

**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
TUESDAY NOVEMBER 17, 2015 – 6:00 P.M.**

Board Members Present: Liz Coenen, Kristen Campbell, Eve Lo, Jane Reilly, Melissa Santrach, and Liesl Taylor

Board Members Absent: Andrea Galdames, Juliann McDermott, and Julie Richards

Other Attendees: Chris Bewell

Meeting Called to Order by Liz Coenen, Board Chair, at 6:10 pm

AGENDA

Public Comment Period: No public comments were offered.

Approval of Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

- Liz asked if there were any additions or changes to the agenda.
 - Liz asked to add a presentation by Kristen Campbell about resiliency in the Montessori environment.

MELISSA MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE EVENING’S AGENDA WITH THE ADDITION OF THE PRESENTATION; EVE SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED 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 October meeting minutes.
 - Jane noted that the meeting start time had been omitted. Liz recalled that we had a presentation by the auditor and that we had started promptly at 6 pm.

KRISTEN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER MEETING WITH THE NOTED ADDITION; MELISSA SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Board Education – Kristen Campbell

- Kristen presented a beautifully rendered video that showed the importance and simplicity of honoring and supporting the development of resiliency in children.

Treasurer’s Report – Melissa Santrach

See Finance Committee minutes; additional comments follow:

- A transfer of \$100,000 was made from BMO Harris to Hiway Credit Union so that all CMES funds would be insured.
- Sandy has generously offered to develop new financial policies needed to comply with new federal guidelines regarding purchasing and other financial practices. One change, for example, is that all funds raised for going outs must be deposited in the bank before being used.
 - The policies will be reviewed by the Governance Committee then presented to the Board for approval
 - Once the policies are approved, Chris will develop the necessary procedures.
- Melissa reviewed the October financials and noted that we are tracking as expected for this time of year. Melissa asked if anyone had questions.
 - Chris noted that some line items are expended beyond 100%. They will be adjusted in the revised budget.

**MELISSA MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE OCTOBER 2015 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS;
KRISTEN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Board Chair Report – Liz Coenen

See report; additional comments follow:

- Liz had no additional comments.

Governance Committee Report – Liz Coenen

See October and November Reports; additional comments follow:

- Liz reminded Board members that there were two sets of Governance Committee minutes because the October meeting had been postponed.
- Liz commented on the work the Committee is doing to develop a Tennessean warning for CMES.
 - This is a statement public entities in Minnesota add to forms that collect personal information. The warning applies to Minnesota only and is meant to alert the person providing the information about how the information can be used, who will have access to it, and what will happen if the person chooses not to provide the information. The warning is to be specific to the form.
 - According to our attorney, the warning is most often applied to staff complaints. Liz noted that for now we have the basics covered and have a template for human resources purposes
 - Liz has also forwarded to Dr. Speiker the relevant documents and current CMES policies already in place.
 - Liz pointed out that knowing how and when to use the warning is somewhat amorphous – for example, one school district adds it to homework assignments. Liz will be following up with Dr. Speiker about the breadth with which we need to develop our compliance based on the list of forms Chris has identified that we are currently using to gather information.
- The Committee is also talking about how to fill the vacant Parent seat on the Board.
 - A parent had expressed interest in joining the Board but her family is moving away from the area. This gives the Board a chance to pause and review our Board composition to see if it is what we need at this point in our growth and to develop a strong, engaged Board.
 - Liz suggested that we continue to discuss this at a future Board meeting or Board retreat to get everyone's thoughts.

Development Committee Report – Liz Coenen on behalf of Julie Richards

- The Committee will be meeting next Tuesday, November 24 to work on drafting a letter for an annual fund solicitation.
- Melissa is continuing to work with the designer on developing the brochure.
- Liz spoke with Liza about putting together a video that features the elementary – she asked for a scope and a deadline; Liz will connect with Liesl about what will be most useful.
- Liz thanked everyone for their GTMD contributions and asked Board members to remember to give their donations to Chris.

Director of Business Operations – Chris Bewell

See report; additional comments follow:

- The bus company continues to be very responsive to the ongoing changes we request to support our families.
- This is a time of year when a lot of reports are due so Chris is very busy with those; in particular, the Food and Nutrition onsite evaluation is coming up in December.

- Our enrollment numbers have changed in the past few days.
 - A neighborhood mom is seeking to enroll her 4th grader and 1st grader soon. The family has younger children also. This is an excellent fit with our mission!
- We are receiving a lot of applications for the lottery, which will be Monday, December 7.
 - Adam is also reminding current families with toddlers in the private school that they need to apply for the lottery for the public kindergarten spots.
 - Following are the proposed openings to be filled in the lottery:
 - Kindergarten – 20 openings
 - 1st grade – 0 openings
 - 2nd grade – 0 openings
 - 3rd grade – 0 openings
 - 4th grade – 4 openings* (This number may vary based on classroom composition)
 - 5th grade – 3 openings
 - 6th grade – 0 openings

