

MINUTES

Monocacy Montessori Communities, Incorporated (MMCI) Board of Trustees (BOT) Wednesday, October 28, 2020 @ 7:00 p.m.

BOT Members present: Travis Creamer, Chris Chandler, Nichole Dowlearn, Tara Dunsmore, Deb Knox-Teitel, Jeff Koehler, Jen Kuhn, Ellie Landru, Jen Mayo, Tori McCarthy (MVM GC Chair), Carrie Jean Rathmell (CCM GC Chair), Shemica Sheppard, Rita Shewbridge, Molly Spence

1. Call To Order

Called to order at 7:05

2. Welcome

3. Community Comments

Michael Beth Edwards shared that at the last MMCI meeting it was discussed that if CCM made a decision for a charter change that the fiscal reason wasn't enough. Michael Beth shared that the type of change they were discussing was a short term change for the long term health of their organization. She requested that if CCM is requesting this change for fiscal reasons and short term that the BOT try to be open minded to changes that were fiscal in nature and considered short term. She felt that this was important so that we do not box ourselves in with language. She also felt that FCPS would recognize the decision as a short term fiscal decision and provide the flexibility to switch back at a later time.

4. Consent Agenda Items

- *September BOT Minutes approved on 10/23: 9 aye, 0 abstain, 0 nay, 4 did not vote.*

5. Reports

MMCI President Report

Molly Spence

Molly shared that she needed to add a short closed session at 7:35 p.m. for 5-10 minutes to discuss confidential information.

Molly also discussed that there was a leadership meeting with both schools and Dan Lippy. These meetings stopped for a window and are happening regularly again. The Annual Meeting is coming up next month.

CCM VP Report

Christopher Chandler

Chris has not heard back from the released maintenance group and has tried multiple times. Chris will reach out again. The biggest outstanding item is to get CCMs keys back. Molly shared that if MMCI needs to escalate she can send a certified letter and provide other support.

MVM VP Report

Ellie Landru

No update

BOT Treasurer Report

Jeff Koehler

No additional update (Report sent, included at the end of the minutes)

6. Updates

CCM update

Carrie Jean Rathmell / Marilyn Horan

Carrie Jean - no additional update (Report sent, included at the end of the minutes)

Marilyn - Interviews were held on Monday. Cathy will be staying on until Friday. CCM will be extending an offer to a candidate. Parent teacher conferences were held last week. There are 318 children and over 400 conferences were held including specials. The conference slots filled very fast. The new custodian is doing a wonderful job. He has been landscaping and winterizing the peace garden.

MVM update

Tori McCarthy/Amy Dorman

Amy - MVM also had excellent turnout for parent teacher conferences. About 88% of families signed up for conferences. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. It seems that nice partnerships are developing. There are parents that have been very upset with virtual learning but they have made it clear that they are not upset with the education that MVM is providing. MVM is expanding small group offerings. There are two new IAs that have agreed to take on small groups so MVM is able to offer for some additional students to come in for specialized instruction, IEPs, and other children who need greater access to be successful. There will be a six week tutoring session invitation going out. These will be 20-60 minute sessions after school hours targeted for children who need extra help. For staffing, everything is in place other than one IA for Dena Ford's position. An offer went out for the one open IA position but they have not heard back from the candidate yet.

Tori - MVM had a back to school night and about 55 attended the social half hour. MVM also held a virtual volunteer fair the following week and is hopeful to have recruited some new volunteers.

Closed Session (7:30-7:42)

Maryland Open Meeting Act Closed Meeting Reason:

- *To consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto*

Vote: Molly motioned to approve sending a letter of intent to Sheppard Pratt Investments regarding MMCI's interest in the lease of their property that was previously Jefferson School for use by both MVM and CCM. Ellie seconded the motion. Ellie and Molly both clarified that this is a nonbinding expression of interest and there would be a more formal process if there is any future commitment. Aye: 12, Abstain or nay: 0.

