

MINUTES

Monocacy Montessori Communities, Incorporated (MMCI) Board of Trustees
(BOT) Wednesday, July 28, 2021 @ 7:00 p.m.

BOT Members present: Molly Carlson, Tara Dunsmore, Jeff Koehler, Ellie Landru, Jen Mayo, Tori McCarthy (MVM GC Chair, non-voting), Carrie Jean Rathmell (CCM GC Chair, non-voting), Shemica Sheppard, Amy Sullivan

Regular Meeting Agenda

1. Call To Order

Tara called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

2. Community Comments

None

3. Consent Agenda Items

- Evotes
 - *7/9/21 May BOT meeting minutes passed; 8 in favor, 5 did not vote.*
 - *7/20/21 June BOT meeting minutes passed; 8 in favor, 5 did not vote.*
- Advance Updates:
 - *Facilities Committee - Advance report received from Molly Carlson/Elizabeth Landru, included at the end of the minutes*
 - *Lottery Update - Advance report received from David Henry, included at the end of the minutes*

4. Welcome/Introductions

As Tara is starting her term as President and introductions haven't been done in awhile Tara started by having those present introduce themselves.

5. Reports

MMCI President Report

Tara Dunsmore

No update

MVM VP Report

Ellie Landru

The PPA numbers have come in so everybody at MVM is working to finalize the budget. The high school proposal team is now working with the new numbers to create a more concrete budget.

CCM VP Report

Christopher Chandler

No update

BOT Treasurer Report

Jeff Koehler

Advance Report sent, included at the end of the minutes. PPA was received as mentioned. The due date for both school budgets is by the end of August. Both schools should be completing their budgets and voting on them and getting them to the BOT so that it can vote at the August meeting.

5. Updates

MVM update

Tori McCarthy

MVM GC met on Monday in preparation for the PPA numbers being released however they weren't released until Tuesday so they are currently determining the new date in order to keep the August timeline. MVM is in good shape for the next year. MVM is in the process of sharing back to school information and will be sending out the MVM Parent Handbook . As of today there was a Find Out First and Superintendent's Update that masks will be required for all individuals in the school building.

CCM update

Carrie Jean Rathmell/Marilyn Horan

Carrie Jean - Advance Report sent, included at the end of the minutes. CCM was able to meet and have a budget meeting today with the new PPA numbers and CCM is looking good. There are some follow up questions but the initial numbers have CCM in the black. They should have no problem approving the budget to send to the BOT for approval in August.

Marilyn - An Upper El parent with 3 children at CCM has accepted a position. She has substituted and they are excited to have her. There is a new Spanish teacher with a lot of experience. There will be a parent that will be an assistant in the Spanish program. This is a non-benefited 2 year position. This individual also has 3 children in the school. There are a few other positions that they are still hiring to fill. All students will have free breakfast and lunch again this year. Kindergarteners will be starting one week from Monday and the classroom is completely set up. There are new materials and the classrooms look amazing. CCM is making sure there is space for exercise and a lunch room and where to store mats for the PK4 that will be returning all day. CCM will be amending the way they do drop off and pick up based on what they felt could be improved last year. FCPS has made the decision that no family members will be allowed to walk students to class this year including the first day of school.

MVM Charter Expansion Update

Elizabeth Landru/Nichole Downlearn

MVM is working on the draft for the grant proposal. The rough draft has been sent to MAPCS and notes have been received back. Work is still needed on the appendices and Ellie welcomes help from community members. Ellie welcomed the community to the regular meetings on the 4th Sunday at 10:00 a.m. The Charter Expansion Team is requesting time in the closed session later in the meeting.

Advocacy Committee Update

Eddie Benites (not present)

Tara shared that Eddie has been working on several projects. She is scheduling meetings with legislators in Frederick County, FCPS staff, and county employees to discuss zoning and also the teacher certification bill that will hopefully be up for discussion again this year. Marilyn shared that the meeting with the principals included individuals at the national Montessori level and was a big deal.

6. Closed Session Start 8:00 p.m., End 8:30 p.m.

Tara motioned and Ellie seconded. Tara explained the Maryland Open Meetings Act reasons for closing. Tara explained that the MVM Expansion team has requested to discuss their budget in closed session due to the fact that it will include salary information. Also, the Facility Team would like to update the BOT on their projects which are progressing but as none are ready to enter a contract we are not ready to disclose detailed information. The motion passed with 7 in favor.

Maryland Open Meetings Act reasons for closing the meeting:

- The appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom it has jurisdiction
- Consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related to the acquisition

7. Discussion/Action Items

8:05 - 9:30 p.m.

