

MINUTES

**Monocacy Montessori Communities, Incorporated (MMCI) Board of Trustees
(BOT) Wednesday, May 19, 2021 @ 7:00 p.m.**

BOT Members present: Molly Carlson, Nichole Dowlearn, Tara Dunsmore, Elise Goodwin, Jeff Koehler, Jen Kuhn, Ellie Landru, Tori McCarthy (MVM GC Chair), Carrie Jean Rathmell (CCM GC Chair), Shemica Sheppard, Molly Spence, Amy Sullivan

1. Call To Order

Molly Spence called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Welcome

Molly welcomed the community.

3. Community Comments

There were no community comments.

4. Consent Agenda Items

- *5/17/21 April BOT Minutes approved, Jen Kuhn motioned, Tara Dunsmore seconded. 8 aye, 5 did not vote.*
- *AMENDMENT: on 5/21/21 the following was approved by evote. Ellie Landru made a motion to approve paying 5k for retainer and up to 1k in additional billable hours for John Garza to engage in Lease Negotiations for MVMPCS. Nichole Dowlearn seconded the motion. 9 aye, 4 did not vote.*
This was mentioned briefly at the meeting due to confidentiality but the minutes have been amended to include the specific details to ensure documented accuracy.

5. Reports

MMCI President Report

Molly Spence

Molly had nothing to add that is not already on the agenda. Tara is gearing up to take over as Molly only has one meeting left.

MVM VP Report

Ellie Landru

Ellie is working on the MVM lease negotiations and also some issues with the HVAC at MVM. Ellie reached out to Mr. Morelli and he responded within a few hours and he has Precision scheduled to come out and help resolve the issues. There is a lot of traction with the High School Expansion committee.

CCM VP Report

Christopher Chandler

No update.

BOT Treasurer Report

Jeff Koehler

Advance report sent, included at the end of the minutes. One of the main things to highlight is both schools should be working on budgets for the upcoming school year. Jeff forwarded both schools their anticipated costs. It is usually submitted to FCPS in July/August.

6. Updates

MVM update

Tori McCarthy/Amy Dorman

Ms. Dorman - there was a smooth transition for those students that returned to 4 day. Almost every request was able to be honored, there were only a couple students that were not able to come back for 4 days a week. There are a total of 95 students coming back 4 days per week. MVM is working towards an 8th grade graduation. There are 5-6 staff members leaving for a variety of reasons that will need to be filled. MVM is planning for fall admission paperwork, working on kids moving up, and staggered start for primary, Today was the last material pick up. Ms. Dorman is working towards using grant funds and also the Acceleration academy for the next year.

Tori - The hospitality committee held a great Teacher Appreciation week. From the GC level it was approved for the Charter Expansion Committee so that it is now officially under the MVM GC umbrella.

CCM update

Carrie Jean Rathmell / Marilyn Horan

Carrie Jean - Advance report sent, included at the end of the minutes. The leadership meeting was held with Dan Lippy on Monday. Dan wanted to make sure that CCM was in contact with FCPS regarding lead water testing as CCM intends to test it next year. CCM is verifying who they need to work with at FCPS. There will be full day 4s program for the next school year. CCM is researching options for continuing this program beyond the upcoming school year for which it is currently funded. If it is continued it would be a charter amendment and it would need to be submitted by December 31st. The biggest factor is funding. If CCM is able to do fundraising for the salaries it will continue. It will go to the GC now and if approved it will come back to the BOT. There was a conversation on the staffing of the library. Currently there is no access to the software for the library as FCPS has been requiring a staff member only to access this system. The solution is that there needs to be a designated staff member to run the designated reports including student information, however parents can check out and check in and run labels. This will not require hiring, but will require designating somebody. The last item was that Deb Knox-Teitel sent an email about volunteer hours and so CCM is working to make sure these are updated.

Marilyn - CCM was able to accommodate everybody on the survey who requested to come in whether for 2 or 4 days. Anybody who requested it late was not able to be accommodated.

