

# **Madrone Trail Public Charter School**

Jackson County, Oregon

Regular meeting of the Board of Directors

Wednesday, March 7, 2018 at 5:30 pm

Madrone Trail Public Charter School – 3070 Ross Lane, Medford, OR 97502

## **I. Call to order/ Roll call**

Brenda called to order the special meeting of the Madrone Trail Public Charter School Board at 5:30pm at Madrone Trail Public Charter School 3070 Ross Ln. Central Point, OR 97502

Sarah conducted a roll call. The following persons were present: Brenda Stein, Monica Rathjen, Michelle Gury, John Briggs, Sarah Trujillo

Karen Bailey (Administrator)

Jane Higgins, Leann Tourzan (Faculty Liaison)

## **II. Opening verse**

III. **Public Comment** – **Jessica Bray** spoke about the upcoming Auction on May 12, at the Ashland Springs Hotel. It will be a Monte Carlo theme with card and roulette tables. Sponsorships available, so far there are \$5000 sponsorships. General admission tickets \$5, regular tickets \$75, and VIP \$100. People will be in separate areas. Rushmore Society is participating. There will be an auction committee meeting at h The Schoolhouse Brewhaus Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 6pm. Tickets available online, and anyone that would like to contribute up to \$50 for teacher tickets may do so in the office.

**Julie Scurlock** There is a big divide between our leadership and our faculty at this time, I am aware this has been going on for a while, and that there have been efforts to resolve these issues. I know these problems have been brought to the board over the course of a year, and I want to raise awareness that this problem is affecting the whole school community. I want to know when there will be acknowledgement of that, and when there will be resolution. I have had personal interactions with our director, where she shed the teachers in a negative light, which I felt was unprofessional. It is now time for action to be taken, and we need leadership in this community that is for the teachers.

**Matia Brizman** I am coming into this situation late, I don't know much about the sabbatical issue, but I do know that the children are finding out about this, and I realize

being a business owner, that you have to make tough choices, and I know everyone wants the school to continue, but part of the consideration is to do the right thing, and if something has been committed to, that is part of what needs to be honored, and that is what the children will be looking at.

**Nancy Escherich** When I trained at Rudolf Steiner College, I remember one of the professors talking about the three C's of Waldorf education- Connection, Communication, and Collaboration. Since working here we have had a faculty that has used all three, some issues are easily worked through, we listen to all voices and work together to help create the school we think is best for students. I would like to see the board listen to all of us speaking, and then have conversations with faculty and parents, work collaboratively with all of us. I wonder how the four pillars of our school could come together to collaborate, communicate and connect with each other. I am curious if this is important to our board? Is the board taking time to hear all the different sides of every issue? There is a process in Waldorf education that each issue takes three meetings to bring up an issue, discuss it, and then vote on it. We do this at our faculty meetings, so we can take it into our dream life, and take the time to fully process each issue before deciding. I support the sabbatical for our teachers that were offered this compensation and want to honor this agreement. Each teacher has made choices to stay at this school with lower teacher pay with the understanding that this compensation would be there at the end of eight years. I hope you all take the time to look at what we are presenting and continue to collaborate with on this issue that took years of work between board, faculty and administration. I hear the words "conflict of interest" of any family member related to a teacher that might want to serve at our school, I am seeing all that want to serve our school to be in collaboration for the best interest of the school. Now teachers are no longer board members, and are without voting power, I am wondering how this choice serves the best interest of our school, and how it came to be without any communication with the faculty who it directly affects? Another series of concepts that arose for me in my Waldorf training were the three I's – Inspiration, Imagination, and Intuition. Steiner brought these concepts to the first group of Waldorf teachers almost 100 years ago, and they are just as important today. I want to work at a school that lives into, and practices the three C's, and three I's. This is what will carry our school forward. We all need to communicate, connect, and collaborate. All of us need to take time to meditate, and move into our own places of inspiration, imagination, and intuition and share these with each other. Waldorf education is based on the evolution of the human being, and how to continue to communicate, collaborate, and connect with each other to create the world we want to see. We are working on letting go of ideas and ways of being that are not serving our higher spirit. Control, power over, and disconnect are ways of being that do not serve our higher good. I am envisioning and want to work at a school that is moving forward in our evolving consciousness. One that empowers everyone as part of the whole. I ask our board to

take a deep breath and exhale and ask you to go from your head to heart. What does that place feel like? Are you moving from a place that is in line with connection, communication and collaboration, imagination, inspiration, and intuition? Are you helping to create a school that serves our students, parents and teachers, administration and board?

