

**Thomas MacLaren State Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting
January 28, 2021
Minutes**

APPROVED

The meeting took place online via Zoom videoconference.

- I. **Call to Order:** Mrs. Nussbaum called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.
 - A. **Roll Call:** Present: Mrs. Melissa Nussbaum, Mrs. Hannah Parsons, Ms. Diane Borre, Mr. Paul von Boeck, Mr. Tim Fuller, Mrs. Meredith Sherman, Mrs. Kristine Prickett Vadala, and Mrs. Dawn Conley. Also present were Mrs. Mary Faith Hall, Executive Director, Mr. Ben LaBadie, Head of Upper School, Ms. Katie Maslow, Assistant Head of Upper School, Mr. Nico Alvarado, Head of Lower School, Mrs. Lori Richardson, Director of Finance, Mrs. Kari Coleman, Director of Operations, Mr. Grant Cooper, Faculty, Mrs. Kim DeCelles, Faculty, and Mr. Eric Hall, Founder.
 - B. **Public Comment:** None
 - C. **Approval of Agenda:** Mrs. Nussbaum requested the following changes to the agenda: 1) Move the Student Performance presentation to before the Policy Review and Accountability section and 2) Move the vote to approve the revised budget to the Finance Committee Status Report section. Mr. von Boeck motioned, Mrs. Parsons seconded. Unanimous approval of the revised agenda.
 - D. **Approval of Minutes:** Ms. Borre motioned. Mr. von Boeck seconded. Unanimous approval of the November meeting minutes.

- II. **Student Performance**
 - A. **Middle School Writing Program:** Mrs. Hall reminded the Board that a few years ago the school made some changes to the writing program. It seemed like the right time to have an update about how those changes have been implemented. She introduced Mr. Cooper, head of the Literature and Composition team, to give the presentation. First, he noted that before he could talk about writing, he needed to point out that the development of good readers is the overall goal of literature and composition in middle school at MacLaren and that the purpose of the writing program is to support that development of good readers. He went on to share three examples of writing from current students that illustrated the type of writing that is being taught at MacLaren.

- III. **Policy Review and Accountability**
 - A. **Approve Strategic Plan 2020-21:** This Strategic Plan was updated at the Board Retreat in November. Mrs. Nussbaum directed the Board's attention to the section regarding Board responsibilities, noting that her 2nd term ends in June and Mr. Fuller's second term ends in December, so the members need to be actively seeking replacements for those two director spots.

MOTION: To approve the 2020-21 Strategic Plan as presented.
Mrs. Parsons motioned, second by Mr. von Boeck. Unanimous approval.
 - B. **Approve Title IX Policy:** Mrs. Hall explained that this is an extensive policy. It does not fundamentally conflict with our current Sexual Harassment policy but it is much more expanded and there are many more compliance requirements on our end that

the Board will get more involved in. Mrs. Coleman, as our HR Coordinator, has done the most training on this, and so Mrs. Hall has asked her to give a high-level overview to the Board today on this policy. She also assured the Board that more trainings will be coming in the future for them.

Mrs. Coleman began her presentation with a brief history of the Title IX legislation and read Title IX to the Board. She then gave an overview as to who Title IX protects, what it upholds, and how it affects us as a public school. As of January 1, 2021, there are new rules surrounding how Title IX is implemented in public schools, and thus the reason for the many trainings and new policy that the Board is approving today. We have always had a Grievance Policy, but this policy is much more specific about the process and procedures as it pertains to sexual misconduct and harassment grievances. To help better inform our school community of this new policy and the protocols surrounding it, we have created a page on our website that can be accessed from the homepage by clicking the Title IX icon found along the right side by scrolling down to the middle of the page. (It can also be found under the Contact Us tab.) Mrs. Coleman noted that we are just now populating that webpage so it will be a little bit before all the needed elements will be added.

Mrs. Hall clarified her role as well as the roles of other staff members. She also specified which staff hold which roles in the new process. She noted that our school lawyer helped to craft the new policy and guided the creation of the forms and appendices to help parents know how to follow the process step-by-step. Two members of the Board, Mrs. Parsons and Mrs. Vadala, will go to more intensive training on this new policy. Mrs. Coleman alerted them that she will need copies of their training material to post on the new webpage per statute.

Mrs. Sherman asked if there was a responsibility on the Board's part or the Staff's part to instruct students on behavior expectations. Mrs. Hall explained that we already address this during student orientation.

