

Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, September 15, 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 non-voting members.

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 and Dr. John Ruddy. Absent from the meeting: Stephanie Westington.

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

Dr. Susan Trussler welcomed visitors and asked if any visitor had comments regarding September'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 August 18, 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 August 18, 2020 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Laila Kane, and seconded by Dr. Clarence Lamanna. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the minutes as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

II. President's Report

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler informed everyone at this time there is a lot going on that will be presented in tonight's meeting. At this time, Dr. Trussler turned the meeting over to Joseph Ross, Director of Facilities and Security to present the Updated Health and Safety Plan. Joe gave a brief overview of the updates to the previously approved Health and Safety Plan with regard to the re-opening of the School for the 2020-2021 year.

With no further discussion a **MOTION** to approve the Updated HGMICS Health and Safety Plan for the School for the 2020-21 school year, that will be re-submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education and publicly disseminated, was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Laurie Cadden. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Updated HGMICS Health and Safety Plan as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

III. Finance/Facilities Committee

Dr. John Ruddy

At this time, Dr. John Ruddy reported that there will be three issues presented this evening from the Committee to include the monthly financial report, the 2019-20 annual audit and an update on the construction of the building addition. At this time, Dr. Ruddy asked Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager, to present the Financial report for August.

1. August 2020 Financial Report

Chuck Wallinger

Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager reported revenues are \$43,042.65 above budget for August 2020. The CARES ACT-ESSER Grant revenue was above budget by \$40,000; this revenue was not budgeted. The FY 2019-2020 Reconciliation revenue was above budget by \$2,871.50 due to the change in calculation for the school year from 133 days to 180 days, this calculation has been approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Expenses are \$7,852.58 above budget for August 2020. The Administration costs were above budget by \$9,663.71 due to the payment to the School's former Principal that was not budgeted and to the retiring instructional teacher for sick and annual days. The Debt Service was below budget by \$7,519.41 due to the delay in the \$4.5 million dollar loan from FNCB; this was the same over the last several months. The Net Operating Revenue for August 2020 of \$26,472.53 was below budget by \$35,190.07 due to COVID-19 related costs. There are 103 days of cash on hand, which covers the School for three months.

In addition, the FY 2019-2020 Unipay redirection and direct school district payments of \$555,493.26 were paid in August 2020. The Scranton School District is considering payment directly to HGMICS for FY 2020-2021, which would increase efficiency in the receipt of payment. There is a \$364,664.91 remaining on the FNCB loan at a fixed rate of 3.35%. the Federal Grant CARES ACT-ESSER was paid in August 2020. Title I, II and IV grants opened up for costs incurred starting in July, 2020.

Dr. Ruddy thanked Chuck for his report. Dr. Ruddy asked if there were any questions regarding the Finance Report. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through August 31, 2020 as reported and submitted was made by Dr. Fran Langan and seconded by Laila Kane. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Financial Report as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

2. Annual Audit for 2019-2020

Dr. John Ruddy

Dr. Ruddy announced that William McGowan and Robert Bernadyn from the firm of Baker Tilly conducted the Annual Audit for 2019-2020. Baker Tilly concluded, in their opinion, that the Annual Audit for 2019-2020 was a clean audit. Mr. McGowan reported that additional items had been added to the audit due to COVID-19; however, there had been no change in the audit due to the pandemic. The report also stated that the long-term liabilities decreased significantly, partially due to the demolition of the two buildings located on the lower lot and the reduction in the PSERS pension liability. The report also stated there are no concerns, either quantitative or qualitative, with the audit again this year. Dr. Ruddy complemented Chuck on his diligence as Business Manager. Dr. Ruddy reported that the Annual Audit for 2019-2020 will be dated as of September 15, 2020 with the approval of the

Board of Trustees. Dr. Ruddy asked if there were any questions at this time regarding the Annual Audit report for 2019-2020. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Annual Audit for 2019-2020 as reported and submitted was made by Aaron Nivert and seconded by John Ezbiansky. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Annual Audit for 2019-2020 as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

3. Update: Construction of Building Addition

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George presented an update on the Construction of the Building Addition. There are four prime contractors who have been identified as the lowest bidders for the construction of the addition. However, the bids are higher than anticipated. Over the last three weeks, Dr. George, CEO, Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager, Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Security and Laura Mills, Architect from Hemmler + Camayd identified ways to value engineer the project while retaining the two primary goals of providing adequate classrooms and improved campus circulation during arrival/dismissal times.

