed upon the mandated closure of the School, TreeAnne McEnery, Lower School Principal, should be compensated with a stipend of \$1,500 a month beginning March 13th through the last day of school, June 5th. Furthermore, at this time given Maria Rozaieski's impending departure an Interim Principal appointment should be made. This Interim position will continue until the position of Principal has been posted and filled.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the stipend beginning March 13th through the last day of school, June 5th for TreeAnne McEnery, Lower School Principal was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Aaron Nivert. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the stipend as presented, with no Trustees absent.

At this time, Dr. Trussler's recommendation was to immediately appoint TreeAnne McEnery, Lower School Principal as the Interim Principal at her current salary with an additional \$1,500 per month, effective June 6th until the position of Principal has been filled.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the appointment of TreeAnne McEnery as Interim Principal effective June 6th until the appointment of a Principal, was made by Sam Ceccacci and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving TreeAnne McEnery as Interim Principal as nominated, with no Trustees absent.

VII. Nominating Committee

Laila Kane

Laila Kane reviewed that with the recent approval of the Bylaw Amendment Suspending Term Limits, the Nominating Committee recommends that all trustees suspend their board term limits for the one-year period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 to ensure stability for the School given the current uncertainty surrounding the 2020-2021 school year.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the suspension of term limits for all current trustees for one year from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 was made by Susan Hennemuth and seconded by Stephanie Westington. All Trustees present voted in favor of implementing the Bylaw Amendment Suspending Term Limits for one year as submitted, with no Trustees absent.

VIII. School Matters

Dr. Susan Trussler

Resolution Opposing Governor Wolf's Proposed Funding Cuts

The resolution was presented by Dr. Trussler. Dr. Trussler explained that the Resolution of the

Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools and Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School opposes Governor Wolf's proposed funding cuts to charter schools and their families/students.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Resolution Opposing Governor Wolf's Proposed Funding Cuts was made by Dr. Fran Langan and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Resolution Opposing Governor Wolf's Proposed Funding Cuts as submitted, with no Trustees absent.

1. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. Marie George began her report by thanking the Board of Trustees for their approval of the Resolution Opposing Governor Wolf's Proposed Funding Cuts. Dr. George went on to state that not only does HGMICS oppose the proposed funding cuts but all other charter schools in Pennsylvania are passing similar resolutions and a counter action against all the traditional school districts in the state that are passing resolutions that support cutting charter school funding. The one common theme among both charter and school district resolutions is the call for the needed reform of charter school law.

Dr. George presented the Board of Trustees with the following report:

- While winding down this current year, we are simultaneously preparing for next year. With only three more weeks left, Dr. George commended the staff and families for their dedicated work during these challenging times. Based upon the previously approved calendar for 2020-2021 school year, the first day of school is slated for August 26th.
- This will be a different summer, all SCAMPS are cancelled and replaced with a CoE Summer Program. Incoming Kindergarten class screening, rescheduled from May, will be held the week of August 10th. Arielle May & Sara Wintermute, Kindergarten teachers, will lead the Kindergarten weeklong program.
- The Safety Committee met on May 8th to begin addressing the reopening of the school for the 2020-2021 school year. The committee reviewed CDC reopening guidelines. Guidelines from PDE are expected to be distributed in the upcoming weeks. Currently HGMICS has formed groups to address various aspects of reopening the school, for example: lunch distribution, arrival/dismissal procedures, health checks upon entry, social distancing in the classroom, sanitizing protocols, minimizing student circulation in the school, protecting vulnerable employees and students and continuing to offer remote learning for intermittent and/or extended school closures. Needed health and safety supplies are already being ordered.
- In order to enhance our ability to provide a more integrative approach to remote learning, the purchase of a Learning Management System (LMS) is planned that will replace the current Google Classroom and Zoom platforms. The LMS would be integrated with our Student Information System (SIS) and after researching the highest rated LMS among schools, three systems were investigated. The Schoology LMS is our top choice. The demo is now being reviewed by the staff for feedback with the expectation to install and train all staff in July and August for implementation for the 2020-2021 school year. Marie stated that Mike Abballe, IT and herself are looking over the agreement which will cost \$3500 per year, with additional costs for related training and installation during the first year.
- It was anticipated that the 2020-2021 Budget would be completed and ready to submit to the Board of Trustees in May for approval but is delayed to accommodate for changing priorities; teacher salaries are being re-examined. All budget managers have been asked to rethink and

anticipate what additional needs will be needed for with the reopening of school. Final 2020-2021 budget request and recommendations will be submitted and presented to the Board of Trustees at the June 16TH meeting. A June 2020 Board approval for the next year's budget still allows for timely submission to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