**Sean Rogers** This is your first discussion of the sabbatical issue? It appears you have stepped on a hornet's nest. I am a teacher myself, and I give props to you, because you don't teach the same thing next year that you taught this year. I teach new subjects occasionally, but there is a lot that I can take forward. Your teachers take their first-grade curriculum, and maybe they will use it thirteen years later. They must recreate everything from scratch each year. You need a break, you don't get paid much. I get paid okay as a public-school teacher, you get paid more in satisfaction. I give up a lot of satisfaction for the check. I would like to communicate to the board just how loarge of a desion you are making, and if it is a contractual obligation, you are really doing something that you do not understand the power of. It is a much bigger deal than just saving money. My wife has been working and we have had more of a chance to volunteer we have an inkling of the financials of the school, and obviously you wouldn't be thinking of getting rid of the sabbatical if you could afford it. There is probably something financial that is big, I do not believe taking away the sabbatical is a good first option, especially if it a contractually obligation. When contractual obligations are broken lead to strikes. This is not a threat, I have no power here, but that is what generally happens when an agreement is broken. So I wish you the best of luck, and thank you for volunteering to be on the board. I think you stepped on the hornet's nest by mistake, but if there are legit financial issues that we have to deal with, lets do it together, instead of just thinking this is the best idea.

**Dara Nikolic** I was part of the committee that formed the sabbatical policy when we had our first eight grade teacher about to graduate her class. It was a process, and we looked at lots of different options of looking at the fact that our salary scale is significantly lower than Medford public school, especially for teachers that had public school experience. We had teachers coming in with 10-12 years of experience who were making \$40,000 less than they would be making at a public school. In my 9<sup>th</sup> year of teaching I would be making \$19,000 more a year at Griffin Creek Elementary. But we chose to be here, and we chose it because we love Waldorf education, and this school. When we were forming the sabbatical policy, we looked at ways of compensating for the fact that we have a lower pay scale than most schools. Obviously we are attracting teachers with our curriculum, but the reality of life being what it is, the sabbatical policy was a way to attract teachers and retain them during that eight year journey. I know myself, and many of my colleagues have gotten to 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade, when it gets tough, and it is easy to think "I could be done after this year". Middle school is

tough, and the sabbatical is a way to retain those teachers to stick through that journey with their class. Mateo asked me earlier tonight if that is really what kept me with my class, and honestly, it isn't. I stayed because I love my class, and it was something that looked so good to look forward to. To know that I could get to the end of eight years I could take a breath To know that I would have time with my family, which I have sacrificed so much time with, for this job that is incredibly demanding, have some time to travel, and see places that I can teach about. We are planning to go to Rome this summer, and I can bring that back to the curriculum, and do professional development. I am planning on coming back the year after next and take a new first grade class because I did so much work the first time I can't imagine not doing it again. I do feel like I need that break. I don't know how it would be to shift from the mentality of 8<sup>th</sup> graders to 1<sup>st</sup> graders. I am looking forward to that time to make that big shift and spend time with my family. If you look at the financial side, and we always have to worry about that, I want our school to be financially stable, but we have saved for this. If you were to take a teacher's sabbatical pay and spread it over eight years, it would be about \$4000 more a year. I could be making \$17,000 more a year at Griffin Creek. So, if you took all the teachers, and paid them \$4000 more a year, Medford School District would not bat an eye, and it is the same amount of money, and say it was a problem or excessive. We would still be making far less than what Medford Public School teachers make, but we chose at that time, the board offered us a raise, and we said "that is not the same thing" \$4000 a year is not going to significantly change my standard of living, but having a year off after this journey, and everything you give, to have that break, and release is totally different. It was in gratitude of what we have given, and for me, a way to reset, and get up and do it again, which I am really looking forward to. Coming back to a school where I feel appreciated and valued. So, we are talking about it, and if we decide as a school or as board, that this isn't sustainable, or it doesn't work for our current faculty or future faculty, or some teachers don't want to do the whole eight years, then we can find a way to reconfigure it, or maybe have a completion bonus if you do it, or a signing bonus if you want to come back. There are lots of ideas. But it still needs to be teacher compensation, which is what it was designed for. I feel like we need to honor the agreements we have made. Someone said contractual agreements, and there was not a contractual agreement, and the policy does say "as the budget allows". There is no contract, but there are agreements that have been made, and I believe it is important to honor these agreements and keep these people that have put in so much to this school. I want to stay here, I love this school so much, and I also want to feel valued. I hope we can find a way, if we need to change this, or phase it out, that we can do it ethically and take care of the people that have made this school what it is.