There will be some openings for positions that will be started on next week. The 8th grade celebration is June 10th. There will be limited family members allowed, and additional friends and family will be allowed when they cross the bridge. 15/30 have been with the school since the school started as kindergarteners. CCM still does not have chromebooks. CCM is starting to send out information for Primary. K will start August 9. They are starting to get items needed with grants including mats needed for napping. CCM will make clear in communication that they will not be accommodating individuals who want to remain virtual, families will need to withdraw. CCM is working on a lot of community activities to engage kids next year.

Fundraising Committee

Tara Dunsmore

So far there has been no interest in somebody taking over as chair. Anybody interested should reach out to Tara.

Facility update

Molly Spence/Molly Carlson/Kathleen Lutrell

Kathleen and Molly C. have been in information gathering stages for several properties. Both properties that they have looked at are very interesting for different reasons. Kathleen put out an interest to develop for a Clover Hill property. Frederick City responded that the school would need to do a traffic study first so we need to decide if we are interested enough for this. We have drafted a letter to Frederick zoning because there are some real possibilities if zoning was right. They are waiting for a response from the County Council and the zoning board. This will probably be a change in the legislative process so it is not an easy change. There have been no changes to the Jefferson Property other than their board is not yet ready to relinquish the property with no details. The facilities committee is staying in contact with Sheppard Pratt however a change of mind is not expected in the near future.

Advocacy Committee

Eddie Benites

No update.

7. Discussion/Action Item

7:50 p.m.-9:20 p.m.

- **Discussion/Vote:** MVM High School Expansion (MVM GC)
 - *Charter Amendment: The BOT will review and vote on the request from the MVM GC to expand the MVMPCS charter to include grades 9-12. Molly S. shared that everybody was sent the documents including the charter amendments and answers to questions. Molly is allowing a chance for the BOT to discuss any information received or new questions.*
 - *Tara shared that she has some lingering concerns about facilities. She understands that there is a plan if MVMPCS does not have a facility. She is concerned about if CCM would no longer wish to join MVM on a joint facility and how the increased space may impact an already complicated search. This is the feedback she is hearing most from the community. Also, on question 36 Tara was not entirely comfortable with the response. We need to see a full budget like how does this impact 10 year plans, how does this impact building search. MMCI needs a more full budget. Jeff shared that Amy O'Connor*

should review this as she is trained in accounting and she might have good feedback. The surplus may impact CCM, for example, if something came up and they needed to dip into the MMCI reserves this would potentially impact CCM. Tara is concerned that the high school is not being proposed as its own entity so she felt the budget needs to be presented as a whole. It either has to be its own school, or it needs to be presented as part of MVM and the BOT needs to see how this fits in the big picture which is the 10 year projected financials.

- *Amy Sullivan shared that if the budget shows the solvency and self-sustainability of the project and shows that it is self standing then ultimately it should show that it would be able to operate. Tara shared that while that is great to show, if it is part of MVM, it is now part of the MVM bottom line. Amy S. shared that the surplus will ultimately benefit the whole school. Tara said this is exactly what she wants to see reflected in a budget in the context of the whole of MVM.*
- *Kathleen Lutrell shared that adding the students will absolutely impact all of MVM positively.*
- *Tara shared that for grants she understands breaking out the budget, but from a BOT perspective and FCPS they will want to see the big picture.*
- *Kathleen said that they are still working on making the proposal more robust and in the final document that will go to the BOE this information will need to be there and it is a reasonable request. Amy Sullivan shared that they have been working on trying to accomplish these financials.*
- *Tara asked for Amy O'Connor to be involved with the process and will reach out to her to make sure that she is included.*
- *Kathleen emphasized that this is a process but the bottom line is that this is an advantageous move financially for MVM.*
- *Jeff asked when it needs to go to the BOE for approval.*
- *Molly shared that the next step is for it to go through FCPS staff to go through it and ask questions and once they are satisfied with all of their pieces then it would go to the BOE. The end product may even look very different. The charge of the BOT tonight is to decide if this is an appropriate request and does the plan seem reasonable. Does this follow into our view of the bylaws and what we see as the future of our organization? The question is a bigger picture for the BOT.*
- *Jeff asked if the proposal needs to go in front of the board of ed in a certain time.*
- *Kathleen shared that the clock will start ticking when it goes to the BOE. What needs to be accomplished soon is to get it to the BOE which is a process, but once this is submitted they can also start the grant process. The grant must be submitted at the latest by the first week of August. The sooner the request goes to FCPS the sooner the request can go to the grant request. It will be understood that there is a process for approval. This would meet all timelines and keep the project moving forward. There will be some meetings the*

