



Marine Area Community School • MN District #4254  
Board of Directors Regular Meeting  
Marine Village Hall, Marine on St Croix 55047  
April 15, 2017, 9:30AM

## Board Meeting Minutes – Approved

### *Mission*

*Marine Area Community School will utilize the natural resources, history, arts, and civic stewardship of the community as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, art, and other curriculum subjects. The place-based learning environment will be student-centered, designed by teachers, and reinforced and supported by the local community.*

### **1.0 Call to Order 9:30 a.m.**

**1.1 Roll Call:** Lisa White, Kristina Smitten, Glen Mills, Jon Dettmann, Lisa Dochniak

### **2.0 Approve Agenda**

2.1 The agenda was approved unanimously.

### **3.0 Approve Previous Meeting Minutes**

3.1 Board meeting and workshop minutes from March 11, 2017, were approved unanimously.

### **4.0 Community Comment**

4.1 Stillwater resident Stephanie LeGros noted that this is the one-year anniversary of the MDE approval of the charter school.

### **5.0 Reports**

5.1 **Financial Report:** Member Dettmann reported that the current balance is about \$16,500.

5.2 **Governance Update/Federal IRS Filing:** Co-chair White reported that we are at day 30 out of a possible 90 of waiting for nonprofit status approval. Co-chair White sent a letter to the Marine School Association asking for a formal letter that the MSA is the temporary fiscal agent for MACS in order to set up a Razoo account to collect donations on-line. 5:58

5.3 **Staff Hiring:** We have received exceptional candidates for both school administrator and teacher positions. The committee headed by Director White has been spending many hours going over applicants' materials and interviewing at the Wilder site. A few offers have been extended, all of which have been accepted. Interviews continue through the next Saturday (22<sup>nd</sup>).

Director Dettmann and Chair Smitten thanked the hiring committee members.

5.4 **Facility Status:** Chair Smitten emailed the lease to board members for their review. The anticipated lease will be 2 years in order to have flexibility to

potentially occupy the existing Marine Elementary building in the near term. Also, a shorter lease is recommended because the Wilder property is being sold to the Manitou Fund, who have been very supportive of the school being at the site.

Board members recommended corrections to the lease during the meeting, such as date clarifications.

Chair Smitten noted that MACS will need a Conditional Use Permit and zoning text amendments in order to occupy the site. On April 27 the May Planning Committee meets, and on May 4 the May Town Board of Supervisors meets. If approved by the Town of May, lease takes effect May 5.

Chair Smitten announced that if the lease goes into effect on May 5, there will be an open house on Sunday May 7 because it is important for potential enrolled families to see the facilities and to meet some of the staff. Enrollment packets may be due the week of May 8. We will ask community members to come help clean and do a facility check on Saturday May 6.

5.5 **Transportation:** Jim Maher has been helping with transportation planning. The district's proposed bell times are not workable, so MACS is looking into a hybrid transportation system. MACS is looking at extending the day by 30 minutes in order to have a longer lunch period and offer more opportunities for kids to explore the various offerings at Grove such as more outdoor time. District 834 will need to know about any MACS transportation needs by July 1, but Chair Smitten recognizes that families need to know in order to plan.

5.6 **Nutrition Services:** Co-chair White and Jill Wilson have been looking into food service options. The federal program does offer reimbursement, but it is a large amount of paperwork. One option may be to do a joint agreement with Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) – a wide range of options (such as relying on another district's federal lunch program expertise, menu planning, and procurement, while we do all the cooking). MPS has an excellent reputation and use a lot of local sources for their food services with strong farm-to-table components. Because the Minnesota Food Association is a next-door neighbor at Wilder, MACS is looking at how to provide local food sourcing.

Breakfast may be made available to students.

Carissa Roach volunteered to help with nutrition services.

Co-chair White will have more details in May.

## 6.0 **New Business: None**

6.1 **Procurement Policy:** The board unanimously adopted a Procurement Policy.

6.2 **Teacher Powered Ignition Grant Submittal due April 30, 2017:** Member Dochniak is working on a \$5,000 grant for training for the teaching team at MACS.

6.3 **Decision on Class Sizes:** Member Dochniak discussed her research into class sizes and personal experience. The class balance depends a lot on the particular class and the particular teacher; sometimes a large class is workable and sometimes it requires a lot of additional support. She added that 25 to 26 per class is a manageable size for most any elementary age. Chair Smitten noted the benefits of building on a curriculum when a consistent class size throughout K to 6 is maintained. The Wilder facilities can accommodate 25 kids per class (and so could the Marine Elementary building; the church cannot). Classes can be expanded by 1 in the event of twin siblings. Class size parameter decision can

be revisited annually.

Co-chair White moved to set the class size for each grade K-6 at 25. The motion passed unanimously.

- 6.4 **Discussion about Adding a Section for One Grade Level in 2017-2018:** Chair Smitten noted that there is a very long waiting list for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. When enrollment forms come in, there will be a lot of movement on the list. MACS's authorizer, the Guild, suggested that about 30% of the students currently on the application list will make other choices. Currently there are 239 applicants total, with 51 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade list and 39 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade list (without having done any marketing).

Chair Smitten asked the board to consider the pros and cons of whether MACS should ultimately be a single-section or two-section school. MACS does not need to go back to MDE for approval to add additional sections within K-6 structure. There are a couple of scenarios that could accommodate two sections per grade: If we moved to the existing Marine Elementary building, expanding the building; a split campus with K-3 on one campus and 4-6 on the other. There are staffing, curriculum, transportation, and materials implications if the school went to two sections.

