

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

Tuesday, July 20, 2021

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting in person on Tuesday, July 20, 2021. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM and then subsequently presided over the meeting. Stephanie 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: Stephanie Westington, Sam Ceccacci, Laila Kane, Laurie Cadden, Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, John Ezbiansky, Dino Galli, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, and Aaron Nivert. Absent from the meeting: Dr. John Ruddy.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; Douglas Hein, Business Manager; Joseph Ross, Director of Facilities and Security; Janet Kania, School Secretary; and Joshua Pollak, Esq., Solicitor.

Stephanie Westington welcomed all Board of Trustee members and staff. At this time, there were no visitors in attendance and the meeting proceeded.

I. Minutes

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington presented the June 15, 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 June 15, 2021, Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Laila Kane, and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the June 15, 2021 minutes as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

II. President's Report

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington began her President's report by expressing the Board's gratitude to Dr. Susan Trussler and Dr. Fran Langan for their many years of dedicated service to HGMICS. A celebratory dinner, hosted by the Trustees, was held in honor of Dr. Trussler and Dr. Langan on June 23rd at the Scranton Country Club. All in attendance had a great evening.

Stephanie announced HGMICS was informed of the tragic death of Thomas (Toli) Epon, alumnus, who died in a car accident on July 3rd. The family has named HGMICS as beneficiary for donations in honor of Toli.

Stephanie announced the appointed Committee Chairperson for the 2021-2022 school year. They are: Academic Committee, Dr. Clarence Lamanna; Development Committee, Susan Hennemuth; Finance/Facilities Committee, Dr. John Ruddy; Nominating Committee, Laurie Cadden; and Personnel Committee, Sam Ceccacci. Stephanie stated that the committees have been and will continue to be very active. In addition, the committees have strong knowledge and leadership which will continue to guide the school on a successful path.

Stephanie reported that preparations for the new school year is underway. The team has been working on updating the Health & Safety plan that includes a Continuity of Services plan for students and once board-approved will be submitted to PDE and as part of the ESSER III grant application. The Employee, Instructional Staff, and Parent/Student handbooks have been updated for the 2021-2022 school year. All three handbooks will be presented to the Board for approval at tonight's meeting. Dr. George will present the Reconfiguration Report for Board approval.

III. Finance/Facilities Committee

Stephanie Westington

1. May 2021 Financial Report

Stephanie Westington

In the absence of Dr. John Ruddy, Stephanie reported that due to the departure of Chuck Wallinger in June and the transition of Doug Hein, Business Manager, the May Financial Report was not available for the Board to approve at last month's meeting. Since then, the Finance /Facilities Committee has met, and the May 2021 Financial Report was reviewed. The committee found nothing out of the ordinary with the May 2021 Financial Report. At this time Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to accept the May 2021 Financial Report as submitted. The motion was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the May 2021 Financial Report as presented, with one Trustee absent.

2. June 2021 Financial Report

Stephanie Westington

At this time, Stephanie asked Doug Hein, Business Manager to present the June 2021 Financial Report.

Doug reported revenues are \$19,900 above budget for June 2021. Expenses are \$34,534 above budget; this is due to instructional expenditures. The net operating loss for June 2021 is \$22,815. This is primarily due to instructional expenditures and supplies purchases that occur in June. Doug also informed the Board of Trustees that he is still working on finalizing balance sheet accounts as of the end of the fiscal year and there may be some additional adjustments needed. At this time Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to accept the June 2021 Financial Report as submitted. The motion was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Aaron Nivert. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the June 2021 Financial Report as presented, with one Trustee absent.

IV. Personnel Committee

Sam Ceccacci

Sam Ceccacci reported that the search is still underway for a math teacher. A viable candidate had been chosen; however, the candidate withdrew and accepted another position. The Administration will be reaching out to other qualified candidates to fill the Math teacher position.

