



Sussex Montessori School
24960 Dairy Lane
Seaford, DE 19973

Public Board – Special Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2020

Meeting Start Time: 7:36 pm (Meeting held via Zoom Conference Call)

Meeting Adjourned: p.m.

Meeting Location: Zoom Meeting

Board of Directors in Attendance: Trish Hermance, Linda Zankowsky, Jessica Bradley, Lauren Connelly, Christine Gorowara, Chantel Janiszewski, Sean Steward

Others in Attendance: Lisa Coldiron (Head of School), Michelle Hastie (Finance Director), Elaine Mulford (Administrative Assistant)

Public Attendance: Erynn Weakley, Tammy Bunting

Regrets: Penny Short, E. McCrae Harrison, Toby Hurley

A Message from the Board Chair

Board Chair motioned to approve the agenda; Motion from C. Gorowara to move to amend the agenda to allow for up to three (3) minutes of public comment per person. Second by T. Hermance. No comments and no objections.

Public Comment: No Public Comment

Covid-19 Task Force

Presentation of Proposed Plan

L. Zankowsky shared that the Covid-19 task force has been working diligently on this plan since May. These are very challenging decisions for our Board. She encouraged the board to vote their consciences. Board Chair thanked the Task Force and C. Janiszewski for her leadership.

Motion from C. Janiszewski that the Sussex Montessori School opening plan be approved; Second by J. Bradley.

Discussion

C. Janiszewski presented the 2020-2021 Opening Plan. The Covid-19 task force focused on a plan that is reflective of our commitment to our students, regardless of what parents choose for them – whether it be hybrid or remote. The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) was consulted on this plan. After board approval, a survey is going out to our families on August 12, 2020 for them to choose hybrid or remote learning. The plan will continue to be updated as changes are made at the state level. This Plan will be posted on the website.

The mission of the Sussex Montessori School (SMS) is to nurture the development of empathetic, collaborative, persistent and innovative global and community citizens in accordance with the time-tested philosophy of Maria Montessori.

C. Gorowara commented that this plan will put everyone at minimal risk. She wants to be clear to parents that the Board encourages parents to be very conservative with attendance about sending their children to school; i.e. if the child has symptoms, they will not be counted as absent. Also, she mentioned that private lessons posted on the website should be password protected.

S. Steward presented questions which the board discussed: 1) How does this model match up to other districts? What if families want/need to be in school more than 2 days a week? S. Steward pointed out that many families rely on two-person incomes – what are families going to do if another school is offering 4 days a week and SMS is only offering 2 days a week (in person). It may come down to a monetary decision to place their children in another school. Board Chair responded that all of our contracts are committed to our school that signed up last Spring, and to the best of her knowledge, other schools are only going to be able to have children physically in their schools 2 days per week – 2 remote days and one deep cleaning day. 3) Do we have a lot of families that do not have access to the internet and will have issues accessing the lessons? Board Chair answered that Head of School received preliminary information in June; once the Board approves plan tonight, another survey will be sent out on August 12, 2020 – asking parents specifically if they have access to the internet, have a computer and camera in their home, need a Chromebook, and if a parent will be available to assist their child(ren). Whatever plan is decided on by each family, it is only set in stone until November 1, 2020. The state is actively working on providing internet access to those families that do not have access. Our campus is wireless and will allow learning without technology.

Motion to approve the Opening Plan was restated by the Board Chair. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by T. Hermance; second by Jessica Bradley to move the starting date of school from September 8, 2020 to September 14, 2020.

Discussion: this change will allow for professional development on hybrid and remote learning as well as health and safety protocols.

Motion was restated by the board chair and passed unanimously.

Close of Meeting

Motion to adjourn by S. Steward; Second by J. Bradley. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Next Meetings

Regular Board Meetings FY 21 Third Tuesday of each month (6:30 -8:00) August 18, September 15, October 20, November 17, December 15, January 19, February 16, March 16, April 20, May 18, June 15.