

MINUTES
VSWEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, April 21, 2021
VIA [Zoom](#)

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Gregory Schneider (GS) – President

John Tanner (JT)

April Sauer (AS) – Secretary

Danielle Martinez (DM)

Dan Franks (DF) – Treasurer

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

The President, Treasurer, and Secretary were present, and a quorum was reached.

GUESTS

Invitees of the Board:

Frank Mirizio (FM)

Barb Cunningham (BC)

Nellie Grossenbacher (NG)

Adelina Carrera (AC)

Kerstin Kubina (KK)

Members of the public present via Zoom/Registration through Google Forms:

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- Michelle Kratzer
- Riva
- Susan Kerr
- Megan Young
- Lu Li
- Colleen
- Laura Heaney
- Jamie
- Megan
- Jill Thomas
- Scott Edwards
- JJ
- Sami Rank
- Sarah Williamson
- Susan Kerr
- David Schantz
- Nina Prange
- Larry Grossenbacher
- Kim Baker
- Cynthia Bartholomew
- Heather Sullivan
- Helen Moriarty
- Tammy
- Sophie McCurley
- Nick Casura
- J Falconburg
- John Kennedy

OPENING VERSE / INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting was called to order at 6:35pm. GS welcomed the public to the meeting, read the opening verse, and reviewed meeting procedures.

The Board members introduced themselves along with FM.

GS Provided an overview of the agenda.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

GS moved to enter an executive session for discussion or consultation with DMS's attorneys in order to consider its position and instruct its attorneys regarding DMS's position in threatened litigation or in settlement discussions conducted in order to avoid or resolve litigation with a former employee of the school. DM second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: GS, AS, JT, DF, DM. **Motion Passes.**

The minutes of the Executive Session are confidential and are maintained separately pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(B).

Executive session ended at 7:25pm.

BOARD RECRUITMENT

GS Got an email from an applicant stating that he had a work emergency and will apply at a later date. We'll proceed with the four of you. Tell us a bit about yourself. Please keep your questions to minute.

BC She's a wife of 31 years, mother of 4, has senior at DMS. Their third graduate at DMS. Community member for a decade. Was an admin assistant in the high school. Made good friends and discovered a love for Waldorf education and community as a whole. Found a new passion with Waldorf education and wanted to share it with community, so she started Humble Hive—a monthly group to spotlight teachers, books, speakers. Also created book club based on Waldorf interests. Would love to continue to serve the school.

KK She has 2 kids at DMS--2nd/4th. Part of Parent Council. Does animal care and enjoys gardening.

NG This is her first year at DMS. Two sets of twins—5th/7th grade. Just moved from New York. Was previously at a Waldorf school in NY. Has a vested interest in Waldorf and carrying them through high school.

AC She came to the school when her youngest daughter was an 8th grade. Currently in 11th grade. Also has a kindergartener at school. Originally from Prescott and learned about Waldorf and learned there were two Waldorf trained teachers. They were her mentors. She learned about DMS by being a part of Mountain Oak in Prescott. She's an early childhood teacher. She's had an in-home care business and previously taught at Mountain Oak's preschool. Currently a stay at home mom. Avid parent volunteer, Winter Faire vendor, and continued involvement with animal and garden and Parent Council.

GS Excellent, happy to have you all here.

AS What made you interested in joining board?

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NG Every meeting, GS put out a plea asking for people to join the Board, and I immerse myself in what I'm passionate about. Being on the board is a way to advocate for students. Wanted to make sure that she wasn't a bystander. Wanted to be involved and stepped up to apply to the Board.

AC A few years ago, I considered it, but I didn't feel like I was ready. Had only been to a few in person meetings and wasn't sure what was going on. Wanted to be more prepared so she became more active and paid attention to the meetings and struggles our school has had over the years. Want to be involved and help where she can. Thought she could put some effort right now.

BC She has a desire to serve the school. She's tried a few different ways. It seems like this is the steering body of the school. Although, our Board has a lot of financially sound minds, she felt that perhaps a different perspective that she could bring of our holistic community and a healthy social life. She wants the community to rally behind the Board and bring a different point of view of our powerful community. She loves our school and wants to see it thrive. You've done a great job surviving the storm, and maybe perhaps it's time to look—with the contemplation in the future—perhaps it's time to have a holistic view of the community.

KK She's inspired to serve. She loves the DMS community. Particularly, this year, watching the Board navigate covid, she was inspired to be more active and serve in that way.

DF What skills do you have that you think will fit and serve the school as a board member?