Sam also reported that effective August 15, 2021, Lisa Lewis has accepted the Instructional Assistant position at the salary of \$22,030. Dennis Gavin has accepted the 12-month position of

Facility Maintenance Technician at an hourly rate of \$20 per hour and will begin August 9, 2021. Also, it was reported that Bryan Kerns is no longer employed by HGMICS.

At this time, Sam called for a **MOTION** to accept the Personnel Committee Report as presented. The motion was made by John Ezbiansky and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Personnel Committee report as presented, with one Trustee absent.

V. 2021-2022 HGMICS Health and Safety Plan

Joe Ross

Joe Ross began his presentation by stating the ARP ESSER Health and Safety Plan is a requirement that needs to be updated and submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education by July 31st and posted on our website. The Plan must also be included in the ESSER III Application due by September 1st. Joe proceeded to give an overview of the Health and Safety Plan which contains services offered by the school to students and addresses questions related to the on-going pandemic.

Joe asked if there were any question. At this time not hearing any, Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to approve and submit the HGMICS Health and Safety Plan for 2021-2022 school year that includes the School's Continuity of Services Plan for academic, behavioral, and social/emotional support for students as presented. The motion was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Laila Kane. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving and submitting the HGMICS Health and Safety Plan for the 2021-2022 as presented, with one Trustee absent.

VI. 2021-2022 HGMICS Handbooks

1. Employee Handbook

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George began her presentation of the 2021-2022 Employee Handbook by highlighting updates and changes to the handbook that reflect previous Board actions such as spouse health coverage and employee tuition reimbursement. It was noted that there will be an increase employee contribution for those employees, hired prior to July 2015, that are enrolled in the state retirement system, PSERS.

Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to accept the 2021-2022 Employee Handbook as presented. The motion was made by Aaron Nivert and seconded by Dr. Clarence Lamanna. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the 2021-2022 Employee Handbook as submitted with an addendum that records additional health and safety measures identified as presented, with one Trustee absent.

2. Instructional Staff Handbook

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne began her presentation of the 2021-2022 Instructional Handbook by stating there were a few changes which includes an extended school day. The school schedule day for teachers will begin at 7:45 AM and end at 3:30 PM which is a 15-minute

difference from last year, and Math department criteria to determine student's eligibility for the Algebra I course.

Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to accept the 2021-2022 Instructional Handbook as presented. The motion was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Laurie Cadden. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the 2021-2022 Instructional Staff Handbook as submitted with an addendum that records additional health and safety measures identified in the updated Health and Safety Plan as presented, with one Trustee absent.

3. Family / Student Handbook

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne informed the Board that the 2021-2022 Family/Student Handbook included an extended student schedule day. Students will begin to arrive at 7:55 AM-8:15 AM, preparation for dismissal will begin at 3:00 PM with dismissal at 3:05 PM, criteria for eligibility for the Algebra I course will be implemented. In addition, the Director of Student Services has been added to this handbook.

Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to accept the 2021-2022 Family/Student Handbook as presented. The motion was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. Stephanie called for any questions or comments. John Ezbiensky asked TreeAnne why the arrival and dismissal times are being changed. TreeAnne responded the reason for the extended day, previously reviewed by the Board, is to allow additional instructional time for ELA, Math, and Science. At this time, not hearing any additional questions or comments, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the 2021-2022 Family/Student Handbook as submitted as presented, with one Trustee absent.

VII. School Matters

1. Reconfiguration Report Affirmation Statement

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George presented the annual Reconfiguration Report Affirmation Statement to the Board for approval and submission to the Pennsylvania Department of Education that asserts there are no reconfigurations for the Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School for the 2021-2022 School Year.

Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to approve and submit the annual Reconfiguration Report Affirmation Statement as presented. The motion was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Aaron Nivert. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving and submitting the annual Reconfiguration Report Affirmation Statement to the Department of Education that asserts there are no reconfigurations for the Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School for the 2021-2022 School year as presented, with one Trustee absent.