Fundraising Committee

Tara Dunsmore

Tara had a conversation with an MVM parent with a grant background. The parent had some

contacts that may be willing to work on grants and only take payment if grants are awarded. Marilyn shared that there is a new family at CCM that work in fundraising. Tara said she will reach out to them if Marilyn can provide contact information.

Grants Committee

Jeff Koehler

No update.

Lottery Committee

Melissa Najera/David Henry

There are a couple of spots that have been problematic to fill, but most positions have been filled with no issue. A couple of families have just decided to leave. Molly will set up a virtual lottery meeting to determine if changes are needed for next year. Melissa and David are training replacements to take over for them next year. Ms. Dorman suggested that the two new secretaries would benefit from joining some of this training.

Facility update

Molly Spence

We are sending a letter of intent for the Jefferson School and both schools continue to seek out and pursue all possibilities.

Nominating Committee

Jen Kuhn

Today is the last day for nominations. The software has been purchased. Jen collected data from each school and the lottery committee. It was time consuming to clean up the data and it is ready to be uploaded. There are currently no candidates for Assistant Treasurer. This is a position that assistance in recruiting is needed. No applications were received for the BOT Friend of Education. All other BOT positions have one candidate. The MVM GC had one application for each position. No applications have been received for CCM GC. There are some individuals at various levels of interest for the CCM open positions and Carrie Jean will reach out to them. Jen mentioned each school stepping up to develop future leaders to fill future positions. Molly said that if each person on the BOT and GC reached out to one or two individuals that they think might be interested and we can help alleviate concerns and answer questions, then we could identify a better pool of candidates for the future to help run our charter schools. Jen will be loading ballots at the end of the week so keep reaching out to possible candidates. The nomination and election process is completely electronic this year. There will be a two week early voting window. At the beginning of the meeting there will be an opportunity for open nominations for positions with no candidates. Changes will be made in the electronic system and live meeting voting will be open for 24 hours. Tara stressed the importance of every member voting so that MMCI is able to reach quorum.

8. Discussion/Action Item

- **Discussion/Vote:** MMCI approval of the CCM GC recommendation for probation (Carrie Jean Rathmell)

Molly explained that when CCM requested the charter renewal there were a couple of items of concern. A 10 year renewal was requested and a 5 year renewal was granted with a one year probation to provide a plan on how the items of concern will be handled. The meeting was originally scheduled for December but it was moved to the annual review already scheduled for February. The actual presentation will be approved at a later date.

Carrie Jean shared that the CCM GC recommends that CCM utilize Scantron and FCPS Benchmarks as supplemental assessments to state testing to show

reasonable progress on benchmarks as a short-term solution with a possible transition to NWEA MAP to be revisited for the 2021-2022 school year.

This year FCPS is not using their standard quarterly assessments. They are assessing 1st through 8th grade using Scantron. Normally FCPS only tests 5th and 8th grade. Because of this and the disruption of COVID, CCM has been able to have access to more comparative data. CCM has focused on professional development, doing virtual and hybrid well, and supporting families to the best of their abilities. Using a method they were most comfortable with seemed to be the most logical choice. NWEA seems like an exciting prospect moving forward. CCM would like to have a plan in place to use a new strategy which has not been possible during COVID.

Molly moves to approve the CCM recommended plan for probation testing. Travis seconded. 12 aye, 0 nay or abstain

- **Discussion/Vote:** *Financial Services Agreement (Kathleen Luttrell/Molly Carlson)*
Molly Carlson reminded the BOT that last month Kathleen and Molly C. presented the BOT with JLL information and it was asked of them to return with two additional quotes due to FCPS regulations for expenses of this size requiring 3 quotes. These were presented to the BOT over email and Kathleen answered questions that came up.
Molly Spence motioned that the BOT accept the agreement with JLL. Jeff seconded. 12 aye, 0 nay or abstain.
- **Discussion:** *Advocacy Needs List (Eddie Benites)*
(Report submitted, included at the end of minutes). Eddie reviewed the highlights of the report.
- **Discussion/Vote:** *Annual Meeting Community Question continuation for purchase of building (Molly Spence/Jeff Koehler/Jen Kuhn)*
Molly explained the background of this vote, which the BOT needs to renew as it expires 12/31/20. The approval of this question to the community allows MMCI to pursue real estate loans for purchase or lease of a facility.

