



Board of Directors
Town Hall Minutes
November 11, 2021

Free Horizon Montessori PK – 8

Montessori for the 21st Century - a place to learn, a place to belong

1. BOD Introductions
2. Meeting started at: 7:31PM
 - a. Board Members Present: John Frost , Doug Klof, Bekky Robbins , Alison Fuhr
 - b. Board Members Absent (excused): Ben Dodson, Dan Hofmann
 - c. Guest Staff Members Present: Cyndi Vosburgh, Donnetta MacDonald, Kim Erickson, Adam Garbus
 - d. Guests: Albert, Alison Milan, Amber Manresa, Amy Smith, Andrea Stacy, Craig Spinks, Danielle Grimes, Ellen Ivy, Heather, Heather Smith, Jamie Widler, Jane Connard, Jesse Ornelis, Jolene, Julia, Kathryn Schoen, Kresta Vuolo, Kristen, Kristine Whittle, Leslie Arboleda, Linda DeBruyn, Luciana, Lynsey Grace, Meggin Rutherford, Michelle Nordwald, Sarah Duran, Tony Schiess, Troy Lyon, Orion Himes, Jaime White, Amy, Amber Parham, Megan Wells, Lisa Kingston, Cheryl Ritter
3. Reading of Mission/Vision/Motto
4. Town Hall Q & A
 - a. Principal Committee has begun their work, will solicit applications from the community to serve as a community representative on the Principal Search Committee
 - b. Scoping of where we want to go, working with outside experts who have experience with this
 - c. Kristen Cattigan (sp) – estimation for the time commitment if they wanted to serve on this committee.
 - i. Will be involved in all aspects of recruitment, will be required to interview all candidates, during month of February, availability to go to interviews, most likely during work day, between now and then, weekly meetings, ~1hr each.
 - ii. Anticipate interviews to be in-person or virtual
 1. Plan for in-person, but opening search beyond Colorado, good chance of virtual as well.
 - d. Julia – Can exec team and BOD come together to plan for the next year sooner than the July prior?
 - i. Spring is very full, we begin a lot of planning in the spring, but actual sit-down, setting goals, hard to pull that back because of the pace of things that the Board has to take care of. Last meeting for sitting Board is in April.
 - e. Chat Q – how are we planning on getting input from entire staff and community
 - i. Search committee will be responsible for that, likely be a lot of surveys to respond to.
 - ii. More public meetings like this Town Hall

- iii. Committee meetings are open meetings, public can participate, even if they aren't on the committee as a member.
 - 1. Not every meeting may be open, due to confidential nature of application process.
- f. Michelle Nordwald – could you explain thought process about why BOD thought it was best to part ways to Kresta in the middle of the year instead of the end of the school year?
 - i. Board had consideration, decided that if change was coming, was good to make change now rather than wait until end of the year. Beyond that, confidential personnel matters. Board discussed extensively, reached out to District, deliberate decision.
- g. Chat Q – were the staff liaisons included in this final decision? Were they asked for input?
 - i. Staff liaisons are non-voting members of the Board, were not involved in the decision.
 - ii. We did not directly ask for input from the staff to keep highly sensitive personnel matters confidential
- h. Chat Q – If the Board can make the decision about the Principal, can they make other staffing decisions?
 - i. In policy manual, Principal reports to the Board and a District rep, do not make decisions on any other staff members except for the Principal, staffing decisions delegated to Principal.
- i. Andrea Stacy – in terms of a time commitment, would be helpful for working parents to be able to quantify that? An hour a week moving up to February and then heavier in February? Intend to narrow it down to 3 candidates? 10 candidates?
 - i. Don't have a specific answer yet, would expect light weeks to be an hour week, heavy weeks to be more, likely some standing meetings that will work around everyone's schedule plus ad-hoc meetings as needed.
 - ii. Will depend on the applicants that we get.
 - iii. Principal Search Committee is doing initial work, actual hiring and decision of who we will hire is a Board decision. Final round of interviews will be for the Board.
- j. Chat Q – concerns with staff in supporting Donnetta and Jesse
 - i. Jesse is moving into some Assistant Principal responsibilities as Donnetta moves into interim role. Looking at resources we can use to help support them.
 - ii. Board is very excited that Donnetta was willing to take on this interim role. Board has responsibility to oversee the Principal, leave operation of the school to the Principal and staff. Are aware that change and resourcing is hard, looking to Donnetta to lead the way through the challenges.
- k. Chat Q/Comment – sounds like we made the decision and asked Donnetta to figure out the day-to-day
 - i. Had conversations about how this would work, in constant contact with Donnetta, here to support her.

