

Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees virtual meeting via ZOOM on Tuesday, December 15, 2020. The HGMICS facility is located at 1615 East Elm Street, Scranton, PA. Dr. Susan Trussler, President called the meeting to order at 7:04 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 attendees.

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

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 December's agenda items. At this time, the visitors in attendance had no comments or questions regarding the agenda. The meeting proceeded.

I . Minutes Trussler

Dr. Susan

Dr. Susan Trussler presented the November 17, 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 November 17, 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 began by wishing everyone a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season. She announced that several policies for adoption will be presented for approval. Also, updates will be given on the building addition, Health & Safety Plan, and the First Trimester.

Dr. Trussler stated that revised value engineering numbers were received for the building addition from the Prime Contractors and they are within the expectations of the budget and expectations set forth. Dr. Trussler explained and presented the Resolution for Prime Contractor Awards to the Board for approval. With no further discussion, a **MOTION** was made by Dr. Trussler and seconded by Laila Kane. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Resolution for Prime Contractor Awards as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

At this time, Dr. Trussler handed over the meeting to Stephanie Westington, Chairperson of the Finance/Facilities Committee. Dr. Trussler congratulated Stephanie on becoming a grandmother with the recent birth of her granddaughter.

III. Finance/Facilities Committee Westington

Stephanie

Stephanie Westington congratulated Dr. George, Joe Ross, and everyone who had a part in the successful Value Engineering Process. Stephanie then asked that Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager present the Financial report for November and deferred to Chuck's presentation.

1. November 2020 Financial Report

Chuck Wallinger

Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager, reported revenues are \$9,799 above budget for November 2020. The IDEA-B (Individuals with Disability Education Act) revenue was above budget by \$17,038; this revenue was not budgeted. The Tuition revenue was below budget by \$2,140 due to the Special Education enrollment being 2 students below budget. The Food Service revenue was below budget by \$2,426 due to only having 6 serving days in the month of November. The Student Activities are below budget by \$2,750 because of no Field Trips due to COVID-19.

Expenses are \$6,296 below budget for November 2020. Instructional costs were above budget by \$10,871 due to COVID costs. Debt Service was below budget by \$7,519 due to the delay in the \$4.5 million dollar loan from FNCB. The Net Operating Revenue for November 2020 of \$75,794 was above budget by \$16,095.

The School had \$1,230,720 in cash at the end of November 2020. This is approximately \$30,183 more than the balance at the end of October 2020. This represents 162 days cash on hand, which places the School in a positive solvency position. The FY 2020-21 Unipay redirection and direct school district payments of \$218,016 were paid in November 2020. The Scranton School District did not have funds available to pay a balance of \$55,952, the Scranton School District will be paying this balance when funds become available. There is \$345,661.32 remaining on the FNCB loan at a fixed rate of 3.35%, which will be rolled up into the long-term debt. The COVID ESSER federal funded grant was received in November 2020 for \$57,633, this grant has been received in full.

Stephanie Westington thanked Chuck for his report. Stephanie Westington 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 November 30, 2020 as reported and submitted was made by Aaron Nivert and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Financial Report as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

IV. Academic Committee

Dr. Fran Langan

Dr. Fran Langan reported that the Academic Committee did not met. However, the School's Administrative Leadership is keeping the Academic Committee informed on the progress of Cyclical Monitoring for Special Education slated for April 2021. As part of that preparation, several policies are brought forth for Board approval. Additional updates on the academic programs will be presented by the Principal and CEO as part of their report.

At this time, the following policies for Board approval were presented for Board approval:

1. Positive Behavior Support Policy

Dr. Trussler presented the Positive Behavior Support Policy to the Board of Trustees for approval. The **MOTION** to accept the Positive Behavior Support Policy as submitted was made by Laila Kane and seconded by John Ezbiansky. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Positive Behavior Support Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

2. Child Find Policy

Dr. Trussler presented the Child Find Policy to the Board of Trustees for approval. The **MOTION** to accept the Child Find Policy as submitted was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Child Find Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

V. Development Committee

Susan Hennemuth

Susan Hennemuth reported that the Development Committee met to discuss two important items. The first item was to discuss the Annual Fundraising efforts. The Annual Fundraising efforts will be further developed and will occur in the Fall 2021. Annual Fundraising support efforts will be presented to parents and supporters around November 2021. A letter and brochure will be updated for distribution and an initial introductory mailing of the Foundation is planned for spring 2021 after the Foundation Board is established.

