

## **Howard Gardner MI Charter School**

### **Public Board Meeting**

Tuesday, January 18, 2022

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting remotely on Tuesday, January 18, 2022. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:07 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, Laila Kane, Dr. John Ruddy, Laurie Cadden, John Ezbiansky, Dino Galli, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Aaron Nivert, and Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen. Absent from the meeting: Susan Hennemuth.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; John Marsico, Business Manager; and Deana Bonacci, Administrative Assistant.

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 of residence will be recorded before remarks are made. With no request for comments from the audience regarding the January agenda, Stephanie proceeded with the meeting.

#### **I. Minutes**

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington presented the December 21, 2021, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A **MOTION** to approve the December 21, 2021, Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Clarence Lamanna, and seconded by Laurie Cadden. 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 December 21, 2021, minutes as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

#### **II. President's Report**

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington welcomed everyone in attendance to the January 2022 Public Board meeting.

Stephanie began her report by stating HGMICS continues to provide in-person learning for students and continues to operate under the School's Health and Safety Plan.

Stephanie thanked all of those involved in the 2022 Charter Renewal process for their hard work over the past several months. In reviewing the applications, it became evident how

much time was spent compiling the information required and in drafting the very detailed and well written applications. The applications were submitted to the School's chartering districts and confirmation of submittal was received.

Lastly, Stephanie formally introduced and welcomed John Marsico, the School's new Business Manager.

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

#### **Dr. John Ruddy**

Dr. John Ruddy reported the Finance/Facilities Committee will not have any formal motions as the December 2021 financial report will be presented for approval at the February Board meeting. John stated the Finance/Facilities Committee met on January 12, 2022. Several agenda items were addressed, first the updated construction schedule revisions due to arrival of the roof. Secondly, the building addition's occupancy timeline was discussed and planning for the existing building as well as the move into the building addition. The School's recent Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, conducted by the Pennsylvania State Police Department, was also reviewed. Lastly, the Committee addressed the schedule for the School's 2022-2023 budget.

### **IV. Academic Committee**

#### **Dr. Clarence Lamanna**

Dr. Lamanna stated the Academic Committee met on Tuesday, January 11, 2022. Amongst the items discussed was the completion of the School's K-8 Curriculum Framework, which was included as an attachment to the School's 2022 Charter Renewal application. Clarence thanked all of those who participated in completing the Curriculum document. The Committee also discussed potential implications regarding middle school staffing when the four core content areas will be taught to middle school students five days per week. Midterm progress reports will be submitted at the end of January to give parents adequate notice in relation to any deficiencies their students may have. Lastly, a Special Education policy regarding a Charter school's responsibilities in terms of assessments and allowable timeframes, in alignment with Federal guidelines and State statutes, was drafted and reviewed for the Board's approval.

#### **1. Special Education Screening and Evaluations for Students with Disabilities Policy**

At this time, Dr. Lamanna called for a **MOTION** to accept the Special Education Screening and Evaluations for Students with Disabilities Policy as presented. The motion was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. Dr. Lamanna called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Special Education Screening and Evaluations for Students with Disabilities Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

## **V. Personnel Committee**

**Sam Ceccacci**

Sam Ceccacci reported the Personnel Committee met on Tuesday, January 11, 2022, where the Committee received an update on the Community Outreach position. Also discussed was a policy regarding employee notice upon resignation or retirement. The Committee suggested reconvening the Benefits Task Force and having at least one member from the Academic, Development, Finance/Facilities, Personnel, and Nominating committees participate. A Human Resources audit, personnel needs, and budget development were also reviewed.

At this time, Sam called for a **MOTION** to approve the Personnel Report and resume for Julie Imel as Director Communications, as presented. The motion was made by Aaron Nivert and seconded by John Ruddy. All Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Personnel Report, with one Trustee absent.

## **VI. School Matters**

### **1. Updated Field Trip Policy**

**Dr. Marie George**

Dr. Marie George presented the revised Field Trip Policy. The original Field Trip Policy was adopted in February of 2020. The substantive change to the updated Field Trip Policy is the addition of medical concerns and medical administration.

