

Annual Meeting



Bluffview
Montessori
School

1321 Gilmore Avenue
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May 12, 2022



Bluffview Montessori

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Bluffview Montessori

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Review and approve agenda
3. Review and approve May 12, 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes
4. Annual Reports:
 - a. Head of School: Henry Schantzen
 - b. Treasurer: Shelly Merchlewitz
 - c. Governance: Katie Kinneberg
 - d. Human Resources: Renee Knutson
 - e. Building and Grounds: Henry Schantzen
 - f. Pedagogy: Katie Kinneberg
5. Announcement and introduction of elected Board of Directors members
6. Discuss and schedule a new meeting date
7. Open Forum
8. Adjourn



Bluffview Montessori

May 12, 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present- Erich Lippman, Molly Leifeld, Henry Schantzen, Ann-Marie Dunbar, Katie Kinneberg, Meghan Booth, Shelly Merchlewitz, Dan Kirk

Board Members Absent: -

Others in attendance: Scotti Berg, Kiersten Porter, Criss Polachek, Esther Hill, Mariah White, Jocylyn Porter, Jerry Windley-Daoust, Crystal Hegge, Amy Leach

1- Meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM.

2- Katie motioned, and Molly seconded to approve agenda for May 12, 2021. The vote was unanimous.

3- Katie motioned, and Molly seconded to approve board minutes from May 13, 2020. The vote was unanimous.

4- Annual Reports

- Head of School:

- Henry walked us through his annual report, discussing many of the challenges and accomplishments of this challenging school year.
- Discussed PPE and masking throughout the year.
- Discussed the role of the floating substitute teacher in the context of COVID.
- Teachers have received new laptops. New chromebooks are coming in to make sure everyone has access.
- Internet infrastructure had been updated throughout the building.
- COVID has forced a reorganization of classrooms and storage locations.
- In general, Henry discussed the many transitions in use of space and learning models that had to happen in the context of COVID.
- In non-COVID-related news, we have transitioned from WAPS to Volunteers of America for an authorizer, and the relationship between them and us has been great! Being part of their network allows for much greater access to resources than we had before.



- We also received a \$1M donation last summer. Most of it has been earmarked for improving salaries.
- Treasurer:
 - Katie walked us through the largely COVID-related treasurer's report.
 - We have once again received a clean audit.
 - Fund balance is 35.7% at the time of this report.
 - The CARES Act fund led to several forgivable funds.
 - She discussed primarily the GEER and ESSER loans.
 - Staff and salaries have been increased as a result of the donation.
 - The task at this point is to figure out how to sustain those salary increases, as they went to the base salary (i.e., not bonuses).
- Governance:
 - Katie discussed the board nominations and timeline.
- HR:
 - Molly discussed the policy reviews, updates, and changes.
 - The need for an HR coordinator was emphasized and steps have been taken internally to address that need. The board has approved this position and a job description has been drafted.
- Building and Grounds:
 - Henry discussed IEA occupancy audit in summer 2020.
 - HVAC system needs updated.
 - High-efficiency boilers have been installed to replace the old ones.
 - Dry suppression system is holding up and we will be moving to a Nitrogen-based system, which will improve the longevity of our pipes.
 - Interest in outdoor learning has increased. One space has been constructed behind the library. We are considering other options as well.
 - Sidewalks and parking lots need work.
 - Jerry W.D. mentioned the need for a more wheelchair accessible parking lot.
- Pedagogy:



- Katie discussed the changes in timelines and requirements for teacher evaluation processes in light of COVID.
- Mary Hallman was contracted to review Montessori-trained teachers.

5- Announcement and introduction of elected Board of Directors members

- Ann-Marie Dunbar thanked Molly Leifeld and Erich Lippman for their years of service on the board.
- She also introduced our new board members, Mariah White (teacher) and Crystal Hegge (parent).

6- Open Forum: Jocylyn Poehler thanked everyone for their hard work. Jerry Windley-Daoust concurred, highlighting the front office, administration, and teachers.

7-Meeting adjourned at 6:51 PM.



[Annual Reports](#)

[Head of School](#)

Bluffview Montessori Vision Statement

Empowered learners unfolding their full potential as whole and unique persons in a global community.

