



Board of Directors
Board Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2021

Free Horizon Montessori PK – 8

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

1. Meeting called to order at: 6:03PM
 - a. Board Members Present: John Frost , Doug Klof, Bekky Robbins, Dan Hofmann, Ben Dodson, Alison Fuhr
 - b. Board Members Absent (excused): None
 - c. Staff Members Present: Cyndi Vosburgh, Donnetta MacDonald, Adam Garbus
 - d. Guests: Kresta Vuolo, Megan Wells, Meggin Rutherford,

2. Approval of Agenda for current meeting
 - a. Ben moves to approve, Doug seconds, unanimous approval of agenda

3. Public Comments
 - a. Dan – had a change to volunteer, was wonderful to see how well the kids are doing. So nice to be able to into the classrooms and see the great work being done.
 - b. Kim – John volunteered in all LE classes with an experiment, kids loved it.
 - c. Alison – kids jazzed about Book Fair this week.
 - d. Donnetta – staff chili cook-off, Leslie Raines won! 15 participants.
 - e. Megan – love to celebrate school nurse Gina, and health aides Ariel and Susan – extra effort, so much, long hard work, instrumental part of school community.
 - i. Meggin – can we put that in the Fox Flash?
 - f. Ben – Fox Flash really coming together, easy to read, communication person really hitting their stride.
 - g. Adam – Corrinne interviewed some of the teachers for new families, students, was fun
 - h. John – admin and office staff, Mr. Jesse, put up some hysterical snowmen in the windows of the office, Lisa Kingston, with Principal Search Committee quick turn-around, thankful for her flexibility.

4. Principal Update – Donnetta
 - a. COVID response team, doing a great job, had to quarantine a classroom, handled it quickly and well.
 - b. Book Fair – been so fun, CSN and Cyndi have worked so hard to make it a really safe and fun environment, also feels normal.
 - c. Staff – still working to be fully staffed, offer out for a 3-day assistant, anticipating extending an offer to a qualified candidate for the half-day Primary classroom.
 - d. Instructional Leadership Team – volunteer group, started year at a retreat, revamp what the ILT would do, planning some full staff activities, plan through the next few meetings to have something that can tie back into the them of resilience during tough times.
 - e. Lisa – been working very hard with the PSC, managing very well, decided that the staff will vote on who will sit on the committee.

- f. Family Partnership Survey – opening Nov. 29, we want to try and get as many participants as we can this year.
 - g. Questions
 - i. John – Celebrate Donnetta and Megan, communication re COVID protocols.
5. Staff Liaison Updates – Adam and Kim
- a. Adam – normal year of teaching is very difficult, this year everything is exponentially more challenging. Moved into a feeling of ‘it is what it is.’ Some other UE teachers, students, there’s an mix of emotions that everyone is dealing with. Frustration, spread so thin, amazing to see that everyone shows up every day. Teachers grateful that we have all the admin team, board, for everyone’s support.
 - b. Doug – what was the staff reaction to the Town Hall?
 - i. Did not hear much from the staff specifically from Town Hall
 - c. Kim – had a department meeting, LE had some questions for the board:
 - i. Losing 2 assistants, one on Friday, one in early January – if some of the extra money could be used to be hired at a higher pay level for assistants. Both are leaving because of the money situation.
 - 1. Alison – hiring decisions really go to Donnetta, we don’t determine operations
 - 2. Donnetta – Lisa met with a couple of the leads that will lose assistants, coming up with alternative back-up plan.
 - ii. Is Kresta staying on past January?
 - 1. Alison – we have conversation later tonight to discuss plans for next year. As soon as Board knows, we will make sure is communicated ASAP.
 - d. Adam – curious if there are specific things that you want the Staff Liaisons to do – can bring things back to you.
 - i. Alison – main role, is to be staff perspective. AS we discuss issues, decisions, you bring your perspective so that we can make informed decisions.
 - e. BOD Classroom visits - one of the big jobs of the Board is to make sure we understand what’s going on in the classrooms, come into the building, interact with the staff. Have chosen to do that through classroom visits. Don’t want to add on stress, think if there is a time in the spring that we could schedule that.
 - i. Ben – given school outbreak status, how should we proceed? Could do virtual
6. CSN Update – Meggin
- a. CSN continues to have amazing energy, amazing group of people. We’re focused on next, Book Fair, we have run out of many things because kids are buying them, personally seeing lots of parents buying wish list items for their teachers. Learned a lot, lots of ideas for next year.
 - b. How we can support the staff – how do we let them know how loved and supported they are. December 14, will be getting hot lunch from Ali Baba Grill, will sponsor Holiday Party in January, glam the staff room this year. Looking at fancy coffee maker, etc, make it awesome. Researching bringing in a chair massage for two days.

