

# **Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting**

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, April 20, 2021. Dr. Susan Trussler, President, called the meeting to order at 7:02 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. Fran Langan, and Dr. John Ruddy. Absent from the meeting: Dr. Clarence Lamanna and Aaron Nivert.

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.

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

## **I. Minutes**

**Dr. Susan Trussler**

Dr. Susan Trussler presented the March 16, 2021 Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked if there were any corrections or additions. With no corrections or additions, a **MOTION** to approve the March 16, 2021 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 began her report by announcing that there will be good news presented this evening through various committees, Principal's and CEO's reports. Dr. Trussler announced that the Ground Breaking Ceremony for the building addition took place last week. Dr. Trussler, Board of Trustee President, Laila Kane, Board of Trustee Secretary, and Dr. Marie George, CEO are scheduled to meet with FNCB Bank next week to sign all documents on the closing of the \$4.5 million loan for the building addition. Committees that met last month will give reports on their various programs and upcoming events.

Dr. Trussler closed by stating the 2021-2022 Budget will be submitted next month for Board of Trustee approval.

## **III. Finance/Facilities Committee**

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington reported that the Finance/Facilities Committee met on April 13<sup>th</sup> with a packed agenda. The Budget Revision for 2020-2021 was reviewed in detail and revisions made, accepted, and are submitted to the Board of Trustees at tonight's meeting for approval. A preliminary draft budget for the 2021-2022 school year was discussed. The closing on the \$4.5 million loan for the building addition will

take place next week. Plans for Financial Reserve are moving forward. At this time, Stephanie asked Chuck to present the March 2021 Financial report.

## **1. March 2021 Financial Report**

**Chuck Wallinger & Stephanie Westington**

Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager, reported revenues are \$35,896 under budget for March 2021. Tuition revenue is below budget by \$32,984 due to an overstatement of Tuition Revenue in January 2021 which was corrected. Food Service Revenue is below budget by \$590 due to COVID-19. Student Activity Revenue is below budget by \$3,250.00 due to field trips not occurring because of COVID-19.

Expenses are \$2,407.33 above budget for March 2021. The Instructional costs were above budget by \$17,999.10 primarily due to COVID-19 Salary and Benefit costs due to all-remote instruction. The Student Activity costs are below budget by \$1,522.22 due to COVID-19. The Cafeteria costs are below budget by \$4,803.40 due to COVID-19. The Debt Service was below budget by \$7,519 due to the delay in closing on the \$4.5 million dollar loan from FNCB. The Net Operating Revenue for March 2021 of \$12,422 was below budget by \$38,303. The school had 137 days cash on hand that places the School in a positive solvency position. The FY 2020-21 Scranton School District Unipay redirection balance of approximately \$475,000 is expected to be paid in April 2021. There is \$319,987 remaining on the FNCB loan at a fixed rate of 3.35%.

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 March 31, 2021 as reported was made by Dr. John Ruddy and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Financial Report as submitted, with two Trustees absent.

## **2. Budget Revision 2020-2021 Fiscal Year**

Stephanie Westington presented the Budget Revision for 2020-2021 Fiscal Year that had been submitted, reviewed, and accepted by the Finance/Facilities Committee. At this time Stephanie asked Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager to give a brief summary of the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year Budget revisions. Chuck summarized the revisions as budget line items that needed to be adjusted primarily due to COVID-19 and Grant Revenues. The Net Operating Revenue was reduced by \$83,920 due to COVID-19, especially as increased salaries and benefits due to all-remote learning will not be covered by Grant money.

Stephanie Westington asked if there were any questions at this time regarding the Budget Revision 2020-2021 Fiscal Year. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** was submitted to the Board of Trustees to approve the Budget Revision 2020-2021 Fiscal Year as presented and submitted. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Budget Revision 2020-2021 Fiscal Year, with two Trustees absent.

## **IV. Academic Committee**

**Dr. Fran Langan**

Dr. Fran Langan reported that the Academic Committee met with one agenda item – School Wide Title I Program. An excellent presentation was given by TreeAnne McEnery, Principal to the Academic Committee on the School Wide Title I Program. TreeAnne elaborated on all aspects pertaining to the program, which included data collected that will be utilized for forming the future framework of education for all students enrolled in HGMICS. All current faculty will be fully engaged in the School Wide Title I Program. Dr. Langan stated that TreeAnne would explain the presentation in her report.

