

Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, August 18, 2020

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees virtual meeting via ZOOM on Tuesday, August 18, 2020. The HGMICS facility, is located at 1615 East Elm Street, Scranton, PA. Dr. Susan Trussler, President called the meeting to order at 7:00 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, Sam Ceccacci, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Aaron Nivert, Dr. Fran Langan and Dr. John Ruddy. Absent from the meeting: Laurie Cadden and Stephanie Westington. NOTE: Stephanie Westington joined the meeting later due to a prior obligation.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager; Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Security, Janet Kania, School Secretary; and Joshua Pollak, Esq., School Counsel.

Dr. Susan Trussler welcomed visitors and asked if any visitor had comments regarding August's agenda items. At this time, the visitors virtually in attendance had no comments or questions regarding the agenda. The meeting proceeded.

I. Minutes

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler presented the July 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 July 21, 2020 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Laila Kane, and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the minutes as submitted, with two Trustees absent.

II. President's Report

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler informed everyone that this has been a very busy month with the plans for reopening the school. Until further notice, all Board and Committee meetings will be conducted remotely. The announcement of all remote meetings will be posted to the website and a public legal notice was submitted to the Scranton Times Newspaper.

Dr. George and TreeAnne McEnery organized the Pre-service for all faculty and staff that began on Monday, August 17th. Details will be presented later in the meeting by Dr. George and TreeAnne.

Discussions from the Academic Committee will be presented later in the meeting. The Personnel Committee will present the need for additional staff for the all-remote program now being offered, as well as the adoption of new policies.

At this time, Stephanie Westington had joined the meeting and asked that Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager present the Financial report for July and deferred to Chuck's presentation.

1. July Financial Report**Chuck Wallinger**

Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager reported revenues are \$17,344.80 above budget for July 2020. The CARES ACT-ESSER Grant revenue was above budget by \$16,975.45; this revenue was not budgeted. Expenses are \$18,053.16 above budget for July 2020. The Administration costs were above budget by \$7,108.27 due to the payment to the School's former Principal that was not budgeted. The COVID-19 costs of \$16,975.45 were not budgeted but are offset with revenue received from the CARES ACT-ESSER Grant. The Debt Service was below budget by \$7,519.41 due to the delay in the \$4.5 million dollar loan from FNCB.

The Net Operating Revenue for July 2020 of \$4,384.85 was below budget by \$708.36. The School had \$705,932.21 in cash at the end of July 2020. This is approximately \$362,621.68 less than the balance at the end of June 2020. This represents 87 days cash on hand, which places the School in a positive solvency position. The FY 2019-20 Unipay redirection and direct school district payments of \$568,575.75 are expected to be paid in August 2020. The 5 school districts that made partial payments did not have funds available but will subsequently make the balance payments; Scranton School District is one of the five who did not have funds available for FY 2019-2020 billing. Chuck had a conversation with the Business Manager from the Scranton School District earlier in the day. The Scranton Business Manager and Chuck are in discussions about Scranton changing their method of payment from Unipay redirection to direct payment. There is \$370,952 remaining on the FNCB loan at a fixed rate of 3.35%. The Federal Grant Title II and CARES ACT-ESSER have been paid in July 2020.

Stephanie Westington thanked Chuck for his report. Stephanie asked if there were any questions at this time regarding the Financial Report. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through July 31, 2020 as reported and submitted was made by Sam Ceccacci and seconded by John Ezbiansky. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Financial Report as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

2. Construction of Building Addition**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington presented an update on the construction of the building addition. Stephanie announced that the Finance/Facilities Committee met on Monday, followed by an Executive work session later that same day when bids for the 4 prime contractors were reviewed. The 4 lowest bids came in significantly over the budgeted amount. The Finance/Facilities Committee, at this time feels that it is not in the best interest to increase the debt. Kevin Morgan from Sordoni Construction and Laura Mills from Hemmler + Camayd continue to work with the School and are looking into why the bids came in over budget. Both will take a closer look at ways to value engineer the bids as well as at the possibility of reducing the scope of the project without sacrificing functionality to bring the building addition into budget. The Finance/Facilities Committee, at this time is not ready to move forward and will review the recommendations from Sordoni Construction and Hemmler + Camayd in

the near future.

IV. Public Participation Policy

Joshua Pollak, Esq.

Joshua Pollak, Esq., School Solicitor presented an overview of the proposed Public Participation Policy which is in line with the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act. The Pennsylvania Sunshine Act presents regulations requiring transparency and disclosure in schools, government or business. Schools, government or business are required to make meetings, records, votes, deliberations, and other official actions available for public observation, participation, and/or inspection. With no further discussion a **MOTION** to approve the Public Participation Policy as presented to be effective immediately was made by Dr. Susan Trussler and seconded by Dr. Clarence Lamanna. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Public Participation Policy effective immediately, with one Trustee absent.

