

Howard Gardner MI Charter School

Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting remotely on Tuesday, February 15, 2022. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:02 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, Laurie Cadden, John Ezbiansky, Dino Galli, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Aaron Nivert, and Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen. Absent from the meeting: Dr. John Ruddy.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; 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. One visitor, Dawn Wright, from the Pittston Area School District was present and asked when the School's masking requirement would be lifted. The Board President addressed this question by stating Howard Gardner MI Charter School rules in accordance with CDC guidelines. With no further comments from the audience regarding the February agenda, Stephanie proceeded with the meeting.

I. Minutes

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington presented the January 18, 2022, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A **MOTION** to approve the January 18, 2022 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Clarence Lamanna, and seconded by Aaron Nivert. Stephanie asked if there were any comments or corrections on the minutes. Not hearing any, Stephanie called for a vote. All Board of Trustees members present voted in favor of approving the January 18, 2022, minutes as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

II. President's Report

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington welcomed everyone in attendance to the February 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 announced the School's 2022 Charter Renewal Application was approved by both the Abington Heights and Scranton School Districts for the next five years beginning July 1, 2022. Stephanie congratulated Administration, Faculty, and Staff on the Charter Renewal, stating the quickness and approval turnaround by both school districts is a testimony to the quality and the professionalism of the School. Stephanie thanked Dr. Marie George and TreeAnne McEnery for their leadership and hard work that went into preparing the applications.

Stephanie stated the school year continues to move forward with plans being made by our Business Manager, John Marsico, to begin the budget process for the 2022-2023 school year. In addition, the Board is planning to schedule another Strategic Planning session during the summer. The previous session resulted in the initiation and completion of a master plan, which put into motion the infrastructure advancements for the School that will be completed in 2022. The Board and Administration will be soliciting input from all stakeholder groups as the planning process continues.

III. Finance/Facilities Committee

John Ezbiansky

In the absence of Dr. John Ruddy, John Ezbiansky reported the Finance/Facilities Committee met on February 9, 2022. The Committee discussed the December 2021 and January 2022 Financial Reports, as well as the annual line of credit through FNCB for \$150,000, which will be reviewed again before the renewal in 2023. Marie presented an overview of grants received, denied, and those still pending. The annual Uniform Grant Guidance was reviewed and will guide the use of all Federal monies. Joe Ross reported that considering the extended deadline for completion of the construction project, an extension to the Builder's Risk Insurance was accordingly made through July 2022. Finally, John Marsico reviewed a detailed budget calendar that will guide the preparation and approval of the 2022-23 general fund budget.

John Ezbiansky asked John Marsico, Business Manager to detail the December 2021 Financial Report for approval.

1. December 2021 Financial Report

John Marsico

John Marsico, Business Manager, reported revenues for the month of December 2021 of \$467,803. The majority of this reflects \$416,706 of School District billings. Expenses of \$317,178 are \$55,675 less than November 2021. The Net Operating Profit for December 2021 is \$150,625, with a year-to-date Net Operating Profit of \$65,906. The School had \$1,143,208 in cash at the end of December 2021. This is approximately \$244,420 higher than the balance at the end of November 2021. In

December 2021, there was one draw made on the construction loan in the amount of \$195,071 of which Mar-Paul was paid \$178,462 and SEHC Plumbing was paid \$16,609. Total construction funds drawn to date are \$1,747,091.

In relation to grants, the School was awarded \$130,663 in Title I funding. \$9,806 was received in December 2021 with a total of \$26,133 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$14,596 in Title II funding. \$973 was received in December with a total of \$2,919 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$10,000 in Title IV funding. \$667 was received in December with a total of \$2,000 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$413,069 in ESSER II funding. \$9,686 was received in December with a total of \$57,257 year-to-date. The School drew down \$3,300 in SRSA Grant funds to cover various enrichment program expenses.

At this time, John Ezbiansky entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through December 31, 2021, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. John called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the December 2021 Financial Report as presented, with one Trustee absent.