Molly Carlson requested that the percentages be apples to apples comparisons because their lease includes items like snow removal. Tara discussed that another reason the percentages are different is that MVM's lease has been below market value. Tara will reach out to Amy O'Connor to make sure that the percentages are including the same items.

The change was made to add "or lease" as many properties being reviewed are lease options. Ellie and Molly questioned if we should increase the percent to 20% to allow more flexibility. Carrie Jean and Tara shared that over 17% is not feasible. If our income is increased then the 17% monetary amount would also increase, however, for budgetary reasons 17% has been determined to be the highest sustainable percentage. This is the fiscally responsible guideline. The 17% total maximum was discussed and determined to be the reasonable percentage to include in the community question.

Updated language:

Question to the Community:

Background information: MMCI intends to purchase or lease and renovate new facilities to house its schools to provide space for future expansion of its school programs. These projects may include a new location or the school's current location for renovation and expansion, should that be found to be the best available option. Currently, MVMPCS spends about XX% of its FCPS PPA (per pupil allowance), and CCMPCS spends about 16% of its FCPS PPA on facilities (lease) payments, utilities, and associated costs. Best practices from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools recommends keeping total facilities expenditures at or below 20% of public revenue received.

Please vote on the following statement: For the period 1/1/2021 to 12/31/2022 the membership of MMCI empowers the Board of Trustees of MMCI to obtain real estate loans to purchase or lease and renovate facilities intended for the use of its schools. For budget sustainability, the annual repayment amount of the loan to include total annual facilities costs shall not exceed 17% of the total current fiscal year PPA funding received by each individual school. Further, the Board of Trustees shall not approve the acquisition of a loan that would put either school into budgetary deficit.

Molly motioned to approve the updated wording for the question to the community regarding MMCI's ability to obtain real estate loans and with the understanding that the BOT Secretary will update the factual information regarding MVM's PPA contribution. Tara seconded the motion. 12 in favor, 0 nay or abstain.

Announcements:

1. Upcoming MMCI Business Meetings (usually held at 7PM the FINAL Wednesday of each month): meetings will be virtual until further notice

- November 18 ANNUAL Meeting*
- December 16*
- January 27*

Meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Advance Reports

The following reports were sent to the BOT prior to the meeting:

- *Treasurer's Report (Jeff Koehler)*
- *CCM Report (Carrie Jean Rathmell)*
- *Advocacy Report (Eddie Benites)*

Treasurer's Report (Jeff Koehler)

I had a meeting with our bank (PNC) to review our accounts and discuss several topics:

- Our accounts are over the FDIC insured limit. However, our options at PNC are limited if we want to maintain near-liquid funds. We can consider investment options, but we should decide on our building before moving forward with any investment options.

- PNC recommends switching from using debit cards to using credit cards. Are there any objections to this option? It will reduce overall risk since it is not directly linked to our cash.

-September 2020 Financial Notes:

MMCI Accounts

- *Unrestricted cash balance in checking account is \$48,145.*
- *Current Reserve Fund Savings balance is \$355,998.*

CCM Accounts

- *Projected Facility Fund Savings balance is \$383,100.*
- *Projected end-of-year PPA surplus \$895,278.*
- *Unrestricted cash available in checking account is \$105,882.*

MVM Accounts

- *Projected Facility Fund Savings balance is \$793,682.*
- *Projected end-of-year PPA surplus is TBD.*
- *Unrestricted cash available in checking account is \$36,376.*

MMCI Expenses Expenses paid over \$2,000 threshold:

▷MSMC/Mr. Michael Morelli (MVM rent payment) \$129,892.00

▷Garza Law Firm (MVM lease negotiations – final bill) \$2,320.00

MMCI Admin Fee

- The MMCI Admin Fee was received from FCPS and all funds have been disbursed according to the Income Distribution chart that was approved in August.

