

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

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, June 15, 2021. 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, Dr. Fran Langan, and Dr. John Ruddy. Absent from the meeting: Aaron Nivert.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; Douglas Hein, Business Manager; and Janet Kania, School Secretary. Absent from the meeting: TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; and Joseph Ross, Director of Facilities & Security.

Dr. Susan Trussler welcomed visitors and asked if any visitor had comments regarding June's agenda items. At this time, Stephanie DeNaples, Scranton School District, greeted the Board of Trustees and stated that she was representing the neighborhood. Stephanie expressed how excited the neighbors are with the expansion of the School; however, the neighborhood is wondering if the hours of construction noise and dust can be altered and contained due to this peaceful neighborhood? Dr. Trussler said that the neighborhood concerns are welcomed and will be directed to Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Security when he returns from vacation. Dr. Trussler asked if there were any additional comments at this time. The visitors in attendance had no additional comments regarding the agenda and the meeting proceeded.

## **I. Approval of Minutes**

**Dr. Susan Trussler**

Dr. Susan Trussler presented the May 18, 2021 Board meeting minutes for approval and asked if there were any corrections or additions. With no corrections or additions, a **MOTION** to approve the May 18, 2021 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan. 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 her report by announcing this meeting is the last annual Board of Trustees meeting for the 2020-2021 Academic year. The election for the Slate of Officers

for the 2021-2022 year will be presented for a vote and begin in their respective positions effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

Dr. Trussler also announced, with a happy but heavy heart, that both herself as current President of the Board of Trustees and Dr. Fran Langan, Board member will transition off the Board that dates back to prior to becoming a Charter School. Both will remain active, Dr. Trussler will serve as President to the Howard Gardner Foundation and Dr. Langan will serve on the Comprehensive Planning Committee. Dr. Trussler also announced that the two new Trustees, Dino Galli and Dr. Catherine Cullen, will be transitioning onto the Board effective July 1, 2021.

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation recently took place with the largest graduating class of 29 students in the history of the School. All 29 students are moving on to various high schools in the surrounding area.

Dr. Trussler thanked everyone for the dedication and support over the years to make HGMICS a great educational experience.

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

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington began her report by introducing Douglas Hein, Business Manager who has replaced Chuck Wallinger, effective June 14<sup>th</sup>. Stephanie stated everyone was excited to have Doug join HGMICS. Doug's pertinent experience will be an asset to HGMICS. Doug thanked Stephanie and the Board of Trustees and is looking forward to working with everyone.

#### **1. May 2021 Financial Report Update**

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington informed the Board due to the timing of the departure of Chuck Wallinger on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and the transition of Doug Hein, Business Manager, who began on June 14<sup>th</sup>, the May 2021 Financial report was unable to be prepared properly.

Stephanie informed the Board that the May 2021 Financial report along with the June 2021 Financial report will be prepared and presented at the July 2021 Board meeting for approval. The Finance Facilities Committee will meet prior to review the May 2021 Report.

### **IV. Academic Committee**

**Dr. Fran Langan**

Dr. Langan reported that the Academic Committee did not meet because all the business for the 2020-2021 Academic year had been completed at last month's meeting. The Academic Committee made tremendous strides with new curriculum initiatives and the transition to Schoolwide Title I that will serve to strengthen overall educational experience of our students.

The Academic Committee is looking forward to many exciting, innovated opportunities for students in the upcoming 2021-2022 school year.

At this time, Dr. Trussler presented the following:

### **1. Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan**

Dr. Trussler submitted to the Board for approval the 2021-2024 Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan, Induction and Professional Development Plans that were developed by the Comprehensive Planning Committee and posted for public review for the required 28-day period, and that will be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Federal Programs Division, with the accompanying Affirmation Statement signed by the Board President. The **MOTION** was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the 2021-2024 Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

### **2. 2021-2022 NEIU Agreement for Special Education Services**

Dr. Trussler presented the 2021-2022 NEIU Agreement for Special Education Services for approval for the provision of special education services by the Northeastern Intermediate Unit (NEIU 19) for the 2021-2022 school year. The **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Westington and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan to accept the 2021-2022 NEIU Agreement for Special Education Services as submitted. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the 2021-2022 NEIU Agreement for Special Education Services, with one Trustee absent.