- c. Looking forward to, CO Gives Day December 7. Really focusing on corporate matches. Pushing monthly donations. Trying to communicate the why of our fund raising.
 - i. Boards of school generally do a match of donations, please email Meggin how much you can donate on December 7.
 - 1. Give to Free Horizon Foundation and NOT the school itself.
- d. Goal that we are raising towards this year is for Montessori materials.
- e. Spring Fling – will be sending out requests to contribute ideas for Spring Fling so that it's not so heavy on overhead.
- f. Why for next year, Bond money that will be coming 2023-2024 – how can we support and grow that contribution.

7. Optimal Leadership Model at FHM

- a. Alison – Dan, Donnetta, Alison met on this – consensus: sometimes you don't need to reinvent the wheel, just tweak it or reorient the focus. Seth Webb, good leadership: Have Principal with good Montessori experience and operational sense, A. Principal with good Montessori experience, instructional coach with a lot of Montessori knowledge – key to getting in classrooms, helping teachers implement strong Montessori practices. We have all of the pieces that he feels are the important pillars of leadership at a Montessori school. Maybe we don't need changes in the organizational structure, but where do we focus each of those positions to optimize Free Horizon.
- b. Donnetta – all the elements are there, need to re-shift the attention of those elements, and base it a bit on what the community needs right now.
- c. Community engagement at the principal role, needs to be the face of engagement. How can we engage these families in a way that will really help them?
- d. Strategy and growth of the school depends on where leadership puts focus. Admin and Board have to work together to decide how the school is going to grow.
- e. Dan – trying to set new principal up for success. Trying to align with district, where possible. School of Innovation, a little different, but try to maintain an organizational structure to what the district might see in another school. Beneficial when leadership has to deal with district.
- f. Tied to goals – how do we increase family engagement, focus on Montessori in the classroom.
- g. Will keep this operational model.

8. Principal Search Professional Assistance Option

- a. A lot of responsibility and expertise that we don't have, recruiting a Montessori administrator that can be successful within a public school framework. Lots of resources out there to assist, will cost.
- b. Proposal to vote to set aside money for this, explore options, select at the December meeting. Seth Webb's organization, a lot of what is going to fill a job search posting has been written, don't need professional help on that, once candidates come in, how to evaluate, their knowledge of Montessori and how they share that, that's where we need to help and where his organization steps in. Have database of interview questions, can come sit in each interview, give professional interview on how they saw how the

candidate performed. Not saying who was best, but professional review of each candidate. As we narrow down to finalist, can prepare a sample day.

- c. Ben – there are good things about the proposal, price point is good, having the outside knowledge from someone who has gone through this process before would be helpful. Concerns lie with them not being involved in getting candidates. Candidates are really going to drive this process, if they are removed from this process, that could be where the need for assistance is initially. What does our candidate pool look like, will really drive the need for further assistance.
- d. Meggin – can they point us towards where to post? Alison – there are places we can post, free of charge, Montessori specific places that they can help us find. Locally, will help us to reach out to more Montessori contacts.
- e. Kresta – AMS Code of Ethics is that we don't actively recruit leaders from other Montessori schools
- f. What does recruitment look like? If we can't 'headhunt', what keywords would help recruit the right candidates?
- g. Ben – could be really helpful, but will people flock to this position? Maybe not an issue?
- h. Doug – could Seth help us with ID'ing candidates? Alison – would guess that is not something that their company does. He sees that getting candidate pool is not the hard part.
- i. Cyndi – what is cost? Seth's proposal is \$4,000 about 20 hours of labor and knowledge base that they have. His organization used to be a part of AMS, but now separate org, work closely with AMS, since we have gone through these steps, have a lot of knowledge, work with them to ID our growth areas, where are our strengths, who can get us there the best.
- j. Kim – will candidate be required to have Principal license, requirements are set up as a matrix, have points for different areas of qualifications and experience, does not explicitly say that you have to have the licensure, BUT do have to enroll in the program if not already licensed.
- k. Doug – looked at school admin recruiting firms, one based in Denver, they specialize in very tricky hard to fill positions. Did all the posting, probably headhunting, cost was ~1/3 of the salary of the candidate hired. Hearing the difference between Seth's group, more integrated into what we're doing, felt more genuine from them vs. third-party recruiter. Could probably just hand the whole thing over to them. Ben – another consideration, another lever that we could consider and pull if needed.
- l. Cyndi – want to make sure Board understands, for contracts of this nature, whoever we go through is an approved vendor, have the right things in place from the Jeffco part. Doesn't always happen overnight, process to execute contracts might take longer than we expect.
- m. Alison – for tonight's meeting, I don't know if we'll find a better organization that will be better to help us, organization for Montessori schools in the public sector, reasonable price.
 - i. Put a vote to spend the money, and then investigate other orgs that can help, discuss those, pick one at the next Board meeting,.

