

**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – VIRTUAL
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.**

Board Members Present: Jean Melancon, Jess Goff, Alyssa Schwartz, Julaine Roffers-Agarwal, Carolyn Ganz, Maisah Outlaw, Sarah Stocco, Marcus Almon

- Sarah has completed her required board training and is therefore reinstated and able to vote on board motions beginning with this evening's meeting.

Board Members Absent:

Other Attendees: Chris Bewell, Peter Dahl, Joe Aliperto (Dieci Finance) 6:45, Ben Moudry (6:17)

Meeting called to order by Jean Melancon, Board Chair, at 6:04 pm.

AGENDA

Public Comment Period: Comments limited to 3 minutes per person.

Peter Dahl joined us again. He is a parent of Evan in Pond. Interested in listening for expansion plans.

Consent Agenda

- Draft of January meeting minutes

CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE CONSENT AGENDA. JULAINE SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO FURTHER DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Almon	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Outlaw	x	
Stocco	x	

Approval of Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

MAISAH MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE EVENING'S AGENDA. SARAH SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Almon	x	

Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Outlaw	x	
Stocco	x	

Jean asked whether, given the approved agenda, there were any conflicts of interest. None were disclosed.

Head of School Report – Alyssa Schwartz

- Things continue to go well. Staffing up for whatever comes next as things change.
- Enrollment looks good – lots of kindergartners

Distance Learning Update

- Kindergartners came back last week in mornings only – bustling classrooms! Four children who are fully distanced learning.
- Next week starting 2/22, children will be coming on site by class to be getting time together and social emotional learning time
- Vaccinations continue to roll out – hope to be back in person soon
- In-service Day on Friday
 - o Support staff did work on supporting children and their independence
 - o Elementary Lead Guides had a workshop about diverse learning needs through Schoology
- Recent Events
 - o Stone Soup was lovely! Well-attended and very sweet. Cookbook was shared widely.
 - o Screenagers conversation was very good and people were eager to continue the conversation

Director of Business Operations – Chris Bewell

- Enrollment going well.
 - o People are signing up on the web
 - o 25 applications at least – mostly for Kindergarten but not all
- Charter school fair – virtual this year, March 20th – will be online, linked zooms through the St. Paul Charter School organization – hope to invite staff to come talk to potential families

Marketing Task Force Update – Carolyn

- Task force is developing materials – flyer and cards

- Identifying local businesses, centers, and organizations that can host promotional materials to help spread the word, have worked with ESABA and with Barbara Williams to help find more opportunities
- Also looking at use of social media and future planning
- If you have any more ideas about places or people to contact, let Carolyn know.

Board Education – Ben Moudry

- Head of School at Lake Country, was on Founding Board of CMES, has worked and led in many contexts including at Great River and at Groves Montessori in Redlands, CA, and including with adolescent programs
- Ben asked for what we were thinking and then presented with those in mind
 - Full third plane program would be 12-18 - most schools shy away from this and it is complicated. He challenges us to consider looking at having the whole third plane here – it’s hard to see all the growth of adolescents with only 2 years of the 6 in the 3rd plane. One concern is that limited years mean a greater push to be academic, to be “prepared for high school”. Question for us: are we thinking of adolescent program as preparation for high school or as a Montessori education or some mix of both? Where is your focus?
 - Start with your end goal; don’t try to adjust later. For example, if there were a program from 12-18, it should be two communities (7th-9th 12-15, and 10th-12th, 15-18). Hard to switch back to that if you start as 7/8th grade and 9-12.
 - Staffing – recommendation is for hiring someone to help design the program, who will ideally stick with it for at least 3-5 years – leadership change is really hard in the beginning of the school. Much more effective than hiring outside for design and hiring others to implement. Full Montessori training recommended for that/those leaders.
 - Board should plan to set aside money in strategic plan that includes some likely deficits for that program to begin with. Most programs are overstaffed to begin with as they grow.
 - Important in the beginning to make decision about what your program is and what it isn’t. We can’t be everything to everyone and we need to be comfortable with whatever our vision is. Lots of pushes and pulls – sports, farm, etc. It needs to also be realistic and achievable so we can focus on what we do in order to do it well.
 - Creating good partnerships that will be good connections for adolescents, who benefit from relationships with many different adults. Mindset of staff is to be “in residence” with those adolescents as they grow. Many part time experts needed.
 - Much discussion of staffing – recommending staffing for creative arts as well as concern about meeting state licensing requirement
 - We will be in touch with more questions if needed.