IV. Academic Committee

Dr. Fran Langan

Dr. Fran Langan reported that the Academic Committee has been meeting regularly and reviewing the policies of the School's reopening plans. The Academic Committee has identified a need for an additional Learning Support teacher based on the current caseloads for the two teachers who provide services to the School's special education students. The Committee is recommending to the Personnel Committee to increase staffing for this need.

V. Personnel Committee

Dr. Susan Trussler

At this time, the Personnel Committee, noting the recommendation from the Academic Committee, agreed that Maria Guido, a current Teacher Aide who is a certified Special Education teacher, be promoted to the position of full-time Learning Support Teacher. In addition, the Personnel Committee recommended that Canan Guler, a certified teacher, be hired as an Aide effective immediately. With no further discussion a **MOTION** to approve the Personnel Report that included the promotion of Maria Guido to the position of full-time Special Education Teacher and the hiring of Canan Guler as Aide effective immediately, was made by the Personnel Committee and seconded by Dr. Clarence Lamanna. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Personnel Report as presented, with one Trustee absent.

VII. School Matters

Dr. Marie George

1. Section 504 and ADA Policy

Dr. George informed the group that Jade Volchoff, School Counselor advised that the School Policy regarding compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (the ADA) needs to be updated. After consulting with legal

counsel an updated policy is presented for approval. The updated policy reflects the rights of eligible students under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and American with Disabilities Act of 1990. With no further discussion, a **MOTION** to approve the School Policy as presented regarding compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) as submitted was made Laila Kane and seconded by Dr. John Ruddy. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Section 504 and ADA Policy as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

1. Principal's Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne McEnery, Principal, stated the first two weeks of school started slowly, so as to acclimate students to the new health and safety protocols, to adjust to being back at school, and begin to access and familiarize themselves with Schoology. Teachers began to implement more explicit instruction toward the end of the second week in both the at-school and all-remote programs. Moving into the third week of school, emphasis will be placed on attendance, which is required on remote learning days, as some students are not logging in or completing work assignments defined by the teacher. Families must understand that though students are not at school, or engaged in synchronous, live virtual sessions on their remote days, they must access remote day work for attendance purposes. The school must track student attendance for each day of the week; if students/families fail to comply with this requirement, truancy will become a significant issue. Other topics of TreeAnne's report included:

- Curriculum Night is scheduled for the week of September 14th and will be all virtual
 - * Monday, September 14th will be Kindergarten and Seniors
 - * Tuesday, September 15th will be Primary and Uppers
 - * Wednesday, September 16, Intermediate
- Benchmark Assessments will begin to be administered the week of September 14th. This will support teachers working with consistent and reliable data. The Administration has determined a uniformity of assessment tools, and has implemented a process whereby diagnostic categories on trimester curriculum are tested, and Title I teachers conduct all Acadience screeners. Each tool provides a summary report for teachers to analyze and addresses trimester instruction to support student growth.
 - *ESGI: Educational Software for Guiding Instruction will be used for grades K-3.
 - *Acadience (formally DIBELS) a universal screener and progress monitoring tool, will be used for grades K-6 to measure early literacy and mathematics acquisition.
 - *CDT: Classroom Diagnostic Tools aligned to PSSA eligible content will be used for grades 3-8
- Teacher Effectiveness: Supervision and Evaluation is used to determine how to best support the diversity of teaching experience in the instructional staff. TreeAnne reported that she has created a spreadsheet to identify and begin tracking teacher eligibility for differentiated supervision and monitor required formal observation. TreeAnne will begin to schedule meetings with all teachers, to establish their Act 82 supervision schedule for 2020-2021, during the week of September 14th.
- Standards-based Progress Reports: School reports for students' progress will change beginning with the 2020-2021 first trimester. The School will no longer use the narrative report format, but transition to an integrated grade-level standards-aligned progress report, better described as a Pod-level Progress Report. Teachers will include a description of the curriculum covered per subject and students' progress will be tracked based on pod-level standards. These standards reports represent what a child should

know and can do by the end of two years, thus helping teachers to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The HGMICS standards-aligned progress report will also help families and students understand more clearly what is expected for each pod-level, and will track student mastery--with the goals of accomplishing at least a journeyman (proficient) status when transitioning to the next Pod. Patty Biko, Operations Coordinator, will begin to build Sycamore's reports in preparation for the completion of the first trimester.

