

## **MVMCS Board Meeting Minutes, October 13, 2018.**

12:38 Call to Order: Jeff Merage, Board Chair

Attendance:

Present from the Board:

Mona Gibson, Emily Barnhardt, Jason Godley, Tim McCarthy, Mike Morris, Erin Gallagher, Adam Wright, Tony Urbick (after start)

From CSI (Charter Schools Institute, Authorizing Agent for MVMCS) Ryan Marks and Jessica Welch- CSI visiting team

MVMCS Team: Michael Girodo, Head of School (HOS), Julie Dinkens, Business/Finance Manager, Jessica LeBlanc--Faculty

From the Public-

Christine Lilly- Educator with Montessori experience- wanting to be more involved, interested in strategic plan

Approval of minutes from September 14, 2018:

Emily move to approve, Mona seconded – unanimous approval

HOS report- Michael Girodo

Roof Leaks are being addressed.

Mill Levy Equalization report: Michael and Board members working to get the same share of public funds that District schools currently receive. Meeting with local officials and stakeholders.

Continued advocacy on the part of CSI- Ryan Marks reports that \$5.5 mil was approved for the future, but an additional \$5mil was added. So there will a \$10.5 mil request from the Governor, but it still has to go through to committee. Both gubernatorial candidates are supporters of Charter Schools.

Mike Morris- asked about Oct. count (official enrollment audit) and projections. It was very close to projections in the revised budget. HOS and Staff putting heads together for recruitment and retention strategies for next year.

Adam Wright question about Mandi Franz – consultant from Ross Montessori Elementary in Carbondale. Background: Mandi has an M.A. in Montessori- alignment support and instructional

support. Emily: She is a full-time teacher at Ross, so still need to pursue that full-time solution for Steamboat.

Impact 100 grant: Need 100 dollars from 100 people to participate... we were hoping to support playground build, idea of partnering with community to get traction on playground enhancement. Clare Burkey is helping us with that. Michael: let him know on any grants connections.

YVEA grant just awarded, bringing CSU affiliates in for visiting instruction and support on science.

Computer-based testing practice for State Tests: In light of needs identified around State testing and technology referenced proposed change to testing policy—change from current policy on paper testing to allow for computer testing to support computer literacy for third-fourth graders around CO state testing environment. Jeff, call the motion: Jason, motion to approve, Erin second, all approve, motion carries.

Question on Walton Foundation Grant: What was result? We asked and received \$68k, \$20k of which is a matching grant for our Annual Fund. Describes HOS allocation of other funds for support on literacy program, middle school evaluation, Montessori training, STEM training, visiting stipend educators.

Discussion on Walton Grant—new name is WEND foundation. Yearly, ongoing, want us to partner. Other sources of community-based grants are material for support on a case-by-case basis. WEND Still gives lots of support for Charter schools. Jason Godley to reach contacts at Denver.

Strategic Plan Discussion: Strategic Plan due October 15. Draft is there, need to finalize it, open for discussion. One parent thanked us for pursuing middle school. Jeff: no need to vote, we're OK to send once finalized. Michael to upload most recent revision, review and send onto CSI. Michael: if current draft is sufficient, we don't need to make changes—Michael to send updated document since the retreat Monday earliest.

**Student Accountability Committee: Emily:** New members, much enthusiasm. Available data informed their enthusiasm for the overall form of the Strategic Plan. Overall feedback: The communication piece on the what, how and why of MVMCS strategic plan objectives critical to success.

Question on Middle School Feasibility:

Jeff: Still looking at feasibility, Middle School Task Force being assembled, include Board members, staff, members of the community. Michael, survey of community important part.. his past experience on the survey is that community feedback may be very different from overall school intention. The enrollment stability, need 25-35 kids at a minimum to make a sustainable effort.

Emily: Important to recall that the intent of the Board is to have a middle school at some point, the question is not whether, but the timing and overall form of a future middle school.

Mike Morris: The founders of MVMCS had always looked at a middle school—the leap from 6th to 7th-8th is a substantial one. Emily—the financial piece was the major roadblock up to now.

Michael—the startup grant funds require a “performance” evaluation rating in place for some time to be eligible, staff is made aware of need to reach the seven points of evaluation rating to achieve “performance” rating.

Ryan from CSI—discussion on other grants availability, need to be performance for eligibility, more motivation.

Jeff: need to be at “performance” rating for at least three years for primary grant eligibility—Ryan from CSI—slight nuance, may be some technical ability for performance rating on multi-school plan... if performance aggregate is to a level to pull up past years, you are technically available. An “A” grade cancels out the “C” to give us the “B” average we need.

Question on what if the middle school takes on a different education model? CSI—our program is customizable because of changing school needs. There is a mechanism for changing, would require an amended contract for a material change in education model from current.

Ryan—Important to note that grants are reimbursable—so important to have that initial balance on the sheet in order to qualify.