Dr. Trussler thanked everyone who worked so hard on the Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan during the pandemic to ensure the required documentation would be submitted on time.

## **V. Development Committee**

**Susan Hennemuth**

### **1. Successful June 4<sup>th</sup> NEPA Gives**

Susan Hennemuth reported that the Development Committee met on May 25<sup>th</sup> to discuss strategies to participate in the local day of giving- NEPA Gives - slated for June 4th, which allows local non-profit organization the opportunity to fund raise through social media. An incentive from the Hawk Foundation to match \$2,500 raised was met with great enthusiasm. Susan was proud to announce the initial goal was set at \$2,500, with a match of \$2,500 from the Hawk Foundation for a total goal of \$5,000. This goal was exceeded, and the total amount raised was \$10,995 from 68 gracious donors. Susan thanked Julie Imel, Patty Biko and Dr. Marie George for their preparation and diligence to provide advance notice and reminders for the 24-hour period of June 4th. Susan also thanked the support from the Board of Trustees, along with Nivert Metal who also matched \$2,500, and the donors for their generosity that made this event a success.

Susan reported that the Development Committee will be continuing their work on the Strategic Plan goals related to fundraising and public relations come this fall. A fundraising data base is currently being developed which will be updated regularly. A Public Relations strategy session will be held to develop a 2 year PR campaign surrounding issues concerning Charter Schools, as well as the promotion of HGMICS educational platform.

## **VI. Nominating Committee**

**Laurie Cadden**

Laurie began her report by acknowledging the wonderful people and especially Dr. Trussler and Dr. Langan for their dedication and wonderful work that helped shape the educational experience and HGMICS. Laurie expressed the Nominating Committee's wishes for those who will remain on the Board of Trustees to follow in the "footsteps" set forth by Dr.'s Trussler and Langan.

At this time, Laurie presented the Slate of Officers for the Howard Gardner MI Charter School Board of Trustees who will each serve for the year beginning July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. The Slate of Officers include Stephanie Westington, President; Sam Ceccacci, Vice President; Laila Kane, Secretary; and Dr. John Ruddy, Treasurer. The **MOTION** to accept the Slate of Officers for the Howard Gardner MI Charter School Board of Trustees as presented was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Slate of Officers for the Howard Gardner MI Charter School Board of Trustees term effective July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, with one Trustee absent.

## **VII. Personnel Committee**

**Dr. Susan Trussler**

### **1. Douglas A. Hein**

Dr. Trussler announced the reaffirmation of the electronic vote that was held on May 25, 2021 to appoint Douglas A. Hein to the position of Business Manager effective June 14, 2021, and to serve as an authorized signatory on behalf of the Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School and Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation was presented. The **MOTION** to accept and appoint Douglas A. Hein to the position of Business Manager was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded Dr. John Ruddy. At this time, all Trustees present reaffirmed the appointment of Douglas A. Hein as Business Manager, with one Trustee absent.

### **2. Personnel Report**

Dr. Trussler reported the following changes in employee status:

- Matthew Salerno, Remote Primary Teacher will transition to t STEM Specialist, effective August 15, 2021.
- Brian Kubilus, Physical Education / Health Teacher will continue in his current position with the additional responsibility of Athletic Director.

Dr. Trussler reported the following new employees:

- Douglas Hein, who was reaffirmed at tonight's meeting is the Business Manager, effective June 14, 2021
- Catherine Opshinsky will assume the position of Director of Student Services, effective August 15, 2021. The position of Director of Student Services was posted on the website and advertised. Cathy's oversight of Special Education and compliance and supervision made her the most qualified candidate for the position.

Dr. Trussler also announced that Marilyn Caputo, a long-term classroom Aide has retired after many years of dedicated service effective May 28, 2021. Best wishes for a happy retirement goes out to Marilyn!