V. Academic Committee

Dr. Fran Langan

1. Continuity of Education Plan & PDE Affirmation Statement

Dr. Langan informed the group that the Academic Committee met and reviewed the Continuity of Education Plan & PDE Affirmation Statement. The Continuity of Education Plan (CoE) must be presented for approval by the Board and posted to the school's website. The PDE Affirmation Statement must be signed by the CEO and Board of Trustees President upon approval and then submitted to PDE. The CoE follows the PDE educational instruction and attendance requirements. With no further discussion, a **MOTION** to approve HGMICS Continuity of Education plan for reopening the 2020-2021 school year and the associated Emergency Instruction Time report that will be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Continuity of Education Plan & PDE Affirmation Statement, with one Trustee absent.

VI. Personnel Committee

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Trussler began by thanking Joshua Pollak, School Solicitor for his guidance in developing a monthly Personnel Report for submission to the Board.

Dr. Trussler reviewed the report as follow:

- There six members of staff that will have a change in status effective this month.
- Four Teacher Aides, who are certified teachers, are going to move to teaching positions for at least the first trimester to staff the All-remote educational option for students. Alyson Eckler, Ariana Liples, Marci McDermott, and Rob Rouse will have their salaries adjusted based upon the current Teacher Step Scale.
- Michael Abballe, IT Specialist has been instrumental to the School's functioning during COVID that began in March. Michael has utilized his skills with updates to our website, Google classroom, Schoology, and remote learning since March. Michael will change his status to IT Manager.
- Dottie Shoemaker, Food Service Manager will change her status from part-time to full-time.
- There are three new hires, two of whom are to help staff with the all-remote program. One teaching position for Primary Pod all-remote program has been filled by Matthew Salerno. One full-time aide position for the year has been filled by Maria Guido, and a part-time all-remote grades 5-8 Science position has been filled by Deena Mahdavi.

- Kim Felkowski has resigned from her position as Food Service Assistant.

VII. School Matters

Dr. Susan Trussler

1. Title IX Policy

Joshua Pollak, Esq.

Dr. Trussler asked Joshua Pollak, Esq. to present the Title IX Policy. Joshua explained that the Title IX Policy is a policy that deals with sexual harassment, how to report incidents, steps in investigating allegations, process, etc. The U.S. Department of Education set forth changing requirements that necessitated the revisions to Title IX policies in all schools nationwide. With no further discussion, a **MOTION** to approve the Title IX Policy as submitted was made Dr. John Ruddy and seconded by Stephanie Westington. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Title IX Policy as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

1. Principal's Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne McEnery, Principal stated that in the ever-changing dynamics of COVID-19 she reported the following:

- The Reopening 2020-2021 Continuity of Education Plan (CoE) is completed and was reviewed by the Academic Committee. In July, when the School's Health and Safety Plan was presented to the Board of Trustees, the School did not plan to offer an all-remote program option. Since then, HGMICS families' needs had changed, and we agreed to develop and deliver an all-remote learning option. At the time of this report, over 70 students were scheduled for all-remote program, since then there are 80 students who have changed to the all-remote program, and TreeAnne anticipates additional students may opt for that option over the next couple of days.
- The 2020-2021 Continuity of Education Plan (CoE) and the Plan's Summary Chart is the School's reopening with a Hybrid A/B schedule, this schedule will allow two options that are hybrid or all-remote. Students at school have the schoolwide schedule programming automatically applied, while all-remote teachers will do their best to model their students' schedules based on the Pod schoolwide schedule. The program will be as follows:
 - Kindergarten: Arielle May and Sara Wintermute will Co-teach the kindergarten during the CoE. Arielle will teach the children at school while Sara will teach all kindergarten students on their scheduled remote learning day as well as the students enrolled in all-remote program. There is a total of 32 kindergarten students and half of them will be all-remote.
 - Primary: All lead primary teachers will remain at school with their assigned homeroom students. Students enrolled in the all-remote program will be taught by a separate certified teacher.
 - Intermediate to Senior: All lead intermediate through senior teachers will remain at school with their assigned homeroom students. Students enrolled in the all-remote program will be taught by separate certified teachers for each core subject: Math, ELA, Science, Cultures. Each remote cohort will be assigned a homeroom teacher as a point and support person.
 - K-8 Science: K-4 Science, Megan Wolfe will be teaching the at-school students remotely. Also a K-4 has been assigned to Rob Rouse and 5-8 teacher will be teaching all remote students.