- ii. Cyndi – if you are going to vote on the funding, could we discuss taking it out of the carry-forward?
- iii. John – could we do due diligence before December board meeting, and then make final decision at the December meeting, move to set aside an amount, and then final vote next month?
- iv. Kim – most of career in Montessori public schools, has not made a difference, matters if they are a good leader and are able to get the community of teachers as a group together.
- v. Alison – need to know tonight if we are willing to set aside money.
- n. Vote – have proposal in-hand for \$4,000, would the Board be willing to set aside up to \$5,000 from the carry-forward to spend on professional assistance in the principal search process
 - i. John moves to set aside up to \$5,000 from carry-forward, approval TBD, Doug seconds, unanimous approval.
- o. Board in favor with moving forward with moving forward with National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector as vendor. Cyndi will get the process started to review the proposal, district purchasing approval, etc.
 - i. Principal Search Committee will undertake due diligence for December

9. Principal Search Committee Update - Ben

- a. 3 Community applicants, come to determination about who will represent the community, Aniela Verner, Amanda Christopher, Kim Oliver
- b. Discussion of candidates
 - i. Amanda and Kim would bring different strengths to the role, Kim may be more available to make the time commitment necessary.
 - ii. Consensus among the Board that Kim Oliver will represent the community on the search committee
- c. Alison – Lisa says staff will make their decision tomorrow and the committee will be complete.

10. 22/23 School Calendar – 1st Read- Cyndi

- a. In years past, have had votes on calendar, presented multiple calendars, sat down with Donnetta and Kresta, put together a first draft and then Kresta and Donnetta gave input.
 - i. 75 student contact days, believe still has required instructional minutes. District is working with their teacher agreements that teachers will have more planning and PD days. Trying to follow that.
 - ii. This calendar sticks to Jeffco School Calendar. Generally vary from it, but sometimes run into problems when we diverge from Jeffco.
 - iii. Present to staff tomorrow, 11/19

11. 2021/2022 School Year Adjusted Budget – 1st Read – Cyndi

- a. FY22 Enrollment

- i. Used preschool enrollment as of Nov 9, October count that we believe will be finalized shortly. October count 348.9, budgeted over 365. PPR was adjusted upwards over the summer – 2 weeks ago CDE confirmed they are still planning on the increased PPR. Still ahead of budget because of the large increase in PPR.
- ii. If we were at capacity, would have an additional \$252k in revenue. Actively doing tours and admitting students, won't get funds this year, but could for next year.
- iii. Presented 2 scenarios for salaries, difference is in admin salaries, not a single, but several that are in flex at the moment.
- iv. Balance of extra carry-forward funds
- v. 2nd read at December meeting

12. Executive Session to Discuss Confidential Personnel Issues – entered at 9:04pm

- a. Declaration of Executive Session – Executive Session: in accordance with Colorado Revised Statute 24-6-402(f), “Personnel Matters” for discussion of changing personnel changes at FHM. We will enter session with all 6 current BOD members plus Donnetta MacDonald as Interim Principal Board Member Cyndi Vosburgh, Director of Finance and Advancement, invited as a guests. Motion by John to enter executive session to discuss personnel matters. Second by Doug, unanimous approval. Started at 9:04 PM
- b. John moves to end Executive Session, Bekky seconds, unanimous approval. Executive Session concluded at 10:12PM

13. Assignments

- a. Reach out to Meggin re CO Gives Day
- b. Bekky to send minutes to Lisa

14. Adjournment at 10:15pm – Ben moves to adjourn, John seconds, unanimous approval.

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