Co-chair White stated that the Wilder facility could accommodate 9 classes with the currently rented buildings. Could lease an additional building (we are leasing 5 of 7 presently).

The minimum number in a class would be need to be set. Chair Smitten suggested that it may be 20; need to review budget to see what it allows.

Member Dettmann said that if there is the community demand for and enough enrollment for a second 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, he would support the idea.

Co-chair White noted that there are several families who have children on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade waiting list 26 or higher who also have children in other grades, and accommodating those 3<sup>rd</sup> graders may affect enrollment in other grades.

Member Dochniak offered that having two sections of each class allows for more flexibility in social dynamics, and teachers can play off each other's strengths.

Hiring committee volunteer Brian Gould also offered his expertise, that charter schools sometimes fail because the initial ideas are too big and that the uncertainty with the physical space is a concern. He suggested that there are practical areas to look at: 1) being small can actually limit flexibility; 2) materials costs (books, etc.); 3) facility space; 4) staffing – how does looping work in this particular situation with the particular teacher; 5) handling class size bubbles and lulls. He added that having a waiting list can be a good thing.

In response to an audience question, Chair Smitten noted that it would be best to postpone the decision until after the initial enrollment phase is complete so that we have a better idea of need. She continued that it may be in the school's best interest to try to capture the interested students now in order not to lose them, but the most appropriate decision should be whether Grove should ultimately be a two-section school for each grade and invited the board members' thoughts.

Board member Mills voiced concerns about the community's ability to support a two-section school, and concerns about parents requesting one teacher over another. Member Dochniak responded that as a teacher-powered school, Grove will have a structure that ensures the teachers are accountable to

themselves and each other so that colleagues work together to play off each other's strengths.

Member White noted that as far as the community's ability to support a two-section school, the situation may have changed with District 834 closing both of the northern elementary schools. She added that as far as physical space, the Wilder facility could accommodate two additional sections with existing leased space, and some of the unleased space could house additional grade sections.

Member Dettmann added that he doesn't see any downside to having a two-section school; the demand and need may speak for itself, but practical considerations like textbooks and materials are a concern. He asked whether, as the kids grow, the space could accommodate a second section of 6<sup>th</sup> grade (in the event of a "bubble" class starting with 3<sup>rd</sup> and moving up to 6<sup>th</sup>).

Chair Smitten noted the concern of finding a teacher who could do the looping.

Member Dochniak noted the trend away from textbooks and toward on-line media. She also talked about her experience in looping from 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> and the benefits of being able to build on the curriculum, but agreed that it takes a certain kind of teacher who is able and interested in doing that.

Audience member Stephanie LeGros noted that the availability of busing may make Grove a more viable option for district families.

Chair Smitten summarized by saying we should understand the response to the initial enrollment, and make a decision after that. She also stressed that Grove is not Marine Elementary or any other existing elementary, but a totally new school that may not be a good fit for some but will be a better fit for others. The founding board's vision is for a small overall school environment; Chair Smitten's image of the school is that the school never exceeds two sections per grade. Decisions should be based on what is best for Grove in the long run. Enrollment packets will be going out soon, and the Open House will be on May 7. Families will be better able to make informed choices, and then the Board will be better able to make a fiscally and programmatically responsible section decision at the next board meeting.

## 7.0 Old Business:

- 7.1 **Federal CSP Submittal:** MACS is hoping to be able to release good news regarding the grant soon. We are waiting for MDE to publish its press release.
- 7.2 **Financial Management Services Consultant Decision:** Member Dettmann reported that the committee recommends the Anton Group as the financial manager. They are a technologically savvy, hands-on, capable, and willing team who can interface with our special education services. Member Dettmann moved to contract with the Anton Group for two years at \$4250 per month; the motion passed unanimously.
- 7.3 **Special Education Services Consultant Decision:** Member Dochniak reported that the committee recommends Indigo as our special ed consultant in part because of the lump sum pricing structure, professional development opportunities for Grove staff through Bethel College as needed, and collaborative working style. They also have a prior working relationship with the Anton Group. The cost would be \$48300 for 40 months, which includes monthly meetings and biannual reviews, and handling of reimbursements and documentation.

Grove/MACS may also have to hire a special ed teacher, depending on need.

Chair Smitten noted that the committee sent out seven requests for proposals for special ed services, and got two back.

Member Dochniak moved to adopt the proposal from Indigo for special education services; the motion passed unanimously.

Chair Smitten added that she will be crafting a request for proposals for teaching team facilitator and training in decision making.

7.4 **District 834 Partnership:** Nothing to report.

## 8.0 Other

8.1 **Volunteers:** Community member Justin Kaufenberg has stepped up to help guide the technology needs at Grove and work with other previously approved consultants.

Capitol improvement fundraising help will also be welcome! Stay tuned for more details.

Volunteer Megan Lapos announced a library book drive for good quality, gently-used kids books, with drop off locations at the Town Hall, Christ Lutheran Church, and Sal's in Withrow. Books that are not appropriate for Grove will be used for the Marine Community Library summer reading program. Chair Smitten added that the Marine Library Association has offered time and talent to help set up the library.

8.2 **Open House May 7:** note disclaimer of possibility of date change.

8.3 **Next board of directors meeting:** May 20, 2017, at 9:30AM at the Wilder Forest location.

9.0 **Adjournment:** 11:30 am.