- **Discussion/Vote:** MAPCS Membership at MMCI Level (ELLIE/AMY)
Ellie shared that McKenzie Allen from Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools (MAPCS) has joined the meeting to discuss the benefits and reasons to join. Ellie explained that this is a long term investment for state level advocacy including equitable PPA. MMCI is paying debt service to FCPS in how our PPA is calculated. Our membership would increase county level access to resources. Assistance with staffing and facilities. An opportunity to interact with other charters. In addition, there is

grant support.

McKenzie shared that in her time as Executive Director she has worked to increase membership and to expand the services to all charters in Maryland. They have worked to diversify. There has been investment and growth at the national level. With dues there is technical assistance. MAPCS would work with MMCI on growth, governance training, renewals of schools. McKenzie sits on boards at the state level and partners with entities to review everything that MSDE releases. She is working to have Esser III funds released in an equitable manner. MAPCS provided testimony on 7 bills last year. They were successful in preserving funds and thousands of dollars for even small schools. The debt service that charters are required to pay is one way to assist facility funding. It is easier to reallocate funds than to ask for additional funding. MAPCS will also be starting brown bag lunches and talks that would be exclusive for charter schools. MAPCS maintains a non-combative relationship with the unions, districts, and MSDE. Tara inquired about dues. McKenzie shared that the dues are \$5/PPA student but will increase to about \$8/PPA student over the next 3 years. After speaking McKenzie left the meeting.

Ellie made a motion to approve entering into a membership with Maryland Alliance for Public Charter Schools with a fee structure of \$5/PPA student for this year coming from the MMCI budget. Tara seconded. Tara discussed that the schools did not want to hold it at the school level but at the MMCI level it made more sense and would benefit both schools. Jeff asked who the point of contact would be from each school for at least this year and moving forward to make sure we are getting as much benefit as possible. Molly shared that on the Facility Committee they consult lawyers on topics that MAPCS might be able to answer for them. Tara shared that there are many charter issues that come up that we are not always sure how to interpret or advocate that they could help us with navigating. Ellie would like to look into their board training options. Amy Sullivan mentioned there were long term benefits in their relationship with FCPS. The motion passed with 7 aye.

- **Discussion: Board Member Expectations & Committee Structure (TARA)**
Tara sent information in advance, included at the end of the minutes. As a Board Member we have basic expectations to show up, read everything, participate, and promote the organization. Tara discussed each of these areas and encouraged board members to be engaged and to reach out to her if they have ideas and suggestions. She asked board members to read over their job descriptions of what they have agreed to do. Tara discussed the committees and vacancies. She made a recommendation to combine Fundraising & Grants which both have vacancies. Tara is recommending two new committees: Communication/Marketing/Education and Diversity/Equity/Inclusion. Jeff agreed with combining the Fundraising & Grants. Tara encouraged each of the Parent Trustees to pick an area they are passionate about

contributing to MMCI. Molly mentioned that CCM is starting a more active volunteering initiative. Tara mentioned a big responsibility of the Fundraising Chair would be to look into a Capital Campaign. Ellie mentioned that there was an MMCI level meeting for combined knowledge efforts and coordination of fundraisers that was held a long time ago and it was helpful for creating ideas and for making sure each school's efforts were not in conflict with each other. Amy Sullivan suggested incorporating Advocacy with the Fundraising & Grants.

- **Discussion/Vote:** BOT meetings to remain virtual for the remainder of 2021, reevaluation in November/December for the remainder of the school year. (TARA) Based on the discussion last month this seemed to be the consensus and Tara wanted to make a formal decision with a planned reevaluation. Tara made a motion to keep the BOT meetings virtual for the remainder of 2021 and reevaluate in November/December for the remainder of the school year. Ellie seconded. 7 aye.
- **Discussion/Vote:** Upgrade to Google Meets for 1 user: \$4/month (TARA) Tara discussed the benefits including break out rooms and being able to see who raised hands in order. Tara motioned that we purchase one license for \$4/month. Ellie seconded. 7 aye.
- **Discussion/Vote Facilities Projects:** (MOLLY, ELLIE) -
 - Funding for a construction contractor to review properties and provide estimates for construction needs.
 - Funding for Studio MB architect at an hourly rate of no more than \$215 for up to ___ hours to develop a broad estimate for the "ground up" construction of a shared campus with ___ contractor.
 - Funding for Traffic Study

This was removed from the agenda due to conversation in the Closed session. A full facilities update is included in Molly's Facility Report, included at the end of the minutes.

