

# Laramie Montessori Board of Trustees

## Regular Board Meeting Agenda

January 25, 2024

6:30 PM

**Location:** Laramie Montessori Charter School

**Zoom:** <https://acsd1-org.zoom.us/j/93415596199?pwd=WThlaEJURExzNUV6R1JyNWVoVEFnQT09>

### 1. Opening (6:30 PM)

*The Mission of Laramie Montessori School is to support the development of the whole child through an authentic Montessori environment that honors the child's intrinsic motivation to learn and supports each individual's unique intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development.*

#### 1.1 15-Second Montessori Moments

- Carter: Second son will be joining the Montessori preschool.
- Heidi: One of our preschool students often encounters difficulties, leading us to implement a program where a fourth-grade student provides him with mathematics tutoring three times a week. The preschooler expressed appreciation for the older student's kindness.

#### 1.2 Roll Call

- Onsite: Emily, Megan, Shawn, Rich, Amy
- Remote: Carter

#### 1.3 Approval Of Agenda

- Shawn motions to approve, Megan seconds. No discussion. Unanimous approval.

### 2. Minutes

#### 2.1 Approval of Minutes

- Megan motions to approve, Shawn seconds. No discussion. Unanimous approval.

### 3. Audience Communication

#### 3.1 Grooms and Harkins – Audit

- Auditors
  - The audit was conducted by Grooms and Harkins, with the Independent Auditor's Report located on the third page. This report's second paragraph indicates a "clean" opinion, signifying no significant findings were discovered.
  - The year under review was considered normal in terms of financial activities.

- A notable alteration during the period was the adoption of a new accounting standard concerning leases. This adjustment requires that leases now be recognized on the balance sheet.
- Details regarding this new lease standard are outlined on page 12 of the financial statements and page 14 of the PDF document. The essence of this change is to present a discounted value of future lease payments on the balance sheet.
- The primary adjustment in the audit concerned the comprehensive inclusion of all leases in accordance with the new standard.
- Norman
  - Q: What happened with the fraud?
  - A: It's not the type of fraud that requires disclosure.
- Motion to approve the auditors report from the 25<sup>th</sup> of January:
  - Megan Motions, Shawn Seconds. No discussion. Unanimously approved.

### 3.2 Teacher Representative

- Progress reports for students will be distributed shortly.
- Professional development (PD) last week for training on the WY-TOPP assessment.
- We are ensuring that accommodations are in place for students requiring additional support.
- There is a general sense of excitement for the upcoming spring season among staff and students.
- Kaylie is actively engaging sixth graders in "going-out" projects, fostering practical learning experiences.
- The date for Title Night has been rescheduled to the week following spring vacation, acknowledging that some parents tend to leave on Fridays.
- Plans are underway to enrich the end-of-year parent meeting with not only an ice cream social, but the introduction of a science fair. This will include a collective project undertaken by the preschool class, although the specific project is yet to be decided.

### 3.3 Open Communication

- No open communication

## 4. Monthly Financial Report

### 4.1 November Financials

### 4.2 December Financials

- Norman:
  - We are currently at 52% of our financial target, slightly above the expected 50% halfway through the fiscal year. This deviation is notable due to higher-than-usual payroll expenses.
  - Enrollment of full-day 3-year-olds increased costs.
  - **Potential Budget Adjustments:**
    - The CCOC grant may alleviate half of our financial obligations for Lindsay.

- Partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters could reduce afterschool program costs.
  - Most goods for the year have been purchased.
  - Potential budget overruns in repairs and maintenance or custodial services could be carried over to next year's budget.
  - There has been no increase in pre-school tuition fees, which may need to change.
- Jeff:
  - The ELL position was funded this year but is no longer necessary, but this person has been assigned other duties to avoid mid-year pay cuts.
  - To comply with DFS regulations for 3-year-olds, two part-time employees were hired.
- Motion to approve November and December Financials:
  - Megan motions to approve, Carter seconds. No discussion. Unanimous approval.