The Bluffview Montessori PBIS theme this year was “Many Voices, One Harmony.” Montessori environments continuously strive to achieve balance and harmony. That harmony in our pedagogical philosophy is termed “normalization”. But what does that mean? Normalization has nothing to do with “returning to normal” as we move further away from the Covid 19 pandemic (which negatively impacted every philosophical underpinning that Bluffview was built on), nor does it suggest that any child or person is ‘typical’ or ‘average.’

Normalization is really a reference to a unique process in child development, as observed and articulated by Maria Montessori, where children engage in meaningful work and grow into contributing members of their community. It consists of a child’s ability to concentrate and work freely in their classroom environment, using the didactic materials to fully engage their interests while exercising self-discipline and peace. Dr. Montessori cited normalization as “the most important single result of our whole work.” This most important work carries with it certain characteristics that are visible to those that observe the students during their day: love of work, concentration, self-discipline, and sociability. These characteristics are key elements in aiding all learners to become empowered learners unfolding their full potential.

This school year has been an exercise in renewal and commitment to the idea of not only normalized classrooms, but a normalized school community as a whole. Many voices, one harmony speaks to this philosophy at all levels: classrooms, staff, students, parents, and all other stakeholders



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working together to find a harmonious balance that will elevate the collective school experience for all learners.

As we move forward there is much work to be done. The work of growing the school culture through engagement with our partners and stakeholders will be at the forefront next year. We will work toward the return of fun days like grandparents day, the fall open house where parents can join their children in the classrooms for an evening, more WSU/SMU student teachers and practicum students in the building, and more field trips over the course of the year. We must also work on the stabilization and growth of our financial resources which is the primary driver relative to the amount of staff turnover we have experienced the last few years. We will also focus on the continued learning recovery for those that have experienced reduced learning opportunities due to the pandemic, as well as supporting all in need of mental health related services.

As always, we will move forward with the Bluffview Vision and Mission at the forefront, guided by Montessori principles, weighing all decisions around intentional actions that will have the most positive impact on the students, staff, and families in our care.

Thank you to all parties that committed to joining us in working through another challenging but fruitful school year.

Sincerely,

Henry Schantzen



Treasurer

Bluffview's financial management company remains BergankDV. In addition to compiling our monthly financial reports, creating budget projections, managing payroll and accounts payable, and working in an advisory position to help the Board make sound financial decisions for our school, they inform us of updates from the state and federal levels regarding revenues and legislative changes. They are also responsible for the clean audit issued to Bluffview by CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) for FY 2020-2021.

One of the primary functions of the Board of Directors is to ensure the financial health of the school while working to maintain a balanced budget. In FY 2020-21, Bluffview had a 35.7% fund balance for all funds. During FY 2021-22, BMS currently has a fund balance of 37.1% of our expenditures. We are obligated to have a fund balance of at least 20% (and a debt service ratio > 1.0) and our policy states a minimum goal of a fund balance of 24%. We as a Board have a goal of 30%. The state's annual holdback of our funding is currently set at 10%. As of April 30th, we have received 100% of our FY 2020-21 holdback. The holdback has been as high as 40% back in FY 2012, which the state used to help balance its budget. One significant reason for maintaining a strong fund balance is to insulate the school against external influences as much as possible in times of financial shortfalls.

There are always factors that present challenges and benefits to the budget. Enrollment is the main source of the school's income (approximately 92%) and is one thing the Board looks at during each monthly meeting. This year our Average Daily Membership is currently at 211 students. For 2022-23, we have one opening in 5th grade and waitlists for all other grades PK-7th grade. Maintaining and increasing our enrollment continues to be a priority, especially for the tuition-based preschool and Erdkinder programs.

There were a variety of COVID funds to assist the school with the added costs, reduced revenue, payroll, and building improvements needed due to the COVID pandemic. The CARES funds have also



greatly helped to offset the loss incurred due to reduced enrollment and allow us to maintain a healthy fund balance. These funds also allowed the Board to issue stipends for the staff for the additional work performed in relation to COVID and a stipend for the Covid Coordinator position.

“The **Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act**, passed on March 27, 2020, provides over \$2 trillion in federal economic relief to protect the American people from the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The CARES Act provides assistance for American workers, families, and small businesses, and preserves jobs for American industries.

This CARES funding includes an Education Stabilization Fund, which in turn contains two major sources of funding for schools: the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. It also contains section 5001, the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), which establishes \$150 billion in payments to state, local, and Tribal governments navigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/covid19/cares/>

Here are the COVID-related funds we have recieved:

- ESSER II is \$77,749 and needs to be spent/drawn by September 2023.
- ESSER III is \$174,613.64 and will need to be spent/drawn by September 2024.
- This year will be our second year of offering summer school. It is completely funded through MDE Fin 163 for \$28,491.01. We still have Fin 161 funds in the amount of \$31,992.49 from last year.