**Alyssum Barber** I was one of the first teachers here to receive the sabbatical, and I did not return, for financial reasons. The sabbatical is an important benefit to keep, because it recognizes the hard work and sacrifices that a teacher that is licensed to teach at a

public school makes when they commit to a class at Madrone Trail. My base income is about \$100 more a day, that is a lot of money. There are so many things that money does for my family, so it is not something to overlook. I work in a well maintained, well-staffed school, Howard Elementary. They have a work room that is about half the size of this gym. There are four different secretaries, at different times of the day, the principal is available to do physical things, administrative things. There are so many things that make it hard for me to walk away from. The skills that a Waldorf teacher needs to bring to the table include musicality, artistic ability, capacity to meet their students from age 6 to age 14. It requires many hours outside the classroom, on average, my dad, husband and I would spend an hour and a half to two hours a night in grades 7 and 8, preparing math lessons so that the students could meet their standards. I could not wing it, like I am able to in my current job with the curriculum that was provided to me. For Waldorf teachers it requires many hours outside the classroom, either preparing academically for 3-4 week long blocks that include choosing and preparing appropriate movement and dance, musical and poetic elements. It requires so much more work, and yet, I get paid \$100 more a day, for what is considered normal excellence in a public-school setting. Teacher here, also need to design curriculum that meets the needs of the district, keeping the academic activities rigorous enough to advance their students, while aligning these standards with the developmental needs of the student. When my class graduated, I found myself an empty vessel. Not because it was something I did not want to do, but because I had poured everything I had into those kids, which I am not complaining about, but you need to recognize in the people that are sitting before you. Their homes are empty, their family time is sacrificed, like mine were when I accepted a job here for much less money. During those years the sabbatical was debated, and ultimately approved, and it kept me motivated when exhaustion was all I knew. It was an incentive that I might have the freedom to pursue my own interest. What I decided to do was go to Ecuador to teach in a Waldorf school. Unfortunately, while I was there my dad passed away. Financially I could not come back to Madrone Trail, because of the cost that I incurred flying back in an emergency setting. I had to take a job where I could earn money more quickly. In the years I worked at Madrone Trail, I gained so much and sacrificed not only my time, but my children's early years, and about \$80,000. There is also the PERS contributions to consider, because of the lower pay, the contributions to PERS are lower, which means in retirement they will be receiving less benefits. I also feel it seems like if this were a priority for our board, school and community that this would be an easy amount to fundraise for. I would like my child's teacher to be able to sit back and recover.

**Mactild Howard** Five years ago, we were sitting here, in a meeting with the teachers and the board to discuss the sabbatical, we discussed reasons for and against, and its affordability, and it was granted. The teachers are now affected based their decisions on that, even though it was not contractual. We can all understand that the financial

situation might change, and that the giving of the sabbatical might have to be revisited. I hope the immediate teachers of the next two years, two who are leaving in two months, and had the understanding that they would be receiving sabbatical will be honored based on the past commitment of the board. To me it seems unfair, and disrespectful without having had a process in place, to disregard the previous commitment of the board. For the future, I would like so suggest that you have a clear process in place where you decide where the cutoff is for teachers that will be affected that were also promised a sabbatical, so they can adjust, and not be confronted just months before. The dedication, commitment, and the high ideals for Waldorf curriculum, together with the lower pay, I think deserves a sabbatical, bonus, or whatever you want to call it. From my experience having a sabbatical I appreciated this extra thank you from the community very much, lets face it, the commitment to teach the full cycle in a Waldorf school is very different for any public-school teaching. In the school I taught at, it was not connected with the teacher coming back after sabbatical, it was a conscious gift, which made it possible for me to step back, reflect, and assimilate the last eight years, and rejuvenate. This is a process which belongs to the teaching of a cycle of eight years, so I hope you can honor at least for the next two years, the promises that were made by the board before you, and figure something out for the future that might work.

**Gesine Abraham** I worked as a private school teacher in a Waldorf school and the school was constantly dealing with a budget deficit, mid-year we would have to try to see how we could keep the school open, and how to raise funds. We had complete financial instability, and no job security at all. We got paid less then even charter school teachers do, had no PERS or any type of retirement. I am presently retired without any benefits. The other side of the picture is Alyssum with her stokes supplies and \$100 more a day. In the middle of that we have the charter school. WE get 80% of the ADM per child, and that gets none of the bond money, and has the buy and maintain their own facility, so we are getting quite a bit less than public school. We are trying to figure out a way to make it work in that bind. It is almost as if they set charter schools up to fail in a sense, because they have made it almost impossible to do. I know that the board values the teachers, and their dedication, and I trust they will do everything they can to pay them as much as they possibly can. It seems to me that the fundraising we do is already overextended in this community. I am not really sure how we could come up with another \$35,000 in fundraising, because that is more than what we have done at the auction. I just wanted to give that perspective, they are in a bind. I know that the board intends to pay the teachers as much as they can, we have very little discretionary money, so any extra that we get, I am sure they will want to give it to the teachers because of their dedication, and the board is aware of that.

**Michelle Coull** The sabbatical policy reads “It is a gesture of gratitude for the work, time, energy, love, and sacrifice given by a teacher who successfully takes students through the journey of graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade.” In that sense the sabbatical has been a 100% success in that all the teachers since this policy was enacted have taken their classes all the way through. I want to make a clear request of the board, it is March, and my position and Dara’s come to a closure this June. My request is that you let us know, when we come back after Spring Break in April, where we stand. That would be appreciated.