Fundraising Current fundraising totals:

▷CCM donations \$4,652

▷MVM donations \$1,819

Of note, CCM received an additional one-time \$2,000 donation from another family.

CCM Report (Carrie Jean Rathmell)

1. CCM GC Recommendation for Probation (on agenda for MMCI approval):
 1. The CCM GC recommends that CCM utilize Scantron and FCPS Benchmarks as supplemental assessments to state testing to show reasonable progress on benchmarks as a short-term solution with a possible transition to NWEA MAP to be revisited for the 2021-2022 school year.
 2. More detailed information can be [found here](#):
 3. [tiers of interventions document](#)
2. Montessori Training for Wolfinger
 1. CGMS may not have enough enrollment for an October cohort. If that is the case, Mary Ellen will begin her training as a part of the January cohort. As of the Oct 14 meeting, CGMS was still trying to increase enrollment in the cohort.
3. Custodial Services
 1. Chris Chandler provided All Clean with 30 days notice of termination of the contract on Oct 5 with the last day of Nov 2.
 2. FCPS Custodian began on 10/19.
 3. There will be two weeks overlap.
4. Transportation estimates for bussing
 1. Marilyn was able to gather information from FCPS to begin estimating costs of providing bussing from hub locations if facilities solutions take us to locations less centrally located in Frederick County
 2. capacity on busses is 44 middle school students and 60 elementary students
 3. Cost of bus driver salaries and fuel for 4 busses using the farthest destination of New Market for all 4 hubs is estimated at \$157,000 per year.
5. BOE Oct 14 Work Session regarding Sabillasville Elementary
 1. The BOE is proceeding with decision making for Sabillasville Elementary
 2. BOE will address again at BOE meeting on Nov 23
 3. This continues to be a project of interest for CCM facilities. Facilities Committee to provide more information.

6. *PreK Charter Amendment*
 1. *A work group is forming at CCM to continue to develop the amendment proposal regarding preK. Monthly newsletter column is updating the community that this topic is being considered and inviting parents to be involved in the discussion.*
7. *Finance Opening*
 1. *We were not successful in filling the current vacancy in the finance position. Looking to the elections to fill the vacancy with the new term.*
8. *Girl Scouts use of building*
 1. *Communicated to the girl scouts that we anticipate that after school use of the building will not resume during a hybrid reopening but instead would resume when schools reopen for full enrollment of students.*

CCM Secretarial Vacancy

9.
 - a. *Interviews are scheduled for Monday, October 26*
10. *Corporate Ct Zoning Exemption*
 - a. *Paperwork submitted and fee paid*
Documents attached (CCM Tiers of Intervention, Proceeding to resolve probation:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-iJ1IOPGlafvZba8uL_kURZeCKjtN3IUOdr3KVzuqqg/e/dit?usp=gmail)

Advocacy Report (Eddie Benites, sent on 10/25)

Requests/ Suggestions:

1. *Real estate updates should be considered under closed sessions of the Maryland Open Meetings Act. Additional information below.*
2. *Meet with Frederick County representative Jerry Donald to discuss real estate interests. Additional information below.*
3. *Share advocacy proposals and concerns.*

Upcoming Events:

- *November 3, 2020, Election Day*
- *November 11, 2020 (10:00 am), FCPS Curriculum and Instruction Committee meeting.*
- *November 11, 2020 (6:00 pm), FCPS Board of Education meeting.*
- *November 17, 2020 (5:30 pm), Frederick County Council meeting.*
- *November 18, 2020 (12:30 pm), Frederick County Council meeting with delegation.*
- *November 23, 2020 (11:00 am) FCPS Policy Committee meeting.*
- *November 23, 2020 (6:00 pm), FCPS Board of Education meeting.*

Long-range dates:

- January 3, 2021, Congress convenes for the 117th Congress.
- January 13, 2021, Maryland General Assembly convenes for the 442nd Legislative Session.