team will need to attend at the end of June. What the BOT needs to vote on is the charter change language which will still need to go through FCPS. Nobody should assume that anything decided tonight is a permanent decision but it is one step closer to a program that may happen a year down the road.

- *Tara shared that this was a very helpful perspective.*
- *Kathleen shared there is optional language that the BOT needs to select. One would indicate the breakout year to year for increased enrollment. The alternative wording would be to just include the maximum number of enrollment without the breakout. One thing Kathleen shared was that our constant demand shown in our lottery indicated that filling an additional 30 student class should not be an issue. There is a potential issue with having some students without Montessori experience from the general population.*
- *Ms. Dorman shared that this should not be a challenge because if the majority of the students are Montessori trained and the people seeking this are usually the ones who would benefit from this program. Some students have a hard time acclimating and it is a process but all students are there because they should be there. Students do not always understand the amount of autonomy involved with Montessori and the biggest obstacle is usually if the child wants to be there and if they do the other issues can be addressed. Also, there is a considerable amount of excitement in the community which leads Ms. Dorman to believe that families are interested in engaging in this program.*
- *Molly C. questioned how the High School Expansion Team was able to get to the salary number and ranges for the first year and that she realized that this needed to be flexible. She also inquired about the principal's role and if there was a plan to adjust the principal salary. Finally, she wondered if there would be changes made to the original document or if the questions and answers would be included as an addendum.*
- *Kathleen shared that first year salaries were based on FCPS mid-career numbers.*
- *Ms. Dorman shared that this is a project that hasn't been done before and there was a lot that was still being figured out*
- *Ellie requested that if we want to continue talking about specific roles the BOT should consider a closed session.*
- *Tara shared that her issue is that the position will become much bigger and may become bigger than one person can handle.*
- *Ellie shared that the budget of the project includes an assistant principal down the road.*
- *Kathleen added that the FCPS policy is not to have an assistant principal until a school has 400 students.*
- *Marilyn added that she felt the discussion was positions not people. She added that when you add high school you add a different salary scale and needs to be viewed as another level.*
- *Molly C. asked the timing that was discussed regarding an AP. Amy*

Sullivan shared that the AP was discussed starting year 3. The money is not broken out but it is there when the need is there. Ellie also shared that it was built in at year 4 because there was a more conservative approach to budgeting.

