

Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting remotely on Tuesday, September 21, 2021. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:09 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, Dr. John Ruddy, Laurie Cadden, John Ezbiansky, Dino Galli, Susan Hennemuth, and Aaron Nivert. Absent from the meeting: Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen and Dr. Clarence Lamanna.

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, staff, and visitors. Stephanie asked if there were any comments or remarks regarding the September agenda. At this time, there were no comments or remarks from the audience and the meeting proceeded.

I. Minutes

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington presented the August 17, 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 August 17, 2021, Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Susan Hennemuth, and seconded by John Ezbiansky. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the August 17, 2021, minutes as submitted, with two Trustees absent.

II. President's Report

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington welcomed everyone in attendance. Stephanie stated that since the start of the 2021-2022 school year on August 30th, there is much to report. All committees resumed their regular scheduled meetings. The Finance and Facilities Committee held two meetings, and noted that the conclusion of the annual audit. A detailed review of the results was presented by Baker Tilly to the Committee and entire Board. There will be two policies presented at tonight's meeting for approval by the Academic Committee. The Personnel Committee will present candidates for open positions. The Development Committee is scheduled to meet on September 22nd. The Community Outreach Work Session, that was scheduled for August 25th has been rescheduled to October 11. Dr. George will facilitate the session and all Trustees are encouraged to attend as plans to address several goals of the strategic plan. Other stakeholders, faculty, staff, administration, and parents will be invited to attend as well. The Annual Golf Tournament will take place on Sunday, October 10th.

III. Finance/Facilities Committee

Dr. John Ruddy

1. Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Financial Audit

Dr. John Ruddy

Dr. John Ruddy began his report by stating that the Finance/Facilities Committee is actively meeting to review monthly financial reports, and progress on the construction project. In addition, a special meeting was held on September 16th when the draft audit was presented by Bill McGowan and Rob Bernadyn from Baker Tilly, LLC. The Board of Trustees was also briefed by Baker Tilly, LLC.

Dr. Ruddy presented the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Financial Audit for approval. A **MOTION** to approve the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Financial Audit as submitted by the accounting firm of Baker Tilly, LLC. was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Aaron Nivert. All Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Financial Audit as presented, with two Trustees absent.

2. August 2021 Financial Report

Doug Hein

Dr. Ruddy asked Doug Hein, Business Manager to detail the August 2021 Financial Report for approval.

Doug Hein, Business Manager reported revenues for August 2021 are \$340,253 and are in line with what was expected for the month. The majority of this reflects \$329,226 of school district billing. Expenses of \$453,071 are \$131,959 over July 2021 due to the purchase of a new Reading series which cost \$81,387 and will be paid for by the ESSER III funds, along with summer building and grounds maintenance projects. The Net Operating loss for August 2021 is \$112,817.

The Balance Sheet Notes are as follows: the school had \$920,682 in cash at the end of August 2021. This is approximately \$189,439 more than the balance at the end of July 2021. This represents 74 days cash on hand, which places the school in a positive solvency position. The school's loan of \$4,500,000 has an 18-month grace period for principal payments, which will end in October 2022. Monthly principal and interest payments of approximately \$25,035 per month will begin in November 2022. The August 2021 payment was \$3,005 compared to the July 2021 payment of \$965. The term is twenty (20) years, and the interest rate is 2.99%. In August 2021, we drew down \$199,406 to pay Mar Paul Company, Inc. and \$6,473 to pay Scranton Electric Heating and Cooling. Total construction funds drawn to date are \$643,050.

Grant Updates are as follows: the school was awarded Federal Title I Schoolwide funds in the amount of \$132,198 for the 2021-2022 school year, with no distributions issued yet by the PA Department of Education (PDE). This funding is for improving student academic performance in reading, language arts and math. The school was awarded Federal Title II Schoolwide funding of \$14,596 for the 2021-2022 school year, with \$1,135.11 being distributed in both July 2021 and August 2021. This funding is to be used to provide professional development and supplemental programs to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals and other school leaders. Federal Title IV Schoolwide