- School Committees: due to the hybrid schedule, the School had to utilize its instructional staff in multiple ways. This has impacted the ability to schedule committee work during the school day. The administration has addressed this use by reorganizing how Wednesday staff meeting time is utilized. We have decided not to hold weekly instructional staff meetings during the CoE, instead we will use this time to schedule committee meetings. The monthly meeting schedule will be finalized the week of September 14th.

At this time, TreeAnne thanked everyone and asked if there were any questions, comments, or concerns. None being addressed the meeting proceeded.

3. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George began her report by stating that the School reopened on August 31st as planned following a two-week pre-service program for staff. The school reopened with 77 students participating in the all-remote program and the remaining 223 students attending the at-school program, with half of that population in the building on any one day. Additionally, 16 and 22 students, on alternating days, attend our 5+ Program in response to students who have been identified with either an IEP or 504 plan. In addition Dr. George reported:

- COVID-related Grants: Monies from the ESSER grant (CARES Act) are now being received; the awarded amount is \$78,216. The award letter was just received for the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) COVID related grant in the amount of \$90,000; this funding is expected to be released soon. The third grant is a Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) grant administered by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). The original application for eligibility was submitted in June and we recently received our project approval and can now submit our project needs, which are health and facility related. Reimbursement through this grant covers the period from January 20, 2020 through September 14, 2020.
- Special Education: The Child Study Team has begun meeting weekly and is chaired by Colleen Coolbaugh, School Psychologist. Teachers who identify struggling students make a referral to the Child Study Team. Intervention strategies, in collaboration with teachers, are then developed to address the student's difficulty in learning. This year a more structured, research-based approach to supporting students (Multi-Tiered System of Support or MTSS) who are struggling within their general education curriculum is being developed. After monitoring the progress of the student, if indicated, an evaluation by the school psychologist may be completed to determine eligibility for special education services. Currently 15% of our 300-student population receives special education services that may range in the services needed and frequency. As a Tier I itinerant school, we provide support in the least restrictive environment.
- The School is scheduled to receive its six-year Cyclical Monitoring for Continuous

Improvement (CMCI) visit (remotely) during the week of April 26, 2021, held with the PA Bureau of Special Education, with Juanita Kirton, Chairperson of the Monitoring Team. Dr. Kirton will also provide us assistance in preparing for the visit. The Special Education Team recently completed required training for the CMCI and is preparing a student roster from which student sampling for document review and Educational Benefit auditing will be used.

- Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Security now chairs the Safety Committee and is designated as our Pandemic Coordinator with PDE and the NEIU19. Joe's years of experience in security, developing policies and plans, and leading Safety Committees are a welcome addition to the School. Joe has coordinated two required fire drills, one for the A day cohort and one for the B day cohort; regular fire and security drills will be scheduled throughout the school year. In addition, Joe Ross and Patty Biko, Operations Coordinator, recently conducted bus and van evacuation drills with the students and drivers of those vehicles. When Security drills such as lockdown, lockout, and shelter in place are scheduled, students, staff and parents/guardians will be notified prior to these planned drills.
- Six iAir filtration units were installed in each of the HVAC rooftop units by August 28, 2020. As cited in our Health and Safety Plan, these will provide improved air flow throughout the building. Four brightly colored green and blue picnic tables were purchased and are located near the Music Cottage. Teachers are encouraged to utilize the outdoor area for outdoor education, weather permitting. Also located outside the Music Cottage near the play area is a portable hand-washing station that we are renting from a local supplier, costs associated with this rental are included in the PCCD grant.
- Joe Ross and Bryan Kerns worked diligently to prepare the classrooms for the start of the school year. They are developing a preventative maintenance schedule but as is often the case, unexpected repairs are needed. This week they replaced two commodes for the Intermediate II and III bathrooms. Just a reminder that all but one classroom has its own bathroom and along with others throughout the building, there are a total of 18 bathrooms located throughout the building.
- Due to the need to focus on the building interior, an outside lawn service was hired, following receipt of several quotes.

VIII. New Business

Dr. Susan Trussler.

At this time, Dr. Trussler thanked everyone teachers, staff, and Trustees for all the hard work that has gone into preparing the school for a successful 2020-2021 school year. 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 7:51 PM, no further items of business or comments were raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Dr. Trussler and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. Adjournment was accepted by all Board of Trustees present, with one Trustee absent.

The next virtual HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, October 20, 2020 at 7:00 PM.**