- Specials: have been scheduled on a block rotation to limit their and the students' exposure to multiple classes a day. There is time identified in their schoolwide schedules to meet with all remote students.
- TreeAnne met with all the Pods, Specials, Title I, all remote teachers, and the Classroom Aides to describe the above programming and staffing. Preparation for how to plan, initiate, manage, and integrate grade-level curriculum/instructional objectives in a hybrid schedule has begun.
- Class lists and A/B cohorts are completed and shared with staff and families.
- The Annual Kindergarten Meet n' Greet for new families is scheduled for August 26th and 27th. Families that have opted for the all-remote program will be scheduled for Wednesday, August 26th. Families that have opted for the hybrid will be scheduled for Thursday, August 27th. The schedule will allow a 15-minute meeting for three families at a time.
- Pre-Service Agenda: Pre-service began on Monday, August 17th and will continue through August 28th. The program includes reviewing health and safety measures; Social-emotional learning, MTSS, and Mindfulness. Schoolwide goals, and the Charter Application's academic components. SLO's, Special Education, and Differentiated Instruction Reviewing the new Teacher Effectiveness Manual, discussing Standards-based progress reports, and Senior teacher, EJ Murphy will be presenting on systemic racism as the School's first step in addressing racial literacy and hidden curriculum.
- Since the Winter of 2019, the administration has been discussing adopting a standards-aligned progress reporting system. This type of progress report supports the teacher's knowledge and monitoring of student understanding and growth throughout the integrated grade-level curriculum as aligned to the standards. A draft of Pod Standard-Aligned Progress Report attributes and criteria aligned to the PA Core and National Core standards is complete. Teachers will review and provide feedback during pre-service.
- Marie George and TreeAnne hosted a virtual New Family Orientation, where approximately 40 new families attended. Families were grateful for the thorough presentation and time to address the school's general operations and new protocols because of COVID-19.

3. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George began her report by stating that the past weeks have been categorized as a series of 'pivots', with the ever-changing dynamics for reopening. Dr. George reported the following:

- Most significant change from the last Board report relates to the increased need for an all-remote program. A later survey indicated 50+ families or 70+ students who want an all-remote education to start the year.
- Early August plans to offer an all-remote program began. Two resulting effects: (1) there are smaller classes each day at the school which reduces the number of teacher aides needed and (2) we can now have four of our teacher aides who are certified teachers assigned to the all-remote program. The hybrid (A/B) model for both the at-school and all-remote programs will be utilized.
- PDE requirement is the completion of an "Affirmation Statement", titled *Emergency Instructional Time Template*, that ensures that our academic program while in this emergency status continues to meet state standards and is addressed in our Continuity of Education Plan, must be signed by the Board President and CEO.
- PDE Guidance issued on August 10th regarding Determining Instructional Models During the COVID-19 Pandemic utilizes the Department of Health's county by county health status and can be found on the web.

- Pennsylvania's Education Secretary Pedro Rivera announced his departure and will become president of Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in Lancaster. Dr. George expressed her congratulations and appreciation for his educational leadership in the Commonwealth.
- We will be "welcoming back" our students for the 2020-2021 school year in both our at-school or all-remote programs on August 31st. Notifications will include teacher assignments, class schedules, lunch program and transportation.
- Dr. George and TreeAnne McEnery held a remote New Parent Orientation on August 11th with 38 parents in attendance. Over-all consensus was widespread appreciation and excitement expressed about their students being able to attend our school.
- Three Q & A Sessions are scheduled beginning Wednesday, August 19th through Friday, August 21st with parents/guardian.
- Pre-service for all staff will begin on Monday, August 17th through Friday, August 27th.
- Joe Ross coordinated a meeting with the neighbors on August 10th beginning at 6:30 in our parking lot to update them on the building addition. There were 25 neighbors in attendance. An aerial drawing and rendering of the lobby were on display. Questions and concerns centered around the lower lot and water run-off/drainage. Those specific questions were fielded by Laura Gillett-Mills from Hemmler + Camayd and Jeff Jerome from GPI. Kevin Morgan and Brian Long from Sordoni Construction also made presentations. Joe Ross will be the point person for all neighborhood communications.
- The School's Annual Report was submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education prior to the August 1st due date. Copies of the report were forwarded to our two affiliated school districts-Scranton and Abington Heights, with a copy to our Intermediate Unit (NEIU19).
- Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager has been working closely with Baker-Tilly on the audit for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Chuck indicated that the audit is 95% completed, with a few minor items to be cleared-up. Chuck is confident that the 2019-2020 FY audit will be read to be presented to the Board at the September meeting.

VIII. New Business

Dr. Susan Trussler.

At this time, Dr. Trussler asked if there was anyone else in the audience who wished to voice any additional concerns. Without hearing any Dr. Trussler asked for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

At 8:11 PM, no further items of business or comments were raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Stephanie Westington and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan. Adjournment was accepted by all Board of Trustees present, with one Trustee absent.

The next virtual HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 7:00 PM.**