

# MINUTES

Monocacy Montessori Communities, Incorporated (MMCI) Board of Trustees  
(BOT) Wednesday, August 25, 2021 @ 7:00 p.m.

**BOT Members Present:** Molly Carlson, Chris Chandler, Nichole Dowlearn, Tara Dunsmore, Elise Goodwin, Jeff Koehler, Jen Kuhn, Ellie Landru, Kathleen Lutrell, Jen Mayo, Tori McCarthy (MVM GC Chair, non-voting), Carrie Jean Rathmell (CCM GC Chair, non-voting), Shemica Sheppard, Amy Sullivan

## 1. Call To Order

*Tara called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.*

## 2. Welcome/Introductions

*Tara had the elected BOT members and principals do brief introductions.*

## 3. Community Comments

*None*

*Tara motioned to approve the agenda changes. Jeff seconded. 10 aye.*

## 4. Consent Agenda Items

- Evotes
  - 8/15/21 July BOT meeting minutes passed; 6 in favor, 1 abstain, 6 did not vote.
  - 8/23/21 Appointment of Amy Sullivan as MMCI Assistant Treasurer; 8 aye, 1 abstain, 4 did not vote.
- Advance Reports (included at the end of the minutes)
  - MVM GC Chair Update
  - CCM GC Chair Update
  - MMCI Lottery Committee Update
  - Advocacy Committee Update
  - Finance Summary July 2021
  - Financial Reports July 2021

## 5. BOT Member Reports

MMCI President Report

Tara Dunsmore

*MVM and CCM had leadership meetings this week. This is supposed to give the charters time with the liaison for questions and Dan was unable to attend. Starting September 1st there will be a vacancy for an MVM Parent Trustee. MMCI will advertise to the community and hopefully have candidates for the September meeting to review. Tara encouraged BOT members and volunteers to complete the FCPS Volunteer training and sent the link. Tara also spoke about the confidentiality agreements. Tara reminded the BOT that when you are part of something that is indicated as confidential it is incredibly important that all members honor this commitment.*

CCM VP Report

Christopher Chandler

*No updates beyond what will be discussed at the meeting.*

MVM VP Report

Ellie Landru

*MVM had some building drama last week. MVM was closed Monday and Tuesday due to a plumbing issue. It is similar to the last issue and was due to sludge build up.*

BOT Treasurer Report

Jeff Koehler

*Jeff shared that this will be his first time in 5 years on the BOT that the budget will be submitted on time.*

## 5. Updates

CCM Principal update

Marilyn Horan

*There will be a first field trip on Monday and the Middle School will go to Upward Enterprises. Parents will pick up and drop off from there. This will also be the first day for PK3. The last two spots have been offered on the lottery and they should both start this week. Otherwise, nothing to add to Carrie Jean's report. Naptime is going well. Some children sleep and some don't, but there are no criers. It was great to have 5 year olds start early, and 4 year olds all day.*

MVM Principal update

Amy Dorman

*Amy is busy with Covid tracing, hiring interviews, carline, and registration. Teachers have done an amazing job preparing their environments. There was a rough start to carline as this has not been done for 18 months, but each day is going better. There was a fire alarm the first week of school and the SRO was impressed at how quickly the school was evacuated. Students and Staff did an amazing job clearing the building. MVM is mostly at full capacity. Covid*

guidance is changing. MVM has just been labeled as an outbreak because two people have become connected. Ms. Dorman is learning who needs to quarantine and how to handle these situations. Also, Back To School Night was postponed because of the fire alarm and plumbing issues.

(Jen Mayo joined)

Tara motioned to start the closed session. Ellie seconded at 7:41 p.m. 12 aye, no nay.

### Closed Session 7:41 - 7:59 p.m.

Maryland Open Meetings Act reasons for closing the meeting:

- Consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related to the acquisition

Marilyn shared before the meeting started that due to Amy's advocacy FCPS is now allowing us to hire staff with a Montessori license but not Maryland certification as long as they are willing to get their Maryland certification.

Eddie asked if there was a legal memo so it can be used with local reps.

Nominating Committee Update Jen Kuhn

Jen went over the Nominating process and the positions that are open. One of the responsibilities of the secretary is to oversee the nominating committee, however the nominating committee is generally made up of active members that run most of the process. There was turnover of the nominating committee about a year ago and there are a lot of vacancies on the nominating committee and both CCM and MVM need some engaged volunteers. The timeline process will be presented in September. Tara encouraged the BOT members to start the recruiting process. Jen added that individuals who are up for election should begin to decide if they will run again.