**Kalee Lagomarsino** I have four kids, one of which is autistic. We came to this school because I have had kids in schools for eighteen years. We have seen horrible teachers, wonderful teachers, systems that work, and systems fail. I have homeschooled and been in all kinds of school settings. One of the things I have been doing over the last month as we have been thinking of joining the board, and being more involved in the school, is research into what schools’ work and what makes them work. The American school system is not in the top ten, we are in the middle, and compared to our wealth, it is embarrassing how little we fund our schools and our teachers. There is also massive teacher burnout in this country. What is going on in the countries where their education is working? There a few factors, and one of them is that teachers are revered. We don’t do that in this country, they are having to fight for basic stuff. Why? It’s ridiculous. We came to this school because after our experiences we had with our special needs child at other schools. I had to fight for two years to get the support for my child. We are so behind the times in schools that are succeeding in other countries, and part of the reason isn’t just the financial part, it is the attitude that we have toward teachers. A sabbatical is something that is changing the attitude. I feel so proud to do that, because I am investing in the teachers who are investing in my child. To hear that they are going to take that away it makes me scared. I don’t want to invest in a teacher that is burnt out, and exhausted. Finances are not an excuse, children with autism were treated like dirt in our school system, and it didn’t change because people said “we don’t have the money” It changed because people said. “we have to do something.” Taking the sabbatical away is not a solution is not an answer.

**Michelle Gury** I want to say thank you to everyone that got up as spoke. This is a tricky situation, and I feel the connection to the school for each of you, and the connection to the parents. We are doing our best, just as you are, to understand the issues that are presented in the budget, and in the school. So, thank you.

**Monica Rathjen** I would also like to extend my thanks to everyone who came tonight, and I would like to remind you that these board meetings are public meetings, all our comments are posted online, anyone is more than welcome to come and listen to the meeting, and to participate in the public comments. I encourage you to stay this

evening, I will be speaking specifically about the conflict resolution policy that we have in place, and about these issues that are rising, and what we might be able to do to work through these. I feel that I might be able to address that.

**Brenda Stein** I know this is an emotional issue, and I am just trying to keep to our timeline that we have set for this agenda, and I welcome all you back to our next meeting if you have more to say. I would just encourage giving me heads up so that we can budget the appropriate amount of time for public comment.

**Sarah Trujillo** I also want to thank everyone for coming tonight. I do want to point out that this is our first discussion of the sabbatical issue as the board sits now. We have heard you first, and we haven't even discussed it further than that. I want to make it clear that nothing is being ripped away, we haven't make any decisions, and we will give it a lot of thought and try to make an ethical and honest decision. We do value teachers, you are with our kids every day, and I love you all.

**John Briggs** I am a new board member, I have been immersing myself in Madrone Trail for the last six weeks, an inordinate amount of time honestly. I am finding the my colleges, the other board members that are here are all extremely contentious, I have talked with them personally. They all, as I have, the primary focus of our school as the betterment of our children. How do we educate them? How do we provide an environment that is safe for them? How do we develop a curriculum that is going to perpetuate their intellectual development? This school is striving to do that. The unfortunate part is that this school is not a Waldorf school, and it is not a public school. It is a hybrid of the two. Because of that, the constraints of dealing with the bureaucracy of the Oregon state education system creates mandates that we have to abide by. Walking into this situation I have been immediately confronted with the major dilemmas that face each and everyone of us. We are all on the same team, and we need to figure out how to get from here to there, with the primary focus being the kids. We are under probation from the Medford School District, we are facing an existential threat to the existence of this school. Because of that we have to abide by what is in front of us. There are three things 1. The school district is stating that we are not achieving according to the standards set forth by the state. We have to focus on that and create some systems by which that will happen. 2. They are concerned with some of our governance issues, some of which you have expressed concerns about. There are other elements that we need to correct, and make sure that we are in compliance. 3. The financial stability of the school. I will take about that when we talk about the budget. But, we only get 88% of our money from the state. At this point in time 2/3 of our budget is associated with salaries and benefits. That means that we have 1/3 of our budget that can be allocated to everything else that is associated with this school, from paying for the building, sewage, electricity, supplies, curriculum, and everything else.

We have a finite amount of money, in order for us to move forward we have to be sensitive to that, because we are not a private school, we cannot raise tuition. We cannot come to you as parents as ask for money. We cannot demand that, we have to work within the confines of what we are presented. That is a difficult task. I have read through all the minutes associated with the sabbatical. I know all the discussion that went on. I know all the struggles that the board faced in coming to a conclusion. Everyone of us here is sensitive to the teachers and we understand the commitment that you have made. We understand the rigors of the curriculum, but we have to try and find a way that we can take all these sensitivities, develop them around the vision of the Waldorf philosophy and yet make sure we are financially stable. To do that, we as stake holders, parents, teachers, board members, and administrators need to be heard. We have listened to you tonight, we are taking into consideration what you said, but we are also extremely mindful of the budgetary constraints that are in front of us. I am going to commit to developing a policy that makes sense but is sensitive to where the teachers are and previous commitments that have been made. I have some ideas, but we have not been able to discuss that yet. We are going to do the best we can, and if any of you have ideas, and you want to contact me please do. Pleas be assured there is not a hidden agenda among the board, everyone here has the best interest of the school at heart. I think the best thing we can do is try to develop a team spirit because we are all on the same team, and need to do that for our kids.