2. Principal Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne reported the following:

- Enrichment and Academic Summer Program – The enrichment and summer programs concluded on July 15th. Both programs were successfully implemented. Students showed significant progress in the academic program and those who attended the enrichment programs engaged in hands-on-summer fun. TreeAnne commended the instructional staff that worked in both of these programs.
- ACT 13 – TreeAnne recently participated in two of three initial ACT 13 trainings offered by PDE, Model 1 & 3. TreeAnne was unable to participate in Model 2 due to a schedule conflict and her attending OGAP. ACT 13 of 2020 was signed into law by Governor Tom Wolff on March 27, 2020, which revised the ACT 82 Educator Effectiveness Process. Model 1 provided an overview of the changes, such as the weight attributed to classroom observation and practice and building - level scores. Model 3 provided an overview of how teachers can customize their Educator Effectiveness as professional growth. Model 2 addresses teacher-specific and LEA-selected measures, however TreeAnne was unable to attend.
- Ongoing Assessment Project for Mathematics (OGAP) – the week of June 21-24, the Intermediate and Upper math teachers and STEM Specialist, along with TreeAnne completed one of four OGAP training: Fractional Reasoning. The OGAP framework provided innovative pedagogical underpinnings for the teaching of fractions.
- Instructional Staff Interviews – the school received several qualified resumes for both the Instructional Assistant and Middle School Mathematics (Grades 7-8) teacher position. TreeAnne is looking forward to welcoming the candidate that was chosen as reported in the Personnel report in August. The Math position search on-going.
- Handbooks – both the Instructional Staff and Family/Student handbooks have been updated for the 2021-2022 school year and presented to the Board for approval earlier in this meeting.
- August 2021 Pre-Service Schedule – the 2021-2022 Pre-service schedule is completed. The schedule includes professional development opportunities for departments, pods, the whole group, and a project-based leadership cohort. NEPA community members, in-house staff, and program coaches are all scheduled to lead the team during the week and a half training.

3. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George complemented TreeAnne and the faculty for the extensive planning for the upcoming year. Dr George stated that administrative staff are in the throes of final preparations to welcome teachers and students back for the start of the 2021-2022 school year. Dr. George reported the following:

- Construction, Building and Grounds – extensive summer cleaning of the school is underway with deep cleaning of the kitchen, floor polishing throughout the building, and painting each classroom.

Considering the construction project's impact on the previous locations for the Kindergarten and School playgrounds, new play areas are now being prepared. The large shed was relocated to the lower lot and removal of old structures such as unusable freezers and truck bed. A basketball hoop was donated from the Waverly Community House for use outdoors.

The construction project for the school's building addition, which will provide 7 new classrooms for Middle School students, a new entrance and improved visitor and vehicular traffic flow. Each week, despite persistent rain, brings considerable progress with footers and the retaining wall providing a view of what will be the footprint of the addition. Due to the impact of the rainy weather, the construction team has been working some evening and weekend hours in order to keep on task. A Neighborhood Meeting is slated for July 27th at 6:00 PM to update the neighborhood on the progress of the building addition.

Final plans are underway to install a new keylock system in the existing building that will align with the building addition. The keylock system for the addition is included in the construction cost whereas the existing building will be paid directly by the school. The quote amount was \$9,800, which was lower than anticipated and will be covered by the ESSR Grant and completed by August 30th.

