



MicroSociety Academy Charter School
591 West Hollis Street, Nashua, NH03062
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Board of Trustees Monthly Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 14, 2021
6:30PM
VIA Zoom Call

I. Board Meeting Called to order

- A. 6:00pm. Present via Zoom, Amanda Schneck, Amy Bottomley, Barbara Halevi, Thomas Malone, John Dagianis, Tom Dougherty, David Glasier, Cathy McNamara, Andrew McWeeney, G. Frank Teas, Suzanne Barkley. Susannah Williams.
- B. Tom read notice regarding authorization to meet electronically due to Governor Sununu's State of Emergency Pandemic executive order 12/2020-04. All votes shall be done by roll call vote.
- C. Tom mentioned that going forward we will have a placeholder in our agenda to ratify any executive board meeting votes.

II. Public and School Community Input.

- A. Lisa and Joe Owen, Lynn McGowan, Michelle Snyder, Jennifer Mathews, Laura Mitchell, Kyle Schneck, Kim Witkowskie, Tim Monk, Janelle Levesque, Danielle Troy, Cheryl & Greg Bean.
 - a. Kyle appreciates how well the administration has navigated through the pandemic and changes taking place through Covid. He was disappointed by the admin's presentation and felt that it was more of a sales pitch. He

mentioned that we only have 5 years of data (30 classes) in K-5 and 3 years of data (9 classes) of data in 6-8. The board should be looking at how to assist the admin staff with solutions for 6-8 and not just eliminating the program.

- b. Tim Monk - he attended the meeting last week and feels that long term MACS excels at the elementary level and could do more for the middle school. He said that he feels we should be looking at solutions for middle school.
- c. Michelle Snyder - She feels like we are giving up too soon. There should be additional efforts with marketing and development, which can be ramped up. She feels that the school needs to try harder and the presentation was one sided as to why the school should close.
- d. Jennifer Matthews - She feels that the presentation is one sided and not allowing parents to help change what is happening. She feels that we should let the middle school finish. She wants her kids to stay at MACS through 8th grade. She wants to hear what we can do as a school to keep middle school before coming to the conclusion to eliminate middle school
- e. Joe and Lisa Owen - He feels not enough time has been allocated to the middle school. They transferred to MACS so that they could have one school for elementary and middle school. He said getting rid of middle school will impact elementary school enrollment.
- f. Laura Mitchell - She encourages the school to wait and see what the next few years will do with enrollment numbers. She said that if this is voted through, she will pull all of her kids from the school.
- g. Danielle Troy - Her 4th grader wrote a letter about his feelings on school closing. Middle school grades should be kept. We moved our lives to be at the school and we will not have any celebration or be the older kids in the school.
- h. Kim Witkoskie - She mentioned that she loves the MACS program. She is hopeful that her 6th and 3rd grader can finish the school at MACS. MACS ranks in the top 20% of charter schools in the US. They also rank up there with teacher salaries and attrition rates. She wants to see what the administrative staff has done to save middle school instead of eliminating it. She also feels that we should be building an awareness campaign of MACS.
- i. Lynn McGowan - She agrees that only 3 years of data isn't enough. We should provide more time for problem solving with the middle school.

III. School Director's Report

- A. Micro Moment - A group of remote students have decided to create their own miniature remote enterprise. They are selling origami, pictures, pencils, erasers and more. The kids run the venture at Pearl Marketing Academy, and are in the process of creating Pearl bucks to be used in the store.
- B. Enrollment is currently at 235.
- C. Staff evaluations have been completed and contract discussions will occur by the April 15th renewal deadline.
 - a. The Board and HR committee are switching the STD and Life to the NH HealthTrust so all benefits are packaged with one company.
- D. The main sewer line has caused some setbacks and is in need of replacement. It has forced the school to close and pivot back to online learning. We have received executive order 89 from the Governor to push our start date to May 3rd.
- E. Staff are in the midst of planning end of year celebrations. There will be a graduation ceremony, end of year awards ceremony and a field day this year.
- F. We have received two resignations from staff not returning in the fall. Our guidance counselor and middle school math teacher will pursue other opportunities. A third one also came in from Barbara Graff, our secretary, who is retiring after this year.
- G. MACS held a Town Hall meeting to discuss attrition, academic performance and enrollment trends, specifically around the middle school program. Administration has made the recommendation that MACS moves to a K-5 program and phase out middle school.
- H. The Staff is working on adjusting micro to a more hands-on approach now that the students will be in the building 5 days a week.
- I. The next PTO meeting is Thursday April 22nd at 1pm.
 - a. The PTO will be doing a Spring Calendar Raffle Fundraiser, where people can purchase the calendar entry for \$15. They will draw a raffle prize winner every day from May 10 - June 10.