AC Having been an early childhood teacher, she could bring about the aspect of having been on a faculty before. She brings good communication skills. Ability and desire to be a part of a team and keep a team together. She loves organizing. It's put to her to put together a collaboration of minds, she's there. When her daughter started, she wanted to be active as a parent. She gathered parent reps and came together and knocked out the Halloween Carnival. We rocked it. And proud that she's helping continue that mindset of teamwork.

BC She could bring a unique perspective. Started as a parent and was hired on for 8 years and got to study along seasoned Waldorf teachers. It gave her an interesting window to know staff and parents' perspectives. Have an appetite for understanding many things. Brings a harmonious collaborative group of people.

NG In the letter of intent, two of the things you listed were legal and financial aspects. She's not those, but she's good at community building and engaging people. She has a subset of skills—event planning, task jobs—not afraid to step out and bring people in. It's part of her personality. She could bring a group of twenty individuals to her home for dinner and make sure everyone is a part. That's the beauty of Waldorf. Having a community is a huge part of that. We've suffered this last year, and we need to build our community back to build the school, and I'm not afraid to bring people together at all.

KK She would bring skills from her professional life. She was an accountant. She's creative on revenue generation as well as expense management. Coming from a corporate environment,

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bring a different flavor. Currently at Solution Engineers, deals with lot of people and finds solutions. This translates well to coming up with different strategies for the Board and being able to execute them as well.

JT In your opinion, what is the biggest concern facing DMS right now?

NG Being fresh to the community and being new, she thinks the biggest concern and problem facing DMS is DMS. She's talked to a lot of people, and it seems that everyone is scarred and still hurt over what's happened over the last three years. Stop, and how do we move forward and on from that. It seems there are so many hurt feelings and hurt personalities that the community needs to heal from that and move forward. The only way DMS can thrive is stay where we are now and not dwell on the past of what has happened. We have the Board and fresh administration, and we need to move forward.

KK A big challenge is a financial one. We need to build financial reservoirs so we can move through bigger plans and not struggle.

BC The biggest concern in my opinion would be the loss of the institutional knowledge and seasoned Waldorf teachers. In order to bring the quality of Waldorf education that our community needs we need to have at least 51% of Waldorf trained teachers. With the loss of the history and the past goes some great wisdom.

AC She echoes those responses. She agrees with KK. Definitely needs an emphasis on fundraising. She's noticed a lack of the three-fold order, and that if you can picture a Venn diagram—Board, faculty/staff, and parents/outer community. That's the reason why NG we are where we are. Those have not been connecting and communicating together. She's seen bits and pieces of that coming together—like the hiring of FM. She hopes we can get back there someday soon with this contemplation.

JT Thank you.

DM In your opinion, what is going well at DMS?

BC Those who are still there are the die hards, and she thinks that the love has never stopped. Every community member is doing the best with what we've been served up with. There's a lot to be said for what our community has for this school. She knows that everyone and the Board is doing the good work.

KK The love has always been there. A couple things going well are the hiring of the Executive Director, FM. He's doing a great job so far, and overall the school is pulling back together—through Board, community, and staff growing in the same direction. That's been largely from the Board and hiring good leadership to steer it.

AC Ditto to that. We finally have a leader in FM. He has taken flight with that, and that's been wonderful. He's showed us that he's committed to the success of our school. He's such a friendly person, and that's exactly what we needed—a friendly face and a loving individual.

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Loving the children and getting to work, doing what needs to be done. Also, hearing that the Board has taken on those moments where we could capture some money—grabbing grants and funds we could during this year. She commends the Board on being diligent to do the work to make that happen. Faculty probably brought their gusto to that too. We're more financially stable now.

NG The turn in administration. Since FM has come in, he works well with the Board and that we've come together to make the community whole. The core of Waldorf—her boys are on their third teachers, but they still love Waldorf. At the core, with small young teenagers—they're still happy to go to school. Same with her fifth graders. They're happy to be held tightly in the Waldorf environment. That's what's working. Among the chaos, the kids are still encapsulated in the core of Waldorf, and that couldn't be done without the Board and administration.

GS What could the board do better or differently?

AC It's hard to say because we don't see things done outside of this meeting. She feels like the group as a collective—it doesn't appear that anyone is a student of anthroposophy. So she thinks that's lacking. She's read some by-laws, and sometimes it seems a little unorganized.

KK She thinks raising money from outside the community. There are things she's not aware of, so we need to be more creative and go outside to get more dollars.

BC In her opinion, she'd like to see a more balanced and diverse board, meaning that she liked the suggestion at the Town Hall meeting Peter said 3 parents, 3 faculty, 3 community members or half men, half women. Something that gives what she would like to see a wider sample of our community which is really big. She wants to see more voices represented. It seems like finances are covered. One perspective she'd like to plant the seed about, perhaps now that the first base is covered, she has the sense that when the community can participate more, the pocket books have opened up more freely. Sometimes we put the cart before the horse.