funds in the amount of \$10,000 had been awarded for the 2021-2022 school year. PDE distributed \$66.67 in both July and August 2021. This funding is for providing well rounded education opportunities, creating safe schools and supporting student physical and mental health. The school was awarded \$413,069 in ESSER II funding. These funds are used to purchase educational technology to aid in the interaction between students and their instructors, provide mental health services and supports, and support summer and after-school learning programs. PDE allocated \$8,827 in July 2021 and \$9,686 in August 2021. The school was awarded the US Department of Education's Small Rural School Achievement (SRSA) grant for the third year in a row. This grant covers learning enrichment programs and expenses. In FY19 the school received \$13,746, all of which has been drawn down. For FY20, the school was awarded \$17,989 of which \$2,188 has been drawn. The school has until September 30, 2022, to obligate the remaining funds and December 30, 2022, to liquidate the funding. For FY21, the school was recently awarded \$20,609, which must be obligated by September 30, 2023, and liquidated by January 2, 2024. The 2021-2022 PA Ready to Learn Grant window opened in August 2021 and the School's application was submitted well before the November deadline. This funding will support the establishment of a competency-based learning curriculum framework and provide teacher stipends and any resources needed to complete the associated work. The American Relief Plan (ARP), ESSER II application was submitted at the end of August. This grant provides the school with \$835,519 of funds to defray various salary and program costs incurred from March 13, 202 through September 30, 2024. If approved, the school will also use approximately \$85,000 towards the construction of the Kindergarten Annex and a new outdoor pavilion.

Stephanie thanked Doug for his detailed report. Stephanie added that the reason for changes the structure of the financial report due to Doug moving from the Quick Books online system to the Quick Books desktop system. Stephanie also complimented Doug for his detailed tracking of the budget, which is helpful to the Board, along with the close tracking of grants and drawdowns of monies going forward.

At this time Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to accept the August 2021 Financial Report as submitted. The motion was made by John Ezbiansky and seconded by Dino Gallo. All Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the August 2021 Financial Report as presented, with two Trustees absent.

IV. Academic Committee

Laila Kane

Laila Kane presented two policies from the Academic Committee to the Board of Trustees for approval. Laila stated the Academic Committee met on August 30th to discuss each policy. The first policy for approval will be the Evaluation Policy for Certified Instructional Staff and the second will be the Special Education Policy.

1. Evaluation Policy for Certified Instructional Staff

Laila called for a **MOTION** to accept the Evaluation Policy for Certified Instructional Staff as presented. The motion was made by Aaron Nivert and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. All

Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the revised Evaluation Policy for Certified Instructional Staff as presented, with two Trustees absent.

2. Special Education Policy

Laila called for a **MOTION** to accept the Special Education Policy as presented. The motion was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Policy as presented, with two Trustees absent.

V. Personnel Committee

Sam Ceccacci

Sam Ceccacci stated that the Personnel Committee met on Tuesday, September 7th and all members of the committee were present. Sam stated that there are four candidates for Board appointment, including Jon Iannone, Middle School Math Teacher, Deana Bonacci, Administrative Assistant, Julia Fessenden, Instructional Assistant, and Shana Carmody, School Social Worker. The Personnel Committee is reviewing a policy for COVID vaccinations for newly hired employees as drafted by School Solicitor, Atty Pollak and recommended by Dr. George.

At this time, Sam called for a **MOTION** to accept the approval for the August 2021 Personnel Report as presented that includes new hires for the positions of Middle School Math Teacher, Administrative Assistant, Instructional Assistant, and Social Worker. The motion was made by Dino Gallo and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Personnel Committees August 2021 Report and all four hires as submitted and presented, with two Trustees absent.

V. School Matters

1. Health & Safety Plan Update

Joseph Ross

Joseph Ross, Director of Facilities/Security began his report by stating the 2021-2022 Health and Safety Plan was submitted and is continuously updated to follow CDC, PDE, and PA state guidelines as information is received. Joe summarized several of the enhanced mitigation efforts that are in place. Effective Tuesday September 7th the following enhanced mitigation efforts were implemented: universal masking, symptom screening, temperature check, cafeteria (a fifth lunch period has been added to serve Kindergarten students only, seating in the cafeteria will be unidirectional and students will sit with members of their homeroom, the only exception is the Seniors who will be allowed to choose their own seats, students will be directed to wear masks immediately upon completion of eating), mask breaks, testing (the school has decided that the “pool testing” protocol that PDE is making available would not work in our setting), in-person meeting, events, and all public board meetings will be held virtually until further notice, visitors will be restricted to those who provide direct services to student or to the school, and

students in all pods, except for seniors will be contained within their respective homeroom and teachers will rotate throughout the day.