**Financial Report: Julie Dinkens, Business/ Finance Manager.**

Great news, we made TABOR requirements for cash on hand, discussion on financial report, any questions, looking for a verbal acknowledgement that Board review. Board acknowledges review of financials.

We will have a updated cash flow sheet for next meeting. August financials to review for this meeting.

Jeff Question on security deposit line item from financials: Should be \$5k not \$10k.

Julie continued report on financials, operating budget has some changes from May-approved budget. Revised budget to come to a vote December or January.

Question--\$20.4k payment to CHF (Entity for Christian Heritage School building we lease) for facilities services—this is the lease and CAM fees for the school.

Discussion on revenue picture overall: We have some great fundraising going, \$20k in matching funds need for the grant rider Michael described earlier... Mona to give report on fundraising. Julie is overall pleased with our position at this point.

Discussion on Aging (parents in arrears). Picture compared to last year on parents not-paying is greatly improved... wrote off \$8k in bad debt from last year. Mona—policy in place? Michael: It's more of a "compassionate yet firm" practice where we work with families who have a challenged financial position, with more teeth in the individual parent contract. Typically, 3-5% of population, up to 5% could use some form of tuition assistance, usually just 10%-15% assistance on an individual basis. Some financial assistance is critical to pursue if we want true socioeconomic diversity to blossom at MVMCS.

Currently we have \$3k in arrears—if we take that out to the end of the year, we'll be in the same position. Primary issue is from the private preschool side vs partial-fund kindergarten and public elementary, could get ugly if we aren't consistent on kindergarten and preschool.

Discussion continues on resolution of aging accounts—penalties can include dismissal, "not invited back," looking for Board feedback and direction, best practices are being evaluated from other schools

Discussion on half-cent sales tax initiative 2B, other ways are better to pursue from Ed Fund board perspective.

Surrounding feasibility of formal financial assistance program: Michael—we have some infrastructure needs on software, funding timing complicated efforts, and goal is to have application process crafted for future financial aid funds that may become available. If we ever get to surplus, the issue becomes easier to resolve—the partial surplus can be dedicated to assistance support. If we end up with surplus and our enrollment continues to stabilize, i.e. 25 vs 13 fourth graders next year, the picture becomes more sustainable.

Reminder on Facilities commitments should surplus arise: Jeff: important to note that deferred maintenance, accidental damage, unexpected contingencies funding needs to be watched—that's on us.

Reminder on maintaining accounting best practices: Emily: we need some real clarity on K-6 vs preschool—must be really clean on public vs private "sides" and how funds are kept separate for these separate entities under one umbrella.

Upgrading Teacher compensation should surpluses arise: Michael: we're doing a great job on understanding our sustainable levels, and how to direct surpluses, such as improving teacher compensation packages—must put that out there.

Tony question on scholarship fund idea, in-kind labor contributions: Michael, some trickiness with implementation given the expectation communicated on volunteer ask of all parents, hard to do “paid” vs unpaid for everyone else.

**Vote Yes on 2B:** reminder on political funding channels: Renewal of “half-cent for our kids.” Financial—important that 2B is on the radar for all parents—this funding supports a lot of our needs. Mona—this is being communicated at next Parent Committee meeting. Emily, parents getting some yard signs, high traffic areas. Discussion sign placement, electioneering on parent pamphlets in car line... Board members would need to put on “parent” hat. Jason Galligan is spearheading 2B awareness for MVMCS Board.

**Non-profit status update for MVMCS: Julie:** The 501©3 status update is coming in December. That’ll open doors for us on fundraising and community participation.

Mona Gibson, fundraising committee report: Starting with Duel. Gillian Morris, Michele Garner were co-chairs with Mona on Fundraising committee.

“The Duel” results—less attendance, less fundraising than last year, but likely the date of the weekend had an impact. Moving to do this effort one more time, go with last year’s date vs last year. Great auction this year, huge participation. Great classroom parent effort on baskets. Mona—still sorting through results, but broadly speaking, optimistic the end result should be same or better than last year’s net take.

Discussion on high-profile Montessori mentions and support from media and business figures.

**Annual Fund Update:** Moving forward, sticking with 100% participation for 100 days of fundraising. Last year, we had 80%, plus 100% of Board, Faculty, Staff. Community Participation is absolutely vital to securing external grants. Mona is not comfortable yet with community formal ask of the \$100k needed. Fundraising effort is to be November 6 to February 16. Discussion on frequency and reaching out on Fundraising Updates, importance of communication piece, how best to include mention of the matching \$20k grant for maximum effect.

Deficit from state funding and other grant sources is \$531 per pupil. That must be made up with Annual Fund. Discussion on timing of grant info. Michael gave example of the Parent Orientation talk, mostly preschool parents in attendance, and some eye-openers.

Mona: Important to educate parent community more on the mechanisms of funding and overall budget.

**Discussion on 100% participation, 100 days of Annual Fund drive program:** Not really as much about overly generous contributions, but sustainable amounts from EVERYONE have the most meaningful impact. Emily: Because last year we had 80% level of participation, we had access to more grants.

