

Minutes

February 27, 2024

The MSC Board met this date in person in Building B of the school campus. Participating members included Steve, Ginny, Conetta, Dawn, Chanda, Mary, Kobie, Kim, Charles, Leslie (“HoS”) all in person. Bryan attended remotely. Brittney (“CFO”), was also in attendance.

Kim called the meeting to order.

A motion was made to approve the January minutes as well as a second. The minutes were affirmed unanimously, and the Board decided to append email votes on Board matters to the minutes going forward so that they are recorded officially by the Board.

Leslie provided the HoS report. Leslie explained enrollment deadlines had passed, but there were still some contracts that needed to be signed, so she will have a more concrete update next time once all contracts are finalized. Leslie reported the Valentine's Day party was great. There was an informational session for prospective MSC families recently with 14 attendees from 9 families. Most staff will be attending the AMS conference from March 8-10. Based on verbal conversations with staff, it appears that all are planning to return next year, and Leslie also has had 3 trained Montessori teachers reach out to the school asking about jobs, which is great news. Staff contracts are usually signed in April. There is a current teacher in middle school training and Leslie has joined the SC Montessori Alliance Board. The Board asked how teacher requests for training/professional development get approved, and Leslie explained there is no documented process for that, and it may be something worth standardizing in the future. The Board discussed having the attorney working on the school handbook review this process and make recommendations. Leslie confirmed that currently most requests are able to be met.

Leslie facilitated discussion on the new parent portal, which the Board had been given access to prior to the meeting. There were some minor issues around the mobile interface and the login process; Leslie will work with office staff on this before rolling out to all parents. Otherwise, the Board was very impressed with updates to the school's web presence and new parent portal.

The Board agreed to be a sponsor of the upcoming auction and Leslie circulated a pledge sheet for Board member commitments to the sponsorship.

Leslie provided an enrollment update and the Board had some questions about the numbers of students in certain grades next year. Specifically, the Board had some concerns around 6th grade numbers, and Leslie provided good insight about the fact that middle school starts at 6th grade and without a middle school at MSC, retention through 6th grade can be difficult. The

Board asked about other grades, and Leslie explained there is a concerted effort to level out the numbers in each class going forward, which was not always done in the past. Leslie explained that having a designated admissions person is going to help ensure we do not just take new 3K students throughout the school year where we need balance at other grade levels. Leslie confirmed we always make contact with exiting families to track why they are leaving.

There was discussion around the May “backout date” for enrollment contracts, which is that late in the school year to account for when the Brockman lottery occurs. There was discussion around revisiting when that date should be in the future. There was discussion around whether we should consider a toddler or middle school program, as those came up in the parent survey. The discussion included how that would fit onto campus - Leslie sees potential to renovate Bldg. D and add onto the back of it for a toddler program, which would help with primary readiness. There was discussion about long term strategic planning and needing to decide whether we want to cultivate what we have or grow another program like middle school or toddler, both of which have their own unique benefits and challenges. Leslie confirmed she has talked with teachers about long term strategic plans for the school, also discussing class sizes and classroom spaces. The Board discussed more strategic planning with stakeholders in the future, perhaps using a facilitator. Leslie also provided positive updates on facilities, such as getting in additional sand, mulch, and the sunshade.

Brittney provided the finance update. She explained we are still in one audit but had a completely clear report out of the audit, which the Board was very pleased to hear. Brittney committed to moving money from the money market account to the high interest account to start better earning money on our reserves. The Board had questions around the amount of the mortgage payment for the school, and Brittney was able to pull those figures in real-time. Brittney explained she has also corrected some misallocations in past budgeting from years prior, so the school’s finances are in very good order. Brittney is also communicating with staff regarding what their budgets are and where they stand with those. The Board also had questions about what gets allocated to the Building and Grounds portion of the budget. Brittney provided insight and clarified it was lawncare, pest control, HVAC, etc. The Board discussed the school’s bus and options for replacing it or renting a bus for field trips. Leslie explained we use the bus probably 10x/year, and can look at funding a new one or other options, but that it would likely be an expensive endeavor either way. Brittney stated she could look into the numbers of buying a new bus versus renting one for the upcoming years.

Leslie stated she got revisions back from the attorney hired to revise the employee handbook and contracts. They returned four different employee contracts, volunteer forms, and the handbook. Big picture items worth revisiting are staff tuition credits, the leave policy, professional development requests and allocations.

The Board then discussed recruitment for new Board members. A couple Board members are rolling off and one is not continuing their term. The Board discussed having an “interest link” on the Board page of the website or portal. The Board discussed its priorities of being intentional and transparent in Board recruitment and placement. The Board also discussed the interest form for families that had traditionally been sent after families signed their contracts; this could include an option for interest in Board membership. The Board agreed to move further discussion on this item to the Wednesday Officer’s meetings.

The Board next discussed how the school navigates situations where students have exceptionalities or potential exceptionalities. Leslie explained that neurodivergence is becoming a more common topic of discussion with staff and families and we need to look at how we can best accommodate the needs of students and families. The Board discussed topics that will require further examination, like when we require outside evaluations, when is an accommodation appropriate, and all options available for making relationships work with all families. Leslie is looking at bringing more resources in-house and has looked at SC ABLE and Inclusion at Montessori, but added that teachers are getting some of this training at conferences they are attending. Leslie added that staff training on critical conversations would be beneficial. The Board recognized students also need to know how to work with students with exceptionalities. The Board asked Leslie whether a part-time counselor was being considered as an additional staff member for the school; Leslie explained that is not in the plan currently, as that is not where the budget priority for staffing falls at this time.

The Board also discussed staff team building and the cadence of staff meetings, which this year are every other week and designed to disseminate information for staff. In the past they have been weekly. There was discussion around when staff team building and development days occur. Leslie stated the staff unanimously does not want teacher workdays built into the school calendar, and that they prefer a concise calendar and to do planning throughout the school week. The Board emphasized the value it sees in staff team building and planning throughout the year, and that perhaps biweekly staff meetings could alternate with biweekly team building/shared learning/planning meetings next school year.

The Board then moved into executive session to discuss Leslie’s mid-year review.

After the executive session discussion, the Board voted to offer Leslie an extension of her contract for interim head of school for the next year, through June 30, 2025. There was a second to the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, it was moved to adjourn the meeting, a second followed as well as a unanimous vote to conclude the meeting.

Email Votes

November 1st email motion:

To formally release a Primary family from their contract, as their child has experienced ongoing medical challenges this school year resulting in the student missing over half of the school days.

Vote: unanimous

November 12th email motion:

- 1) As her supervisor, approve Leslie's recommended professional development for herself, and
- 2) approve an increase of \$20,000 to the overall professional development budget line item for all staff

Vote: unanimous

January 9th email motion:

To formally invite Virginia ("Ginny") to the MSC Board.

Vote: unanimous

February 24th email motion:

To formally engage RCG as the contractor for facilitating the Head of School search.

Vote: unanimous

February 29th email motion:

As it pertains to Leslie's current and upcoming contract:

- 1) fulfill remainder of MSC's contractual obligations to Leslie for the current term, and
- 2) approve terms for Leslie's contract for the upcoming interim extension.

Vote: unanimous

March 5th email motion:

- 1) approve Dawn's draft with updated RCG timeline for HoS search
- 2) send update to staff asap
- 3) send to families a day later, or after the parent portal email, whichever comes later.

Vote: unanimous

March 7th email motion:

Approve additional \$5K for RCG contract to include more stakeholder communication

Vote: unanimous