- **Discussion/Vote:** MMCI Ethics Policy & Conflict of Interest Policy (JEFF/TARA) Tara sent out the policy that was reviewed and updated in the BOT Policy Work Session. Jeff asked her to share with the group since the Principals were indicated to help resolve MMCI level conflict. Tara explained that the policy created a new Ethics Committee that would determine outcomes for escalated MMCI ethics concerns, it would not be staff level conflict, that has its own process. Tara explained that there would be an opt in option for community members that would be a general pool if an issue arises. Marilyn recommended that staff not be included because it could put them in a difficult position if it involves their student or a future student. Principals are included on the committee as individuals that attend GC and BOT meetings and understand what is going on and what our expectations are and what is considered ethical. Marilyn agreed but didn't feel that both Principals needed to attend all issues which are hopefully not often but they could possibly take turns. If the issue involves a

member of the committee that individual will recuse themselves. If the President needs to recuse themselves, the Treasurer will take over as chair. Tara motioned to approve the MMCI Ethics Policy and Conflict of Interest Policy as presented in the drafts reviewed. Ellie seconded. The motion passed with 7 aye.

- **Discussion/Vote:** MMCI Financial Policy, Procurement Policy, MMCI Reserves & Surplus Policy (JEFF)

These are still being finalized. Amy O'Connor is still finalizing the credit card portion. This will be moved to the August

- **Discussion/Vote:** MVM Lease Renewal (ELLIE)

Ellie motioned to approve the MVM Lease as proposed. Jeff seconded. Tara explained that we worked with a lawyer and it is basically extending the current lease. The biggest concern is that if the building is sold it removes our option to renew. We have the terms for one year with the option to renew for one year, unless the building sells then there is no renewal. The motion passed with 7 aye.

Marilyn shared that there was a concern from an MVM family about why are the Montessori charter schools still not offering a virtual option. Marilyn shared that she felt that to be able to offer Montessori in person is the best option. Traditional schools have the size they can fulfill this request. In order to do it we would have to be hybrid which no other teacher in the county is offering. Tara shared that Frederick County offers the virtual option, but students need to re-allocate to their home school in order to enroll. Marilyn clarified that if the world shuts down, we will shut down. But we do not have the resources to do both. Ellie shared that at MVM they did explore having a virtual option that was cheaper than hiring staff but it was not a possibility financially and was not equitable use of funds. MVM tried hard to find a solution. Amy Sullivan asked if there is any sort of an option for lottery preference for families who had to leave due to the pandemic to home school or attend virtual school, can they be placed on a priority list? Ellie said she is hoping to explore this with MAPCS.

Tara voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:16 p.m. Shemica seconded the motion. 7 aye.

Advance reports

- *Facilities Update (Molly Carlson/Ellie Landru)*
- *Lottery Update (David Henry)*
- *Treasurer Report (Jeff Koehler)*
- *CCM Update (Carrie Jean Rathmell)*
- *Board Expectations (Tara Dunsmore)*
- *MMCI Committee Structure (Tara Dunsmore)*

Facilities Update:

(Confidential information removed)

The MMCI Facilities committee has been busy with five areas of focus, building on the work outlined for the June BOT meeting:

-Property A with attorney Lisa Graditore, the committee is exploring whether an MMCI occupancy timeline will work. We also propose engaging Studio MB architects to walk through the property with a contractor to make an initial broad estimate on needed renovation costs. Both parties are discussing the terms of a draft Letter of Intent.

-Property B- The seller has indicated that he has an offer on the property, and has not been clear regarding when an environmental study (required by the committee) would occur. As a result, we will discontinue exploring this property and will revisit it if the existing deal falls through and/or we see the results of an environmental study.

- Property C - the committee would like to engage Studio MB architects and a contractor to provide a broad estimate on the cost to construct a shared campus; this will come for vote tonight. We would also like to hire a firm to conduct a traffic study on the property; key for due diligence on this site. Lisa Graditore is reviewing the seller's response to a Letter of Intent.

- Zoning advocacy. Eddie proposes meetings with the following entities to provide them with a background on the need for property and past property issues as well as share current properties under consideration. Some of these meetings may include additional, non-property-based discussions.

5. Meetings with:

- County council
- County council zoning commission
- City Council
- City Council zoning commission
- Board of Education
- Office of School Innovations (Maryland Department of Education)
- Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools
- Maryland Department of Planning

- Recommendation that both GCs agree to join Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools (cost is \$125 per school). We have learned that MAPCS can support efforts to pursue bond financing from the state (key for a facilities project) and they can potentially connect MMCI with angel investors.