- There are several federal and state level funding opportunities to support schools due to the emergency situation being experienced. HGMICS has been notified of available funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency that will distribute federal funds through the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and through the CARES Act/ESSER funds. This will help with items that will be needed to reopen the school without utilizing funds from the budget.
- The initial PEMA grant application was recently submitted and more detailed requests must be submitted in the upcoming weeks. This fund supports costs associated with supplies and services to ensure the safety and security of the school building and occupants related to COVID 19. It is anticipated that PEMA funding would offset at least \$20,000 of allowable expenses from January 2020 through September 30, 2020.
- ESSER funds (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund) will be released in June and applications were opened this week. Allocations are based upon Title I fund methodology and HGMICS is targeted to receive \$78,000. This grant will provide HGMICS the opportunity to both recoup expenses and prepare for expenditures directly related to increasing student access, teacher preparedness and related materials, supplies, technology and training to provide remote learning to a K-8 student.
- The consolidated application for the federal Title I, II & IV will open this week, which will present another opportunity for important funding for 2020-20221. HGMICS was notified that the US Department of Education Small Rural School Achievement (SRSA) grant was funded again for the 2020-2021 school year with the provision to extend the years use of the funds for the 2019-20202 and 2020-2021 school year.
- Dr. George met remotely with the parents/guardians of the eight -grade graduating class, four senior teachers, Maria and TreeAnne on May 5th to discuss the 2020 Graduation. Eleven of the 18 families attended the meeting. The three areas discussed were academic progress, special recognitions for the Class of 2020 and the Graduation ceremony. A yearbook for the eighth-grade class is being designed and for each of the final 18 days of the school year (beginning May 13th) a student will be featured on our website and Facebook page. Cap & gowns in royal blue have been ordered and will be distributed to each eight-grade student at the time of Student Material pick-up for the students to keep. Picture day for the graduates will be announced as well as the graduation date.
- Regarding the building addition, the design details are complete and bidding specifications are being drafted. At this time, no date has been set for the bidding process pending final municipal approvals whose offices have been closed since March.
- Recruitment for two teacher positions for the Primary I and Intermediate I classes, and for the Principal position, due to Maria's departure, are underway. HGMICS was optimistically planning to have an overseas Mandarin Chinese Teacher join the faculty for the 2020-2021 school year. However, the School's application to the Taiwanese Ministry of Education, while approved, was withdrawn last week due to the uncertainty associated with the operations of the 2020-2021 school year and international travel required of the selected Mandarin Chinese teacher. Due to the expansion of the campus, a Director, Facilities and Security job will be posted as well as bids for a new Security system.

2. Lower School Principal's Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne McEnery, Lower School Principal reported:

- the week of May 4th-8th was National Teacher Appreciation Week. TreeAnne publicly recognized, appreciates and thanked each of our teachers for an engaging, lively, and professional remote education program. The teachers maintained high expectations for student learning and placed tremendous effort into the HGMICS CoE. These times require all of us to be flexible and responsive to our environment. All staff are doing the very best they can to meet the needs of the HGMICS community and there is no failure within our staff and their implementation of the CoE.
- TreeAnne updated the Board of Trustees on the CoE plan. TreeAnne reported meeting with each Pod on May 1st to receive staff feedback on how they are managing the program and to address any concerns they may have in moving forward with the CoE over the past 9 weeks. TreeAnne stated that instructional program stays as true as they can to our mission and maintains alignment with the PA State Standards. The faculty found routines for weekly work and remain in active communication and available to their students. The week of May 25th, teachers will begin to wind down the year in preparation for the final days of school which is scheduled for June 5th. In addition, attendance during CoE has predominately been successful. There has been a handful of families that are in communication with their lead teachers and Jade Volchoff, School Counselor as to any issues that prohibit the students from successfully participating in the CoE. TreeAnne reported that Jade and herself are in communication about continued concerns shared by teachers.
- The school designed two programs to help address additional educational support students needs during CoE and the summer. After-School tutoring program began on May 4th and will end on June 1st. There are 22 students enrolled and six tutors providing support. A CoE Summer Program has been established. The CoE Summer Program is offered to students that are recommended by the teacher in consultation with the family. The CoE Summer Program teachers will design Individualized Academic Plans for each student that enrolls to address areas of concern.
- The teachers completed mini-progress reports that were sent through Sycamore to all families on May 15th. These reports are meant to briefly inform families of whether their child(ren) are progressing satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily during the third trimester. Teachers were asked to include whether a student may be recommended for the CoE Summer Program in the report.
- TreeAnne acknowledged Meghan Feliciani, IT who continues to offer support to instructional staff with making remote classrooms and assignments integrative, organized, relevant and engaging. Meghan recently communicated a PD schedule for every Wednesday until June 3rd. Topics included Google Forms/Google Classroom and Drive Organization, Games in the online environment, Online resources and Safe Sharing and Planning for the Future.
- TreeAnne identified that the Teacher Effectiveness Plan & Policy that was established is a PDE aligned Teacher Supervision and Evaluation Plan which recognizes that HGMICS strives to be a leading center of excellence in primary and middle school education. Administration's responsibility to the teachers for student achievement and growth coincides with teacher's

professional growth and effectiveness. The foundation of the teacher supervision and evaluation plan is professional development. This allows to create and advocate a continuous learning culture which justifies the School's mission to implement innovative instructional methods and programs for the students imbued with the multiple intelligence framework.