MOTION: To approve Sexual Harassment (Title IX) Policy as presented.
Ms. Borre motioned, second by Mr. von Boeck. Unanimous approval.

- C. **Conflict of Interest Signatures:** Mrs. Hall announced to the Board that they would be receiving a DocuSign version of the Conflict of Interest statement that they will need to electronically sign and return. If Board members have any questions about this, they can contact Mrs. Hall, Mrs. Nussbaum or Ms. Borre. This is something we do annually.

IV. **Board Training**

- A. **501(c)3 and Political Activity:** Mr. Hall started his presentation noting that charter schools are governed by three different sources of law when it comes to advocacy work: the Fair Campaign Practices Act (a Colorado statute), the IRS 501(c)3 regulations, and the First Amendment. There are differences between what the school can do and what those who work for or serve the school can do. There is also a distinction between campaign activity and lobbying activity. He went on to explain each of the laws as well as the differences and distinctions.
- B. **Education Alliance of Colorado (EAC):** Mrs. Parsons spoke to the Board about this organization that MacLaren is joining and explained why we are doing so and what this alliance will do for us and its other members. This is a new organization with 12 member schools thus far. That number is expected to grow. In this first year of existence, the EAC is focused on parental education. Then it plans to utilize a

lobbying firm in the next legislative session. This will be a year-round endeavor. Because the member schools are like-minded, they will be able to take stronger positions on policy than larger organizations that have many diverse members.

Some clarifying questions were asked that Mrs. Parsons and Mr. Hall answered. Mrs. Hall reminded the Board that we join these organizations annually, so we can revisit this membership next year to see if it still aligns with our priorities as a Board. Mrs. Parsons requested that another Board member join her in attending the EAC meetings and being a part of the work involved. Mrs. Sherman volunteered.

V. Status Reports

A. Executive Director: Mrs. Hall mentioned that the Colorado League of Charter Schools will be holding their annual conference virtually this year on March 3-5. She encouraged Board members to consider attending and asked members to contact her if they were interested. Mrs. Hall reminded the Board that we received a RISE Grant from the federal government in collaboration with twelve other schools. The League wrote most of the grant and is coordinating its dispersal to the schools. The goal of the grant is to come up with a tool to measure student engagement, whether in-person, hybrid, or remote, with diverse learners. After testing it on smaller populations in our school community, we will roll it out in the fall to larger groups as we see fit. There are also professional development requirements. We are in the early days of this grant, so there is not much more to report on currently, but Mrs. Hall will be updating the Board as the months go by.

Mrs. Hall went on to note that the school calendar was changed in regards to US Project Week and not holding in-person Parent-Teacher Evaluation meetings. This was done to make it possible for teachers to complete their evaluations before Winter Break so that they could enjoy some real and needed time off. Long term, we do not want to cancel Parent-Teacher conferences, however.

Mrs. Hall told the Board that we are deep into enrollment season and that the Lottery is tomorrow. Originally, the idea had been to expand the 1st and 2nd grades, but now it is more likely that 5th grade will be expanded. This decision will affect hiring needs as well as purchasing furniture and supplies. Mrs. Hall said she will keep the Board abreast of the conversation and final decision. Also, on a related note, she noted that the school is in the early process of figuring out hiring needs for next school year.

There has been a big development push at the end of the year with our Fall Appeal and the push to connect grandparents to the school. The Development Committee will meet in February to talk about these initiatives in more detail.

Finally, Mrs. Hall updated the Board that we are still doing four days a week in-person schooling for Lower School and three days a week in-person for Upper School. She and her team are in active conversations about if and when we can expand in-person learning for Upper School to four days a week. Any decisions that are made will be communicated with the Board.

Mr. Alvarado added that he has heard from some of the middle school teachers that are noticing how well-prepared the students are who came from last year's fifth grade class. The effect on the 6th grade class is noticeable even though the 6th grade class is made up of only 50% of students who rose internally into that class. This news has been encouraging to the K-5 faculty and staff.

Mrs. Nussbaum asked Mrs. Hall how the faculty and staff are doing, as we are in the 3rd quarter of the year. She wondered if it had gotten any easier. Mr. LaBadie said yes and no. In the Upper School, it has been helpful to have moved from two to three in-person days. Also, they are doing more remote learning training with the faculty which has been beneficial. However, doing both in-person and remote learning every week is still more work in general for the teachers, still tiring and for some, the year has seemed extra long. And yet, they are generally of good spirit and there are many small kindnesses that the faculty does for each other that helps lighten the load and cheer each other up. Mr. Alvarado noted that the experience in the Lower School is similar to that of the Upper School. There is a sense of isolation from their colleagues, like they are on an island. It is particularly hard for kindergarten families who have their children in school for the first time and they can't even come into the school. When the gates open up in the future, that will be a time to rebuild those trusting relationships between the school and parents.

