



**Sussex Montessori School
Board of Directors
September 16, 2025, 6:30 p.m.**

Board of Directors Present: Linda Zankowsky, Trish Hermance, Taquil Foster-Lewis, Sean Steward, Kyle Morgan, Bob Wheatley, Mason Falligant & Penny Short (Tardy-6:50 p.m.)

Others Present: Siza Mtimbiri (Head of School), Michelle Hastie (Finance), Debra Smullin

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m.

Approval of Agenda-

A Motion to approve the agenda was made by Jessica Bradley and seconded by Sean Steward. The Motion was approved unanimously with no objections and no abstentions.

Public Comment – No public comment

A Motion to approve August 19, 2025, minutes was made by Jessica Bradley and seconded by Sean Steward. The Motion was approved unanimously with no objections and no abstentions.

Committee Reports-

Student Success-

- Taquil is chairing the committee and will work with Peter and Mason.
- Taquil will coordinate monthly check-ins to align reporting with the academic year.

Community Engagement/Enrollment- Jessica Bradley

- Jessica mentioned the Hispanic Festival and the ice cream social.
- 50+ names were collected from parents willing to help.
- PTO is planning a fall fest on November 20 from 5 to 8 PM.
- Dr. Siza suggested using QR codes linked to Google Forms for parent sign-ups.

Finance Committee- Sean Steward

- Sean reported that DOE is helping with the consolidated grant.
- The committee discussed salaries, road changes, and zero-based budgeting.
- They are reviewing last year's final budget to find funding for salaries.
- The committee wants to formalize the review of PCARD transactions as part of their monthly meeting.

Financials – Michelle Hastie

Precious presented the financials to date through August 31, 2025

- August 31, 2025, represents (2/12) months actual or 16.67% of the current fiscal year.
- We have received 65.9% of our State and Local revenues.
- We have received 5.4% of our federal revenues.
- We have spent 21.1% of our Total operating budget.

A Motion to accept August 31, 2025, financial report was made by Sean Steward and seconded by Jessica Bradley. The Motion passed unanimously with no objections and no abstentions.

Budget Overview

- The budget is a work in progress and will likely be revised before the normal January/February vote.
- Purchasing decisions need to be discussed so Dr. Siza can plan expenditures.
- A reasonable expectation for an earlier budget revision is next month.

State Funding and Enrollment

- September 30th count will be in, and state funding changes with enrollment changes.
- The preload for charter tuition billing was initially 380 students, then 383, and recently 394.
- Education sustainment funds and tech block grants may change based on the Division 1 units the school has.
- Tuition tax is based on complex/intense spec ed students and their districts; the number won't be known until mid to end of November. The current figure is \$54,000, which is what was received last year.

Opportunity Grant

- Money from the Opportunity Grant (several hundred thousand dollars) is considered reserves.
- These funds will be used before current funds.
- Expenditures need to be analyzed and coded properly to the Opportunity Grant.

Consolidated Application

- The consolidated application is due on Friday.
- Funds have been released for Title 4, Title 3, 1, and 2
- The consolidated grant pays for salaries for associate teachers.
- Also pays for sped stuff of IDEA funds.

A Motion to approve the consolidated grant application for Title 1, 2, and 4 funds, as well as the Opportunity Grant funds was made by Sean Steward and seconded by Jessica Bradley. The Motion passed unanimously with no objections and no abstentions.

Development- Linda Zankowsky

- The welfare grant submission is in progress, due by October 15th, with a goal to submit it by Friday.
- The grant should cover \$150k for the elevator in the barn.
- There is a balance of about \$350,000 to raise for the barn.
- Horizon is working on a plan to launch a local campaign for the remaining money needed for the barn.
- The goal is to have the barn completed for the next school year.
- The \$350k should get a conditioned space, but furnishings were not included.
- Another \$50k was added, so they are working towards a \$400k goal.
- Dan Helwig and Samantha Fasciola from Horizon Philanthropic will be working on building relationships and handling the campaign for the remaining \$400,000.
- Samantha Fasciola will be at the October board meeting to discuss fundraising strategies.

Facilities- Bob Wheatley

- Mold situation is under control, about 95% of the way through.
- Recent air quality reports came back okay.
- There are 5 air scrubbers, with 2 still in use.
- A maintenance protocol has been developed for the units.
- There was a break in a waistline due to a subcontractor.
- Paper towels and other items were found in the pipes.
- Replacing paper towel holders with dryers is being considered.
- Everything has been cleaned out and is flowing well.

Work at the barn:

- Still doing some punch list items, including roof trim.
- Operating under a temporary certificate of occupancy due to the fire marshal's requirement for sprinklers in the basement area where columns were added.
- A proposal for the sprinkler work is pending.
- The space can now be used for storage.
- The temporary certificate of occupancy is good for 30 or 60 days at a time.
- As long as progress is being made, the fire marshal will work with them.
- The temporary certificate of occupancy only applies to the barn.
- The air scrubbers have a consistent hum, but it hasn't been too disruptive to instruction.

- Thankful to the facilities committee and everyone who worked to get the school open quickly after the disruption.

Executive Committee- Trish Hermance

- Dr. Siza, Sean, and Taquil met to discuss standardizing board reporting and creating templates.
- Looking forward to getting back to monthly Montessori moment/celebrations.
- The board wants to remind themselves what it means to be a Montessori school and how that philosophy is unique and important.
- The goal is to loop the board in once a month to Montessori ideas and thoughts and continue learning around those pieces.
- The board also wants to celebrate the work happening at the school with the kids to remind themselves why they do what they do.
- Dr. Siza will work on what that looks like over the next month or so.

Head of School Report- Dr. Siza Mtimbiri

- The start of the school year was great, and the classes are beautiful.
- The leadership team (Peter, Dr. Siza, Kaneisha, and Courtney) meets every Wednesday for an hour.
- They are starting a child study process where teachers can submit data on students they are struggling with.
- The child study team will look at the data and see what accommodations can be given to the teacher to support them.
- The goal is to ensure due diligence before considering special education.

Enrollment

- Current enrollment is 394 students.
- K1 has 114 students with 16 open spaces before going to a waiting list.
- Second and third grade have 133 students, which is a little over by three.
- Fourth, fifth, and sixth grade have 147 students.
- They are expecting a third grader to come in.
- There are no pending withdrawals.
- The clinicians are tracking why families leave, with reasons including transportation, distance, state moves, and enrollment in other schools.

Staffing

- Michelle is the new apparel teacher, working with Heather who is still in training.
- Kristen and Mark Martin are new lead teachers from Florida.
- There have been a few role changes.

“C” Setting

- The “C” setting is for kids who really struggle with intense needs.
- An associate is doing a fantastic job with these kids.
- Special Ed Courtney is doing a fantastic job getting systems into place and organizing that whole space.

Training

- 13 teachers are enrolled in training.
- Two are finishing requirements and preparing for exams.
- Four are in the second year of elementary training.
- Three will switch to lower elementary primary track.
- One is beginning primary training.
- Three are beginning elementary training.

A Motion to move to Executive session was made by Jessica Bradley and seconded by Kyle Morgan. The Motion passed unanimously with no objections and no abstentions at 7:48 p.m.

A Motion was made to approve that Dr. Siza and the Finance Committee have the authority to make final decisions on the 12-month position salaries, while keeping the \$30,000 contingencies in the current budget, working towards a \$100,000 contingency overall, was made by Jessica Bradley and seconded by Sean Steward. The Motion passed unanimously with no objections and no abstentions.

A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Sean Steward and seconded by Jessica Bradley. The Motion passed unanimously at 8:31 p.m.