Question: How much do folks understand—it takes \$10k to educate “Johnny”, X comes from state, Y from grants, and the rest community contributions on the public charter side. The preschool, being private, is more self-sufficient, and the Kindergarten component is a hybrid with similar funding challenges to the full public.

Idea of matching “micro grants”, Tony: Identify and target parents who give larger amounts, and potentially ask the givers if OK to tie those contributions to “everyone in class gives something” to equal an amount offered, question on does 501©3 status change open funding channel options for MVMCS, like “donate here” button on emails, use of fund-sending sites like Venmo or Zelle, versus current state of “Make check payable to CSI.” Discussion from Mona and Julie surrounding potential confusion with Colorado Gives day.

Colorado gives day is December 4, critical to get momentum effort focused around that day.

Jeff: 501©3 status is imperative. Question from Tim McCarthy, why is it taking so long? Application process was a learning process, took time to get it right.

Tim: can Finance committee simplify the funding awareness into a one-page infographic? Michael: Parent Committee is working on a half-pager.

Erin: Ways to inspire those who can to give the most they are able?

Michael: Where we are (resort town) ends up impacting funding availability vs a rural community, say, twenty miles to the West or South. Funding source environment makes demographic assumptions that we already have the money. Important to note that members of the Board are primary messengers for our community on education of MVMCS’ status as public charter school.

Tim: Agree, and if we end up with big donor portfolio, we need to get messaging ramped up.

Discussion on emotional appeal, “in a student’s own words,” other vectors to incentivize donations and maximize.

MVMCS Community Dinner: Save the date: November 14, partnering with Old Town Pub for MVMCS Community Dinner: 530-8p, \$7 burgers if reservations in advance. Should they be more at the door? Main idea is for a reasonably priced meal, no expectation of a fundraising component. Michael to raise awareness at dinner, but no formal ask anticipated.

Student Accountability Committee (SAC) Update: Emily: We can get passionate members to give 15 hours of their time, or they can go explain our situation to five people and have a huge impact as well. Suggestion on “how to get messaging” to work: Not just sending an email. Feedback from committee: Take everyone else’s name off the email, if it comes from my Teacher, I’ll open it, otherwise it’s likely to get involved. Committee desire: Adding SMS functionality, emails such as

“Parent.Committee@MVMCS.org” which might be more visible and more likely to break through the digital noise out there.

Student newspaper ideas and discussion. Very likely to get traction. Students eager to write. Printing capability is tough right now, but working on that.

Volunteer commitment expectation: 20 hours per parent per year minimum. Winter Sport Club example as a benchmark example. Parents want to be tracked on volunteer commitment hours and recognized. Discussion on ways to do this

SAC question to Board: What is the MVMCS position on technology and making sure students have familiarity with it as necessary?

Michael—we’ve had the computers out for practice testing for CO upcoming testing requirements, students are getting more familiar. Ongoing debate on degree of technological learning support vs technological intervention in more traditional Montessori environment. Readiness for middle school, anecdotal nervousness on the part of students/ staff regarding the amount of technology used in district schools. Jeff: It’s on our strategic plan, staff to create, Board to review and suggest changes as needed.

Jeff: regarding he’s taking pieces from Emily’s and Michael’s work on UIP (Unified Improvement Plan) and finalized draft Strategic Plan, bring it together, involve the greater Board, and goals around technology enhancements at MVMCS may ultimately be part of HOS evaluation.

Emily: SAC would like to meet monthly.

**Facilities Committee Update:** **Jeff:** Discussion on lease finalization. Permutations of playground location, possibility of one portion of playground going up for donation to local community, workaround playground areas for remainder of 5 year lease. A flyer was passed out various playground parcels for reference.

Board discussion went over pros and cons of individual playground likelihoods, direction from Board to Chair was to re-visit playground issues with landlord and resolve prior to lease signing. Brief discussion of plan B: (other alternative locations), but not there yet. Plan is to stay at CHS spot for another lease term and work on “forever home” possibilities without the pressure of moving next year.

Storage room project: There are two offices off the main administration area currently utilized as storage. Facilities committee identified this area as potential for using these rooms, either combined or singly, as a breakout/ small group classroom setting for various special programs. Idea is to purchase and build cabinets for the East main hallway. Tony to organize parent workdays for December 1 and 2, December 8 and 9 (with help from Parent Committee and HOS for outreach)

Security Subcommittee: Tony and Tim: Working with Dan LeBlanc, facilities committee and security subcommittee member and Michael on two main projects: Evaluation of current state and any security “holes” which may currently not be obvious; and upgrading locks functionality. Desire is for front door security improvement, “lock down” functionality, and code access functionality for staff. Lock upgrade ordered for East access door by current playground, waiting on vendor to install.

New Business: Leslie Gumbrecht has resigned from the Board and her position as Board Secretary. Tony has agreed to take on the role. Mona nominated, Tim seconded, all approved.

No other business, motion to Adjourn. Motion seconded, carries.

Meeting adjourned 3:16pm