

**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
JANUARY 21, 2025, TUESDAY - 6:00 P.M.**

**Board Members Present:** Jess Goff, Julaine Roffers-Agarwal, Jean Melancon, Alyssa Schwartz (6:08), Carolyn Ganz, Rachel Droogsma, Rohan Chougule, Sarah Stocco

**Board Members Absent:**

**Other Attendees:** Chris Bewell, Cynthia Crooks, Tom Fendt

**Meeting called to order by Julaine Roffers-Agarwal, Board Chair, at 6:03 pm.**

**AGENDA**

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

- Cynthia Crooks - EL teacher at Cornerstone - invited by Jess, just coming to see what's happening
- Tom Fendt - LE lead guide in Pond - just coming to see what's happening

**Consent Agenda**

- December 2024 Meeting minutes
- HOS 2024-25 Professional Development Plan
- HOS 2024-25 Annual Goals

**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**

**SARAH MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE EVENING'S AGENDA. RACHEL 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.

**Treasurer’s Report - Carolyn**

- ADM 132, we are budgeted for 138, paid for 140 - budget revisions will be shared next month
- Good cash balance and CD balance - which includes Employee Retention Credit money which we are holding in reserve until we are confident it won’t be clawed back
- More details in reports - everything healthy and nothing unexpected
  - ESSER funding ending
  - Cash flow healthy
  - Hold back is still 10%
  - Good grants for general operations (thanks to Alyssa)
  - We’re about 51% of the way through the year, have spent a slightly smaller percentage (44%) of money, but there’s a natural lag.
  - Food service money is as expected, still always a work in progress

**JEAN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE DECEMBER FINANCIALS. ROHAN 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 in December
  - \$1,985 from Give to the Max
  - \$25 T-shirt donation
  - \$1,500 individual donations

**CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE DECEMBER DONATIONS OF \$3510. SARAH 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	

**Board Education - Budget Review - Carolyn**

Some things to keep in mind.

- Allowed to rely on the finance professionals we hire - we are responsible, but we don't have to double check their work
- Committees go through the nitty gritty details and then bring forward the summary and we don't need to redo that work either
- Important to know how we ended our last fiscal year - last year was a deficit (which is fine, we have fund balance) but we want to keep it in mind as we look at revised budget
- Need to keep in mind the connection between enrollment and budget - 145 is the break-even point right now according to Joe and we can keep that in mind as we look at budget revisions (extra tricky as we can't necessarily fit 145 in our building!)
- Good to look at monthly percentages - we want those to be fairly even - so we aren't spending more than we are bringing in
- General funding versus food service funding
- State revenues are 56% general education, 39% SPED - nice to keep in mind when hearing about state budget projections

**Head of School Report - Alyssa**

- Hired a new behavior specialist, hiring 3 new paraprofessionals
- Working on reading-centered parent event with Equity Committee
- Received 32 responses from parent engagement survey, following up with respondents - very strong response relative to other surveys, even right before winter break
- Upcoming events Board members are welcome to attend
  - Stone Soup, 1/25 4:30-6:00p
  - Cornerstone Café 2/7 8:30-9:30a
  - Contact Alyssa to schedule a time to observe in an environment
- Question about Alyssa visiting other schools - SPA, Great River (related to SPED settings, though GR does not have setting 3 as we do this year)

### **Director of Budget Operations - Chris**

- While we say we have an ADM of 132, we will tomorrow have a current enrollment of 134 - so we will have slightly more than that by the end of the year. ADM is based on an average across the year and we are paid on whatever that is (132.6 or whatever). For food service we can round up the number - you can't feed half a child.
- Cyber security incident with PowerSchool (our student information system, very large company).
  - They informed CMES after winter break that data was taken out of their main system (exfiltrated). Until a couple days ago, it wasn't clear if our data had been taken, but we now know that it has been. There are other organizations in MN (Minnesota IT is one) working on it and several MN schools affected - more info at info session tomorrow.
  - After that meeting, Chris and Alyssa will make a decision about what and how to share with families, insurance company, etc.
  - We do not store SSNs or credit card information
  - But there is sensitive information - names, birthdates, addresses, phone numbers, immunization records.
  - We don't have any parent portals which would be more vulnerable.
  - Staff information is also limited to school related information - names, classes, etc - not personal information.
  - It sounds like Powerschool is going to offer 2 years of identity protection to anyone potentially affected and Chris feels like they have been good about investigating and communicating.
  - Question: do we need to check with legal to see if there's any liability? This will be asked at the meeting tomorrow.
  - Comment: very important that they define exactly what was taken (not just general PR statement, but very specific)