#### **IV. Approval of Minutes and Agenda Adjustments**

##### **a.) Approval of February Board Meeting Minutes**

###### **Motion Approved**

**Michelle Gury** I make a motion to approve the Board Meeting Minutes for February 2018.

**John Briggs** I second the motion.

**Aye – 5 (Stein, Rathjen, Gury, Trujillo, Briggs)**

**No – 0**

##### **b.) Agenda adjustments- item 7. b. Liaison Definition tabled**

#### **V. Approval of Consent Agenda**

##### **a.) Approval of Expenditures for January 2018 expenditures**

###### **Motion Approved**

**John Briggs** I make a motion to approve the expenditures for January 2018

**Sarah Trujillo** I second the motion

**Aye – 5 (Stein, Rathjen, Gury, Trujillo, Briggs)**

**No – 0**

## **VI. Informational Items**

a.) **Faculty Report- Jane Higgins** The main thing for us, was that we want to continue to have the board meetings on the second Wednesday of the month, so that our staff meetings in alignment to be able to attend. **Brenda Stein** I think that is fine. **Jane Higgins** If the subject of the board liaison is on the agenda for the next meeting we would like to participate in that discussion. If it had been voted on tonight it would have been without the opportunity for faculty to have any input on that. **Michelle Gury** I think that was because faculty was offered an opportunity to have input on that at the last meeting and it was declined. **Jane Higgins** My understanding was that there were board members that did not want it to be that way, and it got pushed through anyway. The faculty members should be able to speak and discuss within the meeting, and two of the sitting members expressed that. **Leann Tourzan** We discussed it at the faculty meeting today, and there were a lot of feelings that there should be two. **Brenda Stein** I don't think there was ever an issue with there being two. We can discuss it at our next meeting. **Jane Higgins** I just want to point out that just because I didn't want to work on this policy, doesn't mean faculty should have no say. There is continued tension between the director and faculty.

b.) **Director's Report Karen Bailey** John Briggs and I met with Michelle Cummings to start our charter negotiations. We have been renewed. It is a long process, it will take a meeting every other week. Luckily the other two Medford School Board members are very enthusiastic about our school, Jeff Consella, and Karen Starcovich. Our committee, which John Briggs is now the chair of, and Jesse Gammon is on, Tracy and I, as well as Jessica Kenzie. We are working through the process of a school improvement plan. We have never had one before, so there are some unknowns. We tried to get Michelle's feelings on that as far as what is likely, and what the process will look like, and we are in the details of the plan. At this point our charter is not unconditional, it will be contingent on us to address their significant concerns about us in the school improvement plan. So, it is a bit like being on probation, it is basically ongoing accountability for our three areas that John mentioned earlier. It is maybe not the best thing that we could have had, but not the worst. They do want us to succeed, but they are holding us accountable. **John Briggs** In the meeting that we had with Michelle Cummings, I find her to be

extremely professional, very kind and helpful, she will help us to come up with something we can live with but will be in accord with the dictates of the Medford School Board, I am looking forward to working with her, we will need to dig in and do the work. **Karen Bailey** Getting our charter renewal was one of my goals this year, and another was to find a new board member, and I succeeded in that as well. I am excited about the next couple of months, getting this hammered out. It is going to take a lot of collaboration, dedication, and collaboration with the district that we are trying so hard to develop a positive relationship with. It is key that it is not confrontational. They are our partner in this, they can make us more and more a part of their district, if we can work together. We did our lottery draw, and we have 50 kindergarteners on the wait list, which was very impressive for Michelle, she understands that we are a very popular choice in the valley. **Michelle Gury** On a side note, I did want to mention to anyone interested in joining the board, that it is a good idea to observe one of the Medford School Board meetings, to see how board meetings are run and understand the process.

- c.) **President's Report- Brenda Stein** This is the time of year that we begin our climate survey, Michelle has offered to start that. **Michelle Gury** I will be starting to compile questions to ask. The approach I would like to take this year is to focus on the upper grade students as well as parents and faculty to get feedback. I have reached out to the Waldorf Alliance to see what those questions should be and would like parent and faculty feedback on that as well. I thought we might incentivize it by offering whichever class brings back the most could have a pizza party. **Brenda Stein** We have not had a board treasurer in quite a while, and although we have not had a vote on it, I would like to ask if John would be willing to serve as an interim treasurer and we can vote on it next time. I was hoping that the secretary can revise our board binders to make sure everything is up to date. It has come to my attention that we should develop a nominating committee who would do the interviews for new potential board members. It says in the bylaws that the board president, the secretary and the treasurer are the ones that would do that, so I am asking if you are willing to do that? **John Briggs** Count me in. It would be a vetting process and time saver for board meetings, allows for better preparation, so board members know that applicants have been thoroughly vetted. **Michelle Gury** I like that idea, when I joined the board, the process seemed awkward, and it seems like a better use of board meeting time. **Sarah Trujillo** I would be willing to be a part of it, but my term is up in May. **Brenda Stein** Something else that has come up is the school mentor position job description, no one has volunteered to create that. Perhaps Mactild could let us know what her job entails and we could put it into a job description, faculty could give input on that as well. Information given may not all go into the final document but could be helpful. Faculty all have job description, and we should have it for all contracted employees. I am willing to