At this time, Dr. Marie George entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Updated Field Trip Policy as submitted. The motion was made by Clarence Lamanna and seconded by John Ezbiansky. All Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Updated Field Trip Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

### **2. Principal Report**

**Dr. Marie George**

In the absence of TreeAnne McEnery, Dr. Marie George gave highlights from the Principal Report. At the return of winter break, the Primary Pod teachers transitioned back to individual homerooms. Many personnel have commented on the positive impact the transition has had on the students. The Academic program completed the K-8 Curriculum Framework, which will guide teachers by subject. The School looks forward to sharing this document with families in the future.

Upcoming in the 2022-2023 school year is the transition into the School's new building addition, which will specifically affect the middle school Upper and Senior Pods. One of the primary developments in this transition is having Science become a core subject, which will require having both an Upper and Senior Science teacher. As

the development of the competency-based section of the Curriculum Framework advanced, it became evident that social studies content is vast; therefore, additional staffing may be considered.

Mid-year benchmarking is underway for all grade levels and the results will be reported to the Academic Committee once finalized.

The Grant-funded Enrichment and Tutoring Winter Sessions commenced with ten Enrichment programs and thirteen tutoring sections offered. With such a positive response to the programming, additional sections have been added to accommodate requests.

### **3. CEO Report**

#### **Dr. Marie George**

Dr. Marie George provided updates regarding the Health and Safety Plan. HGMICS continues to closely monitor all COVID-19 cases that are reported. The School is appreciative of student families keeping the Administration and apprised of household cases. Teachers are working closely with families to ensure homework and schoolwork are provided to those students who are in quarantine. HGMICS is required to report COVID-19 cases and close-contacts to the Pennsylvania Department of Health on a weekly basis. HGMICS's latest report once again confirmed no transmission has occurred within the school. The School is going to continue to enforce the masking requirement both indoors and outdoors, but with the recently released CDC guidance for schools, HGMICS will move to the five-day quarantine period as of January 31, 2022. The Test-To-Stay program, effective January 10, 2022, is offered to the students based on eligibility if they've been a close contact at the school.

The HGMICS 2022 Charter Renewal Application was submitted to both chartering districts, Abington Heights School District and Scranton School District. Comprised of ninety-eight questions and one hundred forty attachments, the application gives an overview of all aspects and accomplishments of the School over the past five years. The entire application was framed within the context of the School's Strategic Plan, which was initiated in 2018. The Strategic Plan coincided with the five-year renewal period the 2022 Charter Renewal Application addresses. The Application Cover Letter emphasized the School's commitment to qualitative growth and highlighted areas of qualitative improvement from Academic Professional Development, Finance and Facilities, Parent Engagement, etc. Marie thanked the Staff for producing a succinct, professional, and coherent document.

The Civil Rights Department of the United States Department of Education is conducting their biennial Civil Rights Data Collection. HGMICS is required to submit this data regarding student demographics, academic areas being studied, percentages in terms of minorities, low-income, bullying incidents, etc. The deadline for submission is February 28, 2022.

There is great news regarding the School's Construction project. Roofing materials arrived January 11, 2022, and the roof will be completed this week. This progress brings the School closer to a July 2022 occupancy. Marie thanked Joe Ross, who has been central in keeping the Construction project moving forward, as well as Sordoni's Construction Managers and Advisors.

The Pennsylvania State Police performed a two-day Risk Assessment of the School in October of 2021. Their previous assessment occurred in 2016. The Assessment Report tracks issues vital to the School and makes available Grant opportunities under the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and Safe Schools Program.

Students and staff recently voted on their preference of a Mascot to represent the School. The winner, "Hedgehogs", was announced and HGMICS is in the final stages of designing a graphic to represent the chosen Mascot. The finalized HGMIC hedgehog graphic will be rolled out during National School Choice Week, which takes place the week of January 24, 2022.

## **VII. New Business**

**Stephanie Westington**

At this time, Stephanie asked if anyone had any new business to bring forth. Not hearing any, Stephanie moved on to adjournment.

## **Adjournment**

At 7:41 p.m., no further items of business or comments had been raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Stephanie Westington. Adjournment was accepted by all Trustees present, with one Trustee absent. Stephanie thanked everyone for attending.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 15, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.**