Lottery Update

CCM currently has 315 registered students and 2 accepted offers. At this time, MS is still over committed at 61 students. 29 in 7th and 32 in 8th. 6th grade and K are each at 29 seats filled. The seat in K is on hold pending resolution of the question of out of district students of employees. The seat in 6 is on hold pending withdrawal from MS.

MVM currently has 294 registered students as it recently had 6 withdrawals. Offers are going out for those 6. At this time, MS is at 60 students with 29 in 7th and 31 in 8th. Offers in PK3 (2 offers), K (2 offers), 2nd, and 4th.

As we approach the new school year, activity typically increases, so the open/filled seats will be changing.

Treasurer Report:

MMCI Accounts

- Unrestricted cash balance.....\$34,209
- Current Reserve Fund Savings balance.....\$336,007

CCM Accounts

- Facility Fund Savings FY21 ending balance.....\$383,043
- Projected end-of-year PPA surplus.....\$1,102,142
- Unrestricted cash available in checking account...\$112,053

MVM Accounts

- Facility Fund Savings FY21 ending balance.....\$793,707
- Projected end-of-year PPA surplus.....\$460,772
- Unrestricted cash available in checking account.....\$59,348

Expenses Expenses paid over \$2,000 threshold:

- None in June

Fundraising Current school fundraising totals:

- CCM \$8,351
- MVM \$26,264

CCM Update:

FY 2022 Budget:

We have done preliminary work and are awaiting the PPA amounts. As of 10:30 7/23 we have not received.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 28 (PPA pending)

Facilities issues in July at Corporate Ct:

fire department was called to CCM twice in July due to smoke in the building and the sprinkler system did not activate.

Water overflow from sump pump activation

HVAC units leaking water in into classrooms

Electrical outlets not working in section of office area - attempts to identify the source of the issue have so far failed

Tara emailed a letter to the landlord requesting copies of the inspections and repair work that has been completed and additional work that is needed to have the systems in working order for the return of students.

Staffing:

Marilyn can give a current update at the meeting

CCM is continuing to struggle to find candidates that meet certification requirements to fill Upper EI and Spanish teaching positions.

Vacancies also remain for Spanish IA, newly created (ESSER III grant) math interventionist, at Montessori teacher specialist positions

Chromebooks:

Marilyn can also give an update, as of Monday, July 19, CCM had not yet received on site the chromebooks that were ordered with COVID funding in August 2020

Communication with New Families & New Classes awaiting FCPS data rollover:

We are waiting for FCPS to have enrollment information complete in their system before we are able to have Parent Square set up for the new school year with new families added and students moved up to their new classes.

Because of this delay from FCPS, through Parent Square we can currently only send whole school communications, not individual class or grade level communications and it only reaches families and staff who were a part of CCM during the 2020-2021 school year, not new families or staff.

Lottery Staff Priority for staff members residing outside of Frederick County Under Review

There is currently a kindergarten seat at CCM with a staff member who resides outside of Frederick County in line for the slot because of staff priority.

CCM fully supports providing the option for staff members to choose to enroll their child at CCM. Especially with our ongoing struggle to recruit qualified Montessori & Spanish teachers.

However, this was flagged for review because of overlapping portions of the lottery policy, CCM charter, charter policy and state law, and out of county enrollment policy and sometimes grey areas of staff priority, out of county residency, and whether or not tuition would be charged for the child of an out of county certified staff member.

Dan Lippy has been consulted and this is currently under review by the FCPS lawyer.

Update Charter Amendment for Full-day PreK4

Dan Lippy confirmed at the CCM Leadership meeting that a charter amendment is not needed for full-day PreK4 while it is grant funded.

CCM is securing a second year of grant funded full-day PreK4 with the ESSER III grant. This would extend to include the 2022-2023 school year.

This means the charter amendment to continue offering full-day preK4 after the grant funding expires would be for the 2023-2024 school year with the charter amendment submitted to FCPS/BOE by December 2022.

Expected timing of the Annual Report for 2021-2022 school year

Dan Lippy said he is going to advocate for annual reports to be presented in February. December was mentioned, but Dan doesn't think this is the best idea because there is only one BOE meeting in December and it doesn't give a chance to have much data for the current school year.

Change in CCM GC meeting dates for Fall 2021

At the July meeting we voted to change from the 2nd Wednesday to the 1st Wednesday of the month for CCM GC meetings in Fall 2021 because of conflicts in the FCPS calendar. Wednesday, September 1, Wednesday, October 6, Wednesday, November 3, and Wednesday, December 1.