2. January 2022 Financial Report

John Marsico

John Marsico, Business Manager, reported revenues for the month of January 2022 of \$404,443. The majority of this reflects \$370,147 of School District billings. The School received \$5,509 from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Division of School Health, in January 2022 based upon the 2020-2021 Annual Reimbursement. This annual reimbursement is submitted in September through the School Health Annual Reimbursement Request System (SHARRS). The reimbursement funds Medical Office supplies for 2021-2022. Expenses of \$293,531 are \$23,647 less than December 2021. The Net Operating Profit for January 2022 is \$110,912, with a year-to-date Net Operating Profit of \$176,818. The School had \$1,019,186 in cash at the end of January 2022. This is approximately \$124,023 lower than the balance at the end of December 2021. There were no draws made on the construction loan in January 2022. Total construction funds drawn to date are \$1,747,091. The School made an interest only payment of \$5,555.62 on the construction loan in January 2022.

The School was awarded \$130,663 in Title I funding. \$8,711 was received in January with a total of \$34,843 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$14,596 in Title II funding. \$973 was received in January with a total of \$3,892 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$10,000 in Title IV funding. \$667 was received in January with a total of \$2,667 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$413,069 in ESSER II funding. \$9,686 was received in January with a total of \$66,943 year-to-date.

At this time, John Ezbiansky entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through January 31, 2022, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Dino Galli and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. John called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the January 2022 Financial Report as presented, with one Trustee absent.

IV. Academic Committee

Dr. Clarence Lamanna

Dr. Lamanna stated the Academic Committee met on Tuesday, February 1, 2022, to discuss a number of items. First, amongst the items related to information, the Principal reviewed the Standards Aligned Progress Report, indicating that it's in accord with the standards and gives a detailed view of a student's progress. Benchmark data updates, as well as progress monitoring in relation to the benchmarks, was also provided by the Principal. The Committee was pleased to hear how the benchmark data is reflecting the hard work the teachers have been doing. In addition, program staffing was discussed in relation to teacher assistance as well as middle school teacher deployment. The Principal and the Academic Committee concurred that regarding the subject matter, especially for middle school students, there are implications for additional teaching staff. A recommendation was made to send this matter to the Personnel Committee as well as the Finance/Facilities Committee for their consideration. The School's Special Education Director gave an update about a parent survey that was conducted with pleasing results and a book club is taking place where parents are invited to join. 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. Student Promotion and Retention Policy

At this time, Dr. Lamanna called for a **MOTION** to accept the Student Promotion and Retention Policy as presented. The motion was made by Stephanie Westington and seconded by Laila Kane. Dr. Lamanna called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Student Promotion and Retention Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

V. Development Committee

Susan Hennemuth

Susan reported the Development Committee met on January 26, 2022, and discussed several topics, the first of which being Julie Imel accepting the position of Director of Communications for Howard Gardner MI Charter School. The Committee further reviewed the job responsibilities and how they should be prioritized. The previous idea of using a consultation company was tabled at this time. Also discussed was inviting the Foundation

Board members to the next Development meeting scheduled for February 23, 2022, which they have accepted.

VI. Nominating Committee

Laurie Cadden

Laurie Cadden reported the Nominating Committee did not meet in the month of February. The Committee is in the process of forming a list of potential candidates to serve on the Board, as it changes on a yearly basis following the Board rotation schedule. The Nominating Committee will have a more in-depth report after the March 2022 meeting.

VII. Personnel Committee

Sam Ceccacci

Sam Ceccacci reported the Personnel Committee met on Tuesday, February 1, 2022. The Committee discussed several topics, the first being Academic/Personnel planning for the fiscal year 2022-23. This included updates about an in-house substitute adjustment, middle-school assistant per Pod, and the ELA teacher for the Upper Pod in Grade 5 and 6. The Benefits Task Force is in place and is slated to meet on the third Thursday of each month. The first meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 17, 2022. The Committee received updates on other Personnel matters such as instructional assistants, number of teaching staff, and Science becoming a core subject and the effects it will have on personnel. Other Personnel changes include naming Kim Wall as Social Studies teacher, Alyson Eckler as in-house substitute, and that Karen Yevitz is no longer employed by HGMICS as of January 28, 2022.

