

Howard Gardner MI Charter School
Public Board Meeting
Tuesday, December 21, 2021

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting remotely on Tuesday, December 21, 2021. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and subsequently presided over the meeting. Stephanie led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance and took roll call for the board members and non-voting attendees.

The following Trustees attended: Stephanie Westington, Sam Ceccacci, Dr. John Ruddy, Laurie Cadden, John Ezbiansky, Dino Galli, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Aaron Nivert, and Susan Hennemuth. Absent from the meeting: Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen and Laila Kane.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; Joseph Ross, Director of Facilities and Security; and Deana Bonacci, Administrative Assistant. There is one visitor present.

Stephanie Westington reminded the attendees the public hearing is on agenda items only, visitors may comment on items listed on the agenda, and names and school districts or residence will be recorded before remarks are made. With no request for comments from the audience regarding the December agenda, Stephanie proceeded with the meeting.

I. Minutes

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington presented the November 16, 2021, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A **MOTION** to approve the November 16, 2021, Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna, and seconded by Aaron Nivert. Stephanie asked if there were any items for discussion on the minutes. Not hearing any, Stephanie called for a vote. All Board of Trustees members present voted in favor of approving the November 16, 2021, minutes as submitted, with two Trustees absent.

II. President's Report

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington welcomed everyone in attendance.

Stephanie announced there were a few items on the agenda, including two Special Education policies, and a motion to approve the appointment of a new Business Manager, and the presentation of the Calendar for the 2022-2023 school year to be voted on. Last, but not least. Stephanie announced the retirement of the School's long-time Kitchen Cook, Dottie Shoemaker and thanked Dottie for her years of service and her care for the students.

III. Finance/Facilities Committee

Dr. John Ruddy

Dr. John Ruddy reported the Finance/Facilities Committee met on December 1, 2021, to discuss a number of issues in respect to Finance and Facilities. The Committee discussed the Charter Renewal, the Business Manager position, as well as construction costs. John stated the meeting was very productive and detailed.

1. November 2021 Financial Report

Joe Ross

Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Security, reported revenues for the month of November 2021 of \$450,195 with the majority of this due to school district billings in the amount of \$377,858 against expenses of \$369,836. Net Operating Profit for November 2021 is \$80,359, with a year-to-date Net Operating Loss of \$81,852. That number will change once the School is reimbursed from the grant funding. The School had \$898,788 in cash at the end of November 2021. This is approximately \$20,054 less than the balance at the end of October 2021. In November 2021, two draws were made on the construction loan due to a delay in receiving the payment applications from the contractors in October. The first draw was made for a grand total of \$316,744 dollars. Mar-Paul, our General Contractor, had a draw of \$255,542. Scranton Electric Heating and Cooling, our Plumbing Contractor, as well as our HVAC contractor had draws of \$45,249 and \$15,593 respectively. These were drawn on November 1st. The second was a draw of \$259,193 consisting of \$182,035 from Mar-Paul, SEHC Plumbing for \$12,195, and Joyce Electric for \$64,963 made on November 18th. Total construction funds drawn to date are \$1,552,020.

Joe stated the School received grant in the amounts of \$17,422 of Title I funding, \$1,946 of Title II funding, and \$1,333 of Title IV funding in November. The School was awarded \$413,069 in ESSER II funding. \$9,686 was distributed in November with a total of \$47,571 year-to-date. The School drew down \$24,558 in SRSA Grant funds to cover various enrichment program expenses and wages for the month.

At this time, Dr. John Ruddy entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through November 30, 2021, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Dino Galli and seconded by John Ezbiansky. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, and Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the November 2021 Financial Report as presented, with two Trustees absent.

IV. Academic Committee

Dr. Clarence Lamanna

Dr. Lamanna stated the Academic Committee met on Tuesday, December 7, 2021, to review a number of items. First, an overview of the status of the curriculum document was presented. The document will be made available upon completion. In addition, the Committee reviewed an application for Behavioral Support, which is mental health services in the School, and will be addressed in the CEO's report later in the Board meeting. Finally, the development of two policies,

both in accordance with Federal and State guidelines and reviewed by the School's solicitor.

1. Special Education Behavior Support Policy

At this time, Dr. Lamanna called for a **MOTION** to accept the Special Education Behavior Support Policy as presented. The motion was made by Susan Hennemuth and seconded by Laurie Cadden. Dr. Lamanna called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Special Education Behavior Support Policy as presented, with two Trustees absent.

2. Special Education Confidentiality Policy

At this time, Dr. Lamanna called for a **MOTION** to accept the Special Education Confidentiality Policy as presented. The motion was made by Sam Ceccacci and seconded by Dr. John Ruddy. Dr. Lamanna called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Special Education Confidentiality Policy as presented, with two Trustees absent.