On September 24th, a communication was sent to all HGMICS families outlining enhanced mitigation measures effective September 7th which is in alignment with the CDC and the PA Department of Health and PDE focusing on in-person learning with layered prevention strategies. The PA School Epidemiology team adopted a harm reduction framework for K-12 schools. Harm reduction is a public health model aimed at equipping people with information and resources to reduce engagement in high-risk behaviors, while recognizing that it may not be eliminated. Our enhanced mitigation measures provide the layered prevention strategies necessary to enable us to conduct in-person learning safely. While experiencing the positive impact of these measures, we also continually monitor local community spread and anticipate ways that we can enhance school safety. As of September 24th, the School has not experienced COVID transmission in the school, but we saw an increase in the number of students that were absent from school due to quarantine requirements and other illnesses. In order for the school to continue in-person learning safely, Arrangements to have schoolwork will be sent home

In response to a question regarding family communications. With the increased calls from family members regarding student symptoms, parent communications were recently delayed but will be back on schedule such that after any covid case identified a notification will follow. Dr. George added that any Board member contacted about school matter should direct the concerns to either herself, TreeAnne, or Joe.

Stephanie “thanked” Dr. George, Joe Ross and the administration for their leadership, hard work in keeping committed to the HGMICS Health and Safety Plan and their commitment for a safe educational environment for all staff and students.

2.Principal Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne McEnery, Principal echoed her gratitude to Joseph and Amy Ryan, School Nurse for all their hard work and commitment for a safe educational environment.

TreeAnne presented the following:

- Fall After School Programing: Grant-funded Enrichment and Tutoring -The Fall After School Program during the 2021-2022 school is scheduled from September 20th through December 10th. All Health & Safety protocols will be adhered to during the after-school programming. We are offering nine sections of tutoring with approximately 37 students registered for ELA, Math, or both subject areas. We are offering nine enrichment programs with approximately 66 students registered. The Fall tutoring and enrichment programs in total is offering 18 programmatic offerings and reaching over 65 students, which is approximately 21% of our student enrollment.
- MTSS Committee (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) – The school has formalized an MTSS Committee which is composed of administrative staff from each tier of intervention. The Committee meets monthly to ensure the implementation of schoolwide leveled interventions and supports addressed to academic and achievement, behavioral and emotional needs of all students. The Committee is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the fidelity and effectiveness of the MTSS framework by actively reviewing

data. Our school is predominantly in Tier 1 which is 80-90% universal support for all students. Tier 2 is 5-10% which is targeted support for some students who are at risk. Tier 3 is 1-5% individualized support for the few students with intensive and persistent challenges. Schoolwide benchmark assessments will conclude the week of September 29th. Teachers and departments are compiling reports on the results of the assessments. The reports will be submitted to the principal. A full report will be submitted to the Board of Trustees at next month's meeting.

Curriculum Night – The annual Curriculum Night was held virtually on Wednesday, September 8th. The informational evening was scheduled by elementary and middle school sections. This was an opportunity for families to meet their student's teacher and learn about the curriculum for the school year. It was well attended. Next year in order to accommodate the many families with multiple children in our school, we will schedule the evening within a 2.5-hour time block, with each Pod being planned for a half hour. This will allow families with several children within the elementary or middle school classrooms to attend each Pod presentation.

- Departmentalization & Department Chairs – This is the first year that the Primary through Senior Pod has departmentalized. The primary teachers transitioned into teaching only Literacy, Mathematics, or Social Studies for 2021. They are gaining confidence and are relieved to focus on one content instead of many. This adjustment continues to support alignment and accountability in curriculum and instruction and build collegial support for grades K-8. Each department has a designated Chair. The Chair is a stipend position, with articulated responsibilities documented. The Chairs are scheduled to meet with the principal monthly. This will help address continuity in schoolwide goals and outcomes.
- Teacher Evaluation, SLO, Walkthrough - Teacher evaluations will be scheduled in October 2020. Classroom Walkthrough focus for trimester I centers on visible Student Learning Objectives. Once all benchmark data is completed, teachers/departments will design their 2021-2022 SLO. I am highly encouraging departments to formulate an SLO together to help increase student achievement.

3. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George began her report by stating on August 30th, the school year began with two Welcome Assemblies – one for the elementary students and another for the middle school students. TreeAnne McEnery, Jade Volchoff, Joe Ross, and Dr. George made presentations that addressed the school's mission, new initiatives, construction project, review of the PBIS program, STAR student behavior, and safety and health procedures. The elementary students (K-4th) were highly engaged identifying what constitutes START behavior, and the middle students (5-8th) were very inquisitive about the construction project.