Treasurer’s Report – Joe Aliperto

- See reports
- ADM is 133, and budgeted at 135. This should be fine given that part of the year was above the 135. We’ll keep an eye on enrollment numbers of course and adjust if necessary, but hopefully it won’t be.
- Tracking in line with budget which is good (though that if we drop enrollment any more, we will need to look at it, as stated above)
- Healthy fund balance in excess of 30% - great for future planning

CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE JANUARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS. MARCUS SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Almon	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Outlaw	x	
Stocco	x	

- Donations: We received several donations totaling \$647.60 from an anonymous donor (\$500) and Blackbaud Giving Fund (\$147.60)

MAISAH MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE DONATIONS TOTTALLING \$647.70. JULAINE SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Almon	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Outlaw	x	
Stocco	x	

- There is an opportunity for staff to go to the MCM Elementary Orientation this summer. This is the course formally known as the Assistants Course. It is a great overview for support staff, admin, and others.
- Cost is \$900/person, 1 free for every 4 that sign up.
- 3 evenings a week through the month of April.

- The Finance Committee recommends that we approve funding, not to exceed \$8100 for this staff training. This could fully fund staff or be spread out to partial funding, depending on who is interested in attending.

JEAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE FUNDING (not to exceed \$8100) FOR STAFF TO ATTEND THE MCM ELEMENTARY ORIENTATION. SARAH SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION OF WHERE THE MONEY WOULD COME FROM. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Almon	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Outlaw	x	
Stocco	x	

Equity Task Force Update – Maisah

- Currently contacting potential task force members, looking for lots of diversity in lots of ways (licensed, unlicensed, different levels, different positions, parents, community members, etc) List is not finalized, but in process. Maisah and Sarah will talk with Alyssa in case there are missing staff voices. If you have anyone to suggest, please be in touch.
- First Task Force meeting week of March 1st
- 5-6 meetings before May board meeting
- Goal: present cost estimates at March board meeting
- Hard to get this off the ground so taking longer than originally predicted and want to respect how important this is and the stretch people are feeling.

Expansion Feasibility Task Force Update – Jean

- UST meeting with Alyssa and Jean – one of the first steps of expansion would be to apply with UST, our authorizer
- Next stage would be Ready-to-Open plan – this would include monthly meetings with UST rep, the board, the head of school – keeping us on timeline of critical tasks to make sure we could open on time.
- Proposing adjustment to timeline to be realistic
 - o looking at enrollment, current 4th years would be the best first 7th grade class
 - o This would mean the program would open in the fall of 2023 for grade 7 after many steps and years of program design and planning
- Possible locations if we expand

- Boys and Girls Club – seems unlikely there would be space inside, perhaps property to buy. Connection made but no meeting yet.
- Hmong Church – tour happened last Friday, 2/12
 - Directly to the east of the center and CMES
 - They are considering selling the property
 - We looked at many slides, pictures, and details of church.
 - MCM is not in a place to purchase right now
 - Could CMES rent? We can't own property as a charter school, but there are ways that charter schools form separate company to purchase property (ABC) and then CMES would rent from that company.
- Discussion of everyone's reactions and thoughts – slow down, make sure we're ready, how exciting, how to be financially responsible, etc – so many thoughts and reactions!
- Jean will set up another meeting to continue to explore the options for the Hmong Church.
- There was a question about what is required to set up an ABC. Jean will bring more info next month after consulting with other people.

Board Chair Report – Jean Melancon

- Many meetings with local organizations
- Sanneh Foundation and Conway Center – some good connections to continue to explore

Suggested Agenda Items for Next Board Meeting

- Update from Expansion Feasibility Task Force
- Update from Equity Task Force
- Guest speaker – Matthew Howell, Oak Hill board treasurer – Adolescent environment financial considerations
- Review board election process
- Begin board self-evaluation process
- Approve 2021/22 school calendar

Adjourn

What went well?

- Lots of positive comments about the board education session with Ben.
- Great conversations among the board members

SARAH MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:04 PM. JULAINE SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Almon	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Outlaw	x	
Stocco	x	

The next CMES Board Meeting is Tuesday, March 16th, 2021 at 6 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Jess Goff, CMES Secretary