Tom M motions to accept board meeting minutes 2021/2022 school calendar and Director's report. Cathy 2nds. By roll call:

Thomas - YES	David - YES	Amanda - YES	Cathy - YES
Barbara - YES	John D - YES	Tom D - YES	Andrew - YES
Frank - YES	Suzanne - YES		

All Yes's. Minutes and Director's report accepted.

Ratifications of the Executive Committee meeting minutes

1. Approval for the repair of the sewer line. Executive committee was granted the approval to accept that quote, \$60,400 and then amended to add the additional work - total bill is \$65,800. Work is near completion at this time.
2. Due to the Governor's policy, we were asked to review the mask policy. We discussed whether we should be making changes, which we have made no changes until the CDC makes any changes.
3. Governors executive order 86 for a full school start of April 18th, we approved Amy to ask for a waiver so that we would have enough time to get the furniture back into the building after the sewer is fixed.

IV. Treasure and Financial Report

- A. We remain on track financially YTD.
- B. Amy mentioned that she was exploring grant money for additional relief funds. \$71,000 which has been approved, but it will come in Sept 1 date.
- C. Additional costs that we might expect.
 - a. Increased cleaning and janitorial costs. We are expecting to increase to a full-time janitor in the fall. Somewhere around \$20-\$30k.
 - b. Permanent sub position - increasing this position to a full-time sub would increase our budget by an additional \$25,000.
 - c. Increasing our savings - this is going to be an ongoing discussion. No room in the budget right now to increase it. It will be contingent on increasing revenue.
- D. Tom M asked where we were getting the money to pay for the sewer. David said it is coming from our operational surplus.
- E. John D asked if we had a line on our balance sheet for expenses that come up, such as the sewer, roof and mold.
 - a. David said we do and we fund it, but not as much as the costs of these projects and we will take a look at this line item.

Motion is made to accept the Treasurer and Financial Reports. Barbara 1sts, Frank 2nds.

Thomas - YES David - YES Amanda - YES Cathy - YES
Barbara - YES John D - YES Tom D - YES Andrew - YES
Frank - YES Suzanne - YES

All Yes's.

V. HR & Governance

A. Committee is sending the board the policy around homelessness and foster care for Title 1 changes. Motion to approve. Tom M 2nd by John D.

Thomas - YES David - YES Amanda - YES Cathy - YES
Barbara - YES John D - YES Tom D - YES Andrew - YES
Frank - YES Suzanne - YES

All Yes's.

B. Reviewed Covid travel policy. State guidance has changed on this. Changes in the travel section. Out of state travel must be reported and you must follow quarantine procedures. Motion to approve. Tom M 2nd by Barbara.

Thomas - YES David - YES Amanda - YES Cathy - YES
Barbara - YES John D - YES Tom D - YES Andrew - YES
Frank - YES Suzanne - YES

All Yes

VI. Facilities Committee

- A. Underground issue is making progress.
- B. Landscaping bids for ground maintenance. We have two bids. One for general maintenance and one for irrigation in addition to the general maintenance. Two different quotes.
 - a. Tom D asks the facilities committee to do due diligence and vet out which is the direction we need to go.

Facilities committee after due diligence with the finance committee to make the recommendation and then executive committee make final approval. Barbara 1sts, Andrew 2nds.

Thomas - YES David - YES Amanda - YES Cathy - YES
Barbara - YES John D - YES Tom D - YES Andrew - YES
Frank - YES Suzanne - YES

All Yes's.

VII. Development Committee

- A. Amanda spoke with Sarah at The River Casino who indicated that she needed our IRS Tax ID to confirm that we were still a 501C3. She also said that if we were willing to commit all 10 days to them, we could secure charitable gaming sometime this fall.
- B. The Nashua Chamber is going to start in person Business After Hours (BAH). The event is June 9, 2021, 5:30pm at Holman Stadium. We are going to ask the board to attend since we do not have a board meeting that evening.
- C. The Nashua Chamber has also opened up the Eminence Awards, and we are asking our board to nominate us for Non Profit of the Year.
- D. Survey to the board indicated the following: 1st priority - raise funds for capital improvement projects such as the driveway, roof, etc. 2nd priority - raise funds to support enrichment opportunities such as more computers, programs, etc. 3rd priority - raise funds for the growth and expansion of MACS. We are going to focus our efforts right now on building a brand awareness campaign first.

