

**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
FEBRUARY 20, 2024, TUESDAY – 6:00 P.M.**

Board Members Present: Jess Goff, Julaine Roffers-Agarwal, Carolyn Ganz, Sarah Stocco, Jean Melancon, Rohan Chougule, Jeremy Miller, Alyssa Schwartz Tyler Bouwens

Board Members Absent: none

Other Attendees: Chris Bewell, Cynthia Crooks, Joe Aliperto (6:09-6:30)

Meeting called to order by Julaine Roffers-Agarwal, Board Chair, at 6:05 pm.

AGENDA

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

- Cynthia – English Language Learners teacher – just here to observe and listen and thanks all for your work.

Consent Agenda

- January 2024 Meeting Minutes
- 511 Fundraising

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
Bouwens	x	
Chougule	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Miller	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

Approval of Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Bouwens	x	
Chougule	x	
Ganz	x	

Goff	x	
Melancon	x	
Miller	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

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

Treasurer's Report – Joe Aliperto

- ADM 139 students, slightly below budgeted 141, but we did adjust to make sure we aren't getting overpaid and owing money back to the state.
- 58% through the year, 57% income received, 54% spent
- Everything generally as expected
- Nothing new in terms of grants
- ESSER grants expire September 30 – working on spending those down.
- January \$29.90 donations from Box Tops
- Everything in line despite enrollment being a little lower than we had anticipated.

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

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

JEAN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE JANUARY DONATIONS OF \$29.90 FROM BOXTOPS. SARAH SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

Board Member	Aye	Nay
Bouwens	x	
Chougule	x	
Ganz	x	
Goff	x	
Melancon	x	

Miller	x	
Roffers-Agarwal	x	
Stocco	x	

Budget Revision Update -

- Budgeted back down to 138 to be conservative
- Making budget match more accurately what is actually taking place
- Hourly unemployment
- Some new money – Library Aid and Student Support Aid
- Food service budget
- Overall positive swing of \$27,000
- 37.6% fund balance projected
- Comment: these three pages represent a lot of work!

CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE REVISED 2023-2024 BUDGET. TYLER SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO FURTHER DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

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

Head of School Report – Alyssa

- Regular tours with prospective parents
- Aiming to formalize internship programs, potentially with Metro State University and/or St. Kate's
- Embracing Equity training has concluded; working with staff on completing their critical action projects – MCM is doing this work now too – all 6 leaders meeting soon.
- Upcoming events Board members are welcome to attend
 - o Cornerstone Café, 3/1 8:45-9:45
- Eugene Piccolo passed away unexpectedly – former leader of MACS

Director of Business Operations – Chris Bewell

- New column on enrollment chart – helping to track children who leave midyear
- ADM currently at 138

- Postcard design finished – talking with company tomorrow to get them printed and mailed out to 55106 and 55119 – we’ll be mailing out about 2000 postcards

Governance Committee – Jean

- Rohan taking notes as well
- Discussion of the Scott Flemming presentation
 - o Very nice to have him as a guest – warm and thoughtful – one of the biggest takeaways was how helpful it was to have an outside perspective as we consider the future as a school
 - o Appreciated his perspective on different schools’ successes and those that have struggled
 - o So much varied experience coming to talk to us – so nice to hear from him
 - o Really appreciated his perspective – not always new information, but coming from experience
 - o Curious about parent engagement – what does it mean to have a stake?
 - o Chris has known Scott for many years - so very prejudiced – but just loves his energy – understated and calm – and able to ask hard questions – particularly about expansion
 - o Also, Scott will be coming to visit school, Chris, Alyssa in the future
 - o Brought some really interesting perspectives, questions, and insights that maybe we haven’t considered
 - o Because we have a board that has many different roles, we really bring different perspectives to the board
 - o This will continue to inform the discussion of North Star
 - o Risk discussion was very interesting – what risk looks to different parts of the community
 - o “At what enrollment does your budget sing “
 - o It stood out that having us all in person led to a very good conversation
 - o Also so nice to have a sequestered time just for these conversations (instead of big conversations and all the board business mixed and hurried)

Strategic planning update

- Mission and vision slide reminder
- Where our students come from – maps of the East Side from Julie Richard’s presentation
- Map of Cornerstone enrollment by zip code – almost half the students from 55106, 55119, and 55109 – interesting to think about how to reach more in that area
- Also looking at racial breakdown of community and of school
- Boys Totem Town – doesn’t mean anything but could discuss more about partnerships
 - o Does CMES Board approve/disapprove releasing CMES name to other interested party?
 - o Potential to partner on marketing, outreach, knowledge sharing : depending on who the other party is

