

[Last updated: 1/30/24 at 7:00 p.m.]

**Monocacy Montessori Communities, Incorporated (MMCI) Board of Trustees  
(BOT) Wednesday, January 31, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m.**

**Virtual Meeting: [meet.google.com/fcv-mjvy-utv](https://meet.google.com/fcv-mjvy-utv)  
Join by phone: +1 346-808-1766 PIN: 378 965 061#**

**Regular Meeting Agenda**

**1. Call To Order 7:00 p.m.**

Tara Dunsmore called the meeting to order at 7:08pm. We experienced technical difficulties with the recording, and were unable to record the first hour of this meeting.

**2. Welcome/Introductions 7:02 - 7:05 p.m.**

Members present: Tara Dunsmore, Elizabeth Landru, Amy Duvall, Meggan Sombat, Kelli McIntosh, Lauri Palmer, Jan Francis, Jessica Lawrence Wujek, Kathleen Lutrell, Louisa Diggs, Paul Gouge (11) Ryan Lewis (12)

Not Present: Barbara Litz

Others: Brandon Sowers, Marilyn Horan, Nikki Burgee, Bob Weiland

**3. Community Comments 7:05-7:10 p.m.**

One Community Comment was submitted ahead of the meeting by Darlene Overholtzer, MVM GC Staff Rep. The comment was read into the record by Meggan Sombat, and text is available [here](#).

**4. Consent Agenda Items and Evote Report 7:10-7:12 p.m.**

There were no Evotes this month.

**5. Member & Committee Advance Reports and Updates 7:12-7:53 p.m.**

- MMCI President Report - 5 minutes (Tara Dunsmore)

Tara Dunsmore announced that she would use her time this month to discuss our current Ethics Policy (approved 2016, 2018, revised 2021). The topic is timely, considering the Community Comment sent by MVM staff this month. The MMCI Ethics Policy can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CWd9IvVn2JCjEXsibJO6h7oqp9k-8GSU/view>

Our Ethics policy gives all of our community members the opportunity to have an outlet and recourse for complaints. It is distressing to hear that the staff didn't feel they had this option, and we would like ideas on how to make this more accessible.

MMCI BOT and GC members are committed to conducting all affairs with the highest standards of ethical conduct.

Standards - Integrity, respect, loyalty, confidentiality, and transparency

Protected status for all persons in our community.

Tara said that our staff members are critical to our organization. We are all humans and mistakes are made, grace and courtesy go a long way. This is what we teach to our children and we must model it.

Process for what to do if you feel there has been an ethics violation, anyone can make a complaint to the BOT. The information will be brought to the president and if needed an ethics committee will be convened and the committee will make recommendations to the board for action. We have never had an ethics complaint, but we do take it very seriously.

Privacy can be tricky between staff and parents and the dynamic can be tough to balance. Complaints are always confidential for this reason. Confidentiality may affect action, but the committee is available to review any complaints.

Our policy is fairly robust - any member of parent leadership, including volunteers and committee members, Ethics policy must be signed and we are held to these standards.

You can ask for any member to recuse themselves from the discussion so there are no conflicts of interest.

Meggan Sombat asked if the policy or committee process is currently under review. Tara said that we have recently discussed taking a look at how the committee is set up and provide an option for complaints. We will discuss at our April Work Session.

Kathleen Lutrell said that these situations could be sensitive, and should the first step be a letter to the board or discussion with the President. Tara said that people can always come to members with questions or for advice, and that situations can always be dealt with directly first. Confidentiality is assured.

Tara said that she will send this out, Meggan suggested sending it as a newsletter.

**ACTION ITEM - Send Ethics Policy to community (Tara and Meggan) (Grace and Courtesy)**

Jessica Lawrence Wujek said that she was unable to locate the document. Tara said that the policy is on the website, under MMCI Documents, MMCI Public Files, but we will look at making it more easily accessible to the community.

Jan Francis suggested that something that could help is to provide a way for the community to submit issues confidentially, anonymously (such as a drop box, or Google Form).

Jessica said that anonymity is a concern because as a higher ed teacher, anonymous student reviews can be damaging, so she would recommend that someone filter the messages before they go to the whole board. (2 Executive Committee members)

Tara agreed that it would be important to look for trends in the feedback.

- BOT Treasurer Report / Assistant Treasurer Report - 5 minutes (Barbara Litz, Kelli McIntosh)

Kelli McIntosh said that she doesn't have a report beyond the Finance Summary. Tara said that Barbara Litz is working on getting Finance Committee meetings on the calendar and will officially begin in February.

- [MMCI Financial Report 12/2023](#) (access restricted)
- [MMCI Finance Summary 12/2023](#)
- MVM High School Grant Update (Tara Dunsmore)

Tara said that there has been a lot going on with the High School Grant recently. The MSDE awarded us a 900K grant to support our expansion, issued by the US Dept of Ed. MAPCS took over the administrative role in 2023. There has been a gap since September 30, when the US DEd ended their fiscal year, and administrative duties are being transferred to MAPCS, so we are still waiting.