The Friends of Bluffview were able to secure a \$500,000 matching grant in over and we have received approximately \$431,000 in commitments so far for the Bluffview Future Fund. We are completing year two of using funds from the anonymous donation of \$1 million to be paid out over the next five years. It has allowed us to increase the teacher salary base pay to \$30,000, a 15% increase for



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licensed teaching staff, as well as non-licensed staff salaries by 7.5%, in accordance with the donor's wishes.

Our first reimbursement from the BMS School Safety Grant from MDE in 2018-19 allowed us to recover the costs of an office window and an upgrade to the PA system with outdoor speakers.

The Board, along with our partners BerganKDV, the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, and our Authorizer (Volunteers of America), continues to research and assess viable financial options for Bluffview, such as the Winona Foundation, Qcomp, and Winona County ARP funds. We are always returning to our Vision for guidance as we work to provide the best possible services for our students and their families.

Sincerely,

Shelly Merchlewitz



Governance

The Governance Committee is responsible for:

- Promoting an active Board recruitment process for the school
- Orienting and mentoring new Board members
- Working with the Board chair and Head of school to promote ongoing leadership and governance education and the continued growth of all Board members
- Periodically assessing processes for individual Board members and the Board as a whole
- Conducting the annual election of Directors and filing Board vacancies

The committee called for nominations for the Board elections; there was one position, Montessori Teacher, open for nomination. Katie Kinneberg (I) was the sole nomination for the open position. As there were no other nominees we were not required to send election ballots. The new term begins July 1 and ends the following June 30.

Sincerely,

Katie Kinneberg



Human Resources

The Human Resources Committee met monthly. Our main task this year was to go through a major policy review. The Minnesota School Board Association (MSBA) completed an Audit of our policies. In this audit, MSBA reviewed all of our policies and recommended adding many more. These policies were placed into three categories - Mandatory Policies, Legal Requirements Policies, and Recommended Policies, totaling 141 policies and several forms. In addition, MSBA recommended that 20 of our policies be removed and moved to a family and/or employee handbook instead. To date, we have reviewed and approved 38 mandatory policies, 34 legally required policies, and 17 recommended policies. The committee will continue to review policies and is in the process of creating a 3-year cycle to continue to review policies to ensure that all are up to date. The committee will also review the family handbook, utilizing the MSBA Model Student Handbook.

Moving forward we will also be refining our evaluation process, adding evaluations for all positions that don't currently have them. We will also be refining our hiring process with enhanced questions and evaluation rubrics.

Our largest need has been, and continues to be, offering health insurance to our staff. This has been a need and, just like in years past, we are losing staff and / or not hiring others due to the fact that we are financially unable to provide that insurance. This has to become a focal point of our planning.

Sincerely,

Renee Knutson



Building and Grounds

The Building and Grounds Committee is tasked with planning, discussing, and presenting recommendations to the Board of Directors on all Building and Grounds-related projects associated with Bluffview Montessori and the BMS Building Corporation. All three members of the BMS Building Corporation Board attend this committee's monthly meetings.

1. All inspections are up to date, including but not limited to:
 - a. Summit: fire suppression
 - b. Mississippi Welders: anse unit in the kitchen and fire extinguishers
 - c. Full fire marshall inspection: corrections were required and executed
 - d. Kitchen inspections: this led to upgrades and repairs on the walk-in cooler, a plan to reseal the delivery room floor and change the lights in there, and a few other small changes
 - e. Custom Alarm: alarm system
2. The boilers in the main building were replaced (\$37K) with high-efficiency units last year. As there was a delay, the system also had chemical feeder pots installed finally after a few delays. The Erdkinder building system had feeder pots installed as well. Having run for so long with untreated water, the units experience a shortened lifespan. With properly conditioned water moving forward, we hope to maximize the lifespan of both systems.
3. The dry suppression system had a pipe break on March 12th, flooding the office and front hallway. The ceiling tiles were wrecked, sheetrock had to be replaced, insulation was replaced, etc. This was filed with our insurance, and the mitigation was contracted to Lappins. At the time this report was written, reinstalling the lights, ceiling grid, and tiles were the final steps. The insurance underwriter brought in an engineer to examine the cause of the ruptured pipe. We have not yet received that report.



