

**Howard Gardner MI Charter School**  
**Public Board Meeting**  
Tuesday, March 19, 2024

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a public Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, March 19, 2024. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:03 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: Sam Ceccacci, Michael Barbetti, Dino Galli, Laurie Cadden, Al Dorunda, Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, and Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen. Absent from the meeting: Wayne Evans.

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

Stephanie Westington announced that two visitors were present, Brian Kubilus and Steve Kurilla, who would be presenting the school's Educational Presentation at the meeting.

**I. Minutes**

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington presented the February 20, 2024, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A MOTION to approve the February 20, 2024, Board meeting minutes, as submitted was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Michael Barbetti. 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 February 20, 2024, minutes as submitted with one Trustee absent.

**II. President's Report**

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington welcomed everyone in attendance at the March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Public Board meeting. Stephanie stated the Annual Admissions Lottery for the 2024-2025 school year was held on March 6, 2024. The school purchased a Randomizer to facilitate the lottery. It went very smoothly with 96 applicants enrolled for the next school year and 165 applicants on the waiting list. Stephanie continued her report by remarking it's hard to believe that it is the first day of Spring and the school year has been flying by. The 2024 HGMICS Graduation event has been set for Thursday, May 30, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. on the School's campus. Plenty of extracurricular activities have been going on at the school and it's been exciting to see the level of student participation across academics, sports, and the arts. Stephanie congratulated the 3 students who placed first and qualified for the state championship through the PA Junior Academy of Science and the 2 students who placed first in the Media and Design competition. She also mentioned that 40 students represented Howard Gardener and competed in the NEIU Reading Quiz Tournament. Stephanie applauded all for a great job and wished good luck to the 3 students who will compete at the state level. Stephanie also

congratulated the 7th-grade boys basketball team on winning the championship and taking first place in the Scranton Diocesan League and wanted to wish the varsity cheerleading squad Good Luck in their upcoming competition.

Finally, Stephanie thanked all the Howard Gardner artists for sharing their talent and creativity and making the school's art show a huge success. She thanked everyone, both students and staff, who participated in and led the school's extracurricular activities. Stephanie stated that each activity is so important and adds to the overall school experience, supports the "MI" mission of the Howard Gardner School, and creates both camaraderie and school spirit. Stephanie then welcomed the Athletic Director, Mr. Brian Kubilus, and Music Teacher, Mr. Steve Kurilla, who will present the meeting's educational presentation.

### **III. HGMICS Educational Session – "HGS Athletics & Band"**

**Mr. Brian Kubilus, Athletic Director**

**Mr. Steve Kurilla, Music Teacher**

Mr. Steve Kurilla presented the Music program and band performances. Steve stated approximately 35 fifth through eighth-grade students are enrolled. Students can choose from a variety of instruments, including flute, clarinet, alto sax, trumpet, euphonium, and percussion. Band members are required to attend at least one day of practice after school, but many students choose to attend all three practices offered. Upcoming performances include the Steamtown Half Marathon on April 7th and the HGS Parent Forum's Walk-a-thon at PNC Field on April 21st. The band program has received the Peter R. Marsh Foundation grant for two consecutive years. The band will be going on tour to three local assisted living centers to perform for the residents.

Trustee of the Board, Laurie Cadden, stated the school is very fortunate to have Steve and that he lives and breathes music. She is thrilled he is involved at the school and his work is outstanding. Howard Gardner MI Charter School is blessed to have someone of his caliber who engages and creates like he does and gives the students the power of the art of music. Laurie thanked Steve for everything he does.

Next, Mr. Brian Kubilus presented on the school's Athletic program. The school offers one sport per season: soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter, and cross country in the spring. The soccer program is in-house and offered to K-8th grade students with about 60 signed up. The basketball program has been part of the Catholic Basketball League for two years. There are approximately 24 players from 5th-8th grades. The JV boys basketball team had a successful season, winning the JV Catholic Basketball League. The school also has a cheerleading program with 24 cheerleaders participating in competitions. The Cross-Country program has between 50-60 students. The JV girls' team had a successful season, winning the conference. The school offered an off-site basketball clinic last summer and is hopeful of offering softball and soccer clinics in the future.

**IV. Finance/Facilities Committee**

**Michael Barbetti**

**1. February 2024 Financial Report**

**John Marsico**

Fiscal year to date revenues for the period ending 02/29/2024 were \$4,150,029 as compared to \$3,740,857 for the same time in 2023. Revenues for the period ending 02/29/2024 were higher than 02/28/2023 due to a change in the PDE-363 Form for the Scranton School District in the month of February 2024. This change resulted in a one-time revenue increase in February 2024 that was retroactive back to July 2023. Fiscal year to date expenses for the period ending 02/29/2024 were \$4,005,783 as compared to \$3,814,930 for the same time in 2023. Expenses for the period ending 02/29/2024 were higher than 02/28/2023 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. We have noticed a leveling off in monthly expenses in February 2024. The fiscal year to date Net Operating Income for the period ending 02/29/2024 was \$144,246, as compared to Net Operating (Loss) of (\$74,073) for the same time in 2023 for the reasons noted above. In addition, depreciation expense for the 8 months ending 02/29/24 of \$156,000 was recorded, whereby it was not recorded for the same period in 2023. 2023-2024 Titles I/II/IV, ESSER III and Set-Aside, as well as our NSLP payments remained consistent.