## **V. Development Committee**

**Susan Hennemuth**

Susan Hennemuth reported the Development Committee met on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. An update on the Bloomerang implementation was presented. Julie Imel was hired as a Development Consultant to support the Bloomerang implementation and other PR projects.

The Golf Tournament for 2021 will be held on Sunday, October 10<sup>th</sup> at Pine Hills Country Club. A timeline for outreach and promotion will be set.

Groundbreaking ceremony for the construction project was discussed. It will be held on April 15, 2021 in the lower lot with Dr. Susan Trussler and Stephanie Westington in attendance along with Dr. Marie George, Joseph Ross, and representatives from Hemmler + Camayd, Sordoni, and Mar-Paul. A press release will be formulated along with photographs. Julie Imel will be asked to assist.

The Development Committee continues to explore and identify grant opportunities to help fund playground equipment and the new security system for the building addition.

## **VI. Nominating Committee**

**Laurie Cadden**

Laurie Cadden reported that the Nominating Committee was scheduled to meet on Wednesday April 14<sup>th</sup>; however the meeting was cancelled. At this time, the Nominating Committee has nothing to report.

## **VII. Personnel Committee**

**Dr. Susan Trussler**

Dr. Trussler reported the Personnel Committee met on Tuesday, April 6th. The Personnel Committee discussed salaries for the 2021-2022 year. Recommendations for salaries were passed on to the Finance/Facilities Committee and will be incorporated in the preliminary 2021-2022 budget.

Two items that are being brought forth to the Board of Trustees are the Tuition Reimbursement Policy for faculty and staff, and the Wellness Policy, which will be presented by Dr. George under School Matters.

### **A. 1. Tuition Reimbursement Policy**

Dr. Trussler presented and summarized the updated Tuition Reimbursement Policy to the Board of Trustees. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to accept and approve the updated Tuition Reimbursement Policy to increase from \$200 to \$350/credit for a maximum of 6 credits per year, will become effective July 1, 2021 as submitted was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the updated Tuition Reimbursement Policy, with two Trustees absent.

### **2. Personnel Report**

Dr. Trussler presented the Personnel Report to the Board of Trustees. Dr. Trussler stated that Elizabeth Shaffern, BSN who also holds a master's degree has assumed the

position of part-time Nurse, effective March 22<sup>nd</sup>. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to accept and approve the Personnel Report as presented and submitted was made by Sam Ceccacci and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Personnel Report, with two Trustees absent.

## **B. Benefits Task Force**

Dr. Trussler reported that the Benefits Task Force met last month in conjunction with the Personnel Committee and will meet again on April 21<sup>st</sup>. The Task Force will look at various aspects of health care benefits and health care cost for family members. At this time, there are no items being submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.

## **VIII. School Matters**

### **1. Wellness Update and Policy**

**Dr. Marie George**

Dr. George began by saying her presentation of the Wellness Policy will be in two parts. Part one of the Wellness Policy: Once the School was approved in 2018 for the National School Lunch Program, the first order of business was to convene a Wellness Committee and to develop a Wellness Policy. The template that was utilized in developing the School's Wellness Policy came from the PA Department of Health and was submitted and approved by the Board of Trustees.

Since the approval of the Wellness Policy in 2018, very few revisions needed to be made. The Wellness Policy is required to be reviewed and updated every three years in order for the School to participate in National Lunch Program. School-based activities, acquired space and time, and serving nutritious school meals are required by the School Lunch Program for every student. Revenues of all food and beverages sold must be in compliance with the School Lunch Program.

Part two of the Wellness Policy: The School was approved to offer the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in 2018. The School then established the Wellness Committee and developed a Wellness Policy. The committee has been meeting monthly and are good stewards of the Policy, initially approved by the Board in October 2018. Annual updates and a triennial review of the policy is required and will be presented to the Board. The second of two required kitchen inspections each school year was carried out by Sara Pavia, Inspector from the PA Department of Agriculture with no citations or recommendations. Kudos to Patty Biko for leading the NSLP and Wellness Committee and to Dottie Shoemaker who manages the daily lunch program. As part of the CARES Act, students who are entitled to free or reduced lunches and did not receive them due to remote learning will be provided financial compensation from the PA Department of Health. HGMICS has submitted all required information for eligible students to receive this benefit and direct payment of funds will be sent to the individual student.

At this time, Dr. George asked if there were any questions or additional information needed. Not hearing any, with no further discussion, the **MOTION** to accept and approve the Updated Wellness Policy as presented and submitted was made by Laurie Cadden and

seconded by Stephanie Westington. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Updated Wellness Policy, with two Trustees absent.