Facilities Committee Update Molly Carlson/Ellie Landru

Tara shared that we discussed locations in closed session that we are not ready to discuss in open session and asked for Molly C to give a brief update. Molly shared that we are looking at 4-5 properties. Currently one of the strategies is to work on zoning help. We have also agreed to work with Studio B. One thing that the Facility Committee talked about with them is information on a new build. The cost of the feasibility study was higher than wanted so local construction companies were also contacted to see their costs which will give us more information for future decision making. Ellie shared that in her most recent conversation with

Maryland Alliance for Public Charter Schools one of the priorities for the next session at the state level is equity in funding. FCPS receives their funding and then they take away their debts and then they take away in kind services and then they determine PPA. This would greatly help our facilities fund. MAPCS mentioned that they have some angel investors that are looking to support well established charter schools and they are willing to connect us once we have a project. MAPCS has had some success in state issued bonds. Eddie shared the process for submitting topics to the state.

## 7. Discussion/Action Items

- **Discussion/Vote:** Zoning and Feasibility Studies (Molly/Ellie)

Removed from the agenda.

- **Discussion/Vote:** [MMCI Budget](#) (Jeff)

Jeff shared the MMCI Budget. One of the budgets that we need to approve is the MMCI Budget. Amy O'Connor pulled this together based on last year's budget. MMCI operates based on an Admin Fee that comes from the PPA from each school. This year it is recommended to increase the Admin Fee by 2%. Last year we made some increases and those were paid out of reserves and this year that is being moved to be covered by the PPA. There are some increases in services for working with Studio MB, the full time bookkeeper, and some other things. Tara sent out an email to the BOT at least a week ago to outline how admin fees are being spent. In past years it was required for schools to contribute to Facilities Funds but it is clear that schools are actively aware and doing this on their own. The benefit of this is that there is more flexibility with these funds.

Tara shared that Clubhouse kids are limiting enrollment to 15 per school due to staffing issues. This is about half of enrollment in pre-covid year. Income from them will be less than in other years. There is discussion about income from programs and how to use the funds. One idea is to invest back in the schools. The funds that we are getting from programs can be used to further enrich schools and this will come up for discussion. The budget was structured so that we are not counting on this money. The BOT should think about their ideas about these funds.

Tara shared that one of the critical functions of the board is reviewing the budgets and if anybody ever notices anything that they don't understand to bring it up.

Jeff made a motion to approve the MMCI budget as presented with the 2% admin fee. Molly Carlson seconded. Ellie said JLL is there with a question mark and wondered if that needed to be there. Kathleen shared that nothing was paid out on the executed agreement last year and if something is wanted to be done in the future that would need to be a new agreement. 12 aye

- **Discussion/Vote:** [MVM Budget](#) (Tori/Ellie)

MVM voted to approve their FY2022 budget on Monday. Jeff mentioned that the facility funds line item needs to be moved from the admin line to class 15. Jeff

questioned if this required another vote from the MVM GC and Carrie Jean shared that she does not recommend another vote because the amounts have been approved and it is not changing anything. The intention was already clearly voted on and the proper line item does not change the numbers.

Tori shared that the MVM GC was between three budget approaches as prepared by Rachel Schooley. There were 2 year, 3 year, and 4 year facility savings options. The GC decided to pick the option that left the most money in the budget as we are still operating through Covid. MVM is not used to the same level of stipends and didn't want to be caught off guard so made sure to have a built in cushion. MVM GC also added a budget item for contractors that have been doing work on the building.

Tara motioned to approve the MVM Budget for FY2022 as presented. Jeff seconded. Tara mentioned that the budget needs to be amended with the change of moving the facility funds in the amount of \$531,951 from the admin fee line to class 15.

Tara motioned to approve the amended MVM budget for FY2022 including the transfer of \$531,951 from the facility savings from the admin fee to class 15. Ellie seconded. 12 aye, 0 nay.

- **Discussion:** [CCM Budget](#) (Carrie Jean/Chris)

Carrie Jean shared that what has been approved by the CCM GC is the revised version which has been approved. (The tan column replaces the purple column.) The main difference is salary. This increased significantly. The reason is at the August 11th meeting it was discussed to have a cushion due to the FCTA negotiations not being resolved and CCM does not know what the salary increases will be at this point. CCM is expecting 3% but this budget allows up to a 5% increase. One other difference is that several positions had vacancies for this year. The original budget was based on the previous individual in the position, however by the time the budget was prepared new salaries were known and several were much more experienced individuals which impacted the budget. After seeing the 5 year projections of salaries and realizing this would create a budget deficit CCM looked at 3 scenarios using a 2%, 2.5%, and 3%. The 2.5% was a middle of the road without a deficit or too much surplus - \$90,000. Tara motioned to approve the budget presented and to move \$90,000 from the end of the year surplus line to the class 15 line. Jeff seconded the motion. 12 aye.