4. With several hail storms over the last year, we had the roof inspected. The claim was denied by the insurance company, with their engineer citing that the roof is old, worn, and while there is some damage it is not significant enough to warrant a replacement in their opinion.
5. IEA was contracted to do a full review of the HVAC system. Their findings indicated that a few deficiencies needed to be addressed including:
 - a. Increasing outdoor air damper positions to increase the ventilation rate
 - b. Repairs are needed on air duct dampers AHU 1, 2, and 5
 - c. MAU-2 and BC-4 supply fans need rebalancing to increase air flow
 - d. All coils are in need of a deep cleaning.

Winona Heat and Vent has been given the report at a meeting, and they are working to ensure the deficiencies are corrected.

6. Andy hosted a lighting contractor to review the building. They provided a list of potential upgrades, the approximate cost of each project, and the potential savings that would be assumed with the proposed upgrades. We have chosen to move forward with changing the lighting fixtures in the community room ceiling. This will cost about \$3300 and it is projected to save the school around \$1000 a year moving forward. Those lights, with the delayed illumination times, have been an ongoing frustration, making this an easy choice. We will review other parts of the proposal next year, as our building budget unfolds.
7. The parking lot will probably be reviewed this summer as some patches need to be made, then all will be resurfaced and painted this summer as well. No parking signs have been added to the area by the walk-in cooler as there was a conflict between a parked staff car and the garbage company's truck. Staff has been informed that it is unacceptable to park in that area at all.
8. A place for a non-binary/family bathroom has been identified. It will be located with the other bank of student bathrooms, so the location fits well. There is plumbing 8 feet away that can be tapped



into. OWA is drafting a plan, and money has been set aside to make this project happen over the summer.

9. The storage spaces continue to fill up. Andy had a dumpster in this spring, and removed a great number of unused items. This summer, all unused kitchen items will be sold, donated, or removed.
10. Digicom is in the process of replacing all 10 of the overhead projectors in the school. They were charged with proper installation including mounting and cable covers. Past installations (not by Digicom) included projectors zip tied to the ceiling and cables loose and hanging randomly.
11. ORC withdrew as our cleaning/janitorial contractor. They were replaced with Click Click Cleaners. They will be offering a deep cleaning plan that includes windows for the summer.

Sincerely,

Henry Schantzen



Pedagogy

The Pedagogy Committee began the year planning each of the staff development days. We participated in 2 afternoons focused on Trauma Informed Practices; we learned how trauma can affect students physically, emotionally, and socially as well as strategies to use to support the child and works/practices we can add to our classrooms to help all students. We also had an afternoon for Safe Space training. This is training focused on how to maintain a safe space for our LGBTQIA+ students, staff, and families.

The committee set the process for aligning the new science standards that go into effect fall of '23. Levels met amongst themselves to review the standards and make notes about which are currently covered and how, if there are any standards not currently covered and what their needs may be. Adjacent levels met to discuss overlap, holes, or making changes to reflect the grade level the new standards target. As an example, some of the 6th and 7th grade standards are basically switching.

Every fall we review our teacher evaluation process and make any necessary adjustments. Last year we had modified the requirements to reflect the additional work the staff was doing in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we added a couple new peer observers, with the idea to reduce how many teachers each observer needs to see. We also reformatted the schedule from the COVID modifications the previous year and brought back both teacher goals.

Through the use of COVID funds we started an after school reading program for our second graders. The program, Lexia, is computer-based and targets the population of students identified with the most need for additional reading support due to lost educational time during the COVID pandemic.

One staff member attended the virtual Montessori conference that is usually in LaCrosse. Hopefully next year the conferences will be in person and more staff will be able and willing to attend.

Sincerely,

Katie Kinneberg



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2022 Annual Meeting Elected Board Members

One Montessori teacher seat was open for election as Katie Kinneberg's term was up. Katie was the only nominee for the position, so she was inserted to continue her service. In the time since the nomination process closed, Katie has resigned her position as an employee effective July, 2022. Therefore, the Board will appoint a new Director to her seat after July. We are very grateful for the time, service, and leadership that Katie has provided as a Bluffview Board member and a teacher and extend our sincere appreciation.

On 5.4.22 Daniel Kirk resigned his position as a Director as well. Therefore, the Board will work to find a new Community member to fill that seat.