help with that, and will can refer to minutes for the board meeting in which Mactild was interviewed. From an HR perspective faculty don't write their own job description, which is usually the responsibility of the director. The input is helpful, but ultimately that is the directors call. I would like the expectations from the teachers to be clear, as far as what that mentor should provide for you. **Brenda Stein** I do want to make sure that it is clear, for the calendar, board meetings on the second week of the month, which means agenda will go out at the first of the month so we all have a week to review agenda and information.

## **VII. Action Items**

- a.) **Conflict of Interest Policy- Michelle Gury** Based on past discussions on what we got back from the district as far as faculty being voting members of the board, I have reached out to other public Waldorf schools, I have drafted a form that would be filled out by board members. It states who the conflicts of interest may be, and how to report them. It has been clear from the MSD that having teachers as voting board members is a conflict of interest, from their perspective. It is expected that with teachers as voting members, that if that conflict of interest was to arise that those members would need to formally put that on record and recuse themselves, and that has not taken place. **Jane Higgins** We have done that, and although the MSD has stated that they are concerned about teachers serving, it is a common practice in charter schools. **Brenda Stein** This conflict of interest policy is not just for teachers. Article 6 Section 2 of our bylaws says, "All directors and officers must sign a disclosure of all conflicts of interest and update it if that disclosure needs to be changed" It is for every board member. **Monica Rathjen** I feel that the liaison definition and the faculty voting topic that we will be talking about at our next meeting is a separate subject. What a conflict of interest and a potential conflict of interest. I spoke with the OSBA about this a few months ago, and I encourage other board members to contact them if you have any questions, they are helpful. Conflict and potential conflict of interest have to do with financial issues. So anything that has that potential needs to be declared and the member needs to recuse themselves. It is not an automatic conflict of interest if a family member of an employee asks to join the board per se. The issue is, can that person be unbiased? Does that person know when to recuse themselves? According to the attorney I spoke with, it is extremely common in boards, so all of us need to look at the question of can we be unbiased? Is there a conflict of interest for us? OSBA selected sample policy has board ethics, and conflict of interest BBFA and BBFB discusses all of these issues. For the sake of clarity, I think it would be good to revisit this. I agree that there is a section to sign at the beginning that each member should sign and declare if there is a conflict of interest, but the way this is written relates to finances and not necessarily familial relations. I recommend we look more carefully before we go

forward with the form. **Michelle Gury** At this point we can either adopt the form as I have presented it. If we are going to revamp it, I think there should be a work session. **Monica Rathjen** I believe there needs to be more discussion and input from all board members, this is complex, and in the form it is now is confusing. I think it could use more discussion. **John Briggs** I have no problem with the form, I think it is self-explanatory. There is a wide variety of conflicts of interest associated with staff members serving on the board, aside from just straight financial. **Michelle Gury** I agree with John, one of the things I am feeling as a board member of this school is that we can always bring our voice to the table, but if there is not an end resolution in sight, there is no progress, so this is a start for me, if we want to go back and reevaluate this, this is a start. It is something that is encompassing based on past discussions that we have had. I feel we just need to get this voted in, and on the books so we can move forward. **Monica Rathjen** I feel that, based on the opinion of an attorney that this would put the board in a legally compromised position. I do not feel comfortable going forward to this, and we have the right to differ in opinion as board members. I have these example forms, and would be happy to bring them to another meeting but do not feel comfortable voting for the form as it stands.

#### **Motion Not Approved**

**John Briggs** I make a motion to approve the conflict of interest form as presented by Michelle Gury.

#### **No Second**

**Brenda Stein** We can revisit this issue. **Monica Rathjen** I would like for all board members to have access to the sample form and policy from OSBA and have a discussion before voting on a revised form. **Brenda Stein** Let's schedule a work session for Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup>, at 5 pm.