- ii. Donnetta – have tons of help and support from staff at the school, it’s a lot to do, but feels like we are coming together to figure out the best way forward. From Principal Search component, Lisa Kingston is recruiting, has about 7 interested staff volunteers for 3 spots, next step will be to determine how to narrow that down.
- l. Alison – new family to school, was a resignation in primary department recently, lots of change
 - i. Donnetta – have had a resignation in half-day primary department, did work with that teacher to pursue necessary credentials to stay in the position, choosing a different path. Posted the position, will conduct 2 interviews tomorrow, and an additional interested party. It’s hard, more change, have to maintain requirements, did not align with teacher’s future plans.
 - ii. Requirement for all lead teachers to be Montessori-credentialed or actively in the process of receiving credentials. Specials teachers do NOT have to be Montessori credentialed.
- m. Chat Q - Do Assistants need to be credentialed?
 - i. They do not need to be formally credentialed in Montessori education.
 - ii. Do have many assistants that are credentialed
- n. Chat Q – what is the benefit of the Montessori credential
 - i. Multi-layered, benefits for school, from teacher perspective, benefit is implementing Montessori model, with the philosophy that ties the school together. From the student’s perspective – we are a Montessori school, that is our Innovation. Valuable, understand philosophy, hands-on materials, until you have some of that training, harder to implement all of those pieces.
- o. Chat Q – do we need assistants to get our AMS accreditation
 - i. Assistants are part of our operational model, because that is how you best provide a Montessori classroom. Hard to deliver Montessori model without assistants, critical to quality Montessori program.
- p. Chat Q – how close is FHM to the AMS accreditation?
 - i. We are through Step 6, 10 step process. Last year, a committee was formed to get us through Step 7 institutional structure for Montessori education, bulk of Step 7 is completed, Step 8 is showing that we have instructional and curriculum/ability to provide education to the students. Step 9 is a site visit, less about having to send information in as hosting people from AMS and experience Free Horizon on site, Step 10 is actual accreditation. Target date, pre-COVID, for all of this was to submit Step 7 last year, submit Step 8 this year, host AMS in the spring to get accreditation Spring/Summer 2022 – has been delayed, won’t get accreditation until we have a long-term Principal. Can submit Step 7 and 8.
- q. Chat Q – process and timeline for filling open Board seat
 - i. Need a resume and letter of interest, can send to Julie @ Governance committee, information in the Fox Flash 11/10. Why you want to be on the Board, what your strengths are, etc. Timeline is to collect names before Thanksgiving, first week or two of December do interviews. Hoping at December

meeting the Board will vote on who will fill vacancy so they can get started January 2022. This will be filled for this school year, can be elected in spring for a full term, if desired.

- r. Chat comment – there seems to be a lot of people quitting in the middle of the school year
 - i. Other than primary position, not aware of other mid-year resignations. Staffing issues in all sectors, comparatively, we are doing pretty well.
 - ii. Donnetta – district-wide, nation-wide staffing issues. It's not just FHM, do not seem to be as struggling as much as some other schools are. Hard time to be an educator.
 - iii. Lower turn-over rate at FHM than the District and the state currently.
 - iv. Trying to get District to expedite parent volunteers for sub
 - s. Chat Q – what is the long-term strategy if we don't find a qualified candidate?
 - i. Think we will find a quality candidate
 - t. Amber Parham – where can we access this recording afterwards?
 - i. Can put it on the webpage, can put it on the webpage, could send a link in the Fox Flash.
5. Family Partnership Survey is coming out soon, please respond! Have had challenges in getting participants, value feedback!
6. Julia – thank Donnetta, Cyndi, Board, as a teacher, appreciate integrity and support.
7. Thanks to all the staff for showing up, being there, especially for the kiddos that really need you.
8. Meggin Rutherford – Book Fair coming up! The CSN team have done a great job along with the staff. Have to sign up for times to go shop, still have about 5 slots left for volunteers. This year, a book for every child, has at least \$5 to spend on a book. Can donate directly to scholastic wallet, will help fund the book vouchers. If there is additional funds, will be used to fill teacher and library wish lists.
9. Town Hall ends at 8:40 PM

In accordance with the Colorado Open Meetings Law, also known as the Sunshine Law, the Board must give notice to the public anytime they schedule a meeting of more than three (3) board members to discuss business concerning the school. The Colorado Sunshine law does allow for the meetings, or portions of the meetings, to be held privately when the subject matter being discussed must remain confidential so long as no formal action is taken during the private portion of the meeting, called the "executive session". The Sunshine Law strictly defines eight (8) criteria under which a private executive session can be held, personnel discussion being one of them. The law also states the community must be informed of the meeting and the criteria under which an executive session must be called.

Bekky Robbins