

**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
TUESDAY APRIL 21, 2015 – 6:00 P.M.**

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

**Board Members Absent:** Marjorie Nitz

**Other Attendees:** Chris Bewell, Shane Weinand (VOA representative)

**AGENDA**

**Meeting called to order by Board Chair, Melissa Santrach, at 6:05 pm**

**Public Comment Period:** No public comments were offered.

**Approval of Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Melissa asked if there were any changes to the agenda. The following items were added:

- Acceptance of minutes from the annual Board Retreat
- Appointment of an election judge for the annual election of Board members

**JULIANN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE EVENING’S AGENDA WITH THE ABOVE  
ADJUSTMENTS; JULIE SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Based on the approved agenda, Melissa asked if anyone had any conflicts of interest with the evening’s agenda. None were disclosed.

**Acceptance of Minutes**

- Melissa asked if anyone had changes to the regular March meeting minutes or the Board Retreat minutes. None were suggested.

**LIZ MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE MARCH MEETING AND BOARD  
RETREAT; ANDREA SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Head of School Report – Liesl Taylor**

*See report from HOS. Liesl presented her Vital Signs report; additional comments/actions follow:*

- The Vital Signs report, a review of the mission based on school activities, included the following highlights:
  - It’s been very exciting to observe a new 5<sup>th</sup> grader fully embracing the concept of “big work” in math work.
  - The Project Fair in Forest was wonderful!
    - One anecdote shared was about a couple of students who really wanted to use dry ice for their project and the work they did to learn all about how to handle it safely and incorporate it into their project in an exciting way.
  - Work continues on the preparations for the pancake fundraiser on May 16.
  - Going Outs are beginning to happen in meaningful, important ways, and students are building connections with children from other Montessori schools in the area.
    - A group of Pond students wanted to visit Sunny Hollow to learn about putting on a play. They prepared thoroughly for the outing and had a great time!
  - More art and cultural activities starting to emerge as the classrooms are becoming more settled.
- Liesl spoke about enrollment and described the delicate balance needed to manage the numbers in each of the environments.
- About testing and assessments, Liesl noted that staff have been evaluating the value of continuing NWEA testing now that our authorizer no longer requires it.

- They have decided that there is good information to be gained from the K-2 students' results so those grades will do the spring testing cycle and will continue with NWEA assessments next year.
- Teachers have found that the NWEA test results are not as helpful for the older students. Instead they are finding the OLPA feedback to be more useful so will continue with those next year. Additionally, Dr. Steven Hughes, who has been working to measure executive functioning in younger children, is going to begin working with older children. Students beyond 2<sup>nd</sup> grade will not do the Spring NWEA and they will not do the Fall 2015 NWEA assessments.
- Liesl will defer to Chris for reporting about the MCA testing currently underway.
- Liesl noted that the staff is getting ready for the Special Education review, which will be happening on May 13<sup>th</sup>. They see it as their time to shine and show how the Montessori approach is a good fit for students who receive Special Education services.
  - Melissa asked if someone from the staff could do a presentation to the Board on this. Liesl agreed that it would be a good topic for Board education and suggested that June would be a good month since the report will be available. Liesl will check with staff to see if this is doable.
- Liesl provided several staff updates:
  - At their most recent staff meeting, staff reflected on their professional development for the year and thought about possibilities for next year. One thought was to do a service project with the staff and both Boards.
  - There have been some great new hires and Liesl commented that the diversity of the student community is starting to be reflected in the staff.
    - Adrianna Torres is the new Spanish speaking assistant in the Children's House.
    - Guled Hassan is the new full-time Special Education paraprofessional. He is also in a teacher education program. He has a very deep understanding of what's happening with the children.
  - Interviewing continues for the new Upper Elementary Lead Guide. It's been going well and they hope to wrap it up by the end of the week.
  - Marcella, the assistant in the Upper Elementary, is going back to Spain so that position will also need to be filled.
- Liesl thanked Board members for their work at the retreat – she was grateful to hear each person's story.
- Liesl provided several general updates:
  - The elementary classrooms are seeing many more parent observers, which is new this year. Typically there are more observers in the Children's House but this year they are having a good number in the elementary!
  - There is some interest in CMES becoming a food truck stop and perhaps a CSA drop site.
  - Liesl has continued to work on developing the connection with the local police. Already four families have accessed the Project Assist services.
- Liesl introduced the 2015-16 calendar for Board approval and offered the following comments:
  - There are three professional development days in August for Elementary teachers to continue their work of establishing the elementary program – there is still lots of work to be done!
  - The Friday before conferences will be teacher prep time. Also having time during MEA to focus on classroom adjustments and professional development was very good this past year so it will be done that way next year as well.
  - The Winter and Spring breaks align with the St. Paul Public school calendar so that siblings will have the same days off.