The second agenda item was the development of the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation. The Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation bylaws were approved by the Board of Trustees with guidance from the Solicitor. At this time, members of the Development Committee are contacting four candidates to serve as Directors on the Founding Board of the Foundation. The Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation will present 4 candidates along with Dr. Susan Trussler, who will serve as President of the Foundation Board, to the Board of Trustees for consideration and approval at the January 2021 meeting.

VI. Nominating Committee

Laurie Cadden

Laurie Cadden reported that the Nominating Committee recently met. Recommendations for two viable nominees will be discussed and brought forth to the Board of Trustees for consideration in the new year. The candidates will be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval in March 2021.

VII. Personnel Committee

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Trussler stated that the Personnel Committee had not met since the last Board meeting. There were no changes in staff to report this month. The Personnel Committee will be meeting in the New Year to discuss benefit options for faculty and staff.

VIII. School Matters

Dr. Trussler asked Dr. George to present the Student Admissions by Lottery Policy to the Board of Trustees.

1. Student Admissions by Lottery Policy

At this time, Dr. George summarized the Student Admissions by Lottery Policy and procedures for the Board of Trustees. The **MOTION** to approve the Student Admissions by Lottery Policy as submitted and presented was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. With no further discussion, all Trustees present approved the Student Admissions by Lottery Policy, with one Board of Trustee member absent.

2. Updated Health and Safety Plan

At this time, Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Security gave a brief overview of the Updated Health and Safety Plan to the Board of Trustees for approval. With no further discussion, the MOTION to approve the Updated Health and Safety Plan was made by Susan Hennemuth and seconded by Stephanie Westington. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Updated Health and Safety Plan, with one Board of Trustee member absent.

Dr. Trussler thanked everyone who had worked so hard on both policies.

3. Principal's Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne McEnery, Principal reported the following:

- 2020-2021 Continuity of Education: Parent-conferences were held on December 10th and 11th; teachers shared feedback they received from the families they met with. Overall, families are grateful for our CoE program offerings, they feel the school is managing the COVID safety measure well and commend the organization and communication. The greatest challenge is serving students that must quarantine. Teachers are providing work through Schoology, arranging one-on-one meetings with students to review new materials, or for those at-school teachers that teach a remote class, students are invited to attend their remote classes. While our current numbers are ever changing, teachers are concerned quarantine number of students will grow. Teachers are concerned about student progress.
- Progress Reports – TreeAnne reported overall, the new Trimester Progress Reports were met favorably. Feedback ranged from how clear and organized the information was, how the report indicates where students are at, what they need to work on, and what parents can expect them to achieve within the year, to the opposite where a family felt the report shared nothing about MI or how their child is progressing.
- Honors and Distinguished Honors – 60 students from grades 5th – 8th obtained Honors (cumulative average of 90-95) or Distinguished Honors (cumulative average of 96 or higher) for Trimester I. Students were announced at morning announcements, and each student received an HGMICS Award for their scholastic achievement. Students were also recognized on the School's Facebook page and website.
- After School Enrichment and Tutoring – The fall enrichment programs, and grades 1st – 6th tutoring is concluding the week of December 14th. Anticipated session two will begin in late January after Winter break.

TreeAnne thanked everyone for their time in reviewing her report and asked if there were any questions. With none being heard, the meeting proceeded.

4. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George began by reporting the School Year is moving quickly. The First Trimester has been completed and the 12 day count down to the holiday season has begun for everyone to refresh and prepare for a new Year of continued challenges from the ongoing pandemic, while progressing with an eye on the future. The staff is appreciative of the support provided by the Board.