- **Discussion/Vote:** [MVM Charter Expansion](#) (Expansion Team)

- [High School Proposal Budgets](#)

The MVM GC voted to approve the MVM Charter Expansion . They voted to change the first year from 30 9th grade students to 30 9th and 30 10th grade students. Kathleen shared that what is presented tonight is what will be sent to the BOE as a charter amendment request and start their review process. If everything is approved the request would go in tomorrow to BOE and the grant would be submitted by Friday. This represents hundreds of hours of work. Tara clarified that there are many parts of the proposal that will be decided by the GC. What the BOT needs to focus on are the budget and the charter expansion language. Kathleen shared that the charter

language was already approved by the BOT. Tara agreed that we do not need to reexamine this however she would like to have the BOT approve this as a package. Molly C. asked if the grant is not received what parts of the budget do they plan to remove. Amy Sullivan shared that this would come likely from some materials but they have not had the conversations with the GC and Ms. Dorman.

Kathleen shared that this proposal provides an option for many of our families to have an exciting opportunity in Montessori and for families around the county. It also provides a level of financial stability that MVM has not had. In 5 years down the road MVM could potentially be having the discussion of how to spend the surplus money.

Tara made a motion to approve the MVM high school expansion proposal package as presented. Ellie seconded the motion. The Charter Expansion Request Letter, Proposed Charter Amendment for MVMPCS Charter Expansion, MVMPCS Expansion Charter Amendment Proposal, and MSDE Grant Application will be submitted to the BOE tomorrow morning. The package will then be submitted to MSDE on Friday for the grant. 12 aye.

- **Discussion: MMCI Committee Chairs (Tara)**

Last month Tara discussed participation with board members and her vision. There are still multiple committees that do not have a chair and finding chairs is crucial to getting done the things that we need to get done. This can be recruiting committee members or stepping up for just a few months to help establish a framework for the committees. Tara shared the committees with vacancies and gave the example that this past week something came up with Clubhouse Kids and this was something that she needed to resolve but somebody who was willing to work to communicate with Clubhouse Kids and resolve anything that may come up would be incredibly helpful.

- **Discussion: Back to School Communications for MMCI membership and volunteer opportunities (Tara)**

Tara would like to form some communications for back to school. Now is the time we can capitalize on getting our communities involved but this includes education. We have older documents and files that can be used for inspiration but somebody needs to be willing to take this on. For the immediate future, this one is very important.

- **Discussion: COVID Surveillance Testing Program (Tara)**

This is one of the topics Tara had hoped to discuss with our liaison but was unable to discuss. MSDE has a surveillance program that they are rolling out. All public and private schools are able to participate. As of August FCPS decided to not participate. Tara reached out to MSDE and they wanted to confirm if FCPS is participating and Dr. Alban shared that they are determining what they will do and MMCI should reach out to FCPS first. Tara shared that principals are following clear guidelines and a lot is out of their control.

Tara motioned to adjourn at 9:43 p.m. Ellie seconded. All in favor.

## Advance Reports

- MVM GC Chair Update
- CCM GC Chair Update
- MMCI Lottery Committee Update
- Advocacy Committee Update
- Finance Summary July 2021
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### MVM GC Chair Update (Tori McCarthy)

#### Updates and reminders on the movement of the GC and its Committees:

- The GC approved the SY22 Parent Handbook during the July monthly voting meeting. We will revisit the document during both the August and September meetings to revise and rework any areas that are identified as needing attention as back-to-school continues.
- MVMPCS is still actively seeking multiple committee chairs and co-chairs for several additional committees. At our August meeting, the GC discussed taking a more active role in supporting the existing committees as they work to identify and incorporate new volunteers and plan for this year's activities.
- The GC annual budget work session occurred on Monday, June 28, 2021, to begin discussions on the needs and expectations of SY22. The GC revisited this discussion during the July monthly GC meeting on July 26, 2021, and the SY22 budget was finalized and approved during the August GC meeting on August 23, 2021. Thank you to our budget chair, Rachel Schooley, for all her hard work and insight in identifying areas where our budget could be strengthened.
- There were several staffing changes at MVM over the summer, including the hiring of Kim Cowles to fill the open Montessori Teacher Specialist position. Kim's transition to staff leaves the MVM GC with an opening for a Friend of Education.
- Active discussions are occurring with regards to the upcoming fall elections and GC Chair succession plan. We will keep the BOT apprised of movements in this area as things settle. Additionally, the GC is working to identify MVM parents for the nominating committee.