V. Development Committee

Susan Hennemuth

Susan reported the Development Committee met on November 30, 2021. Susan stated the Annual HGMICS Golf Tournament is scheduled for Sunday, October 9, 2022, at Pine Hills. The only outstanding item regarding the golf tournament is possibly changing the time. Additional topics of discussion included an update on outreach to proposed candidates for HGS Foundation Board, public relation activities, software utilization, and hiring a Community Outreach position, which will be brought to the Personnel Committee. The Committee also discussed the opportunity presented when opening the building addition and possibly involving Dr. Howard Gardner. The Development Committee meeting is canceled for December.

VI. Personnel Committee

Sam Ceccacci

Sam Ceccacci reported the Personnel Committee met on Tuesday, December 7, 2021, to discuss a number of issues. The first issue was the employee health care benefits and that the Staff did a great job in getting the proposed substantial increase reduced to a manageable increase in monthly premiums. The committee received an update on open positions for the business manager position, the food service manager position, as well as the Spanish teacher position. Also, there was a discussion about a proposed new position, a Community Outreach Coordinator. The position includes, but is not limited to, marketing, public relations, fundraising apprenticeships, conducting an annual fund drive, as well as participation in the capital campaign. Also discussed was creating a procedure in the School's handbook regarding timely notification of resignation.

At this time, Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to approve the appointment of John Marsico as Business Manager, effective January 10, 2022, at an annual salary of \$65,000 with benefits not

to exceed 21% or \$13,650. for a total of \$78,650 and to serve as an authorized signatory on behalf of the Howard Garner Multiple Intelligence Charter School and Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation as presented. The motion was made by Dr. John Ruddy and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. Stephanie called for any discussion, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted infavor of the appointment of the new Business Manager. Stephanie abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest. Stephanie thanked John Marsico for accepting the Business Manager position.

At this time, Sam called for a **MOTION** to approve the Personnel Report,as presented. The motion was made by Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Dino Galli. All Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Personnel Report, with two Trustees absent.

VII. School Matters

1. School Calendar

Dr. Marie George presented the 2022-2023 School Calendar. The first day of school will be August 29th, similar to this year, the week before Labor Day. In advance of the first day of school, there are pre-service days for the staff, totaling eight from August 17 to August 26· 2022. The rest of the calendar is very similar to previous years in terms of Federal holidays and various breaks with only one change based on the need for additional time for family conferences. There will be a one full day on December 9th, 2022, devoted to teacher conferences when the School will be closed. The last day of school is slated for June 6· 2022. Prior to that, the School's 8th grade graduation is slated for June 1, 2022. There are 180 educational days as required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Built into the calendar are 5 inclement weather days, 6 half days and 9 Act 48 days, which is the reference to professional development days afforded to the School's staff.

At this time, Dr. Marie George entertained a **MOTION** to approve the 2022-2023 School Calendar as submitted. The motion was made by Stephanie Westington and seconded by Clarence Lamanna. All Trustees are in favor of accepting the 2022-2023 School Calendar and none apposed, with two trustees absent.

2. Principal Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne McEnery gave highlights from the Principal Report. December began with the Parent Forum hosting a community Winter Celebration on December 3, 2022. The celebration highlighted the diversity present in our student population with crafts/activities related to Hanukkah, Kwanza, Diwali, and Christmas. Approximately 300 people were present from the event. Students from the Intermediate Pod were led by Steve Kurilla, Music teacher, in a tone chime ensemble. The whole community came out to celebrate together on a very cold, winter night. It was a merry event.

With the conclusion of Trimester I on November 2nd, 2022, teacher conferences were scheduled on Thursday, December 9th and Friday, December 10th. Families were able to schedule

with all core teachers. The input from parents/guardians was that there weren't enough time slots available for all families. To rectify this situation, we have addressed the conferences in the 2022-2023 School calendar. All conferences were held through Zoom.

The Schoolwide Title I Advisory Group fielded a Survey for Family Engagement on November 22, 2021. The survey was closed on December 10, 2021. The Advisory Group will convene in January and the results will be in the January Board report. The School will review the results and share them with the Board of Trustees and the School community in January.

Student progress is continuously monitored. Teachers have been administering benchmarking assessments, and the ESGI results for K-2 indicate positive achievement. We have all but three Kindergartners who know all of their capital letters and lower-case letters. Congratulations to the School's little ones. Additional benchmarking will be conducted in January and reported at the January BoT meeting.

Primary Pod transitioning from being departmentalized: The MTSS Committee, which meets bi-weekly, and has been busy conducting classroom observations to collect evidence of instructional and assessment practices K-8. In addition to this work, the Committee reviewed the effectiveness of the primary pod transitioning to departments. Based on input from the teachers and the Committee, such as the social-emotional impacts, I reinforced that it would be better to transition back to single homerooms at the New Year than wait until the 2022-2023 school year. This decision was communicated to families on December 6, 2021. The teachers are well supported to make the transition and have been participating in weekly American Reading Company (ARC) coaching sessions since the beginning of December. After meeting with them today, they are anticipating the transition on January 3, 2022.