The school had \$785,973 in cash as of 02/29/24 as compared to \$902,264 as of 02/28/2023. This decrease is primarily because of the increase in operational expenses over the prior year. We are expected to receive the additional revenue from the Scranton School District in March of 2024 because of the retroactive billing back to July 2023 due to the change to their PDE 363 form. That additional revenue is expected to be around \$350,000 in additional cash to our balance sheet. 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 \$4,276,411.

At this time, Michael Barbetti entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through February 29, 2024, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Al Dorunda and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the February 2024

Financial Report, as presented, with one Trustee absent.

**2. HGMICS Records Retention Policy**

**Michael Barbetti**

Michael Barbetti entertained a **MOTION** to approve the HGMICS Records Retention Policy. The motion was made by Susan Hennemuth and seconded by Dr. Clarence Lamanna. All Trustees voted in favor of approving the Records Retention Policy as submitted with one Trustee absent.

**V. Personnel Committee**

**Sam Ceccacci**

**1. March 2024 Personnel Report**

At this time, Sam Ceccacci called for a **MOTION** to approve the March 2024 Personnel Report as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Michael Barbetti and seconded by Al Dorunda. All Trustees voted in favor of approving the Personnel report as presented, with one Trustee absent.

**2. Annual Review of HGMICS Acceptable Use of the Internet and other Electronic Resources Policy**

Sam Ceccacci called for a **MOTION** to approve the Acceptable Use of the Internet and other Electronic Resources Policy. The motion was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Dr. Clarence Lamanna. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the Annual Review of the HGMICS Acceptable Use of the Internet and other Electronic Resources Policy as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

**3. Annual Review of HGMICS Employee Complaint Process Policy**

Sam Ceccacci called for a **MOTION** to approve the Annual Review of the HGMICS Employee Complaint Process Policy. The motion was made by Susan Hennemuth. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the Annual Review of HGMICS Evaluation for Certified Instructional Staff Policy as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

**VI. Academic Committee**

**Dr. Clarence Lamanna**

**1. Annual Review of HGMICS Evaluation for Certified Instructional Staff Policy**

Dr. Clarence Lamanna called for a **MOTION** to approve the Annual Review of the HGMICS Evaluation for Certified Instructional Staff Policy. The motion was made by Dr. Catherine Richmond Cullen and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the Annual Review of HGMICS Evaluation for Certified Instructional Staff Policy as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

**VII. Nominating Committee**

**Laurie Cadden**

Laurie Cadden stated the Nominating Committee met on March 6, 2024, to discuss possible candidates for the Board of Trustees and 2024-2025 Slate of Officers.

## **VIII. School Matters**

**Joe Ross**

### **1. Administrative Updates**

**CEO UPDATES – Advocacy:** HGMICS hosted Mr. Randall Seely, PA Department of Education, Division Chief, Bureau of Charter School on an informational session. Mr. Seely toured the school and spoke with our principal and had numerous conversations with our teachers and students. His successful three-hour visit allowed us to share all the exciting events transpiring in the school. We believe he left HGMICS impressed with the education occurring here.

**Grant Applications:** One grant was submitted to the Scranton Area Foundation. The Foundation is currently in the review period, and we have not heard if our application was selected for funding. I have attended several exploratory meetings with the Pa Coalition of Public Charter Schools regarding a grant request for applicants. The grant is for brick-and-mortar charter schools, and we may qualify in the expansion category. The base award for the grant is \$900,000. There are some grant limitations that may preclude us from applying. No construction costs or staffing can be submitted under this grant.

**Extra-Curricular Activities:** HGMICS has been doing very well in academic and athletic competitions. Three students have placed first and qualified for the state championship through the Pa Junior Academy of Science. Two of our students also placed first in the Media and Design competition, one won for web design and the other won for print design. Additionally, HGMICS had several teams involving over 40 students compete in the NEIU Reading Quiz tournament. Congratulations to all our students who participated in these academic events, and kudos to those who will represent us at the state level.

The HGMICS winter sports season was successfully completed. Our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade basketball for boys and girls competed in the Scranton Diocesan League. Our 7<sup>th</sup> grade Boys team won the league championship. The raucous environment was supported by our varsity cheerleading squad, who are preparing for their own end-of-season competition. It's on to the spring season for the Hedgehogs! We have 52 students signed up for cross country and 34 signed up for the pep squad. Good things are happening for our students in and out of the classroom.

**Art Show:** A hugely successful art show was conducted on March 7, 2024, with artwork displayed by all of our students. Our school band also entertained parents and families with an exciting performance. As with the case last year, these events coincided with the book sale. All combined it was an excellent evening with students and families observing the application of multiple intelligences.

**Lottery:** HGMICS conducted our annual public lottery on Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for Board President Stephanie Westington for attending to act as an observer. This year we enhanced the random nature of the lottery. Applicants were placed on a spreadsheet in the order of their application being received. The school purchased a random number generator to call the numbers. The number called matched the applicant sheet and they were offered enrollment. All families have been notified of their place on the admission or waiting list. There were no issues and the lottery went very well.

**IX. 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. Al Dorunda made the motion and the Public Board of Trustees meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

**Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.**