

**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
APRIL 15, 2025, TUESDAY – 6:00 P.M.**

Board Members Present: Jess Goff, Julaine Roffers-Agarwal, Jean Melancon, Alyssa Schwartz, Carolyn Ganz, Rachel Droogsma, Rohan Chougule, Sarah Stocco

Board Members Absent:

Other Attendees: Chris Bewell, Meg Haley (until 7:32), Joe Aliperto (Dieci Finance, 6:16-6:32),

Meeting called to order by Julaine Roffers-Agarwal, Board Chair, at 6:04 pm.

AGENDA

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

- Meg Haley - parent, also working as a volunteer with Marketing Committee, will share more later in the meeting

Consent Agenda

- March 2025 Meeting Minutes
- 2025-26 school calendar
- Q3 report for UST

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

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Chougule	x	
Droogsma	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

Approval of Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Julaine noted that the agenda lists a report from the equity committee, but in fact it will be a report from the advancement committee. Also, there's an addition at the end of the meeting to discuss the letter from the MN Department of Education.

SARAH MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE EVENING'S AGENDA WITH THE MENTIONED CHANGES. CAROLYN SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO FURTHER DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Chougule	x	
Droogsma	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

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

Head of School Report - Alyssa

- More at the end of the meeting about letter that the State of Minnesota sent in response to the letter from the US Department of Education
- Upcoming events Board members are welcome to attend
 - Children Teach Parents event 4/28 5:30-6:30
 - Cornerstone Café 5/16 8:30-9:30a
 - Contact Alyssa to schedule a time to observe in an environment
- Completed our AMI consultation today - every three years - she's not able to recommend our status (because we have a teacher that isn't yet fully trained) but we assume we will be affiliated - she was overall very positive.
- Sharing video presentation of UE group - nice example of long-term student-driven project taken from initial research all the way through to completion of going-out and presentation!
- Question about AMI leadership visit later in the month - just a social visit, not connected to evaluation at all.

Treasurer's Report - Carolyn, Chris, Joe

- Current enrollment is 135, which means we will have an ADM of around 133.
- We were budgeted for 138 ADM, but have revised that to 132 ADM. We are being paid for 140 ADM right now
- Cash balance and CD balance
- 75% of the way through the year, 75% of funding received, 75% spent
- Grants - no changes from previous months
- Holdback is still 10%

- Slightly more interest revenue than expected - related to some of the CDs.
- Everything looks healthy and within the realm of what we expected. Joe says that the school does a good job of monitoring spending and living within our means.
- More details in reports

CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MARCH FINANCIALS. JEAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Chougule	x	
Droogsma	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

- Donations - There were five donations in the month of March.
 - \$1800 from three different transportation reimbursement sources
 - \$1000 anonymous donation
 - \$160 from Paypal for an individual's birthday donations

JEAN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MARCH DONATIONS OF \$2860. RACHEL SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Chougule	x	
Droogsma	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

- Carolyn on behalf of Finance Committee
 - We have two CDs currently
 - Previous CD matured on April 3.

- The second CD will mature in June and we will have another chance to decide what to do with that investment.
- Finance recommends reinvestment of the whole amount - \$212,783 - in a new CD at 3.8% for six months

CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE REINVESTMENT OF \$212,783 IN A SIX MONTH CD AT 3.8%. SARAH SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO FURTHER DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Chougule	x	
Droogsma	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

Director of Budget Operations - Chris

- Current Enrollment - 136 - we gained a new student right after spring break
- Lottery for next year
 - 32 K applications - 20 got letters and will reply by May 1,
 - 9 Kindergarten waitlist plus 3 who don't qualify for early admission
 - Other grades have some acceptance letters sent
 - 1st grade – 5 Acceptance letters
 - 2nd grade – 2 Acceptance letters
 - 4th grade – 1 Acceptance letter
 - Still some openings, particularly in Upper Elementary, but strong at lower levels
- How did people hear about us? We tried to gather that information to support as we think about marketing. Families could check more than one option.
 - 10 word of mouth
 - 10 have siblings here
 - 8 were CMS students
 - 8 CMES website
 - 1 through AMI website
 - 1 birth to 5 program at Ames Lake
 - 1 alumni
 - 1 google
 - 1 CMS staff child

IOWA

This is the person who works with MDE to access programs and give access to different people who need access. We need to make this official and have it in the minutes for MDE to see.

CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE ALYSSA AS THE IOWA(Identified Official with Authority). JESS SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO FURTHER DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Chougule	x	
Droogsma	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

- Health Benefits Discussion - Chris
 - Current provider, HealthPartners, proposed an 16.6% increase over current year
 - The Finance Committee recommends selecting this option for 2024-25 in order to keep things similar to this year.
 - Premium contribution will remain the same for single coverage: 75% Employer (CMES)/25% Employee
 - Other companies (% inc over current): BCBS of MN- 13.1%, Medica 12.7%, United Healthcare 28.5%
- Dental Benefits
 - Dental coverage will continue through MetLife at the current rate
 - Staff/School pay 50/50
 - Maintain benefit at \$1500
- Vision Benefits
 - Vision coverage will continue through MetLife at the current rate
 - Premium 100% Employee
- AD&D, Short and Long Term Disability
 - Coverage will continue through MetLife at the current rate