VIII. K-5 Presentation

Amy asks us to suspend our rules and allow Susannah to speak. By roll call

Thomas - YES David - YES Amanda - YES Cathy - YES
Barbara - YES John D - YES Tom D - YES Andrew - YES
Frank - YES Suzanne - YES

- A. David asked why we are rushing to make this decision right now. He understands a two-year phase out, by why are we making a decision now versus in a year.
 - a. Amy said the biggest concern is the bubble classes. We have two 2nds and two 3rds. She said that we would be able to fill from the bottom up and in two years, have two grades per class. If we put this off, we are risking the chance of having less students in the building. She doesn't know how to staff the bubble classes, we are leveling in math and we would be down in numbers since we only fill at 89% enrollment.
 - b. Susannah said that if we wait for the bubble classes to pass through the grades, we wouldn't be able to fill our bubble classes, if parents and kids knew that they would only be at MACS for one year.

- c. Amy said staffing in the middle school are certified in specialty areas (math, english, etc). If we continue the bubble classes into middle school, we would need to let go elementary school teachers to hire specialized teachers to educate our bubble school grades. Then let those teachers go after a few years and rehire more elementary school teachers.
- B. Andrew asked what Amy's plan would be if the middle school grades were full, what is the plan for the bubble classes.
 - a. Amy said the bubble classes are the problem. In order to afford our overhead, we needed the additional classes. The original plan for MACS was to offer two grades for K-8. But due to pandemic, issues with the building, etc, we have not been able to locate another facility for our school.
- C. Tom M said the other main reason is that they had a great deal of demand and that they wanted to fill the demand for families to be a part of MACS, and not be waitlisted.
 - a. Amy said the demand was in the K-1 classes, which is still accurate today
 - b. Amy said it's going to be a continual issue if we keep the bubble classes
- D. Amanda mentioned that the presentation the board received and then the town hall discussed enrollment trends. Going back through directors reports, it shows our middle school grades are enrolled at 19-21 students. But the presentation showed 10-12 and if they could explain that.
 - a. Amy said that they need to over enroll in younger grades in order to meet the min number.
 - b. Amanda mentioned that the directors report says 19 in 6th grade, 19 in 7th and 18 in 8th. But the chart shows lower numbers in those grades.
 - c. Susannah said that the chart being referred to is the number of students who are leaving MACS in those grades, not the actual enrollment in those grades.
- E. John D said that this should be about the children and whether we are providing an adequate education to our kids. If we cannot provide leveling in math because we cannot afford it or do not have the room, if we cannot provide sports, music and art, then we need to take a close look at what business we are in. We are not doing our job if we are not able to offer these services. John said he was also perturbed that parents think we have not done our due diligence.
 - a. He asked Amy if she thought of combining classes in 6-8 to assist with enrollment?
 - b. Amy said that if we did that, we could not have 36 kids for a combined class.

- F. Barbara said that to comment on Dr John's comment, yes we are in the business of education and we must listen to our admin staff on the quality of education, but we should also be listening to our parents and the emails we are receiving. We have two narratives:
- a. The admin have mentioned that we do not have enough resources to support the middle school kids
 - b. The parents are telling us that their kids are thriving at MACS and this is the type of school they want their child to be in. We just do not have enough of this category to fill the middle school students.
 - c. Regarding enrollment, Barbara said a lot of questions have been, can we really look at the last two years of data and can we really look at the Covid years for data? Secondly, what will taking the middle school away do to our K-5 enrollment. Even though so many parents leave us in middle school, most parents come in knowing that they will be part of middle school. Therefore we do not know the impact of our decision on the K-5 grades and it might impact our enrollment more than we know.
 - i. Amy doesn't think that losing middle school will have that much of an impact on our K-5 grades.
 - d. Barbara asked Amy to address how Covid impacted our numbers
 - i. Amy said that it helped our numbers as we picked up kids because we offered some sort of in person instruction where Nashua public did not.
- G. David asked about alternatives, such as two grades per year, and run a lottery to fill one grade in 6-8th.
- a. Amy asked if we should really be doing a lottery if kids have been with us the entire time?
- H. Frank asked if the issue is really that we do not have the space for all of these classrooms, or is the issue of kids falling off the program
- a. Amy said it's the kids falling off and not the spacing issue
- I. John said that when the school started, they only offered K-5. Then 6th, 7th and 8th grades were added. He said that we have a couple of options
- a. Doubling up on K-5 is fine. That shows a number that allows us to go forward in a positive way, from a financial standpoint.
 - b. Option to find space somewhere else for 6-8 grades, and you look to rent the space until you determine what you actually need for these grades.
 - c. John mentioned that he does share Barbara's concern on the impact of eliminating 6-8 on the K-5 kids. He feels that although he feels enough time has passed to make this decision, we should be exploring all options based on feedback.

