

**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – VIRTUAL  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.**

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

**Board Members Absent:**

**Other Attendees:** Chris Bewell, Joe Aliperto (Dieci Finance), Kara Younkin-Viswanathan, Kelsey Miller, Patrick Finnegan, Jessie Armstrong

**Meeting called to order by Jean Melancon, Board Chair, at 6:05 pm.**

**AGENDA**

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

Several parents were in attendance to speak about the Safe Learning Plan. Jean shared some slides with the timeline with the sequence of events with the COVID positive case last week before they spoke.

Patrick Finnegan (child in CH1)

- Glad to read the plan, see lots of solid information, glad to see HEPA filters
- Good to also have language of acknowledgement of inherent risk in any public setting during a pandemic.
- Has been speaking with other parents, but here is not on behalf of group but only for self
- Non-medical cloth masks are said to be ok in plan. Could this changed to be a minimum standard of surgical masks?
- Vaccine mandate for staff?
- Discrepancy in mealtime social distancing guidelines for children – discrepancy (3 to 6 feet on different pages)
- It was encouraging that staff can get tested every two weeks – can that be required? If not practical, please let families know why it's not.

Jessie Armstrong (children in CH 1 and Garden LE)

- In the plan was looking for language of encouragement or expectations for parents – was disappointed it not more strong
- Was looking especially at sections about masks and keeping sick kids home – glad for more info recently
- Would it be possible to find out how many air exchanges per hour the classes are getting? Her understanding is 5-6 per hour would be best –so would like to know - especially important with winter coming and windows closed

- Would appreciate clarification about how quarantine calls are made. How do details get shared? What counts as close contact? When families are notified of possible exposures does it include buses?

Kara Younkin-Viswanathan - (children in CH2 and Forest)

- Curious about why no language in safe learning plan that offers 2 day closure which is what happened
- Questions about the role of board and HoS and how related to MCM – not the same as CMES school – so how do all the people interact together in these situations?
- Interested in a vaccine mandate for staff but understand the two schools would have to do this separately

Kelsey Miller (children in CH and LE)

- Was mostly coming to listen, but interested in the Safe Learning Plan and wants to hear that discussion.

**Consent Agenda**

- Prior Month Meeting Minutes

**CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS AS DISCUSSED. 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. CAROLYN SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS DISCUSSION OF ADDING A DISCUSSION OF THE CLOSURE DECISION AND TIMELINE. IT WAS ADDED TO THE AGENDA WITH THE DISCUSSION OF THE SAFE LEARNING PLAN. 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 – Say Vang**

- See report
- Fully staffed – yay! Hired all Para positions and have a new social worker.
- First confirmed COVID case of the year – already mentioned.
- AMI authorization visit coming up soon
- UST coming up in November
- Safe Learning Plan draft up for approval
  - o Some discussion of whether we approve first, then discuss or vice versa. It was decided that we approve draft first.

**SARAH MOVED TO APPROVE THE SAFE LEARNING PLAN. MAISAH SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS MUCH DISCUSSION.**

Safe Learning Plan discussion – concerns, questions, information shared from many members

- Sarah - masking question – Delta is more contagious, can we move towards better masks, KN94/95? We can't require families but could we more strongly encourage better masking? Could we update language in SLP to say that the medical recommendation is ....?
- Say - good idea – we can work on language and rewording – current recommendations are the ones from MDH and MDE and they both state that cloths masks are acceptable.
- A member raised the concern about distancing during lunch as mentioned by Patrick earlier - pg 8 #3, 6 feet but pg 10, 3 feet – can this be reconciled?
- The group discussed that though the plan is for both schools and was made collaboratively, we are approving it only for CMES. The EC program Safe Learning Plan will also need to be approved by the CMS Board.
- Julaine – approach to vaccine mandate – from Governance committee - if we do it, it would be a policy – lots more to update during that portion of the meeting
- Several members raised a concern about being under a SAFE Learning plan from the spring while waiting for this new one – but it wasn't followed in this case. Questions about how this decision happened or what next steps are regarding closure not following our published plans and recommendations.

- Jean shared that admin worked with both schools and board reps on decision. There are many factors - number one is safety.
- Question: What are the actual concerns with regard to the decision over the weekend? Members mentioned:
  - Concern as a board member who approved the plan is how it is used to shape decisions.
  - What can we expect from it in the future?
  - We need to be transparent about how we are making decisions.
  - This seems like an opportunity to look at what we do – how to guide decisions moving forward
  - Are we doing right by our school and our charter as a public school?
- Jean: school creates plan, our role as a board is to be comfortable with this being the best plan. If we aren't comfortable then we ask school to update the plan. We can approve it as is with options to change frequently – it is a living document
- Chris mentioned that the weekend decision left two days time for testing, for staff to write up plans, share information with families, etc.
- Jean pointed out we can't always predict every scenario in detail.
- A member asked: How do we as a board and a school have accountability for following our plans?
- A concern was raised about a possible miss on communication before school started so that parents and families were taken by surprise.
- A member asked if in the Safe Learning Plan - close contacts – can we better define? – More could be added to communication section based on letter parents got about close contacts.
- It was mentioned that this all is a moving target – speed of information is fast – concerned about broad framework vs. too specific
- It was pointed out that discussion got muddy as we were discussing both the draft of the Safe Learning Plan and the use of it last weekend – really two separate topics.
- It was clarified that we can approve as is or not approve and continue to operate with draft. Consensus was good to adopt what we have but continue to address these points.