- The calendar has 170 days next year. The recommendation is 165 days so if snow/cold days occur, we will be fine. We also have ample contact hours during the day.

**EVE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2015-16 CMES ACADEMIC CALENDAR; KRISTEN SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Director of Business Operations – Chris Bewell**

*See report from Director of Business Operations; additional comments follow:*

- E-rate grant has been submitted and we'll know by July 1 what funding will be awarded.
  - We are hoping to get Tier 1 as in past, and although the percentage has been reduced it is still very worthwhile.
  - We are also hoping to receive Tier 2 funds, which includes tech support services and can pay for things like firewalls and hardware. The funding is based on free and reduced lunch counts. We did not receive this last year but are hoping to receive it this year!
- The Fresh Fruit and Vegetables grant has been submitted. Though we didn't get it this past year, we are hopeful it will come through for the coming year. It also is based on the free and reduced numbers.
  - Since we haven't had the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables grant this year, a parent has been arranging to have a snack for the students 5 days a week, which has been really wonderful.
- Regarding enrollment, there is an Open House on April 30. Families on the waitlist have been invited so they can become familiar with the school and decide if it's the right environment for their child.
- MCA testing is underway but it has been very problematic from the state's end. Just today the education commissioner suspended testing until the technical bugs are resolved. It is hoped that when it's resumed it will go much smoother.

**Board Chair Report – Presented by Melissa**

*See Board Chair Report; additional comments follow:*

- Melissa thanked everyone for their participation at the Board Retreat and said the Development Committee will continue to work on accomplishing the fundraising goals.
- The health insurance has been finalized at a 3.2% increase.
- Melissa encouraged everyone who is able to attend ESABA events whenever possible. They offer excellent ways to network within the community.
- Melissa reported on her own experience in doing observations in the classrooms. She found it to be very enriching and encouraged others to schedule a time to do a formal classroom observation.
- Melissa presented Lease Aid Assurance forms for each person to sign and asked that everyone sign and return the forms to her or Chris before leaving this evening.
- Melissa asked all Board members who haven't yet scheduled their annual evaluation with her to do so at their earliest convenience.

**Governance Committee Report – Presented by Melissa**

*See Governance Committee meeting minutes; additional comments follow:*

- Melissa introduced the draft Fundraising policy and indicated that it is good to have a policy in place as we embark on development. As opportunities arise, the policy can be modified if needed. Melissa asked if anyone had changes or suggestions.

- Jane suggested that the last sentence of 3c. [Fundraising activities that occur within a classroom are excluded from this requirement] be added to 4a. so that classroom level fundraising does not require Board level coordination.
  - Board members queried Liesl about whether there were any problems with the classroom level fundraisers and Liesl said there hadn't been any issues yet. If something does arise, we could develop something more formal.

**JULIANN MADE A MOTION TO ADOPT THE FUNDRAISING POLICY AS AMENDED; EVE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- Melissa presented the slate of nominees for the upcoming election:
  - Parent Seat (3-year term): Elizabeth Coenen
  - Community Member Seats (2 seats; 3-year term each): Melissa Santrach; Julie Richards

**KRISTEN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE SLATE OF NOMINEES FOR THE 2015 ANNUAL ELECTION FOR BOARD MEMBERS; EVE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- Melissa noted that we need to appoint an election judge to prepare the ballots and monitor the election process. The election judge also counts the votes.
  - Melissa suggested the Board to appoint Chris Bewell as the election judge.