- Premium 100% Employer (CMES)
- Further by HealthEquity Transition Date: 05/01/2025 - this is the HSA plan - changing their name
 - Boon Chapman COBRA Services/MEM
- Comment that the additional interest we made from CD (mentioned in finance committee report) basically covers the health insurance increase - nice for us - glad/lucky we are monitoring and managing finances carefully

JEAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED BENEFITS PACKAGE. ROHAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO FURTHER DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Chougule	x	
Droogsma	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

Governance Committee

- Proposed Slate of Candidates for Upcoming Election
 - Tom Fendt- Teacher member, 2 year term
 - Megan Riemer- Teacher member, 3 year term
 - They have filled out nomination forms. If approved, they will complete profile sheets to be put into the election packet

JULAINE MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSED SLATE OF CANDIDATES FOR THE UPCOMING ELECTION. CAROLYN SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO FURTHER DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Chougule	x	
Droogsma	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	

Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

- Other open seats as of July 1, 2025:
 - One Parent member seat (formerly Tyler's seat)
 - Two Community member seats (formerly Jeremy's seat, and Jean's seat)
- Contact Julaine if you have any ideas for candidates for these open seats! We can appoint Board Members after the election if needed. We don't have to wait until next May to add people to the board.

Board Secretary

- The main responsibilities of Board Secretary are to take minutes during Board meetings, ensuring that specific items are included in minutes
- Jess has created a template for taking minutes during a standard Board meeting - Julaine will share this with everyone after the meeting
- Secretary position is a one-year position
- Other options:
 - Could rotate through existing board members - upside: spread responsibility, downside: might be tricky to get in a flow
 - Also, could find a non-board member to take notes for us - for a stipend (approx \$100/month)

Advancement Committee - Meg and Rachel

- Goals: Better reflect our neighborhood demographics and increase demand for CMES' unique offerings
- Winter activities focused on increasing neighborhood awareness and representation at enrollment - shared new flyers in key locations, rec centers, etc
- Activities to come: parent swag, parent reps and community center partnerships,
- Discussion of building purposeful relationships, community events - more robust?
- Website sounds to be working well - so nice to know that there is no need to work on web search optimization at this point
- How can the board support your work?
 - Budget - there will be needed funds at some point
- Is there potential for student participation?

- Maybe artwork?
- Student made flyers help a lot - brings students and families in
- Something to share with neighborhood
- Keeping children engaged is key
- We want to invite people from community centers - Rachel wants to create a more structured “packet” for parent reps - have a road map for forming and keeping those relationships - FAQs answers, how to help parents represent school not just individual family/child -
- Posters?
- Can alumni or students help table at events too?
- Thank you so much for all the amazing work!

Board Chair Report – Julaine

- Thank you to each of you for thoughtful meetings last week. Julaine will compile feedback and review with Governance.
- Julaine will be sending out a Whole Board evaluation survey to each of you, please complete by our May Board meeting.

US Department of Education Letter

- The US Dept of Education sent a letter to all public schools and state Departments of Education asking for a certification that those institutions will eliminate their DEI programs (with no definition of what that means) and uphold Title VI or risk losing Title funds
 - There are no specific Title VI funds that we access, but obviously we do receive other Title funds.
- MDE sent a letter back to the US Dept of Ed to state that they will be in compliance with Federal and MN state laws but will not eliminate DEI programming
- Craig Kepler, an attorney we have worked with previously, sent an advisory letter stating that there was no clear answer, to certify or not to certify; he did mention that as we are a very small entity it is unlikely that we will be targeted individually
- Lots of discussion on MACS leaders call this morning, main takeaway is that MN schools are likely to be impacted negatively no matter what we do
- Maine currently has had USDA funds revoked because of their conflict with the federal government - this pays for school meals. This is to say that we may feel impact regardless of actions, maybe in ways we can’t imagine right now.
- Question: Do we need to respond to this as an organization ourselves?
 - Option 1: let state of MN letter speak for us

- Option 2: file letter with Dept of Ed - not sure how to actually do it
- Option 3: file letter with state of MN - they have an email but they have said they are not passing them on
- Discussion
 - Being united as a board to support clear communication with families to support and keep safe
 - So much chaos and confusion - which leaves lots of questions but also could benefit us in this case, maybe it will go away, be on hold?
 - Seems to make a lot of sense to let MDE speak for us (we are lucky to be in MN)
 - Language for us should families ask about this: The board supports the communications that have come from Alyssa. We are following Federal and State laws and aligned with the letter that MDE wrote.. Further questions can be referred to Alyssa.
 - Question about lawyers should need arise. Yes we have access to those resources - both through MACS and through Craig as well. Joe and Craig communicate frequently as well. SPED issues - we have access to lawyers who specialize in that.
 - The state of MN along with 10 other states have filed a lawsuit about this issue specifically.
 - Reminder that this is just the first conversation about potential damage. We are not affected yet - but will likely be.

Agenda for Next Meeting

- Annual Meeting 5:30 - will this include a summary from each committee chair?
- Any items to add to the agenda?
- Budget requests from Committees to go to Finance Committee 10 days before scheduled meeting
- Next month, not in the Lecture Room (probably in Garden)

SARAH MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:38 PM. JEAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS A DISCUSSION TO THANK RACHEL AND MEG FOR THE ADVANCEMENT/MARKETING WORK THEY ARE DOING. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Chougule	x	
Droogsma	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

The next CMES Board Meeting is May 20, 2025 at 6 p.m. with the CMES Annual Meeting at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Jess Goff, CMES Secretary.