Updates/ Recommendations:

1. Real estate and the Maryland Open Meetings Act
2. Meetings with local officials
3. Frederick County legislative proposals
4. Sabillasville Elementary
5. MMCI promotional email

1. Real estate and Maryland Open Meetings Act. The Maryland Open Meetings Act provides for closed sessions under specific circumstances including to consider the purchase of real estate for a public purpose. Please note compliance with the Act for any closed session requires meeting minutes be kept, someone trained in compliance with the Act be present, and other requirements are required. Attached is a checklist for closed session compliance from the Maryland Attorney General.

I recommend additional updates on real estate considerations be done in closed session.

2. Meetings with local officials. After the election, I suggest scheduling meetings, both in-person and virtually, with local and state elected officials. In January, a new federal Congress (the 117th Congress) and Maryland General Assembly (the 442nd Legislative Session) will convene. Additionally, there will be at least one new member of the FCPS Board of Education.

I recommend using November and December to congratulate new members as acquaint new, returning, and continuing representatives with the MMCI community and advocacy needs.

I especially recommend meeting with Frederick County Council Member Jerry Donald. Jerry Donald represents several areas including Jefferson.

Please let me know if I can begin setting up these meetings, meeting topics, and who would like to be involved.

3. Frederick County Legislative Proposals. FCPS submitted proposals to the County for the County to include in its legislative proposals for the upcoming General Assembly through FCPS BOE member Karen Yoho, who is the Board's legislative liaison. Summary:

The Board of Education of Frederick County requests support for legislation that would enact “hold harmless” provisions effective for the FY22 budgets for 1) State Aid to Education funding and 2) Public School Construction funding granted to school systems through the Capital Grant Program for Local School Systems with Significant Enrollment Growth or Relocatable Classrooms (EGRC). FY22 funding for both of these programs will rely on student enrollment on September 30, 2020, which has been substantially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

The Frederick County Teachers’ Association also submitted a proposal. Summary:

The Frederick County Teachers Association requests position statements to support to 1) override the Governor’s veto of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future 2020 and companion legislation; 2) address student count day issues due to the pandemic; and 3) construction funding for aging schools.

Neither of these proposals was included in the County’s legislative proposal package. A complete list of the legislative proposal requests is [here](#). County Executive Jan Gardner’s legislative proposal is [here](#).

Policy support from BOE and Frederick County is not easy or simple. Long-term coordination and long-term knowledge building is critical.

4. Sabillasville Elementary. The FCPS Board of Education considered the long-term fate of the Sabillasville Elementary at their October 14th work session. Several options for the school have been presented to the Board including CCM’s charter home. Others include expanding pre-k options and expanding the Career and Technology Center.

The Sabillasville Elementary PTA president was at the work session and voiced support for creating a new charter school for families of the area. The PTA president stated that the other options may not be “viable” and the community supported creating their own charter school. The Frederick News-Post reported the Board Members seemed supportive of the idea. The full Frederick News-Post article is [here](#).

If CCM wants to continue pursuit of the Sabillasville Elementary project, MMCI should submit written comments to the Board of Education asap. If you would like a draft, please let me know with whom I should work.

5. MMCI promotion email. I recommend setting up a MailChimp (or other) account to

distribute public releases to locally elected officials, education staffers, Katryna Perera (education reporter with the Frederick News-Post), etc. These press releases would include building purchases, honors and awards, etc.