**JULIE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE CHRIS BEWELL AS THE ELECTION JUDGE FOR THE 2015 CMES SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION; KRISTEN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- Melissa commented that a change in state statute now allows non-parent/staff board members to vote and encouraged all Board members to participate. For those who cannot make it to school during voting hours, an absentee ballot can be requested from Chris.
- Melissa presented the following Board and Committee meeting calendar for the 2015-16 year and asked the Board for approval.
  - Melissa noted that the August meeting will occur on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month. If the school is unavailable due to cleaning or other activities, we'll find an alternative location.
  - The annual joint meeting with the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) is scheduled for Wednesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>. This date is already confirmed with the MCM.
  - The annual Board Retreat is scheduled for Saturday, April 16, 2016, but can be changed if needed.
  - The Annual Meeting will be May 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm and the regular May meeting will be at 6:00 pm.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b>	<b>Finance</b>	<b>Governance</b>	<b>Development</b>
July	July 21	July 14	July 16	July 29
August	August 18	August 11	August 13	August 26
September	September 15	September 8	September 10	September 23
October	October 20	October 13	October 15	October 28
November	November 17	November 10	November 12	November 25
December	December 15	December 8	December 10	December 23
January	January 19	January 12	January 14	January 27
February	February 16	February 9	February 11	February 24
March	March 15	March 8	March 10	March 23
April	April 19	April 12	April 14	April 27
May	May 17	May 10	May 12	May 25
June	June 21	June 14	June 16	June 29

**JULIE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2015-16 BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETING CALANDAR AS PRESENTED; KRISTEN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- Melissa reviewed the preparations for the 2014-15 annual meeting , which will be Tuesday, May 19 at 5:30 pm. Liesl will present a summary of the year and incorporate Melissa's report since Melissa will not be in attendance. Liz will present the financial report, which will be prepared by Sandy.

**Development Committee Report – Presented by Julie**

*See Development Committee meeting minutes; additional comments follow:*

- Jim Olsen attended the meeting to learn about Cornerstone from Liesl, who described the Cornerstone experience and talked about how Cornerstone is different from other charter schools.
  - This was good preparation for the Board retreat, which Jim guided.
- Next Development Committee meeting will be April 29 at 7:15 am at the Dancing Goat.

**Parent Involvement Committee Report – Presented by Eve Lo**

- Melissa thanked Eve for coordinating the wonderful array of food for staff to enjoy during conferences. She was there each day to receive the food, prep it, then clean up!
  - Liesl also offered her thanks to Eve – the staff was very appreciative!
- Melissa asked if Eve had any additional comments regarding Parent Involvement Committee activities.
  - Eve had no additional comments.

**Treasurer's Report – Liz Coenen**

*See minutes from Finance Committee meeting; additional comments/actions follow:*

- Liz shared the news that we were awarded the school finance award again! She expressed her thanks to Chris and Liesl for their thoughtful and prudent stewardship of our school's finances. Liz also acknowledged Sandy's wealth of expertise and her generous contribution of time.
- Our cash flow is fine – the concern about not receiving the special education funding has been resolved.
- Liz explained that the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has a new external user access recertification system and that each school must designate a school official to authorize those who can access the secure websites.

**LIZ MADE A MOTION TO DESIGNATE THE CMES HEAD OF SCHOOL AS THE AUTHORIZER FOR USER ACCESS TO MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (MDE) SECURE WEBSITES; JULIANN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- Liz noted that the 2016 budget will be presented at the May meeting.
- Liz asked if anyone had questions about the March financial statements or the Finance Committee minutes. None were asked.

**LIZ MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MARCH 2015 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS; ANDREA SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Other Business**

- Melissa noted that Liesl requested that the Governance Committee formulate a “Going Out” policy for students. Melissa asked Board members to let her know if they would be interested in working on such a policy. The work could be done over the summer but the policy should be in place for the 2015-16 school year.

### **Suggested Agenda Items for Next Month**

- Budget approval
- New hires
- Election results/officers

### **Adjourn**

**KRISTEN MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:38 PM; EVE SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 19. The Annual Meeting will convene at 5:30 PM and the regularly monthly meeting will immediately follow.**

***Respectfully Submitted by Jane Reilly, CMES Board Secretary***