NG There's a lot done behind the scenes. We don't know how much of a commitment it is. She agrees, that the meetings are sometimes a struggle. There was an instance where she presented an idea to the Board, and GS responded, 'This isn't my job, maybe FM will take care of it.' She'd like to see more follow through to keep the ball rolling. It wasn't until six weeks later that she got in touch with someone from the high school. It's a thankless job and time consuming and it's volunteering, but in a small community, everything has to work together. All the components need to be able to build. Everything needs to be about building. We might have to go above and beyond a little bit.

GS Thank you all, and a fair criticism. I apologize. Several months ago was quite a difficult time for the Board.

AS What is your availability?

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KK When she's passionate about something she finds the time. She works, she's a mom, but service at DMS is a priority. She has the capacity to sever where she needs to and how she needs to.

AC She's a busy mon, but she commits and will find time.

NG She has the time and availability. She's available day and night. She has a full commitment level.

BC She's on the threshold of being an alum parent, so she'll have a lot of time. Wants to share about Board accomplishments. She's happy with finances, great job with Covid, loves the new Executive Director. She was vocal about how he was found, she likes the Town Hall, and she's happy that we've approved the school contemplation.

DF If selected, what committees or projects would you like to focus on?

BC She's passionate about our community and wants to team up with whatever committee is working on Alliance membership. She feels well versed in that and wants to see us get that service mark.

KK She doesn't know what's already in the works, but she'd like to work on things like contract negotiations. Like the internet—who's the provider and digging into that to find a solution for efficiency.

NG Community outreach, event planning, and fundraising.

AC She would love to help FM in any way with marketing and outreach. She'd love to be able to help BC to keep our relationships with RSF and the Alliance. We want to hold that Waldorf standard for ourselves.

JT What conflicts of interest do you anticipate as a board member and how will you manage them?

BC She doesn't anticipate any conflicts of interest as a board member.

NG She doesn't anticipate a conflict of interest but will always advocate for core Steiner Waldorf education.

AC If it's a conflict, she guesses being a board member. Would steer clear of board related conversations.

KK Inevitably, there's always conflict of interest. As a parent, she may think there are needs for her children but aren't in the best interest of the school. Her personal way to combat that working with teams, you don't always have to agree to step back a take a greater view. What's best for the overall group verses her individually as a parent.

DM Can you see yourself working well with all board members?

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BC She sees herself working well with all board members because she values what's best for Desert Marigold.

KK Sees herself working well with all. She tends to work well with everyone. She cares deeply for the school which gives cohesion.

NG She tends to be a team player and makes sure all voices are heard. She believes hard in Waldorf and if you're on the board you definitely want to see this through. We all have a vested interest.

AC If conflict arises, she'd find common ground through honest communication. She feels that's key to making the team work.

DM What questions do you have for the board?

NG How many spaces are you looking to fill? How big would like the board to be?

GS By-laws say 11, so we have lots of space. I think 11 would be a great number to have at the end of that day. That many hands would help.

AC Two-part questions. One, her question is to JT, our board member/faculty/LDC member. How will you build a healthy relationship with the high school faculty so current students will choose DMS for their high school years?

JT He appreciates that question. He's already working with FM on building bridges with the high school. They want to see a coordinated effort between the middle school and the high school. We want parents to see that the high school is a viable option. It's a critical path. He's working with FM already, and they look forward to that success.

AC She's grateful to know that it's being worked on.

KK Whoever wants to jump in and take this one. The biggest lesson you've learned since you became a board member?

AS Thought she had a good handle on what was going on with admin, staff and parents, and once she joined the board realized she only knew a sliver of what was truly going on. It gave her sympathy for parents with concerns and to see it from their perspective with limited information. And keeping things confidential. It's hard when the community shares concerns based on rumors or lies, and you can't say anything, and you have to be okay with that. You have to keep confidential things confidential no matter who speaks with you. You have you be okay with being quiet and simply dealing with what comes at you.

DM She took foundations studies. Wanting to know how to move forward and what areas to concentrate on. A big push would be student programming. We had so much more we were offering and wanting to see more. Needing to rebuild and wanting to serve and help. And May

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1st we're doing a fundraiser, and we're doing a big push and this is something to build on and bring sustainability and bring community and faculty together.

BC Anyone can answer: do you value community feedback in whichever form we've had in the past—town hall, public comment, emails?

GS Yes, we value community feedback. We've struggled a while ago when we were getting a lot of criticism, but it wasn't constructive criticism, and it was openly hostile. So we cut off public comments, but he thinks the Town Hall was great because it allows for dialogue. It's not just a public statement that can't be responded to. He likes to openly engage and discuss. He wants to do more town halls.