## **2. Principal's Report**

**TreeAnne McEnery**

TreeAnne McEnery, Principal began her report by stating just over one year ago, schools were mandated to close due to COVID-19. At the April 2020 Board of Trustees meeting the Administration presented its Continuity of Education Plan that detailed the instructional program for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. The program was a collaborative effort between all staff to ensure that HGMICS students were not only offered supplemental/review materials but new content, thus continuing grade-level instruction. TreeAnne was happy to report to the Board of Trustees that this plan was successfully implemented and its revision for the 2020-2021 school year included exciting news that the school would re-open after Spring Break to a five-day, in-person program. One year later, we have come full circle as a community, committed to providing an education, all while ensuring the safety of our staff and students. TreeAnne reported on the following topics:

- Continuity of Education – on April 6, 2021, the school re-opened with a five-day instructional program. They hybrid schedule that had been active since August 31<sup>st</sup> ended and 268 students returned to a full-time educational program. HGS still offers an all-remote program option, which is also scheduled as a five-day program. All-remote staff returned to the school building to teach their all-remote students. When the all-remote faculty is not teaching, they are supporting in classrooms, lunch, and as needed.
- PBIS – with welcoming back the students to a five-day a week schedule PBIS kicked off the return with a Spirit Week. Each day focused on an attribute of STAR: Safe, Trustworthy, Accountable, and Respectful. Staff and students were encouraged to wear a color assigned to each attribute. There was a poster contest and highlights during morning announcements of what each behavior looked like in action.
- Wrapping up the Year – TreeAnne announced with five weeks of instruction remaining for grades K-2 and four weeks of instruction remaining for grades 3-8, teachers are finalizing their instructional plans and will conclude the school year as departments to review the following:
  - Field Day – The Amazing Race – is highlighted by the Parent Forum and will include everyone to participate in a scavenger hunt throughout Scranton
  - All-Remote Field Day will take place on Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, In-person will take place on Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> at an off-campus site, the rain date is scheduled for Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>
  - Last day of instruction for K-2 is May 21<sup>st</sup> and for grades 3-9, May 14<sup>th</sup>
  - Trimester III Progress Reports are due May 25<sup>th</sup> and will be released to families on May 28<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM
- PSSA Schedule – PSSA's will be administered between May 17<sup>th</sup> and May 24<sup>th</sup>, with make-up days identified. The Keystone test for Algebra I is scheduled for May 21<sup>st</sup>. All-remote students are required to come to the school for test administration. PDE does not offer an online test for the PSSA's. Rooms are scheduled for testing.

Teachers are currently completing the online training, with an in-person training scheduled for May 5<sup>th</sup>. Both programs are held at school, in-person, and are scheduled Monday through Thursday from 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM.

- Academic and Enrichment Summer Programs – On Monday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, two grant-funded summer programs were announced to HGMICS families.  
The Academic Summer Program and Enrichment Summer Program are both scheduled in two sessions – session one, June 7<sup>th</sup> through June 25<sup>th</sup>; and session two, June 28<sup>th</sup> through July 16<sup>th</sup>. TreeAnne asked if there were any questions. With none being heard, the meeting proceeded.
- The Academic Summer Program is designed to provide additional educational opportunities for HG students; coursework is meant to address specific gaps in the student learning, not full-year coursework.  
The Enrichment Summer Program is non-academic and engages students in exploring the intelligences; Musical Enrichment with Steve Kurilla; Artistic Enrichment with Melissa Cruise; Mathematical/Logical Enrichment with Matthew Salerno; Naturalistic Enrichment with Kim Hoskins and Ciara Cawley; Kinesthetic Enrichment with Brian Kubilus and EJ Murphy; Linguistic Enrichment with Nicole Berta.
- Schoolwide Title I Program- TreeAnne thanked Dr. Langan and the Academic Committee for allowing her to present the Schoolwide Title I Program at their last meeting. TreeAnne began her presentation by explaining the Schoolwide Title I Program is a strategic step toward designing an inclusive, evidence-based educational reform program. The design and implementation of the program is governed by schoolwide input, data, and annual evaluation, and it is directly aligned to the 2021-2024 Comprehensive Plan, which has identified the School's strengths that can help address challenges. The Schoolwide Title I Program will scaffold an educational framework that will address learning loss associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Schoolwide Title I Program would permit the School to access funding that would:
  - Increase K-8<sup>th</sup> learning time by extending the school day. This will allow us to lengthen math, ELA, and science periods, and schedule two weekly enrichment and intervention periods.
  - Offer instructional coaching to teachers that provides formative, direct, and timely feedback on modifying existing pedagogical practices and instructional models.
  - Align the classroom aide positions with the current job description by adjusting the title to an "Instructional Assistant", which conveys the primary function of the position as instructional support of students.
  - Increase, modify, and implement new curricular resources for the academic program as well as social-emotional health and well-being, which is increasingly impacting student academic achievement and growth