At this time, Dr. Trussler asked for the approval of the Personnel Report as reported and submitted. The **MOTION** to approve the Personnel Report was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. At this time, all Trustees present voted to approve the Personnel Report as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

## **VIII. School Matters**

### **1. Annual Safety Plan**

**Dr. Marie George**

Dr. George presented the Annual Safety Plan for 2020-2021 to the Board of Trustees. Dr. George stated that the Annual Safety Plan is annually submitted to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). Dr. George will submit the completed Annual Safety Plan by the end of June. Dr. George and Joe Ross, Director, Facilities and Security, and the Safety Committee worked on the report, which summarizes the extensive work done in response to COVID-19 in order to re-open the school in August, 2021. The results of those efforts included no community transmission within the school and no break in the students' educational experience. Noted in the report was the establishment of a new position, Director, Facilities & Security and with the hiring of Joe Ross, his leadership and experience were invaluable this past year as he additionally served as Pandemic Coordinator.

The Safety Committee was established in 2018 and has become more active in safety matters within the School, such as debriefing all drills, reviewing emergency response plans, revising policies, and conducting regular staff training. Dr. George provided highlights of the Annual Safety Report including short- and long-term goals.

### **2. CEO Report**

**Dr. Marie George**

Dr. George began her report by stating she and TreeAnne issued a summer send-off communication to families congratulating all their support and flexibility this past year. As a community, we navigated uncharted waters to ensure the students were educated. The staff ended the school year by reflecting that their students successfully learned and

there was no shortage of pride and humility for all the teachers' efforts and successes. Mingled with a relief to have ended this school year are feelings of pride for what was accomplished bolstered by the never-ending support of our governing board – thanks to all!

Dr. George reported the following:

- HGMICS Class of 2021 – the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation formally concluded the 2020-2021 school year on the evening of June 3, 2021. The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade class, comprised of 29 students, graduated under a glorious tent on our campus with their family, teachers, and friends present. This was the largest graduating class in the history of the school which was chartered in 2012. Dr. Susan Trussler, founding board member and former parent was the keynote speaker. Dr. Trussler, as an educator, spoke about the Fulbright Scholar Program and “dead fish” in the water. Both the Valedictorian and Salutatorian reflected on their found memories of earlier days attending the old school on School Street along with their found memories of the current school. Graduating students' families were provided a photo album of the graduation ceremony and a portion of the album is now posted as a slide show on the School's Facebook page.

- NEPA Gives and Extra-Curricular Initiatives – on June 4, 2021 HGMICS participated in a community-wide fundraising effort that raised \$10,995 from 68 donors – a fantastic response for the first-time fundraising effort by the School. The money raised will help fund the start of competitive sports and will be overseen by Brian Kubilus, Physical Ed/Health Teacher, who will serve as Athletic Director and to support establishing a Band as part of our Music Program, led by Steve Kurilla, Music teacher

- Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan (2021-2024) – the Comprehensive Planning Committee has been working on the Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan for the past year. The final draft of the plan was made available for the required 28-day public review/comment period through June 5, 2021. Also posted for review/comment was the School's Induction and Professional Development Plans that will be submitted along with the Comprehensive Plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) along with the Board's Affirmation Statement.

- Schoolwide Advisory Group – the Schoolwide Advisory Group convened on June 8<sup>th</sup> at which time they were updated on the Schoolwide programs' academic, staffing, and financial components. The group will assist in promoting family engagement, parent education and staff training related to the schoolwide program. The seven-member group is comprised of one Trustee, parents, staff, and community representatives. The group will reconvene in August 2021 to update the Family Engagement Policy and establish annual goals that will guide their work.

- McKenny-Veto Act-Homeless Student Compliance Report – the School received the final report following the recently held three-year review of the School's compliance with the McKenney-Vento Act. The School was found to be in full compliance with a recommendation to include a small set aside (\$100) in our Title I grant. To date, HGMICS has not had any homeless students enrolled.

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. Without hearing any, Dr. Trussler called for a motion to adjourn.

### **Adjournment**

At 7:50 PM, no further items of business or comments raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Laila Kane.

Dr. Trussler announced that next month's July 20<sup>th</sup> HGMICS Public Board of meeting will be held at the school, thus returning to in-person. Dr. Trussler expressed her gratitude to Dr. Langan and everyone who supports the school. Dr. Trussler reflected on past board meetings that took place on School Street, and the growth and progression of the School since it became chartered. Dr. Trussler poignantly reflected on those who have had children go through this educational environment and the quality of education. At this time, adjournment was accepted by all of the Board of Trustees present, with one Trustee absent.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, July 20, 2021 at 7:00 PM.**