

Howard Gardner MI Charter School
Public Board Meeting
Tuesday, February 20, 2024

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a public Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, February 20, 2024. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. 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: Michael Barbetti, Dino Galli, Laurie Cadden, Al Dorunda, Wayne Evans, and Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen. Absent from the meeting: Sam Ceccacci, Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe, Susan Hennemuth, and Dr. Clarence Lamanna.

Also in attendance: Joe Ross, CEO; John Marisco, Business Manager, and Deana Bonacci, Assistant to the CEO.

Stephanie Westington announced that no visitors were present.

I. Minutes

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington presented the January 16, 2024, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A MOTION to approve the January 16, 2024, Board meeting minutes, as submitted was made by Michael Barbetti and seconded by Al Dorunda. Stephanie asked if there were any comments or questions on the minutes. Not hearing any, Stephanie called for a vote. All Board of Trustees members present voted to approve the January 16, 2024, minutes as submitted with four Trustees absent.

II. President's Report

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington welcomed everyone in attendance at the February 2024 Public Board meeting. Stephanie stated the school's Annual public lottery is scheduled for March 6, 2024 and many efforts have been made to advertise the open enrollment and the admissions lottery. Stephanie thanked Laurie Cadden for securing billboard advertising and also thanked Deana Bonacci for collaborating with Laurie and for the school's social media efforts.

III. HGMICS Educational Session – Reading and Writing Workshop

Mr. Andrew Filler

Senior English Teacher

Andrew Filler began his presentation by talking about how he incorporates the Multiple Intelligences (MI) in the classroom for verbal/linguistic intelligence. He then discussed how it helps develop the student as a whole, encourages new perspectives, and promotes thinking in new ways. The Reading Workshop allows students to choose their own books, track their reading progress, and engage in whole-class discussions about concepts, which helps them view themselves as readers and offers inherent value in reading for pleasure. Working more with

comprehension in Reading Workshop involves a combination of quick writes and short paragraphs for minilessons, as well as book clubs. The Writing Workshop focuses on genre-based writing, where students write in real-life genres, analyze real-life samples, and go through multiple rounds of revisions, leading to better writing skills through real-world application. The next steps in Writing Workshop include incorporating multimodal projects such as research papers presented as digital posters with data, analysis, and QR codes, as well as portfolios with QR codes to student work and videos explaining their work to their families.

IV. Finance/Facilities Committee

Michael Barbetti

1. January 2024 Financial Report

John Marsico

Fiscal year-to-date revenues for the period ending 01/31/2024 were \$3,333,886 as compared to \$3,516,171 for the same time in 2023. Revenues for the period ending 01/31/2024 were slightly lower than 01/31/2023 due to the influx of ESSER II funding in 2022-2023. Fiscal year-to-date expenses for the period ending 01/31/2024 were \$3,536,132 as compared to \$3,076,030 for the same time in 2023. Expenses for the period ending 01/31/2024 were higher than 01/31/2023 due in part to the addition of a Speech Pathologist to our staff. Additionally, enhancements to both the landscaping and the security for the building were made in 2023-2024 and food costs have increased in 2023-2024 as well. Our legal expenses have also increased due to the Title IX investigations that have taken place. Finally, an effort was made to spend down the Titles I/II/IV and ESSER II grants by 9/30/2023. The fiscal year-to-date Net Operating (Loss) for the period ending 01/31/2024 was (\$202,246), as compared to Net Operating Revenue of \$440,141 for the same time in 2023 for the reasons noted above. In addition, depreciation expense for the 7 months ending 01/31/24 of \$136,500 was recorded, whereby it was not recorded for the same period in 2023. The 2023-2024 Titles I/II/IV, ESSER III, and Set-Aside, as well as our NSLP payments remained consistent.

The school had \$767,883 in cash as of 01/31/24 as compared to \$833,751 as of 01/31/2023. This decrease is primarily because of the increase in operational expenses over the prior year. We continue to make principal and interest payments on the Construction Loan in the amount of \$25,035.47 per month. The amounts being applied to principal and interest each month are based on a 20-year amortization schedule for a \$4,500,000 loan at an annual percentage rate of 2.99%. The amortization schedule was provided by Baker & Tilly and is being compared and reconciled, if necessary, monthly to the Construction Loan bank statement. The principal balance outstanding after the January 2024 payment is \$4,290,402.

At this time, Michael Barbetti entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through January 31, 2024, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Wayne Evans and

seconded by Al Dorunda. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the January 2024 Financial Report, as presented, with four Trustees absent.

2. Annual Review of HGMICS' Allowability of Costs Policy, Cash Management Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, Purchasing and Procurement Policy, and Travel Reimbursement Policy. **Michael Barbetti**

Michael Barbetti entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Annual Review of HGMICS' Allowability of Costs Policy, Cash Management Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, Purchasing and Procurement Policy, and Travel Reimbursement Policy. The motion was made by Dino Galli and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees voted in favor of approving the Annual Review of the five policies as submitted with four Trustees absent.

V. Personnel Committee **Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington presented for the Personnel Committee on behalf of the Committee Chair, Sam Ceccacci.

Stephanie stated the Personnel Committee recently met and discussed the student expansion and the new job positions created due to the expansion. All positions have been posted on the 'Employment Opportunities' page of the HGMICS website and several internal candidates have applied.

1. February 2024 Personnel Report **Stephanie Westington**

At this time, Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to approve the February 2024 Personnel Report as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Michael Barbetti and seconded by Dino Galli. All Trustees voted in favor of approving the Personnel report as presented, with four Trustees absent.

2. Annual Review of HGMICS Tuition Reimbursement Policy **Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie called for a **MOTION** to approve the Annual Review of HGMICS Tuition Reimbursement Policy. The motion was made by Al Dorunda and seconded by Michael Barbetti. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the Annual Review of the HGMICS Tuition Reimbursement Policy as submitted, with four Trustees absent.

VI. School Matters **Joe Ross**

1. Administrative Updates

Joe Ross began by stating the school is conducting a comprehensive planning process to

increase the number of students, which includes examining student expansion, recruiting staff, addressing logistical issues, and reviewing breakfast and lunch periods. The admissions lottery for the school will be conducted on March 6, 2024, and applicants will be selected using a random number generator. The school has submitted a grant application to the Scranton Area Community Foundation for a lower lot project, and they are also maintaining relationships with supporting foundations. Joe stated the school is actively promoting itself through social media, billboards, and other mediums to increase public awareness in the community. The school is offering a new afterschool program called Girls on the Run, which aims to empower girls, promote physical activity, foster friendships, and teach life skills. Joe said the school is hosting a Leap into Reading event and asked if any Board members would like to read to a classroom. Lastly, Joe stated Deana Bonacci will be creating a newsletter titled “Across the Board” to distribute to the Board members and Staff members following a Board meeting to keep them in the know of what occurred at the meeting the night before.

VII. New Business

Stephanie Westington

At this time, Stephanie asked if there was any new business. Not hearing any, she moved to the adjournment of the meeting.

Adjournment

At this time, Stephanie Westington called for a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. Wayne Evans made the motion and the Public Board of Trustees meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.