A tremendous amount of focus and attention from the administrative staff has been on our charter renewal application. I have been focusing on the educational sections and through collaboration with the instructional staff and myself, a significant task, updating the standards-aligned curriculum framework for all core subjects, has been finalized. This document was framed by PDE's Safe Schools, Roadmap for Educational Leaders Focus on Effective Instruction. This standards-based resource is posted on the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website, and it addresses the educational challenges schools face due to COVID-19 and identifies the core, grade-level learning standards to ensure no additional learning loss is incurred by the students. This document is a phenomenal resource that will serve the instructional staff as we continue to teach in the post hybrid remote learning and serve as our updated PD curriculum framework. It's a valuable document the Staff completed. TreeAnne commended their work and wished everyone Happy Holidays.

3. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. Marie George provided a few updates about the Health and Safety Plan. One of the most significant changes that we'll be enacting in the new calendar year is the implementation of a Test to Stay program. This is an opportunity that was provided to all school districts and charter schools throughout the state, free of charge, by the Department of Education and in collaboration with the Department of Health. A Statement of Assurance was submitted, and the School was accepted. Families have been notified of the program. The program is an attempt to allow students to stay at school by participating in a regimen of rapid antigen tests if they are unvaccinated and have been a close contact. Joe Ross will be coordinating the program as our contact person with Concentric, the actual partner that the state has chosen, and our school nurse, Amy Ryan. Amy and her nursing staff will administer the test. Parent/Guardian consent is required. With regard to health and safety, governor Wolf's mask mandate for K through 12 schools has been rescinded by virtue of our state's Supreme Court's ruling, in advance of the January 17, 2022 deadline, when the governor himself said it would expire.

For the past month, the administrative team has diligently worked to assemble all related documents and respond to all questions for the required five-year Charter Renewal Application. The application is now in the final stages of completion. Administration has been proofreading, formatting, and inserting attachments into one document. Additional review will take place the first week of January with a distribution date to Scranton and Abington Heights School Districts of January 10, 2022.

Selection of a school mascot has garnered the attention of students and staff, who, recently submitted their preferences by ranking the following four possible mascots. The four candidates were the hedgehogs, cubs, hurricane, and hawks. The planning group is meeting tomorrow to discuss the winner and Melissa Cruise, the School's Art teacher, is already working on an appropriate graphic. The winner will be announced during National School Choice Week – January 24-28.

Led by STEM Specialist Matt Salerno, the students in the Intermediate Pod (Grades 3 & 4) have re- started the **School Store**. Students submit job applications to perform various functions – ordering, inventory, accounting, and sales – and conduct sales each Wednesday. The School Store is averaging \$125 in sales each week. Bravo to the School's 3rd and 4th grade students, as well as Matt Salerno!

Several EITC donations were received in December including from Fidelity Bank (\$1,000); Philadelphia Insurance (\$1,500), Waste Management (\$3,000) and SEIO (\$6,000). A photo opportunity with Stephanie Abrahams, our agent from FNCB took place considering the generous contributions (totaling \$9500) received over the past year.

In late November, an application was submitted to the Northeast Behavioral Health Care Consortium for a School Based Behavioral Health Team. Unfortunately, the School's application was denied, and administration is following up to determine the reason.

Not having the ability to have a Holiday Party due to COVID, last year we celebrated the

final 12 Days of HGS Holiday Cheer as a spirit-lifting way to end the calendar year, leading up to our winter break. With much positive feedback, the 12 Days were repeated this year. On Day 5 – when we dressed in Red – we had the additional surprise of lunch from Cara Mia’s compliments from the Board of Trustees, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Thank you very much to our Trustees! Our final day on December 22nd will be a Surprise Celebration of Dottie – our beloved Kitchen Cook, who is retiring but may still help part time if needed.

The Supervisor, Food Service position and Business Manager positions searches are completed and had an excellent pool of candidates. Dawn Miller and John Marsico were recommended to the Board as our candidates of choice starting January 10, 2022. The new position of Community Outreach Coordinator, which originally had been discussed by the Development Committee, was approved by the Personnel Committee and the search is still underway. The vacant Spanish teaching position does not have any candidates at this time. Marie wished everyone a joyous holiday and thanked the Board for the support they give to the school.

VIII. New Business

Stephanie Westington

At this time, Stephanie asked if anyone had any new business to bring forth at this meeting. Stephanie thanked the Administration and Staff for their work on the Charter Renewal and safe and healthy holiday season.

Adjournment

At 7:48 p.m., no further items of business or comments had been raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Stephanie Westington.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, January 18, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.**