- Value Engineering Underway – weekly meetings to discuss the progress on value engineering the School's building addition are indicating excellent progress. A final meeting on December 14th was held to present the final results and to determine if the financial targets the School established were met. A full report to the Board was made at the Executive Session last evening.
- HGMICS' Response to the Pandemic – As the School receives notification of students or staff exposed to COVID or who tested positive, announcements are being made to the community and personal follow-ups are being conducted with anyone directly affected. The School continues to follow the 14-day quarantine period despite the recent change to reduce quarantine time issued by CDC and PA Department of Health. With two positive cases reported within two days, the School moved to all-remote classes on November 19th until December 4th. Students returned for in-person learning on December 7th and are hopeful that this can continue through December 23rd. Following our holiday break beginning on December 24th classes will resume on January 4th with two weeks of all-remote education. Current plans are to return to in-person learning on January 18th, but if the surge of the coronavirus continues, staying all-remote for January will be seriously considered.
- Attestation Statement, Updated Health and Safety Plan – the required Attestation Statement, signed by Dr. Susan Trussler and Dr. George, was submitted by the November 30th deadline, which was required for all PA public schools, including charter schools. Since HGMICS is conducting in-person learning when Lackawanna County is having substantial community spread, this Statement affirms the School's action and agreement to comply with all required enhanced mitigation efforts that are included in the 11/30/2020 updated Health and Safety Plan. The updated Health and Safety Plan has been approved by the Board of Trustees earlier at this meeting.
- HGMICS Donations and Fundraising – in addition to the EITC donations that had been reported in last month's report that included FNCB, Waste Management, Landmark Bank, and SEIO, we additionally received a donation from Philadelphia Insurance Company. Preparations are underway for the School to have a mailing during the February-March 2021 timeframe to introduce the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation. Plans continue to establish an annual fund drive in the fall of 2021. It is anticipated that the Founding Board of the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation will be in place by February 2021 which will provide leadership for these and other fundraising efforts.
- 2020-2021 Compliance Monitoring – compliance monitoring is the evaluative process employed by state and federal agencies to ensure that school districts are in compliance with legislative and procedural requirements as documented by various forms of evidence. A monitoring visit was held on Monday, December 7th to review our policies and procedures for compliance with the McKenney Vento Act that concerns homeless students. Anne Salerno, Monitor from PDE, lead the virtual evaluation meeting with Jade Volchoff, School Counselor and Homeless Liaison, TreeAnne McEnery, Principal and Dr. George. Materials to demonstrate compliance were submitted prior to the visit. To date we have no homeless students. The Monitoring visit went well, and a final report will be forthcoming. On December 7th, an all-staff training on Homeless

Students was conducted by Jeff Zimmerman, Homeless and Foster Care Supervisor from the NEIU 19.

- IDEA Funds – a recent notification to the School for the allocation of annual IDEA funds was received through the NEIU 19 to support the special education population. We are pleased to announce an increase in funding, due to the recent change in our reporting; in past years, speech therapy was not included. Speech therapy will now be included, and the School will receive an additional \$17,000. Thanks to Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager for his insight to submit all necessary reports for this therapeutic service to be included in the School's IDEA-B funding. The total amount of the IDEA-B funding this year is \$41,800.
- Pandemic related Grants – the PEMA grant was submitted, and the School received a substantially smaller amount than the \$64,000 that was requested. Our award was approved for \$17,236 with a required contribution of \$4,309 that resulted in a net of \$12,927. Guidelines for this reimbursement grant changed mid-stream since the initial application was made in June 2020. A second round of Cares Act/ESSER grant applications are now open through the Pennsylvania Commission for Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). Applications are due by January 5, 2021.
- Biannual Inspection – Sara Pavia, Inspector for the Department of Agriculture conducted an unscheduled biannual inspection of the school lunch program last month. The unscheduled biannual inspection found no violations. Kudos to Dottie Schoemaker and Patty Biko who monitor and supervise all aspects of the National School Lunch Program. This is the third school year that HGMICS participated in the National School Lunch Program and offers a free or reduced (\$0.40) lunch to eligible students as well as the availability to have a hot/nutritional lunch (\$3.10) to all students.
- Facilities – recently UGI relocated the School's electrical meter, with no cost to the school. Since classes were all-remote there was no disruption for classes. While classes were all-remote, all interior doors were freshly painted giving the School a brighter look when traversing the halls. A heater in the Kindergarten wing needed replacement at a cost of less than \$500. Keystone Controls, who provides HVAC service to the School, installed the replacement with no disruption to the classroom.
- Comprehensive Plan and Other State Required Reports - the fifteen-member Comprehensive Planning Committee met on November 19th and resumed its work towards completing the School's Comprehensive Plan required by PDE. The Plan now has an extended deadline of November 30, 2021. The first portion of the Plan was completed, and the Committee is addressing the Needs Assessment portion. The next meeting is scheduled to be held in February. The Comprehensive Plan needs to have Board of Trustee approval and a period of public comments via our School's website.

VIII. New Business

Dr. Susan Trussler.

At this time, with no new business from the Trustees, Dr. Trussler asked if there was anyone in the audience who wished to voice any additional concerns. Without hearing any Dr. Trussler wished everyone a Happy Holiday and asked for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

At 7:50 PM, no further items of business or comments were raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Aaron Nivert. Adjournment was accepted by all Board of Trustees present, with one Trustee

absent.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 7:00 PM.**