- TreeAnne announced the results of the Parent Survey II on how planned instruction is going for families. The summary of the results was:
 - All instruction materials on Sunday is working
 - Students/Families are most actively working on schoolwork in the AM
 - Families are spending 6+ hours a week, with 8+ hours being most dominant on assignments
 - Manageability of the weeklong work is mixed between manageable and not manageable
 - Google Classroom is a significant communication resource for students
 - Weekly Assignment Charts are a huge support for students and families as well as live sessions
 - Families found the Teacher assignment posts which are done on Sunday, a benefit for school planning of assignments
 - Class meetings are attended by students and these students participate for social reasons, even if that means just being in communication with teachers and their peers
 - Most families do not think their children will need a summer program
 - Most families are aware of the PBIS Online Matrix which can be found on the website for good Behavioral protocol.

A third survey will be sent to families for an overview of experience and satisfaction over the last few weeks of the academic year. TreeAnne asked if anyone had any questions regarding her presentation. John Ezbiensky, Board of Trustee Member and parent informed the group that he has received communications from several families and is very impressed with the progress of the program due to COVID19. John stated all of the feedback that was given to him has been positive. John commended the administration, faculty and staff for the great job they are doing. TreeAnne thanked John for his gracious remarks and the continued support of the Board of Trustees.

3. Middle School Principal's Report

Maria Rozaieski

Maria Rozaieski, Middle School Principal reported the updates on school happenings from April 21st to present as:

- The Parent Forum acknowledged "Teacher Appreciation" week by producing a virtual video which was sent to all staff.
- Virtual Spirit Week was held on May 5th through May 8th. The theme included Star Wars Day, Cinco de Mayo, which featured a live taco making session, Work it Wednesday, Thank a Teacher Thursday and Friday Furry Friend.
- Jade Volchoff, Guidance Counselor along with Joe Bomba, Spanish and Video Club teacher put together a Virtual Talent Show. The Spring Talent show takes place each year and this year due to COVID19 became virtual and is part of our Schoolwide Behavior Intervention and Support program as a monthly blowout.
- Currently the Career Fair has gone virtual and started at the beginning of May. Several people from the community have participated in our Virtual Career Fair.
- The Parent Forum and Coach Brian Kubilis, Phys Ed Teacher are busy planning a virtual field

day for the students which will take place on May 29th. They have planned activities and provided the student body and staff with T-shirts for the event.

- Our Positive Behavior Support and Intervention team has been meeting regularly and preparing for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Teacher evaluations for the 2019-2020 school year have been completed.
- This coming week teachers will be scheduled to come into their classrooms for Year End Clean up. Students personal belongs will be packed up and a schedule for Student pick up will take place next week.
- Melissa Cruise, Art Teacher posted a virtual Art Show which appears on the web page.

Maria ended by saying that she has thoroughly enjoyed her time at HGMICS including working with all students, families and staff. Maria said “it’s been great”.

IX. New Business

At this time Dr. Susan Trussler ask if there was anyone who had any new business items to be presented. Jade Volchoff, Scranton School district, asked to speak. Jade began by stating she wasn’t sure if this was the proper time to comment; however, she wanted to express her surprise and sadness over the resignation of Maria Rozaieski, Principal. Jade stated that Maria along with Vince Rizzo were the people who has interviewed her eight years ago for her current position as School Counselor and she was grateful for the opportunity granted to her by Maria. Jade went on to say she felt that Maria in her many years of service was not only an educator, leader, but also a friend who stepped up when she was needed by the school.

Dr. Susan Trussler addressed the group by saying “thank you” to everyone for all that has been done, especially Marie. Dr. Trussler added that no one knows how long COVID 19 is going to go on. Good luck to everyone especially to everyone who will be leaving us, the students, faculty and staff and the best of everything moving forward. As we approach the end of the school year let’s hope for better times in face of this pandemic.

Renee Dougherty, Abington Heights School District, echoed Jade’s remarks and thanked Jaci and Maria for the 25 years plus to the school.

Dr. Trussler announced in the Zoom virtual chat room a visitor raised a question regarding the possibility of a Parent focus group to discuss remote plans for the new school year? Dr. Marie George responded that parent focus groups are planned and as has been done for the past two years will be held shortly after the conclusion of the school year. Specific dates and information will follow.

Adjournment

At 8:19 PM, no further items of business or comments were raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Susan Hennemuth and accepted by all Board of Trustees present, with no Trustees absent.

The next virtual HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 7:00 PM.**