TreeAnne asked if there were any questions or comments at this time. Laila Kane, Board of Trustee member asked if there would be any consequences if parents did not bring their children for the scheduled PSSA testing. TreeAnne responded by stating that PDE will not penalize any school this year for participation, however;

HGMICS will accurately report participation. John Ezbiansky, Board of Trustee member inquired if there would be a different classroom set-up for the all-remote students who will be entering the building for the PSSA testing. TreeAnne replied that the all-remote students will be assigned to their grade level homeroom teacher with social distancing. TreeAnne assured everyone that a communication will be sent to the parents/guardians to inform them prior to the PSSA testing schedule.

## **2. CEO Report**

**Dr. Marie George**

Dr. George reported that April was an exciting month as most of our students were welcomed back into the building for five day in-person learning. However, this week required another “pivot” point. The commitment of HGMICS is to keep all students, faculty, and staff safe. In light of a recent positive case, we will switch to all-remote learning beginning Wednesday, April 21<sup>st</sup> through Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> and in-person learning will reconvene on Monday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. All staff and families that had been deemed in close contact have been notified. Due to the number of students that had been sent home for symptoms, it was in the best interest of everyone to move to all-remote learning for the three-day period. During the hiatus, the building will be deep cleaned, sanitized, and no one will be allowed into the building.

- Parent Engagement and Communication – ongoing, timely and transparent communication with our families was reinforced this year. Weekly communications are now planned, coordinated, and then issued from the appropriate staff person and provides families with updates on academics, student achievements, wellness information, the PBIS program, and updates on health and safety. Additionally, and most important are the weekly communications that our teachers have with their students’ parents/guardians.
- Parent Education Session – will now be a regular part of each school year. The second of a three-part series will take place on Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6 PM via ZOOM and will be hosted by Jade Volchoff, School Counselor, Colleen Coolbaugh, School Psychologist, and Phil Sallivanti, from the NEIU 19 with the theme of Mindfulness.
- Sports Teams – a meeting was held on Wednesday, April 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss starting sports teams next school year. The intent is to include two competitive teams in basketball and cross-country, and if there is enough interest the possibility of an intramural soccer. Parents offered to assist as this effort begins. Coach Brian Kubilus and Joe Ross are both instrumental in providing school leadership. Trustees John Ezbiansky and Sam Ceccacci are helping as well. Related costs are now being examined as part of the budget planning for 2021-2022, and an Interest Survey will follow.
- Parent Forum Meeting – at monthly Parent Forum meetings, learning support teachers provide timely information about reading and math, and aspects of our special education program. Several parents have volunteered to participate on the Advisory Group for our Schoolwide Title-I program that will begin next school year. Parent engagement is an important and required part of all federally funded programs.
- Graduation 2021 – the 2021 Graduation ceremony will take place on the School grounds on Thursday, June 3, 201 at 6 PM. This year’s 8<sup>th</sup> Grade graduating class is

the largest graduating class with 29 students in HGMICS history. A large tent capable of seating 100 people will be located in front of the music cottage. Profiles of each of our graduates and their plans to attend high school will be posted on our website and Facebook page beginning April 20<sup>th</sup> for 29 consecutive weekdays. Dr. Susan Trussler, Board of Trustee President and parent of a former alumna will be the guest speaker for the 2021 Graduation Ceremony. Dr. George commended Dr. Trussler for her great stewardship of the School, dedication to our mission, and many years of service.

#### **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 or comments. Laila Kane, Trustee commented on the recent article that appeared in the Scranton-Times Sunday Newspaper highlighting Julia Riviello, 8<sup>th</sup> grade student, “Go for the Greens”. It was so nice to have our School appear in the “School Notes” section of the newspaper. Dr. Trussler asked if there were any additional items or comments, without hearing any Dr. Trussler called for a motion to adjourn.

#### **Adjournment**

At 8:04 PM, no further items of business or comments raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Stephanie Westington. Adjournment was accepted by all of the Board of Trustees present. Dr. Trussler thanked everyone for their hard work.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 7:00 PM.**