Therefore, we haven't been able to spend money from the grant since September. We can spend money but there are no guarantees that we will be reimbursed through the grant. Tara said that MVM has done a good job of putting padding in their budget, so there are funds available to spend. Tara said that she is optimistic that funds will be available by the summer, for materials for the incoming class and our science labs.

- MMCI Facilities Committee Reports - 10 minutes

Amy Duvall said that CCM is still collecting info about the full scope of their plan B, and they are on track and not at risk of deadlines passing. There are still a lot of decisions being made on Plans A, B, C, D. And their team is monitoring and moving forward as information is available.

Elizabeth Landru said that MVM is still waiting for the building permit for phase 2 construction. Hopeful mid-february. Currently the architect is working on drawings with the MEP engineer. They are currently working through budgetary challenges to get the best result possible.

- MMCI Principal Search Committee Update - 2 minutes (Amy Duvall)

Amy Duvall said that the committee has completed their first round of application period. Closed on January 22. They are currently reviewing candidates' eligibility. Working closely with FCPS and they have been extremely responsive and supportive. Second round in February, hopeful to make a decision before the end of the school year for transition and shadowing.

- MMCI Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee Update - 1 minute (Jennifer Mayo/ Vanessa Deugarte)

Tara said that recently Elizabeth Landru met with the committee chairs, and they discussed introducing some DEI Training for the community. Hopeful to give updates in February.

Tara is also adding a Bias Incident Report form to our MMCI website, so that the community

can submit issues or observations to the DEI committee who can then recommend action or discussion with board members and/or staff.

- **MMCI Nominating Committee Update - 1 minute (Meggan Sombat)**

Sarah Cramer, co-chair has been in touch with both GC Chairs to discuss openings. We will discuss in detail later this meeting.

- **MMCI Lottery Committee Update - 1 minute (Chad Hawkins)**

Marilyn Horan said that CCM has 1067 applications so far. Bob Weiland said that there are 1293 on MVM's waitlist, and 53 for 9th grade. No other report this month.

Tara said that the High School sub lottery committee is working on Marketing for the High School and will meet next week. Amy Dorman will be able to do visits to Middle Schools and High School Fairs, and Social Media advertising.

Bob asked if CCM 8th graders have to go through a special process. Tara said that we need to clarify the process. Marilyn said that Chad Hawkins has been able to support families, and Tara said that anyone having trouble should email [admissions@mmcimd.org](mailto:admissions@mmcimd.org).

- **MMCI Grants and Fundraising Committee Update - 5 minutes (Meggan Sombat)**

Meggan said that there is no report, asked GC Chairs about the priority lists requested in December. Send emails to [grants@mmcimd.org](mailto:grants@mmcimd.org).

- **MMCI Communications & Community Outreach Committee (Meggan Sombat)**

Meggan said that Committee needs are in the discussion topics.

School Updates:

**7:53-8:03 p.m.**

- **MVMPCS - 5 minutes (Amy Dorman/ Brandon Sowers/ Elizabeth Landru/ Bob Weiland)**

Brandon Sowers said that the first family engagement night was very well attended, despite snow on the ground, and MVM is in the midst of parent observations. Staff is currently going through professional development and training. MVM just finished testing, and parents will be receiving the MD Climate Survey in February. Black History Month Presentations are starting tomorrow, with video lessons about famous African Americans. HS Counselor starts tomorrow, so now MVM is fully staffed.

Lauri Palmer asked about the date for the HS Town Hall.

Bob Weiland said that we are between two dates - 2/12 or 15 of February. MVM GC has an opening for a Parent Rep.

- **CCMPCS - 5 minutes (Marilyn Horan/ Amy Duvall / Nikki Burgee)**

Marilyn Horan said that tours are underway and it is a joy to show prospective parents through the school. Some tours last longer than others. Professional Development day was delayed due to

snow, but training was completed. The staff discussed behavior training, and also discussed and presented parts of the Child as teacher book. It was a creative and enjoyable day.

Marilyn said that she is working on the CCM Annual Report - and the HS Data from CCM graduates is great. High percentage of 3.0+ 85%, and 4.0+ is approx 50%. Twelve of their recent graduates have above a 4.6gpa. This shows that students are challenging themselves, and she is very proud of them. iReady scores from last year are good, and the BOE recognizes the need to look at multiple data points.

She said that each classroom did a Montessori Connections where parents were invited to come in and observe children working in the classroom. Very well received.

Marilyn and Marisa Maldonado have advocated to get HS credit for their advanced Spanish III class and it is under consideration, Marilyn is hopeful for half of a world language credit.

They have had multiple students from that Spanish III class achieve the Seal of Biliteracy, or score close to passing. This can be counted for college credit.