**JESS MADE A MOTION TO ADOPT THE SAFE LEARNING PLAN AS WRITTEN. MARCUS 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	

- Recommendation is to have school revise plan to address the issues raised and bring revisions in October. But now we have a board-approved plan moving forward.

**Director of Business Operations – Chris Bewell**

- Enrollment – Currently 138 enrolled - just had two leave, one join – we expect that enrollment could change as some families are planning to move. We have no more 4,5,6 waitlist though we have space. Lower levels have waitlists but are full (no spaces).

**Governance Committee – Julaine**

- Asked to start looking at how to put together Vaccine Policy for Staff – have contacted many different places (MACS, UST, Allina VP of HR, meeting with insurance carrier, looked at what other schools have). At this point we aren’t getting very clear guidance.
  - o St. Paul Public Schools put together a resolution but traditional public school districts have different rules around this.
  - o Roseville – also resolution – more like what we would do – more similar language.
  - o Charter schools need to have policies. We need to be compliant with employment law, public school law – and will be consulting our attorney. Plan is to require staff to be vaccinated or be tested regularly. Marcus recommended that we consult with an employment lawyer specifically as well as our charter school lawyer.
  - o Lots of time has been spent researching this by several board members. Council tends to advise caution and prepare for potential lawsuits with a mandate.
- Strategic plan – we have talked about a lot in little pieces – time to update/look at where we are all together
  - Access
    - o Continue Equity Task Force work
    - o Evaluate pilot summer school program
    - o Accommodate COVID variants and impact on families
  - Equity
    - o Continue Expansion Task Force work

- Community
  - o Continue marketing campaigns
  - o Continue creative ideas for engaging community
- Sustainability
  - o Conduct staff compensation study
  - o Continue applying for grants
  - o Add new board members

### **Equity Task Force Update – Sarah Stocco**

- Jean and Sarah have been meeting with Equity Alliance to work on actual timeline. Timeline revised to be a better fit for schools
  - Survey around November 1<sup>st</sup>
  - Site Visit early January
  - Findings delivered to CMES and CMS/MCM mid February
- Presentation to staff – coming soon – next week - Say will send email today.
  - Introduce Tonya
  - Answer questions about the process and Equity Alliance

### **Board Chair Report – Jean Melancon**

- MACS presenting CMES a 10 year award
  - Oct 7th Union Depot – all board members invited to attend. Tickets \$39 ea., masks required
  - Also inviting former board members – Melissa Santrach and Liz Coenen
- UST liaison Aaliyah - career move to DC, will participate in CMES November site visit
- MCM collaboration
  - Joint Board Mtg for Wed, Nov 17<sup>th</sup>
  - CMES board mtg Tues, Nov 16, 2021

### **Treasurer's Report**

#### Financial Reports Summary

- Currently the school has enrollment of 138 students.
- Healthy cash balance, not anticipating any need to borrow
- Grant Update: Cornerstone had received the Walton Grant for FY21 in the amount of \$20,000 in February 2021. In addition to this, the school has secured \$25,000 from the Wend Foundation. Cornerstone has also received the Support Our Students Grant. This grant requires \$14,000 in expenditures from the school and in return the

school will receive \$3,500 in grant money. The school also has hired a grant writer to help with new opportunities.

- Healthy cash flow

**CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE AUGUST 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 this month – Total this month is from Amazon Smile (\$68.61)

**MAISAH MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT DONATIONS OF \$68.61. 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	

- Audit Status – nearly done – Joe is reviewing and we will hear more soon. Auditor will be present at the October Board Meeting

**Suggested Agenda Items for Next Board Meeting**

- Review of MCA results and other assessments
- Review preliminary revised budget (approval in November)
- Approve annual report
- Approve HOS Evaluation process, goals and Professional Development Plan
- Review enrollment lottery procedure
- Review any revisions in Safe Learning Plan
- Presentation from Auditor

Other Fall activities

- Create Lease Appendix confirming rent for year
- Publish Newsletter to Friends of the School

**Readdressing Closure Decision**

- Still unclear about what next steps are about the decision now that we have the Safe Learning Plan
- Acknowledging that this is hard time and lots of people working hard to make the right decisions, possible lack of understanding because of lack of experience
- One question – what purpose the safe learning plan serves in decision making? If a decision gets made that’s outside of the SLP and all the guidelines – Who is accountable for the decision?
- Why were board members part of the decision and how does this happen? How should I support this as a board member?
- Decision was made by the administration – not by the board. The board was informed. Input from board? Informed not consulted language should be used to help make communication more clear – need to ensure communication is reviewed by many people to make sure it’s clear and correct.
- Who do we talk to when? Open meeting law? Can we talk in small groups or is that parallel meetings?
- Procedures for closed meetings – in discussion with governance
- How can board members make concerns clear without undermining larger organization or themselves? Don’t want to undermine – fully in support. However, HoS is the only employee of the board and if there are concerns about HoS/admin performance or about desire for more help for HoS/admin – how/when to whom do express this?
- Every board member can always check in with Jean about how to bring concerns.
- Boards don’t always include teachers – partly because it places them both in the employer and employee status

**Adjourn**

**JULAINÉ MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:52 PM. CAROLYN SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. 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 October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 6 p.m.***

***Respectfully Submitted by Jess Goff, CMES Secretary***