B. Dashboard: Mrs. Hall said there was nothing notable on the Dashboard this month. There were no questions from the Board.

C. Finance Committee

a. December Financial Statements: Mrs. Nussbaum honored Ms. Borre and Mrs. Richardson for all their hard work at pulling these statements together. Ms. Borre, in turn, gave the credit to Mrs. Richardson. Ms. Borre noted that we are right where we should be on revenue and expenses at the 50% point of the school year. We have a very healthy fund balance.

b. Presentation and Approval of Revised 2020-21 Budget: Ms. Borre reported that there was a slight decrease in Per-Pupil-Revenue (PPR) that was unexpected but most of that will probably come back in May with the supplemental budget approval by the state, but we don't know yet. To account for this, Mrs. Richardson created an amended budget that shows us in a deficit for the current year, so there is a budget resolution to approve this revised budget and a second resolution because of the negative position that will authorize the school to go into General Fund Reserves to make the budget work. Mrs. Hall clarified that Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) funds helped us to have enough reserves to pull from this year. Mrs. Hall noted that Ms. Borre has helped keep this a conservative budget and that we are having to say no to more things than we have ever had to in the past, but it is just that kind of year and everyone understands that.

Mrs. Nussbaum asked if there was a possibility that we could ask for another loan. Ms. Borre said that there is a second round of the PPP loan out now, but we would have to show that we have lost 25% of our income versus last year during any quarter and we are unable to show that. Mrs. Hall pointed out, though, that the first loan is what should get us through this year.

MOTION: To approve the Revised Budget for 2020-21 and the following resolution: Be it resolved by the Board of Education of Thomas MacLaren State Charter School in El Paso County, that the amounts shown in the following schedule be appropriated to each fund as specified in the Adopted Budget for the ensuing fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 - In the General Fund, \$8,896,092.

Mrs. Parsons motioned; seconded by Mr. von Boeck. Unanimous approval.

MOTION: To approve Thomas MacLaren State Charter School Resolution authorizing the use of a portion of beginning fund balance as authorized by Colorado statutes.

WHEREAS, C.R.S. 22-44-105 states that a budget, duly adopted pursuant to this article, shall not provide for expenditures, interfund transfers, or reserves, in excess of available revenues and beginning fund balance, and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education of Thomas MacLaren State Charter School (The Board) may authorize the use of a portion of the beginning fund balance in the budget, stating the amount to be used, the purpose for which the expenditure is needed, and the school's plan to ensure that the use of the beginning fund balance will not lead to an ongoing deficit, and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has determined the beginning fund balances in the General Fund, PPP Loan fund, Capital Reserve Special Revenue Fund are sufficient to allow certain one-time expenditures, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: In accordance with C.R.S. 22-44-105, The Board authorizes the use of a portion of the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Beginning Fund Balance from the PPP loan fund up to the amount of \$250,000 for the following purposes:

- 1. Up to \$250,000 is authorized in the PPP loan fund as a result of declining general fund allocations for payroll and benefit activities.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the use of this portion of the beginning fund balance for the purposes set forth above will not lead to an ongoing deficit, provided the expenditure from fund balance is one time only.

Mr. Fuller motioned; seconded by Mr. von Boeck. Unanimous approval.

VI. Executive Director Annual Review

A. Executive Session to consider personnel issues under CRS 24-6-402(4)(f)

Mrs. Nussbaum asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session to consider personnel issues under CRS 24-6-402(4)(f).

Mrs. Borre motioned; seconded by Mrs. Parsons. All non-Board members exited the meeting Executive Session began at 5:20 p.m.

MOTION: To exit Executive Session at 5:49 p.m.

Mrs. Sherman motioned; seconded by Mrs. Parsons. Unanimous approval.

Regular session resumed at 5:50 p.m.

VII. Announcements

A. Next Board Meeting: Thursday, February 25, 4:00 p.m.

VIII. Adjournment

B. Motion to Adjourn: Ms. Borre motioned; seconded by Mr. von Boeck. Board adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Katherine A. Brophy, Minutes Recorder

Date