- i. Amy said that she wants to advertise during next enrollment that MACS is a K-5 school so people applying know that it is a K-5 only.
 - ii. Amy said that we can do the current 6th grade all of the way up, but they didn't feel that it was the correct decision because they could only operate one teacher.
 - d. John D asked if we could fill in remote teachers for the higher grades
 - i. Amy said that we could do VLACS for the middle school grades.
- J. Andrew said that some of these conversations have taken him by surprise. He went back through minutes and didn't see much of this conversation reflected in agendas, other meeting minutes, outside of our retreat, but the comments sounded optimistic.
 - a. Andrew said that he isn't prepared to make a vote today since it has only been a topic for 3 weeks. Andrew makes the motion to form a committee to explore our 6-8 grades and not vote on this today.
 - i. Amy said out of roughly 198 families, that we only heard from parents who are going to be impacted by the elimination of 6-8 grades. We didn't hear from any parents who have kids in the younger grades because they either know that they are not returning or they are okay with the decision. She said the majority of the families don't have the intentions to stay with us past 5th grade.

Andrew agains makes the motion to wait on this vote and create a committee to research middle school items such as additional space and funding. A committee with the admin staff and parents can give input. Tom M 2nds the motion.

- b. Tom D did mention that Andrew be chair of this committee and coordinate things with finance, facilities, and the administration etc.
 - c. Tom D said that he is amending the motion so that we create a plan with a fixed timeline with no more than a month and if you need more time for the research, we address it as a board.
 - i. Amy said that this doesn't give her enough time to notify teachers. A month would be the drop deadline.
- K. John D said a lot of what Andrew eluted to, were around the time we were discussing our lease. While you might not see the discussions, those meeting minutes are sealed and they have been discussed in the past. He said that the only way he would vote in favor of keeping 6-8 would be to double up on K-5 and find another building for 6-8

- L. Tom M said that we need time in order to figure out if we have some additional classroom space that would take care of our 6-8 grades and at the same time, as our bubble classes move up, it would create space for those classes. Then once the bubble classes reach 5th grade, a decision could be made on if we want one 6th grade, etc. Tom M said the motion is to allow time to breath so that we explore all options.
- M. Barbara wants to acknowledge that Amy and Susannah have put together a plan and that she is struggling to see if we should push this vote off. She hears the admins' concerns with the bubble classes and if we are making our challenges worse. A month won't realistically change things, we need to really look at putting it off for a year.
 - a. Amy said that if we wait a year or two, we are going to create another bubble class issue.
 - b. Amy said that we can spend the next year trying to find space for our 6-8 grades, but she doesn't want to give parents false hope and
- N. Amanda said that Barbara's comment about the potential impact of eliminating 6-8 would have on K-5 enrollment is a concern as well. John D mentioned that if we are not meeting the needs of our 6-8 kids, does that warrant even having the program. Then going back to the parent emails, many want to get involved and donate when possible. Although we do not have a lot of time, it would be nice to see what the other model of keeping 6-8 would look like.
- O. John D again suggested that we go through the K-5 model and find space for 6-8, it would give the admin time to see what they would do for 6-8 grades. John said that we need to make a decision tonight to give Amy time to go on a hiring spree to find teachers.
- P. Barbara doesnt understand how we can tell Amy as a board to move forward with doubling up on K-5 and then keep 6-8 without having a proper space for them.
 - a. John D said the worst case scenario is that we have temporary classrooms.
 - b. Amy said that we are at capacity for spaces and John D mentioned that we could look to see if they would rent space to us. Amy doesnt feel that we can put modelures in the parking spot. And if not, then we look to rent space from them.
- Q. Tom M wanted the admin staff to know that their effort to highlight things to the board is appreciated.
- R. John D asked Tom D to clarify what a Yes vote means and what a No vote means.