We will continue to hold our meetings virtually through Google Meet.

Board Member Expectations

As a board member, you are expected to:

- ✓ **SHOW UP**
 - Meetings, Events, Shows, etc.
- ✓ **READ EVERYTHING**
 - Charters, Bylaws, Policies, Procedures, Reports, Emails, etc.
- ✓ **PARTICIPATE**
 - Ask questions, Propose solutions, Chair a committee or Lead a specific effort/activity on behalf of BOT, Discuss and Vote
- ✓ **PROMOTE**
 - Support the organization and act as its voice

BOARD MEMBER POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

MMCI BOT PRESIDENT

Principal Officer of the corporation, two-term limit

- Supervise and be responsible for all aspects of the business of the corporation
- Negotiate and sign any contracts, deeds, mortgages, bonds, checks or other instruments which the Corporation has authorized to be execute
- Act as liaison to the county Board of Education (BOE). Present, promote, and support MMCI school issues and concerns to the BOE

VICE PRESIDENT (1 FOR EACH SCHOOL)

Is an Officer of the corporation, two term limit

- BOT level oversight of a school
- Attends various BOT, GC, FCPS, and school community meetings as the interface between MMCI and their school

- Is the voice of their school to the BOT
- Is the face, along with the GC Chair, of their school to FCPS mid-level leadership
- Oversight of implementing MMCI and School strategic visions

MMCI TREASURER

An Officer of the corporation, two-term limit

- Serve as the chair and set agenda of the finance committee
- Develop, track, and present the annual MMCI budget
- Work with the bookkeeper to maintain accounts and oversee financial transactions and facilitate and review the annual audit
- Complete required financial reporting paperwork and make these papers available to the BOT
- Keep the board regularly informed of key financial events, trends, concerns, and assessment of fiscal health.

ASSISTANT TREASURER

An Officer of the corporation, two-term limit

- Work with Bookkeeper to maintain the Chart of Accounts and oversee/review the MMCI accounting records
- Review and approve payroll and the bookkeeper's monthly close of the records
- Serve as member of finance committee and chair of the Fundraising & Grant sub committees
- Work with the bookkeeper to facilitate and review the annual audit, answer board members' questions.

SECRETARY

An Officer of the corporation, two-term limit

- Handle the general correspondence of the Board of Trustees and communications to the community
- Prepare Agendas and keep the minutes of the meetings of the Board and the membership
- Support the nominating committee and president in the organization and execution of the Annual Meeting and Election and ensure that all notices required by statute and these bylaws are duly given
- Serve as custodian of the corporate records and the seal of the Corporation

PARENT TRUSTEES

Member, but NOT an Officer of the corporation

- Focus on the well-being of MMCI as a whole
- Review agenda and all supporting materials prior to board and committee meetings
- Serve on MMCI committees or task forces and offer to take on special assignments
- Active in areas of expertise or passion
- Inform others about MMCI, its mission, and implement active outreach

FRIEND OF EDUCATION

Member, but NOT an Officer of the corporation, no term limit

- Focus on MMCI as a whole - maintain the corporation
- Provide external perspective into all BOT activity
- Support MMCI Officers as requested
- Facilitate discussion / interaction with external organizations

MMCI Committee Structure

Existing Committees

1. **Lottery Committee** (Jen/Sudha)
2. **Advocacy** (Eddie)
3. **Facilities** (Ellie/Molly C.)
4. **Finance** (Jeff)
5. **Nominating** (Jen)

Restructured Committees

1. **Fundraising/Grants - CHAIR: VACANT**
 - Research fundraising and grants consultants and outsourcing options
 - Look into a feasibility study for capital campaign
 - Coordinated efforts for MMCI fundraising vs. MVM/CCM
2. **Community Outreach/Programs - CHAIR: VACANT**
 - Outreach to local businesses and community members
 - Explore community partnerships
 - Explore community volunteer opportunities for students
 - Explore opportunities for enrichment and after school programs

New Committees

1. **Communications/Marketing/Education - CHAIR: VACANT**
 - Communicate MMCI updates
 - Educate community on the purpose and work of MMCI
 - Works closely with community outreach and advocacy to issue press releases and generate publicity
 - Manage MMCI social media
2. **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion - CHAIR: VACANT**
 - An updated mission statement for MMCI that affirms its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. (recommended by the committee, adopted by the board)
 - Identification of the DEI issues the organization needs to address Recommended action items to the board for how to address those issues.
 - Serves as oversight to ensure that the board is working to implement those action items and to ensure they are continually meeting the standards of the mission.