#### Votes Completed:

- **August 10, 2021**, (via eVote) Approval of July GC monthly meeting minutes.
- **August 15, 2021**, (via eVote) the August GC meeting was rescheduled to Monday, August 23, 2021, to meet FCPS budget approval deadlines and the September GC meeting was moved to September 13, 2021, to accommodate the Labor Day holiday on the first Monday of the month.

- **August 22, 2021**, (via eVote) the final draft of the High School Proposal failed to achieve quorum. A revote occurred during the monthly August meeting.
- **August 23, 2021**, the MVM GC voted the SY 2020-2021 budget, several votes to release funds for building repairs (plumbing and electrical), and approvals for the first round of fundraising dine-outs for SY22

#### **Upcoming Work Sessions and Meetings:**

- September 13, 2021, @ 6:30 pm, Monthly GC Voting Meeting to be held virtually

### **CCM GC Chair Update (Carrie Jean Rathmell)**

1. August leadership meeting with Dan Lippy did not occur because of scheduling issues. Tara is in communication with Dan's secretary to select times for meetings this Fall.
2. There has been an ongoing facilities issue that started in July with 2 separate calls to the fire department with smoke in the building. The landlord was contacted by Tara to request resolution of the issues with written documentation of inspections and repairs prior to the return of students to the building on August 9 (early start K). Electrical outlets that were not working on the original side of the building were also addressed in the communication from Tara. A follow up communication was sent indicating that there were limited business days remaining before the return of students and the promised services had not yet been performed so CCM would be hiring an electrician to service the outlets and billing the landlord for the services. The electrician found that an entire panel had been turned off by the fire department and turnin the panel back on restored service. The fire lieutenant was also called out to inspect since inspections were not completed by the landlord prior to the return of students. Emergency light fixtures were found to be out of order (hypothesis is that the batteries died during the extended power outage mentioned above). CCM building and maintenance crew replaced units in some spaces and removed units and installed plates in other spaces that had windows and outside light and therefore did not require emergency lights. An alarm was sounding at the fire alarm box in the lobby on two different dates the week of August 18. Landlord has been contacted and the service company has been contacted by the landlord.
3. CCM is planning to offer chess club through Silver Knights again this year. We are coordinating with Amy O'Connor on the contract.
  - a. Thursdays, 4:00pm-5:00pm
  - b. K-8
  - c. Silver Knights takes registration, sending a registration link in September.
  - d. The middle school room across from your office
  - e. Fall 10/28-1/20, skip 11/25, 12/23, 12/30, makeups on 1/27 and 2/3
  - f. Winter 2/24-5/5, skip 4/21, makeup on 5/12 and 5/19
  - g. 10 weeks, \$173 including \$8 for you all per student (May be adjusted to accommodate \$1 per student per day which is \$10 not \$8)
4. Posted for a Parent Rep vacancy on the CSI (School Improvement Team) and received several responses of interested parents. Will be developing a clearer selection process.
5. Working on clarifying the use of the closed CCMPCS Community Facebook Page. Usage guidelines have been drafted by Sherry Quinones and are under review by the GC.
6. CCM Back to School Night is Monday, September 13. At this time because of guidance MArilyn is receiving from FCPS and space limitations for large gatherings of our multi-purpose room, we are



anticipating that BTSN will consist only of classroom gatherings with no whole school gathering time. Volunteer/GC/MMCI sharing is being planned to take place through pre-recorded videos.

7. 1.0 FCPS custodian resigned at the beginning of August with a last day of August 20. We were granted permission to utilize outside services to cover custodial needs until we were able to fill the position. Candidates who applied included current FCPS custodians so contracted services ended up not being needed. Marilyn can supply a current update of start date for the new custodian. CCM has 2 custodians for a total of 1.5 FTE.
8. As with any new school year, carline was not as efficient as usual on the first day of school. Staff made adjustments in the moment and from day to day and by Friday, all students were in school by 9:00 arrival time.