## 5. Reports

### 5.1 Director's Report

- **School Choice Week Celebrations**
  - Activities include distributing scarves and wrist bracelets to express gratitude for school choice.
- **Charter School Capitol Visit (February 15th)**
  - A short tour of the Capitol is planned for students, including visits to the House and Senate chambers.
  - Due to the inability to secure a room at the annex, there will be no luncheon; students are to bring their own lunches.
  - Participants include Snowy Range, Cheyenne school, and Chugwater school. They will meet with Megan Degenfelder and Governor Gordon and visit the state museum. Third graders will be included, deemed educationally ready to learn about politics.
- **WY-TOPP**
  - The WY-TOPP testing schedule and order has changed this year.
  - Writing tests for 4th-6th graders are set for Wednesday, March 6th, lasting 50 to 60 minutes.
- **Safety and Infrastructure**
  - Father Dominic and Jeff discussed safety measures, including intercoms, keycards, and a vestibule, and noted some other areas for improvement.
  - A new lease negotiation is underway, despite challenges due to the school's growth and the need for more space.
  - The possibility of a sale of the school lot by the church -- with or without the school -- was mentioned. WYDOT plans to acquire a small portion of the playground, compensating with \$15,000 for handicap accessibility improvements.
- **Community Engagement**
  - Trying to schedule "Java with Jeff" in February

## 5.2 Committee Reports

### 5.2.1 Finance

- Norman and Megan met with potential new accounting firms, including *Your Part Time Controller*, which was deemed suitable but required a minimum of 8 hours at \$180/hour. The Montessori only required 2 hours.
- Despite the price increase, High Point is roughly half the cost but with a higher hourly rate.
- Norman concluded it's not worth pursuing other options, valuing the familiarity the current accountants have with our business operations.

### 5.2.2 Facilities

- The committee prioritized getting on a list for facility improvements and discussed how to integrate preschool numbers into the school's overall figures.
- There was a conversation about finalizing the lease agreement within the year.
- Carter suggested adding a board member with expertise in construction and facilities to provide specialized insight.
- The committee is considering obtaining a new Facility Condition Assessment to complement the existing facilities index, aiming to better understand and manage the school's physical infrastructure needs.

## 6. Old Business

### 6.1 Legal Update

#### 6.1.1 Zoom Recording

- If the board meeting is recorded, then the recording is subject to public records laws.
- Storing them on YouTube and external hard drives were discussed but deemed impractical.

#### 6.1.2 Teacher Focus Groups

- It was noted that teacher focus groups need to be publicly advertised.

#### 6.1.3 Property Valuation for Facilities

- Megan Hayes has provided information regarding property valuation.

### 6.2 Montessori Accreditation

- The committee charter is adapted from the preschool version.
- Jeff reported multiple staff, including the entire leadership team, are interested in joining the accreditation committee.
- The committee's tasks include:
  - Identifying an accrediting agency
  - Deciding on the feasibility of accreditation (yes/no),
  - Cost, duration, and justification
- Motion to Approve Ad-hoc Accreditation Exploration Committee
  - Carter motions to approve, Megan seconds. No discussion. Unanimously approved.
- Committee verbiage will be sent to legal.

- Emily will be serving as the board representative.

### 6.3 Strategic Plan Board Integration

- Board members will participate on each of the strategic plan committees, but no assignments yet.

### 6.4 Director Evaluation Process

- Emily has asked Jeff to draft questions related to the strategic plan and his contract and is planning to organize personnel work sessions.
- The goal is to complete the evaluation process within a month.
- Norman prefers this approach over surveys, noting it allows the board to understand teacher dynamics and gather constructive feedback.
- Amy highlighted that discussions would be more engaging for teachers, allowing for reflection and collective idea generation.
- Emily aims for an authentic evaluation process.

## 7. New Business

### 7.1 Policy and Procedures Change Regarding *Leave of Absence*

- The consensus leaned towards diverging from the current school district policy to a new approach where an employee on leave would be guaranteed employment upon return, though not necessarily the same position.
- Concerns were raised about the feasibility of this in a small school context by Carter, questioning the availability of suitable openings.
- Norman proposed considering the elimination of the leave of absence policy altogether.
- Shawn inquired about the potential for integration with the broader district's resources as a public charter school, suggesting it might offer more flexibility in managing leaves of absence.
- Emily advocated for board support to proceed with discussions, suggesting reaching out to Megan Hayes for guidance.
- Jeff, touching on a related issue, emphasized the urgency in resolving these policy changes, mentioning a specific deadline by March 1st to align with the school's contractual obligations.

## 8. Audience Communication

- No audience communication.

## 9. Adjourn (7:55 PM)

- Megan motions to adjourn, Carter seconds. No discussion. Unanimous approval.