### **Strategic Planning - Julaine**

- Review of current action items
  - East side demographics study
    - Who: Advancement (Meg), Rohan
    - What: contact MN State Demographic Center to set up market study and scope; Rohan/Jean/Meg will meet to define the scope and determine what we are asking for
    - When: report back by February Board meeting
  - Future partnership with MCM- what are our different options moving forward
    - Who: Julaine, Alyssa as needed (meaning she doesn't need to schedule meetings and plan the work, but will share crucial perspectives about the models), involve Carolyn for a finance perspective

- What: explore different scenarios for structure of early childhood
  - What is good for us in all options?
  - What are the financial implications if each scenario doesn't work out?
  - What are the planning implications for each scenario?
- When: report back progress in February

**Advancement Committee**

- Rachel has agreed to serve as Chair (focusing on community outreach)

**JULAINE MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT RACHEL AS CHAIR OF THE ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE. JEAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THERE WERE COMMENTS OF APPRECIATION FOR VOLUNTEERING. 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	

- CMES parent and marketing professional, Meg Haley, will be working with the Marketing Task Force to refine her preliminary marketing plan. She is unfortunately sick today (was planning to present)
- Marketing Task Force was approved to operate until December 31, 2024
- Plan was to initiate a plan and then transition activities over to CMES staff or committee members
- Marketing Task Force being folded into Advancement Committee - usually task force charters are time-limited, but there is more work to do here
- Thank you to task force members: Chris, Jeremy, Rohan and to Carolyn for working with them on financial issues
- Jean, Rohan, and Chris met with Meg Haley to give her a background on everything the Task Force has done
- Limited resource that has a goal to be folded into admin duties eventually
- Meg has drafted a preliminary plan - Rohan and Jean will share today
- Separate Slide Show with plan overview and details

- Identifying misalignment between student population and mission - we are thinking about how to address this with marketing
- SWOT analysis
- Goals
  - 1. Better reflect our neighborhood's demographics
    - Objective: increase percentage of student body that reside within 10 miles of school
    - Objective: engage parent ambassadors who are active in the East Side community
  - 2. Increase demand for CMES' unique offerings
    - Objective: develop waiting list of 5-10 families for each age group we serve
    - Objective: motivate current families to spread the word of their positive experiences with the schools
- Discussion
  - 5-10 families could be a lot - we don't want such a big waiting list that families despair of ever getting in - maybe clarify this?
  - 10 miles is actually pretty far - good to think about zip codes also
- Details about how to reach objectives
  - Divided into smaller and bigger commitments
  - Common plans include parent swag, community center events, etc
  - These are ideas, not specific plans yet
  - We need to ensure we have specific plans before engaging with organizations
- There needs to be a commitment from the school and the board rather than relying only on the task force and we want to be aware of Meg's work and commitment here. Fund requests will need to go through the Finance Committee (given to them 10 days before they meet)
- Board members opinions solicited
  - Good plan, lots of good work, nice lay-out - some of these things would be fairly fast and easy - banner, swag, etc
  - Clear that Meg has understanding of us and of East Side
  - Open enrollment starts in 10 days
  - Do we need to approve or can Alyssa work directly with Meg?
  - We want to get general approval to move forward - budget is still a

question

- Are we each willing to take on specific short term activities, like putting up fliers, etc? Yes - if we have direction, totally.
- short term vs. long term - we want to think about enrollment right now, but also have a need for longer term consistent attention to this - this should be paid - stipend for staff? outside contractor?
- Overall - very actionable things - gets things going!
- Cost-benefit analysis - maybe talk to Joe?
- Seems like we are all in short term and there is more conversation to be had for long-term - we want to have a consistent journey
- Would be good to talk to Meg about the timeline over time - what can we expect? - she was already interested in this so easy to keep that conversation going
- Team (Jean, Rohan, Rachel) will circle back with Meg, Alyssa will connect directly, and we will hear more at the February meeting
- Thanks to Rohan and Jean for all their work on the Marketing Task Force

**Board Chair Report – Julaine**

- Encouragement to attend Stone Soup! And this year it’s also Julaine’s birthday! Her favorite event of the year!
- Please share any feedback with Julaine.
- Please give next meeting agenda items with Julaine.
- Next meeting will include a budget revision.

**CAROLYN MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:21 PM. SARAH 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	

***The next CMES Board Meeting is Tuesday, February, 18, 2025 at 6 p.m.***

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