Tara offered MMCI's support for the HS credit for Spanish III.

***Technical difficulties fixed - Tara read the consent and started the recording at 8:10pm.***

Paul Gouge said that he joined Marilyn and Marisa Maldonado at the Annapolis Capitol for Charter School Advocacy Day, and there is a bill in its second year for Charter schools to receive facilities funding from the state. They participated in advocacy for the bill - this year it would not provide funding, but would give a reimbursement for charter school facilities expenses such as maintenance. Paul reported some good passionate responses and said it was time well spent. Marisa Maldonado said that the bill would also open door for charters to receive federal funding.

Tara thanked Paul and others for attending the Advocacy Day. It is important to continue to advocate, and push charter school issues forward.

Because Maryland law prohibits state funding, it automatically restricts federal funding, so this bill would open the door to both state and federal funding.

Nikki Burgee said that she sent a report, including the Evote tracker for quick reference. CCM has an IHOP restaurant fundraiser coming up in February.

Nikki will work on the Fundraising calendar.

Amy Duvall said that she has been working on comm with Tim Summers from FCCS who has been a partner on financing. She would like to partner with him and FCCS for transparency on funding for in-kind services and others. She has followed up with FCPS (Dan and Mark) and is waiting for a response. Advocating for funding and transparency for the formula is important to keep in mind.

Tara said that there is a lot going on in the background and it is important to keep going forward with these details.

Amy said that transitions with parent leadership and FCPS staff necessitate continuity in our advocacy.

## 6. Follow-ups/ Action Items

8:03 p.m - 8:05 p.m.

- [BOT Action Items & Follow Ups](#)

One follow up is the final student counts from FCPS. Tara said that we received the counts, and we are contesting for MVM. Bob said that the GC hasn't voted on a revised budget yet, and Tara said that we need to move forward with the number that they gave us, which was down by 10 students. Amy Duvall said that the preK count was off and she would like to know how. Tara said that our PPA next year will be based on this year's enrollment.

**ACTION ITEM - follow up about the preK funding (Tara Dunsmore, Amy Duvall)**

Marilyn asked about the previous year's ppa for preK - Tara said that the charters are approved but the numbers are off. And we are in discussions.

Tara provided for background - until this year we didn't receive any preK funding. We were not aware in 2020-21 that the state was providing preK funding, After the fact, FCPS offered a charter amendment so we can begin to receive the funding and get retroactive funding. Tara said that there should be some transparency about this funding, as practice.

**ACTION We could ask for a flat out accounting for next year. (Tara, Barbara)**

## 7. New Business: Discussion and Votes

8:05 - 9:00 p.m.

**CLOSED SESSION:** The BOT will hold a brief Closed Session, as needed, and in accordance with one or more exceptions per the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

- DISCUSSION: BOT SOP (Tara Dunsmore)

Tara said that we will keep working on this, and she needs everyone to go in and make suggestions.

- DISCUSSION: Annual Report Check In (Tara Dunsmore)

The March BOT Meeting is on 3/20.

**ACTION - to the BOT by end of the first week of March (Nikki and Bob)**

Parent trustees can provide support

- DISCUSSION: [BOT Committees and Needs](#) (Tara Dunsmore/ Meggan Sombat)

Tara said that parent trustees are expected to select an area of interest or passion and join and volunteer; to be actively involved or chair at least one committee.

Executive committee members have more prescribed roles and responsibilities, although they also participate in committees.

Tara went through the list of needs.

There are two different types of advocacy - with FCPS for funding and services, and with the state for laws to benefit charter schools. One thing that is needed is for board members to attend BOE meetings and advocate.

The state bill will need testimony, so people will need to go.

We also need community engagement with our internal community and external - business

partnerships.

DEI - needs additional committee members

Programs and enrichment is an MMCI task - Jessica has been involved

We should move this forward with new programming.

Lottery committee needs a chair.

**ACTION ITEM - Jessica to work on google drive.**

**ACTION ITEM - Jessica to work on Programs Committee**

Nominating Committee needs support and members.

Amy Dorman asked if MMCI wanted to put a blurb in the next newsletter.

**ACTION - send Amy a list and Marilyn - for newsletter (Meggan)**

**MOTION: Tara Dunsmore moved to adjourn.**

Seconded by Meggan

**MOTION PASSED with 10 Aye.**

Meeting Adjourned at 8:59pm

### Announcements:

1. Upcoming MMCI Business Meetings (usually held at 7PM the FINAL Wednesday of each month): *meetings will be virtual unless otherwise noted.*
  - February 28, 2024 - MMCI BOT Voting Meeting
  - March 20, 2024 - MMCI BOT Voting Meeting
  - April 10, 2024 - MMCI BOT Quarterly Work Session
  - April 24, 2024 - MMCI BOT Voting Meeting
  
2. Minutes and Agendas may be found online at <http://mmcimd.org/calendar/>