- Grants Update – Doug Hein, Business Manager presented a number of grants that have been received and/or applied for earlier in this meeting. On August 30th, PDE notified school districts and charter schools of their respective allocations from the ARP state set-aside monies or Act 24. All allocations for federal grants associated with the pandemic including the set-aside funds, are calculated on the federal Title I formula that is based upon the percentage of low-income students. The set-aside allocation for Howard Gardner totals \$87,000 with targeted areas that the funding must address: learning loss,

social emotional learning, mental health, professional development, afterschool, and summer programs.

- FY2020-2021 External Audit – Dr. George “thanked” Doug Hein, Business Manager for all his diligent work with Baker Tilly, LLC, accounting firm to complete the FY2020-2021 External Audit which was presented to the Board of Trustees for approval at tonight’s meeting.
- Dunmore and Scranton District Billing Update – there is no further update on the Dunmore/Scranton School District billing situation for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.
- 2021-2022 School Year – Health and Safety Plan Updates – based upon recent consultation with Dr. Debra Georgetti, School Physician, the increase in symptoms among children that might lead to a COVID case was discussed and assessed. Since the start of the school year, several students contracted COVID, fortunately not through school transmission. Other students are quarantined due to a household or other close contact, The mitigation efforts consistent with the harm reduction model that Joe Ross reviewed at tonight’s meeting is being closely followed. We now limit visitors to the school and all meetings with families are being held virtually. Kudos to Amy Ryan, School Nurse and Joe Ross, Pandemic Coordinator who are our points of contact with families and all associated record-keeping and communications needed.
- Construction Building and Grounds - the construction of the building addition continues with steel being installed and the layout now visible. Unfortunately, there is a delay in the arrival of the roofing insulation, now slated for January 24, 2022. This has sparked an agreed upon plan to continue construction into December followed by a brief hiatus until the arrival of the insulation. The silver lining in this delay allows the school to utilize the summer months to prepare for occupancy rather than in the middle of a school year.
- Joe Ross and Dr. George received notice that the key lock system that was delayed has arrived, and installation is scheduled on October 11th, Columbus Day, when the school is not in session. The key lock installation is for the existing building, the building addition construction includes the installation of the same key lock system.
- The arrival/dismissal car line has been streamlined, allowing more cars to be stacked on our lot. This is due to suggestions from a grandparent to paint care lines for families to follow. This slight but significant change has reduced the number of cars on Elm Street and creates a more efficient system.
- Parent Forum – the Parent Forum will provide fall outside decorations for all to enjoy. The Parent Forum will hold their first meeting which was scheduled at the School on Thursday, September 23rd, the meeting will not be held virtually. The Parent Forum held a Family Fun Night at Roba’s last Friday.
- Committees – the school begins each year determining needed committees, membership, and meeting times. School Committees include Student Assistance Program (SAP), Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS), Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) team, Comprehensive Planning Committee, Safety and Wellness Committees.
- Personnel – all screening and interviewing applicants for the open positions yielded excellent candidates for the positions of Middle School Math Teacher, Administrative Assistant, Instructional Assistant, and Social Worker. Dr. George said all applicants were approved earlier at this meeting and we are excited to welcome all to the team.
- Golf Tournament – preparations are underway for the Annual Golf Tournament to be held Sunday, October 10th at Pine Hills Country Club. The last time this annual fundraiser was

in May 2019. All tournament information is on the website and the date is highlighted on the school's Facebook page. 50/50 ticket sales are underway, raffle baskets are being donated, sponsors were contacted for financial support and golfers are signing up to enjoy the day. The tournament has a shotgun start at 9 AM with a captain and crew format followed by a buffet luncheon and awards, prizes announcement of the 50/50 ticket winner. Thanks to all who are supporting this important fundraising event for the school.

VI. New Business

Stephanie Westington

At this time, Stephanie asked if there was anyone who wished to voice any additional concerns or comments. Stephanie thanked the visitor for attending the meeting. Without hearing any additional concerns or comments Stephanie called for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

At 8:15 PM, no further items of business or comments had been raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Laila Kane. Adjournment was accepted by all the Board of Trustees present, with two Trustees absent. Stephanie thanked everyone for attending.

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