- CMES can share the party name with MCM
- Pros and Cons of releasing our name
 - We are a public school so anyone could read our minutes and know
 - Worry about our name associated with others and how they will use it – why should we put ourselves in that position?
 - Won't we just find out who is looking at it anyway? Not seeing the advantage of us sharing our name as an interested party – just risk to us.
 - Also, could this counter some of the marketing efforts we've been putting in place – could create doubt about future location, etc?
 - We aren't putting out a press release – we are giving our contact info to Jean, the property manager, with permission to share with the other party to discuss what we are all thinking, possible coalition, etc,
 - Also, talk of expansion has always been around – continuing that talk wouldn't be anything different – as long as we are clear as a board that this is information gathering and seeing what some possibilities are, not specific plans
 - Conversation would be at a high level with the other organization – might not be a fit – just exploring options
 - Good to foster the relationship with Jean Kruger, the property manager, Ramsey County, etc
 - This would be a board connection, not an administration connection
 - No strong feelings either way about sharing name
 - Worth exploring despite risks
 - Clarification: concern about sharing name is that other party could share whatever they want – a loss of control over the information – easier to just let things unfold
 - Our intentions? We would just be exploring
 - Strong feelings about not wanting to become big privileged school – wanting to serve our population, worry about losing that by even considering move
 - We could say that we as a school aren't interested in releasing our name to BTT for this connection, but Sarah could maintain connection with Jean Krueger.
 - Montessori Adolescent model being connected to the land, being outside, community – so seems foolish to shut down any communication about BTT – seems like we are just gathering information, we are in no way making any decisions – we won't know if we have any possibility of partnerships or coalitions if we don't do anything
 - Concerned about being closer to Woodbury, location is too far away
 - Concerned about not at all where we are in our discussions – we need to ensure sustainability
 - Other organization is a youth and outdoors organization – we asked Jean Krueger to share our name – but only after a board discussion to approve
 - Can we ask Jean if she can talk to the other organization and ask them to share their name with us? This would mitigate risks, but would get us more information.

- Information is helpful – just interested to see what’s going to happen with the site, possibilities for any collaboration at any level
- Seems like this conversation has started to extrapolate

JEAN MADE A MOTION TO SHARE OUR SCHOOL NAME FOR THE PURPOSE OF CMES LEARNING ABOUT THE MISSION OF THE INTERESTED ORGANIZATION AND ANY OF THEIR POTENTIAL PLANS FOR BOYS TOTEM TOWN. SARAH SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION, A REMINDER THAT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION CAN STRENGTHEN OUR DECISION MAKING SO IT’S OK WHEN VOTES AREN’T UNANIMOUS. THE MOTION PASSED. THE VOTES WERE:

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

Marketing Task Force Update

- Postcard marketing – very helpful, Chris is working with company, 2500 postcards to those three zip codes (kids ages 4-8 in 55106, 55109, 55119)
- Also, Jean has been owning the process of gathering a list of organization that we would like to get our posters out to – please read her email and take on a small part towards supporting this effort
- Evaluating website options – current contract up in September – looking at options
- Slides with phases – we are in phase 2 – task force is recommending that we work with Nido

Strategic Planning - SOAR update – Rohan

- Completed
 - Phase 1: Compiled version of survey response by the CMES board is shared in Scott Flemming Board Drive folder
- In progress
 - Phase 2: Survey has been shared with selected current school staff & parents, alumni (parents & staff), and past board members
- Phase 2 survey response will be shared at the March 2024 Board meeting

Equity Committee Update – Sarah

- First official meeting – things are getting going

- Next step is to meet with Alyssa – want to make sure committee capacity is in alignment with Alyssa’s goals
- Next steps include
 - Awareness among Students and Teachers
 - Board education regarding equity – speaker at May meeting

Advancement Committee Update – Tyler

- Would still like to work on some engagement handouts
- Continued strong presence at events
- Recommend cornerstone café events – smaller – good to get to know people
- Continue to engage with ESABA
- Interviewing grant writers/firms – looking for someone with more Montessori and charter schools – current grant writer has non-profit and fund-raising expertise
- Strategic partners for programs and enrichment – lots of grant funding right now for collaborations between organizations – could provide opportunities for our children but also have funding to support it

Finance Committee Update – Carolyn

- Revised budget has been their focus
- Staffing salaries is an older issue that hasn’t been dealt with fully – this is something that Alyssa can initiate when the time is right to do that – at this point we are not on any kind of a schedule to examine staffing and schedule – it will be put off until a later time
- Finance charter has not been updated for a long time – so working on that now, will include some processes about how to get money to committees or task forces

Board Chair Report – Julaine

- Relationship with MCM/CMS
- Be ready to implement two-factor authentication for CMES Google accounts
 - Information will come from Chris or Steve, CMES’s IT consultant, on how to implement this
- Also: Planning for kindergarten (Alyssa)
 - Several key staff will be leaving next year
 - Concern about staffing management by CMS
 - Retaining staff members is really important
 - Alyssa’s two full time jobs simultaneously is not feasible really and this trickiness ends up in CH as well
 - Alyssa wrote to CMS leadership and Julaine to help figure this out – strategic plans
 - Very clear that this doesn’t really work – we need to figure it out differently

- CMES priority is to support Alyssa regardless of MCM reaction to these issues
- How to separate the schools – totally entwined – not possible to separate
- Could we absorb CMS? Is that worth exploring? Many questions:
 - Financial
 - Authorizer
 - Version of an expansion question
 - Funding sources are varied and complex

Next Meeting

- Email Julaine with suggestions

Feedback – what went well?

- Email Julaine

JEAN MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:28 PM. CAROLYN SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE VOTES WERE:

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

***The next CMES Board Meeting is, Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 6 p.m.
Respectfully Submitted by Jess Goff, CMES Secretary.***