# CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING TUESDAY MAY 17, 2016 – 6:00 P.M.

**Board Members Present:** Liz Coenen, Kristen Campbell, Andrea Galdames, Juliann McDermott, Jane Reilly, Melissa Santrach, and Liesl Taylor **Board Members Absent:** Eve Lo and Julie Richards

Other Attendees: Chris Bewell and Amanda Cina

Meeting Called to Order by Liz Coenen, Board Chair, at 5:56 pm

## **AGENDA**

**Public Comment Period:** None

# Approval of Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

- Liz asked if there were any additions or changes to the agenda; none were suggested.
   JULIANN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE EVENING'S AGENDA; ANDREA SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.
- Based on the approved agenda, Liz asked if anyone had any conflicts of interest with the evening's agenda. None were disclosed.

# **Acceptance of Minutes**

Liz asked if anyone had changes to the April meeting minutes; none were offered.

MELISSA MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 2016 MEETING; JULIANN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

## Treasurer's Report – By Melissa Santrach

See Finance Committee minutes; additional comments and actions follow:

- With regard to the April financials, Melissa commented that we continue to track on-budget.
  - o Careful attention to the budget revision earlier this year has led to a very stable budget.
  - Our cash flow is good and since we don't anticipate having any cash flow problems, we are not budgeting any financing costs.

MELISSA MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE APRIL 2016 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS; KRISTEN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

- The presentation to staff regarding insurance benefits will be May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Melissa will be attending the meeting. The presentation will also include a "Benefits 101."
- Work continues on the 2016-17 budget, which will be presented at the June meeting. The Lease Aid application is also being prepared for approval at the June meeting.

#### **Board Chair Report – Liz Coenen**

See report; additional comments follow:

- Liz read an email from Dr. Speiker's that accompanied his report.
  - o Board members expressed appreciation for Dr. Speiker's kind words and gratitude for his thoughtful and constructive guidance.

#### Governance Committee Report and Strategic Planning Discussion – Liz Coenen

See Governance Committee minutes; additional comments and actions follow:

• Liz noted that the primary discussion topic at the Governance meeting was a debrief from the April 30<sup>th</sup> fundraising event and a review of the feedback received from guests. She also noted that "thank yous" are going to be sent out by Liesl.

- Liz asked Melissa to provide a summary to the Board of the feedback we received.
  - Melissa said that everyone thought the best part of the event was the tours given by the children. People also commented that the room was beautiful and that the pace was just right. Melissa noted that someone mentioned that they "tuned out" when fine details were presented, while another person wanted more specifics such as the top 5 things that distinguish Montessori from other schools. Another suggestion was to profile specific families and talk about the impact CMES is having in their lives. Melissa said someone also suggested we videotape the event so that it could be done more regularly, more easily, and more consistently.
  - A question was asked by an attendee about whether anyone can attend the school or is Cornerstone just providing a free Montessori education to people who could afford a private school experience.
    - Board members discussed the need to have the demographic information readily available perhaps on the website on an "About Us" page and included in any letter that goes out with the new brochure. Board members also talked about the school's goals of true diversity.
    - Chris noted that she and Liesl will be working on the website this summer and can definitely include demographic information on the website.
  - We also received a comment from Jim Olson, our fundraising consultant from last year, who said that it is really important to have the human connection and to work on developing a stronger "ask." We could also be more intentional about having someone at each table to reinforce the "ask."
- Liz conclude the discussion by thanking everyone for their efforts on the fundraiser and looking forward to building on this success and working toward developing an annual appeal.

#### Director of Business Operations – Chris Bewell

See report; additional comments follow:

- Chris mentioned that some voters used the absentee ballot and it worked will.
- Chris noted that MCA assessments have been completed and that it all went smoothly. Staff
  worked with the children to learn calming techniques so that they can do their best on the
  assessments.
- Chris reported that the enrollment numbers have remained steady for the year and that applications for next year continue to arrive.
  - Staff is in the process of finding out which current families will be staying and which are going.
  - Of the current 22 5<sup>th</sup> years, 4 are accepted to a different 6<sup>th</sup> grade program but the others plan to stay. Liesl commented that we, of course, support families in choosing whatever is best for their child and she will offer an event in November to help families negotiate this transition.

#### Head of School Report – Liesl Taylor

HOS report was distributed to those present; additional comments follow:

- Liesl shared a letter from a parent who expressed his gratitude for all Cornerstone offers his family.
- Liesl provided the following updates regarding school activities:
  - o Due to busy schedules, the Listening Stones sessions will begin during the summer.
  - Information about the end-of-the-year events will be sent out tomorrow!

- Changes in the parking lot for drop off/pick up seem to be going well. Liesl will send something out to families to gather their feedback also. Because fewer people are bringing their children into the building, attention will need to be given to keeping the community feeling. Adam has some creative ideas of how to do this!
- The T-shirt order was placed with much help from Chris! Liesl remarked about the generosity of many of the families who donated extra money so that someone who couldn't afford a shirt would still get one. Enough money was donated to purchase 50 additional shirts!
- o Being a CSA pick-up site is working well. A few logistics need tweaking, but it's going well.
- The VOA Spring site visit occurred yesterday and went very well. Our documentation was all in order. One request made was to make a formal procedure for our service learning activities.
- Liesl offered an update with regard to letters of employment for staff. The letters have all gone out the delay had been in figuring out a better approach for professional development. In the end, it worked out that eligible staff can choose to go to the refresher every other year. Liesl was also able to set aside money to have a staff development day October 21 with Dr. Travis Wright. Wright spoke at this year's refresher course about how trauma impacts children's development.
- Liesl concluded her report with comments about the budgeting process and the need for additional financial resources to provide the supports essential to the success of the children and families we serve. Ideally, we would like the literacy specialist to be full time next year and would like to increase the amount of time the mental health specialist is available. We also need to pay attention to how the administrative work gets done so that it's sustainable. Liesl said that we are doing well but pointed out that our budget is constrained by our student population, which will not be increasing much. The primary way to increase revenues, then, is through fundraising.

#### **Other Business**

None

# Next month's agenda

No additional items

#### **Adjourn**

KRISTEN MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 6:56 PM; JULIANN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully Submitted by Jane Reilly, CMES Board Secretary

Next meeting is June 21 at 6:00 p.m.