- *Tara was hoping to see the proposal revised with answers to the questions that have been asked. She would like to see this added as opposed to an addendum. Kathleen shared that the reason it was not added was because the original document is what was approved by the MVM GC. Tara shared that if it needs to go back to the MVM GC that should happen.*
- *Tara clarified exclusively what we are voting on tonight is the language of the charter amendment, not the specifics of the program. Kathleen agreed and reminded the BOT that the grant timeline is incredibly important to move the process forward. The process is self standing without the grant, however it would be incredibly helpful.*
- *Molly S. shared that MMCI is taking ownership as an organization to support the request to change MVMPCS charter language. The request will then go to the BOE. The proposal will accompany the request but the pieces are not expected to be final.*
- *Kathleen added that there is expected to be back and forth at that point before it goes to the BOE and this process will take months.*
- *Molly C. shared that if there are major changes they should be brought up to the BOT.*
- *Ellie shared that if it goes all the way through and it is approved and there is a change of circumstances that makes it not viable, the BOT can put on the brakes at any time.*
- *Molly S. said that if approved the next step is that Dan Lippy will set up a team to review and likely the President of the BOT should be involved in this team. It will be a leadership level relationship between FCPS and the BOT for some time to work together for this project. This is the big question for Molly is this will be a big effort for our organization. Will this include CCM at some point? Is this where we are going as an organization? Tara shared that in her perspective of stepping into the role as president these are her concerns but it brings up that MMCI does not have a strategic plan. Ideally this would have come first. But we still need to review this strategically.*
- *Molly S. made a motion to approve the charter amendment as proposed without the optional language option from the MVM GC as proposed on 5/11/21. Ellie seconded. Molly C. requested the proposal incorporate the responses to questions in the language. Ellie suggested this be an action item. 10 aye, no nay or abstain.*
- *Tara asked when it should be final to send. Molly S. shared that it is up to the High School Committee to determine the timeline*

- **Discussion:** *MVM Key Policy (Nichole Dowlearn)*
 - Tara requested to have the MMCI office key and access removed from the key policy as there are parts of the financial policy that are contradicted.
 - Tara motioned to approve the key control and access policy as proposed by Nichole Dowlearn removing the section which addresses MMCI office access. Molly S. seconded. 10 aye, no abstain.
- **Discussion:** *Lottery Equity - Marketing & Communications efforts (Molly Spence)*
 - Tabled
- **Discussion/Vote:** *Approval of CCM Montessori Tuition Reimbursement Request (Carrie Jean Rathmell)*
 - One of the Upper EI teachers that is new had training that was approved but the fall cohort at CGMS was postponed. She switched to Barry so there is a cost difference. Due to this change there needs to be a new approval. It has been approved by the CCM GC and is coming from their funds. The total amount is \$10,415 half will be paid to Barry and the other half will be reimbursed to the teacher over three years. Carrie Jean made a motion to approve the request for tuition reimbursement as present. Jeff seconded. 10 aye, no nay or abstain.
- **Discussion/Vote:** *SchoolMint Lottery Software renewal (Molly Spence)*
 - Molly S. has run the document through the lottery committee and they saw no issues. It is basically what MMCI agreed to last year and what is needed to move it forward for next year. Tara asked about the renewal process. Molly S. shared that it is annual. Tara recommended that the BOT work this into the budget so that it is not something that is voted on annually. Tara will work with Amy O'Connor to determine if this should be a budgeted item.
 - Molly made a motion to approve the SchoolMint lottery software for the through June 30, 2022 for \$6500. Tara seconded the motion. Ellie shared that the vendor that MMCI contracts the software through, perhaps it makes sense to make the vote specific to continuing with the existing software. Tara stated that she is not sure that it needs to be voted every year unless the lottery committee feels the need to make a change. Molly suggested that perhaps it should be reviewed every few years. Ellie questioned if there should be a policy on how often we should be reviewing vendors that we are using for different services. Molly S. shared that changing companies for lottery software is not as easy as just changing. There is a lot of data and structure that needs to be put in place.
 - 9 aye, 0 nay or abstain
- **Discussion:** *Insurance Updates (Ellie Landru/Jeff Koehler)*
 - Ellie, Amy O'Connor, and Jeff discussed continuing as we did last year with no changes and getting two new quotes. Schools need to review their coverage and specifically their contents coverage. Ellie shared that the timeline is that it needs to be approved so that it can be in place by July. Kathleen already did a lot of the work last year and Amy O'Connor has already collated all of the information that we have so hopefully quotes will be faster and easier since MMCI is organized. Molly asked for Amy O'Connor to have an annual reminder to give a reminder for this process to get the process started. Ellie also set up calendar reminders for the future including the steps that need to be taken. Ellie stated that the only action at this time

that is really important is for each GC to let us know if they have changes to their coverage.