#### **b.) Liaison Definition – tabled**

**c.) Directors Evaluation Michelle Gury** I have taken the feedback from Mactild, Karen and Alliance of Public Waldorf Schools, contacted three different individuals. Douglas Garret is who Mactild recommended, I spoke with him about some of the issues. He recommended that I get in touch with Tim Connolly, that he would be more aligned to address the faculty/director issues, but he was only available March 19-23, and would have needed to know mid-February. So, that won't work. George Hoffaker was recommended by Karen, as well as the Alliance. Rainbow Roesenblum replied that he would be happy to discuss the issues and recommend George Hoffaker. So, I would like to ask for the board it vote for us to bring him here to do a full evaluation on Karen as we have discussed before. He

would meet with members from all parts of our school. **Monica Rathjen** Is this in addition to the director evaluation done by the board? **Brenda Stein** This would be part of that end of year evaluation. **Michelle Gury** I would suggest us doing our evaluation after we get the report back from George. So that we have a better idea of issues coming forward. I have a question for Karen, I know there was some concern about your prior relationship with George, how long has it been, and how long was the process that you went through. **Karen Bailey** Three years ago, and it was for four months. I had ten hour-long sessions on the phone with him. And that was to get my Waldorf Administration Certification. **Sarah Trujillo** Is it possible for us to consider waiting until the June dates? In my mind, the director evaluation that is done by the board is separate from this, and we have a process in place for the based on the goals that the director presents at the beginning of the year. The director evaluation that you are proposing has more to do with the overall health of the school and the issues that have come up. **Michelle Gury** What has come up, hasn't been clear for me, it has been vague, we haven't had specific complaints, it has been brought as the faculty as a group. **Sarah Trujillo** My question is, is this something we need to get done now, or can it wait until June, is it something that we financially we want to do? How urgent is this? As far as our evaluation of Karen, I feel that we can proceed without that outside evaluation. That process is based on goals that she presented to us at the beginning of the year and is unrelated to outside evaluation. **Jane Higgins** What would the cost be? **Michelle Gury** His quoted price would be \$750 a day, plus mileage and lodging, but he said he would be willing to reduce the per day charge. I feel that it would help clarify those issues. Tim Connelly would be more. **Jane Higgins** Faculty wants feedback in the process as well. **Brenda Stein** It was my understanding that was the reason for asking for outside help, so that we could get to the bottom of faculty issues. **John Briggs** There was a mediator brought in last summer, what was the result of that? **Brenda Stein** The board doesn't know anything about that mediation, other than it happened. Those documents are confidential. **Jane Higgins** The faculty has sent about three letters to the board, they should see there is a problem. **Brenda Stein** We know there is a problem, but we don't know any specifics. **Jane Higgins** We have been told to go back to the conflict resolution policy. **Monica Rathjen** I think I can clarify this when we get to that agenda item. **Brenda Stein** I feel like the purpose of having someone outside come in is to give us all the opportunity to resolve this. We can do the director evaluation the way we did last year, but I feel we do it in a vacuum, because, we still don't really understand the issues. **Michelle Gury** I am also unclear on what the issues are. There is conflict and underlying tension, we don't know the details, and this is an opportunity to figure it out and get advice on how to move forward. It would be a thorough look at how she works with staff, students, parents and board members. **Jane Higgins** That is what we asked for

last year, so that you could see how she was working with us. **Sarah Trujillo** I think Karen was uncomfortable with having an open ended evaluation from employees. I think that is what we are trying to figure out, is how to include that. I would like to find a way that doesn't cost the school \$3000-\$5000. **Michelle Gury** I think if we need to spend that money to clearly understand the issues, it is investing in the overall well-being of our school. **Monica Rathjen** I hear what people are saying and what board members are saying. In this scenario, and the way this board is run, is that we discuss this as a board this time without public comment at this time. Amongst the board members, I have more information about the conflict resolution policy that may help clarify why the board is not able to hear and shed light on this that Michelle has brought. I see value in this process, Karen has asked for this. I am looking at this in terms of professionalism not personal issues, and I think it is important that every party have a voice. My issue is how much it cost. I would hope we could discuss this after I share what I have regarding the conflict resolution policy. I am not opposed to having someone else come in. **Michelle Gury** Karen, is there money in the budget for this? **Karen Bailey** Yes.

#### **Motion Not Approved**

**Michelle Gury** I make a motion to approve George Hoffaker coming to do an evaluation.

**No second**

### **VIII. Discussion Items**

- a.) **Nominating Committee** Discussed during Presidents update
- b.) **Charter Renewal- Karen Bailey** If any board members are interested in joining that committee we meet on Friday mornings. **Michelle Gury** I am interested.
- c.) **Budget Committee John Briggs** Karen had asked for a budget committee to meet made up of faculty and board members, the bylaws do not allow for faculty to sit on that committee. Non-committee members cannot approve budgets. I recommend at the next meeting we discuss and consider the formation of a finance committee which is broader, comprised of two or more members of the board, charged with financial oversight of the organization including budgets consistent with other non-profit organizations, and present that to the board with and advisory committee to help Karen come up with proposals that they would present to the finance committee for review and discussion. We would give our concerns back to Karen, and she could bring it back to the finance committee who would make their recommendation to the board who would make final decision. Based previous four