- a. Yes - refer to a special committee to look at the financials and determine if there is still a means to continue the 6-8 program
 - b. No - move to approve the K-8 recommendation as stated
- S. Barbara asked if we can try to isolate what realistically could be achieved in a months time frame to help with this decision.
- a. Amy doesn't believe that anything can be accomplished in a month. She also mentioned that a delay in a vote means that she cannot communicate to parents who are currently waitlisted.
 - b. Amy also doesn't believe that waiting a month is going to change much and that we cannot mandate fees being a free public charter school. She also doesn't feel that a suggested donation will be something we would be able to collect.
 - c. Amy mentioned that she wants to put out the best product that they can, while adhering to the mission and vision that were put forth by the original founders. She knows that the K-5 model is great but we are suffering in the 6-8 model because we cannot offer a robust program to these grades.
 - d. David said that the ongoing health and viability of our institution is critical for long term success. David doesn't see MACS as a long term solution for K-8, but as a K-5. But he does support the efforts to try and see what the exploratory committee could do to assist our current phase out of 6-8 grades.
 - e. Amy said that we could commit today to a current phase out of grades 6-8, doubling up K-5 with no guarantees that we can make 6-8 work.
- T. Andrew agreed to amend his motion.
- U. Barbara asked to clarify the new motion: That we move forward with the K-5 double classes and look to explore over the next year or two the K-8 model?
- a. Amy said that the reason they are doing this now, is that ASD is doing open houses in October, the lottery in January, but don't tell you if you got in until May.
 - b. The struggle the admins are facing is what academic product are we delivering in the last year of 8th grade kids.
 - c. Amy mentioned that the model is going to look different for middle school kids
- V. John said that some parts of education are not just book learning. They are fit in an environment where students can learn. He suggested that the kids that stay, might be the ones who thrive in that model. A model where they are able to learn in a less pressure cooker situation. It is not necessarily wrong to offer that model to them.

- a. Amy wanted to clarify that we would not be able to have certified teachers in the middle school
- W. Tom D stated that the motion on the table needs to be amended to include the one year exploratory committee and move forward with the K-5 model.
- X. Andrew withdrew his original motion
- Y. David asked if moving to the 2 year phase out, if it would incur a fiscal impact to the school.
 - a. Amy said that due to the outcome of our decision, we might have a max exit of students in middle school. Therefore we could fill another lower level grade if that happens.
- Z. Tom D seeks a motion that we run through the 2 year phase out, with the current building, migrate to K-5, while we evaluate through a separate committee to explore how we can support the middle school such as space, financials, planning, etc. We would include the parents and families to support our efforts with no guarantee that we would be able to support the middle school program. We would then notify families that they would need to execute their fall back plans for middle school.

John D 1sts the motion. Cathy 2nds. By rollcall.

Thomas - YES	David - YES	Amanda - NO	Cathy - YES
Barbara - YES	John D - YES	Tom D - YES	Andrew - NO VOTE
Frank - ABSTAINS	Suzanne - NO		

6 Yes', 2 No's, 1 Abstain, 1 no vote
 Motion passes by majority vote.

David motions to go into Non Public Session. Barbara 2nds. By roll call:

Thomas - YES	David - YES	Amanda - YES	Cathy - YES
Barbara - YES	John D - YES	Tom D - YES	Andrew - YES
Frank - YES	Suzanne - YES		

Entered executive session at 8:59PM

Re-entered public session at 9:29PM

Barbara motions to seal executive minutes according to RSA: 91-a:3, II(d). David 2nds.

By roll call:

Thomas - YES David - YES Amanda - YES Cathy - YES
 Barbara - YES John D - YES Tom D - YES Andrew - YES
Frank - YES Suzanne - YES

Minutes sealed.

David motions to adjourn the meeting. Barbara 2nds.

By rollcall:

Thomas - YES David - YES Amanda - YES Cathy - YES
 Barbara - YES John D - YES Tom D - YES Andrew - YES
Frank - YES Suzanne - YES

Meeting adjourned at 9:31PM