On the Radar for this fall:

9. Recruiting of CCM members for the MMCI nominations Committee to have in place by September 1 to have a strong recruiting season this year for volunteers for elected positions on the GC & BOT
10. CCM Annual fundraising calendar was drafted for the August meeting but was tabled to the September 1 meeting
11. When we discovered through FOF job posting that all FCPS support staff new hires are receiving \$1500 signing/retention bonuses, Marilyn reached out to FCPS staff to clarify if this extended to CCM/MMCI new hires and where the budgeting was. Response was positive. Will follow up and confirm with Dan Lippy at leadership meeting.
12. Lead Testing of water sources: must occur while students are in attendance, Deadline in early December, awaiting confirmation from FCPS if we can use any of the labs from the MSDE approved list or if we need to use an FCPS approved vendor for the lab
13. Timeline for annual zoning exception application for the Corporate Ct location. Sherry Quinones has agreed to be the point person on this task again this year.
14. Ellie recently brought it to our attention that CCM is not represented on the Frederick County Schools Health Metric (COVID) Dashboard <https://www.fcps.org/dashboard>. CCM leadership will follow up to address.

## **MMCI Lottery Committee Update (Jen Swafford)**

CCM has 317 enrolled and 1 pending offer (in 7th)

41 offers have been made since 7/23, 24 accepted, 14 declined, 0 waiting on paperwork, 1 pending offer (above), 2 seats not filled due to overcommitting\*

MVM has 296 enrolled and 4 pending offers (in 1st, 6th, 7th, and 8th)

46 offers have been made since 7/23, 16 accepted, 23 declined, 3 waiting on paperwork, 4 offers pending (above)

\* FCPS sent an email alert (possibly FOF) that asked parents to "re-register" students. When parents completed forms students were enrolled back in home school. This prompted transfer requests at both schools for two families in total. May want to alert FCPS to clarify registration emails and be inclusive of charter schools so this doesn't happen again.

## **Lottery Report (Eddie Benites)**

### **1. Zoning issues**

As MMCI and the associated schools search for property, zoning continues to be an issue. We are in discussions with the Frederick County Council about a possible legislative fix. There is pushback from Frederick County Planning and Zoning.

I am currently researching a specific property to determine the zoning that would affect this property and am in discussions about this property with the Facilities Committee.

## **2. Teacher Certification Legislation:**

Both principals are strongly in support of legislation to amend teacher certification regulations in the State of Maryland. See my memo on the legislation [here](#).

I have been in several meetings regarding this legislation with state trade associations. I recommend the following:

1. Quantify the cost to each school- teacher training, inability or reduced ability to meet school-wide certification requirements, long term subs, additional time in the hiring process, etc.
2. Share the quantifiable data with the trade association groups
3. Create a letter-writing campaign
4. Update staff and ask for members of the Maryland State Education Association (teacher's union) to identify themselves if they would like to help out.
5. Meet with BOE and state delegation regarding support for the legislation

Consideration of this legislation will begin in January and die, sine die, if not considered in 90 days.

## **3. Maryland General Assembly 2022 Legislative Session**

Soon, local governing bodies will create their legislative requests for the 2022 Legislative Session of the Maryland General Assembly. I recommend that MMCI create legislative proposals for the Board of Education and County Executive (to be submitted in October/ November) and general legislative priorities to be submitted to locally elected officials in December.

MMCI should have no more than three legislative priorities, and the priorities should be tailored to each office. Some suggestions include:

- teacher certification legislation,

- high school expansion proposal support,
- request for Frederick County Members on the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee,
- and possibly capital project appropriations.

**4. Lottery Committee- information request regarding student data**

One of the first questions any office will ask MMCI is, “How many students come from my district?” Knowing this information is not only important for these meetings. As we consider new locations, it will allow us to understand our families travel needs. As we move to new locations, knowing this information will allow us to understand how our residency changes over time.

Last year there was slow coordination on legislative efforts. For this year, please authorize that the lottery committee release student data on September 30, 2021, when the roll is complete.

**Finance Summary (Jeff Koehler)**

**Finance Summary July 2021**

**MMCI Accounts**

Unrestricted cash balance \$20,845  
 Current Reserve Fund Savings balance \$301,017

**CCM Accounts**

Current Facility Fund Savings balance \$383,053  
 Final FY21 PPA surplus \$1,021,498  
 Unrestricted cash available in checking account \$112,213

**MVM Accounts**

Current Facility Fund Savings balance \$793,726  
 Final FY21 PPA surplus \$460,275  
 Unrestricted cash available in checking account \$59,221

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

MSMC/Mr. Morelli (MVM annual rent payment) \$259,784  
 Westlake/Dr. Mohiuddin (CCM 6-month rent payment) \$225,007  
 School Mint (lottery software) \$6,500  
 Garza Law Firm (MVM lease negotiations) \$2,080

The MMCI Accounts are currently lower in funds than expected due to the fact that we are “floating” a portion of the MVM Rent payment while waiting for the PPA funds to arrive from FCPS.