KRISTEN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING ENROLLMENT OPENINGS FOR THE 2016 – 17 LOTTERY: KINDERGARTEN - 20 OPENINGS; 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD GRADES – 0 OPENINGS; 4TH GRADE – 4 OPENINGS; 5TH GRADE – 3 OPENINGS; 6TH GRADE – 0 OPENINGS. EVE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Head of School Report – Liesl Taylor

See report; additional comments follow:

- Liesl is working with families to determine the best placement for the children who will become 6th graders in 2016 – 17.
 - Some Heads of School from middle schools will speak to CMES parents to share with them about what it's like for someone to transition to a 6 – 8th grade middle school as a 7th grader. Because some 6 – 8th grade schools have more openings for 6th graders than for 7th graders, CMES families are faced with having to decide whether to move their children to their preferred middle school before they complete their Upper Elementary cycle.
 - CMES will also participate in the small school fair in January to network with schools where our 6th graders may eventually attend middle school.
- Conferences concluded last week and went very well. Many great exchanges!
- The first Parent Involvement Committee meeting is November 18.
- Chris and Liesl are working with Windmill Design on incorporating a blog into the website. They will also work on the overall presentation of the website.
- Liesl provided the following staffing updates:
 - Liesl is working with the staff in the all-day Montessori classrooms to learn how to best manage the rhythm of their days since there is now no time during the day when there aren't children in the classroom.
 - The elementary classrooms are becoming very stable, though there is still work needing to be done to develop a flowchart that shows what happens when different behaviors occur.
 - Liesl is working on a way to address the staff professional development dilemma with regard to the Refresher Course, which is attended primarily by the Montessori-trained staff. Liesl would like to have an all-staff gathering – perhaps a dinner that includes the Board.
 - On November 20, a mindfulness practitioner will be at CMES to observe in all the environments and offer guidance.

- Liesl has joined the MAA (the Montessori Administrators Association) for AMI heads of school and is finding it to be a great resource for many important topics. MAA has a summer retreat that Liesl plans to attend next summer.
- Liesl attended a MPPI (Montessori Public Policy Initiative) meeting in Washington, DC in October.
 - One of the speakers, a lobbyist, said that the Montessori movement has a unique blend of both public and private schools and should determine points of commonality and advocate for those.
 - Liesl noted that Minnesota actively participates in the MPPI and suggested that some component of the Board's work could support the policies to further Montessori education.
 - Melissa asked Liesl to send more information to the Board about this and about how the Board could be more supportive.
- Liesl asked the Board to approve the World's Best Workforce (WBW) document, which was included in the Board packet.
 - Liesl noted that the information contained in the WBW report was also in the Annual Report and has been reformatted using the MDE template.

KRISTEN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE WORLD'S BEST WORKFORCE AS PRESENTED. MELISSA SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

- Liesl asked the Board to consider supporting a school-based mental health approach at CMES.
 - Liesl explained that there are several children who don't have IEPs but who would benefit from mental health support services within the school setting.
 - Board members discussed the financial implications, access for families, and how school-based mental health services would complement the other support services already provided.
 - Liesl explained that a process would be developed to determine which students would benefit from the services and that the Finance Committee would provide the necessary information to the Board about the impact on the budget for the staffing needed. Liesl also noted that parents would be involved in the process.
 - With regard to other support services, Liesl said that the literacy specialist is having a significant impact and that the math support, which has been used by both John and Amber previously, is new this year and is going well so far.

MELISSA MADE A MOTION TO SUPPORT THE ADDITION OF SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT CMES. EVE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

- Liesl updated the Board on other recent happenings:
 - An original Montessori trainer from India visited CMES and, after touring the school, commented that there are many Montessori schools around the world but what's happening at CMES is the true essence of Montessori.
 - Two MDE special education specialists visited and were very pleased with the way special education is working within the Montessori environments. One MDE visitor, who is an autism specialist herself, was very surprised that she couldn't identify any of our students classified as special education students because they are so fully integrated into the fabric of the classroom.
 - Liesl and Nicole (from the training center) spoke to the MDE Board of Teaching in support of alternative licensure.
 - Alternative licensure was allowed by the state legislature a couple of years ago, but the Board of Teaching hasn't yet approved any programs to grant the alternative license.

- Liesl described to the Board of Teaching what it was like to fulfill the requirements of both the Montessori training and the Minnesota licensure and pointed out the ways in which the two processes overlapped. She also noted that if some of the overlap was omitted, teachers could be available to serve children that much sooner. It's possible the Board of Teaching will make their decision by February 2016.
- Tess's training has been going very well. Liesl has been taking Tess to a training class and she is doing great!
- With regard to our Vital Signs report, the school's demographics have stayed steady, the students have really been engaging "big" work – as evidenced by the extreme multiplication work going on recently – and there is lots of research being done in advance of going out. In terms of our maturing community, the male and female students are starting to work together much more comfortably.

Other Business

- None

Next month's agenda

- No additions to the standard December meeting agenda.

Adjourn

KRISTEN MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:57 PM; EVE SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully Submitted by Jane Reilly, CMES Board Secretary

Next meeting: December 15 at 6 p.m.