Molly shared that the Annual Report will take place before the next meeting and also the end of the school year and wished best of luck to both schools ending the year on a good note.

Molly motioned to adjourn at 9:07 p.m. Tara seconded.

Announcements:

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

- June 30
- July 28
- August 25

ADVANCED REPORTS:

- Treasurer Report
- CCM Report - Carrie Jean Rathmell

Treasurer Report

MMCI Accounts

Unrestricted cash balance in checking account.....\$9,109

Current Reserve Fund Savings balance.....\$369,989

CCM Accounts

Projected Facility Fund Savings balance.....\$383,043

Projected end-of-year PPA surplus.....\$974,889

Unrestricted cash available in checking account...\$113,760

MVM Accounts

Projected Facility Fund Savings balance.....\$793,705

Projected end-of-year PPA surplus.....\$141,309

Unrestricted cash available in checking account....\$56,696

Expenses Expenses paid over \$2,000 threshold:

▷None in April

PPA budgets MVM & CCM year-end budget projections were submitted to FCPS on April 15th

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Fundraising Current school fundraising totals:

▷CCM \$7,292

▷MVM \$23,080

CCM Report

For Agenda:

Vote for Approval of Montessori Training Reimbursement Request (Wolfinger):

Context: Training was approved for Ms. Wolfinger for Elementary II to begin with a Fall 2020 cohort with CGMS. CGMS did not have enough enrollment to form a Fall Cohort due to the pandemic. Ms. Wolfinger submitted a new request for enrollment in Elementary II at Barrie beginning June 2021. This request was approved by the CCM GC at the May 12 meeting and is now brought to the BOT for approval.

- o Carrie Jean motions to approve [the request as submitted for Tuition Reimbursement for Mary Ellen Wolfinger](#) to attend Montessori Elementary II Training at Barrie account class 05 74016 (professional meetings & conferences). An amount of \$5,207.50 is due to Barrie from CCM by 6/1/2021 [see invoice](#) and \$5,207.50 will be reimbursed to Ms. Wolfinger in installments upon completion of the program. Second: Marilyn Horan. Motion passed: 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Report:

Key Policy: Lockbox with access code has been installed in the lobby. Access code can be provided by the principal to the CCM building and maintenance chair and others as needed to provide access to the building keys.

Lead Water Testing:

Information we received from the state about compliance with Lead Testing of Water is in this [Folder of materials available here](#)

[CCM's last Testing sample was taken 6/7/2018](#) which gives a deadline of 12/7/2021 for completing the testing. CCM plans to test in September 2021.

MAPCS Membership:

After discussion that weighed the benefits against the cost, CCM GC voted as an individual school to not join the membership of the Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools at this time.

Update CCM Charter Amendment Work Group for PreK:

Met on May 5. No additional meetings are scheduled at this time because CCM accomplished the goal of full-day preK4 with COVID Grant Funding for 2021-2022 school year. We have gathered the information needed to move forward if/as situations change moving forward and to fundraise to continue to offer full-day preK4 beyond the 2021-2022 school year. We are awaiting feedback from Dan Lippy on if a change to full-day preK4 beyond the COVID grant funded year would require a charter amendment or notice to FCPS/BOE which will inform next steps.

[Notes and Resources from the Charter Amendment Work Group are linked here.](#)

Salaries & Benefits for 2021-2022 school year

Jeff sent the projected salaries and benefit elections for 2021-2022 school year received from FCPS which will be helpful in creating the FY22 PPA budget.

Maryland EXCELS

Was updated with teacher certification and professional development documentation. Continue to work through the process that has moved online because of the pandemic. CCM was originally slated for renewal in Spring 2020.

During the report, Marilyn can speak to:

- Additional step of registering with FCPS added to the lottery enrollment process
- Move to 4-day in-person beginning May 17
- End of the year traditions (8th grade, field day, etc.)
- Current status of hiring for openings for 2021-2022 school year
- Status of Chromebooks ordered with COVID Grant Funds