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

VIII. School Matters

1. Principal Report

TreeAnne McEnergy

TreeAnne McEnergy began her report by recognizing Black History Month. HGMICS is celebrating Black History Month with a student from each Pod highlighting a prominent person of color they have been learning about throughout the month during Friday's morning announcements. Last year, Jade Volchoff and TreeAnne gave highlights about someone from history, but this year passed the torch on to the middle

school students for them to integrate their learning by sharing it with their peers within the school environment. The middle school students were graced with an assembly on February 10, 2022, featuring Ms. Glynis Johns, Founder and CEO of the Black Scranton Project. Ms. Johns educated students about the historical black people of Scranton and NEPA and their contributions and successes for the City of Scranton. It was a well-attended and enthusiastic assembly.

Upcoming in the 2022-2023 school year is the meeting of the Schoolwide Advisory Group, who will meet March 7, 2022, to discuss the Family Engagement Survey and family education in the future.

The Academic Committee looked a little deeper into progress monitoring data. The highlighted data is aligning to the School's Comprehensive Plan goals. Steady progress, as well as remarkable increases in student performance are indicated in the School's mid-year benchmark assessments. Included in the report is Kindergarten and Primary Pod progress overall. In literacy areas, Kindergarten is at 70 percent benchmark or above benchmark and the Primary Pod is at 95 percent at benchmark or above benchmark. In Mathematics, Kindergarten is at 87 percent at benchmark or above and the Primary Pod is at 94 percent at benchmark or above. This is the average of several areas that the students are seeing progress monitored. The growth that is shown, which is significant in the math section, was the School's focus and continues to be the focus of the math instruction. At the end of October, the School had 86 percent of the fifth-grade students at below benchmark with 14 percent at benchmark. As of the middle of January, there has been a 10 percent increase at benchmark or above benchmark. The report states that 36 percent of the fifth grade is showing significant growth. The goal that the School set at the end of October was to increase student performance for six students in grade five. This report indicates that student performance increased for 12 students, surpassing the goal for Mathematics. In Literacy and ELA there has been a six percent or five percent increase of those at benchmark as well as above benchmark. The goal was to increase student performance for three students, and there has been significant growth for four students. The School will not see the Comprehensive Plan goal met or net positive until the Comprehensive Plan is completed, based on a three year combative average of student growth.

The public launch of the HGMICS K-8 Curriculum Framework which features the School's standards-aligned, core academic curriculum, is scheduled for March 4, 2022. HGS families will be informed of the document and its purpose, and it will be posted on the HGS school website.

Trimester II ends on March 7, 2022, and Trimester II Progress Reports will be released to families on March 10, 2022. Spring Virtual Teacher Conferences are scheduled the following week on March 18, 2022, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Annual Scholastic Book Fair, hosted by the Parent Forum, is scheduled for Friday, March 11, 2022, through Friday, March 18, 2022.

The Grant-funded Enrichment and Tutoring Spring Sessions begin March 7-March 13, 2022. Ten enrichment programs are offered as well as six sections of tutoring. Summer Programming is currently underway.

2. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. Marie George began her report by announcing the HGMICS has surpassed the 100-school day mark and many exciting things are taking place at the School. First off, the Charter Renewal Application was approved by both authorizing districts, Scranton and Abington Heights. The extensive renewal application was submitted on January 11, 2022. Independently, at their respective board meetings, both districts unanimously approved the applications. The Charter Renewal is for five years and runs from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2027. As previously mentioned, the application was lengthy, but it allowed HGMICS to tout many aspects of the School's operations, academic program, and governance. Highlighted in the four-page cover letter was an emphasis on qualitative growth over the last five years, linked directly to the School's Strategic Plan. The application included answers to ninety-eight questions and over one hundred forty attachments related to those questions. Marie expressed her gratitude to the Administrative Staff and Faculty who contributed, especially TreeAnne McEnery. Marie thanked Cathy Opshinsky, Doug Hein, and Joe Ross for contributing to their relevant sections of responsibility as well as Deana Bonacci, Administrative Assistant, who assisted in retrieving the one hundred forty documents, organizing, and formatting the entire document for submittal and Michael Abballe, I.T. Manager, making it possible for the application and attachments to be easily opened and read by both chartering districts upon receipt.

Marie continued her report by moving onto the biennial Civil Rights Data Collection conducted by the United States Department of Education. HGMICS is required to submit this data regarding diverse student information including disabled, special education and minority student information. The current data collection for the 2020-2021 school year was recently submitted, well ahead of the February 28th deadline. Marie thanked Patty Biko Moraski, who pulled the required data well in advance of the deadline, from the School's student information system, Sycamore.

The School's Fall Sports Program, led by Coach Brian Kubilus, Athletic Director, was extremely successful. A total of one hundred seven students participated in the program and seventy-six of those students played either soccer or basketball, led by eight dedicated coaches and volunteers. The Spring Sports Program consists of the Cross-Country team, with fourteen students already signed up, led by Math teacher, Jon Iannone. There has been an interest in baseball or softball becoming a HGMICS sport for next year and the School will be examining the feasibility of making this happen.

The Howard Gardner mascot, the Hedgehog, will soon be debuted to the community as well as on various sports apparel and uniforms.

A Virtual Open House took place on January 27, 2022, with twenty families attending. Reenrollment from the School's current families is completed. Applications from prospective families are now being accepted for the virtual public lottery that will be held on March 10, 2022, at 9 a.m. Administrative staff conduct the lottery and Stephanie Westington, our Board President, will be present as an observer to the proceedings.

Marie continued her report by discussing various grants the School applied for, specifically, the 7% Set-Aside grant for \$64,938, approved last week. It specifically funds programing for learning loss, and social-emotional student needs. The School's Director of Special Education, Cathy Opshinsky, is planning various ways to use that money for the benefit of our students. A Food Service Grant was submitted in October to the National School lunch program through the Food Service Department. It was an equipment grant to replace one of the School's freezers that is no longer working. Unfortunately, HGMICS did not receive that grant. Still pending is the American Relief Plan (ARP) ESSER III grant, a three-year grant for \$835,519. This grant includes two sub grants for construction projects such as our Kindergarten annex and outdoor pavilion. The School also received notification from the United States Department of Education of our continued eligibility for the 2022 year for the Small Rural School Achievement Grant or SRSA Grant.

Finally, Dr. Marie George reported on staff training and service. Every Wednesday, following dismissal, various committees meet, and trainings are held. For example, on February 2nd, School Nurse, Amy Ryan, conducted a training on seizures and Phil Salvantis from the NEIU led a mindfulness session. At February 16th's meeting, we will be reviewing approved policies and related procedures, such as the Promotion and Retention Policy approved this evening, the Anti-Bullying Policy, and the Field Trip Policy. Friday, February 18th, students have an early dismissal at 11:30 and a staff in-service program will be held for the entire afternoon. Instructional staff will complete their training on the social skills improvement system (SSIS), It's an assessment tool to be implemented next year. Also, staff will be reviewing English Language Learning and Literacy instruction. Simultaneously, non-instructional staff will meet and address the logistical and operational needs of the building expansion, such as phones, arrival, dismissal, surveillance technology, etc.; the afternoon will end with a team building exercise.

At the end of Marie's report, John Ezbianksy displayed the image of the School's new Mascot.

IX. 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 7:50 p.m., no further items of business or comments had been raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Susan Hennemuth. 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, March 15, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.**