- HGMICS Special Education Program – previously reported was the successful outcome of the 6-year evaluation or Cyclical Monitoring for Continuous Improvement (CMC) of the School's Special Education program which took place on April 26th. An entire year of preparation took place prior to the visit. Our final report indicated that there were no compliance issues as well as positive feedback from teacher/parent surveys and interviews. A special and unique commendation from the Bureau of Special Education was issued. Dr. George is very proud of all faculty and staff who demonstrate a commitment to all students, including those with special needs. Dr. Lamanna commended Dr. George and the faculty and staff on their unique commendation and added in all his professional years of educational service he has never encountered a commendation like this. Laila Kane added when she first began her teaching career at HGMICS the school did not have many students with special needs and there was little awareness of the compliance issues that were required. The trustees applauded the School's successful Special Education Commendation.
- Summer Reporting Requirements – extensive reporting for the end of the year occurs in the summer. Reports range from detailed Safety Reports to Child Accounting Reports. Updated Memorandum of Understanding with the Scranton Police department is completed in July with detailed information to follow in September regarding security, personnel, student enrollment, bust lists, etc. The PDE Reconfiguration Report is due by July 31st for the 2021-2022 school year. Any planned reconfiguration for public schools in PA must be reported to include school closings, increased enrollment, and leadership changes. HGMICS has no changes to report that is submitted along with a Board Affirmation statement, School Executed Charters and CEO Reconfiguration letter that are uploaded with the online report submission. This year's Annual Report, only required for Charter Schools is due by August 1st is and is more extensive in requested information from 2020-2021 school year than the previous year's Annual Report. A series of

affirmation statements signed by the Board President and CEO must accompany the submission of the Report.

- ARP ESSER III Grant - the award for HGMICS is \$835,000 for a three-year timeframe with emphasis on academic, health and safety mitigation efforts needed from the COVID-19 Pandemic's impact on K-12 schools as well as the ability to submit facility construction/renovation/improvement costs if related improving the health and safety of students.
- The updated Health and Safety Plan was included in the July Board agenda; this plan responds to specific questions via PDE template/guidance. A Continuity of Services section is part of the Health and Safety Plan this year as well as the Emergency Instructional Form/Schedule.
- Personnel – advertising and interviews for open positions continued over the summer months with good candidate pools. The Instructional Assistant and Facility Maintenance Technician positions have been filled. The search to fill the Math teacher, Secretary, Kitchen Assistant, and Lunch Monitors are still being accepted. Last year, Friendship House provided the school with a Behavioral Therapist who supported our Special Education Program. Unfortunately, that Therapist took another position and will not be returning. Friendship House is experiencing a staffing shortage so the School will attempt to hire a part-time or full-time behavioral therapist and that would be grant funded through the ESSER II Grant over the next two years.

Doug Hein joined the staff in June as Business Manager and continues his orientation to include the National School Lunch Program, School District Billing, Sycamore, PIMS and Federal Reporting. Doug has already initiated procedural changes for monthly accounting that were reviewed with the Finance/Facilities Committee and completed the May and June 2021 monthly reports. Doug is supporting the auditors from Baker Tilly as they prepare for the annual audit. In addition, Doug has established an ACH system that allows the school to initiate electronic payments as well as secured a system for onsite electronic deposits. The first draw on the FNCB loan was received on July 14, 2021.

A second cohort of HGMICS staff is participating in a 5-week Mindfulness Training Session, led by Phil Sallavanti from the NEIU-19. The first cohort training was held last summer. Teachers bring mindfulness into the classroom and at our staff meetings that might include reflection and relaxation activities.

Morning Public Address Announcements include a Mindfulness Moment presented by a different student each school day. The importance of social and emotional support for students and staff cannot be overstated and will be an important part of the programming during the 2021-2022 school year.

VIII. New Business

Stephanie Westington

At this time, Stephanie congratulated the administration and staff as the Board of Trustees is reassured with the stewardship of HGMICS. With no further new business from the Trustees, Stephanie asked if there was anyone who wished to voice any additional concerns or comments. Laurie Cadden suggested photos be taken of new Trustees, officers, new employees. This will allow for good PR and can also be submitted to the local newspaper. Stephanie asked if there

were any additional items or comments, without hearing any Stephanie called for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

At 7:52 PM, no further items of business or comments had been raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Susan Hennemuth. Adjournment was accepted by all the Board of Trustees present. Stephanie thanked everyone for attending.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, August 17, 2021, at 7:00 PM.**