years the average revenue has been \$1,448,000. 88% of that comes from the district 80% of the ADM per student. The school nets \$6,115 per student. That is all dependent on the double track and with the elimination of that will cost us \$120,000 lost revenue this year. There by reducing the expected revenue to \$1,328,000. We have averaged \$1,400,000 in expenditures over the last four years. The reduction of the double track also reduces expenditure on one teacher, so we would reduce expenditures from \$1,400,000 by \$53,000, but also adding back in the cost of a second sabbatical approximately \$40,000. In addition, in May we have a note due to our donor about \$59,000. Which means, this year we will look at spending \$1,447,000. With a deficit of \$120,000 negative cashflow. Historically we have averaged positive cash flow of \$47,000. This year we will have a deficit of \$120,000 unless we do something different. Historically, there has been discussion that the deficit of losing the double track could be made up in fundraising, but fundraising has been static over the last four years. The discussion on the sabbatical is part of this and tough choices are in front of us. The historical board recognized the tough choices and now we are there. Unless we get a massive influx of private donation, we are stuck. I asked Michelle specially if there were a possibility for double track, and she said it was not likely. I am not sure that would save us even if they did. I think we need to jump the hurdle of creating a finance committee next month. I have begun work on next years budget, and we are looking at what we can do, and afford to cut. Hopefully we will have a better idea at next months meeting. (John read section 5-2.11 of bylaws) I am proposing that we have finance committee that is comprised of two or more board members, Karen as the director can create her advisory committee, and come up with the wish list of everybody, present it to the finance committee, and they will send it back until we have something we can adopt. The district has communicated that we have the lowest reserves in the district, and they would like to see that improved, what will be acceptable to them, I am not sure of yet.

**d.) Field Trip Policy - Sarah Trujillo** I was not able to attend the last meeting about this, I know Jodie put together some information about possible policies. Michelle was putting together a committee that would include parent advisors for policy input? **Michelle Gury** We need to get some of our policies and procedures under control. WE had our insurance representative and I have met with the faculty and want to meet with the parents to brainstorm what is important. I think it could be good to schedule a meeting for Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm, and change the Conflict of Interest Work Session to Friday the 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm

**e.) School Mentor Job Description** Discussed in President update

**f.) Conflict Resolution Policy- Monica Rathjen** This policy was adopted last year. We, as board members are required to be fiscally, legally and morally responsible to this organization. This includes encouraging openness transparency, respect and cooperation amongst all community members. When we look at consider all aspects we see that the parts interrelate or coexist and cooperate to create more than the sum of their parts. This includes director, board, parents, staff, students, grandparents, donors, etc. All of this form a community, which is a professional community and not a personal one. When issues become personal, and lines become drawn in the sand it becomes us against them, and it can become unprofessional. Us against them, collateral damage cannot be undone. When you look at an organism like the human body, and you decided the heart is the most important, you take the liver, and the body cannot function. Not one of any of these parts are more important than the other. This policy is a process by which all persons can participate to hopefully bring resolution to issues that need to be resolved so we can continue to cooperate. This policy is available to us all. I know there has been discouragement as to why the board can't or won't act, and I must say, the issues must be brought through the appropriate channels. The board acts at an appellate level, as a final arbiter, and must not act earlier in order to protect the integrity of the process. What I have noticed is that this specific policy that we worked so hard on, with impact from all parts of the school, to see it not working, or general reticence to use it or inability to move past the third level, to reach this impasse that the board is aware of. The process is stalled. I can speak for myself, that it is not that the board doesn't care, it is that the board in its position as an appellate office cannot intervene in these conflicts with this policy in place. So I went to the OSBA and asked what to do when the policy is not working. The OSBA attorney told me that if there is a complaint process and it is not superseded by another process, i.e. disciplinary action by the director etc. Then the complaint process must be followed. Executive sessions should not be used as a substitute process. This promotes resolution and trust. If there is an issue it should be able to come through the appropriate process. He said that we may need to enact multiple policies. These examples that I have provided have the possibility of skipping steps depending on who the complaint is about. So, I think we need to have work session to see if there is a way to encourage people to use the process. I also believe that complaints need to come from and individual. For instance, it is not enough to sign a letter of complaint from the faculty. If ten have an issue, they all have the option of each filing a complaint. This legitimizes the process and all parties involved. The board can't legally take action on matters that don't come through the complaint process. Lets schedule a work session Tues, March 20 at 11am

**g.) Director Evaluation** Discussed in Action items

**h.) Sabbatical Leave Discussion** Discussed in Public Comments

**IX. Thank you's**

**X. Summarize important upcoming dates/ Confirm next meeting-** Parent Feedback for Field Trip Policy-Thursday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm

Conflict of Interest Work Session- Friday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm

Conflict Resolution Work Session- Tuesday, March 20<sup>th</sup> at 11 am

April Board Meeting- Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 pm

**XI. Closing Verse**

**XII. Meeting Adjourned**

Minutes submitted by: Sarah Trujillo

Minutes approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Board President