BC If she may make a suggestion, the nice thing about Town Hall is that you could see who's there. Maybe if we could see who's there. Last question is do you feel it would be beneficial and healthy that at least 51% of the board was studying Steiner or Waldorf education as an aside? Is that a realistic healthy board enhancing thing to do?

GS Ideally, 100% of the board would be participating in that study, but we'd need to build that into board meetings. When you get involved in different projects, it can be difficult to find time to work on our own to study. We'd like to have more experts come. That's my vision. It would be helpful to have more individuals to do more on the board.

DM She wants to plug the book club. Participating in a Steiner study. It's more effective to go as a group to get more discussion.

GS Thank you all for being here and engaging in this somewhat awkward process. We will reconvene on May 5th with all of you and will vote then. He'll be in touch about how that will go.

BUDGET AND FINANCE

2021-2022 Budget

GS FM and DF, where are we with next year's budget?

FM It hasn't yet with Monique. She wasn't quite ready to take out projections. A lot of that has to do with enrollment. There are still applications out—about 40. There are so many layers to this. The funding for student enrollment is one, funding from ESSER II and III is there, but he doesn't want to use that on salary. Wants to use that on capital stuff. He's also in negotiations with health insurance. We were able to gain access to another charter group. Bid should be in next week and it would be less. Employees wants to know about raises, art teacher, choir teacher, etc. That all depends on enrollment and decreasing some bills like health insurance. He and Monique are trying to attack it on both ends and come up with a projection. All staff we have this year, we'll at least have all of those back, meaning staff is not decreasing. If we're getting 30 or more kids, what do we want to spend that money on?

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Enrollment Update

GS We've already covered enrollment.

Financial Update

GS Let's look at Profit and Loss. Reviewed July 2020-March 2021. We're in the black through March. That's very good. Our tuition and income is low due to Covid. Tax contributions are lower than we'd like. Hopefully, that will come up next year with the help of some new board members.

GS Reviewed Balance sheet. Total liability and equity is about 2.7million.

FM This sheet may seem deceiving when you forget two meetings ago she showed us a projection through the rest of the budget. This is different because it doesn't take into account April, May, and June expenditures. He trusts the end of the year budget number better than this one.

GS Yeah, this is an optimistic view of the world right now. It won't be this rosy.

FM Want to point that out to our teachers to make sure we're on the same page and consider the April, May, June expenses.

GS We talked last time about the updated budget. DM, did you get your questions answered?

DM I spoke with Monique today and got all of my questions answered.

GS moved to approve the revised budget for the remainder of the 2020-2021 year for submission to ADE as presented by Monique Garza. DF second. No further discussion. Vote unanimous in favor: DF, DM, GS, AS, JT. **Motion passes.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Update

GS FM, anything else you'd like to update us on?

FM We have completed evaluations on the grades, high school, classified workers—front office aides, maintenance and operations. The only group not getting evaluated is specialty teachers. Next year we have a plan to make sure that everyone gets evaluated. Because he has those done, he has issued contracts to teachers already, and other contracts will go out soon. He feels good about evals and contracts. We are way ahead of what has happened in the past.

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DM Do I dare bring up the parking lot?

FM We had a staff meeting today and addressed the problem. Our teachers are not all getting out to the lot at 2pm. They're coming at different times, and that causes parents to sit and wait. When they're frustrated, they yell things. He thinks the meeting will help and teachers will bring their students to the benches at 2pm. We hope moving forward that that will happen. Another problem is taking place on 28th street. We arrive and leave at the same time as George Gervin, and our parents were making U-turns in their school, and in the street. It's causing problems. He's contemplating asking the police to come out and if they have to give out tickets, so be it. He'll go out tomorrow, and hopefully, things will be better.

DM In the past, we've staggered start and stop times.

FM He's speaking with George Gervin to see if we can stagger times. The principal is nice and we're setting up a meeting. We'll discuss that and also sharing an art teacher.

DM If we're seeing a large number of students exiting a single class, what's the plan for that?

FM Hoping that this is a fear and not something that you're seeing.

GS Since this is veering from the agenda, I'll like to postpone talking about that. I'm happy to put this on the next agenda if we need to.

FM Encouraged DM to meet with him to discuss this issue.

AS Thanked FM and staff for rolling out AZ Merit testing the way they did. It's no secret her kid is remote, and she had concerns going in. Staff reached out and made arrangements that felt safe, and everything went well. Everyone did a great job with testing.

FM It went pretty smooth. Deb Pawlo deserves a lot of credit as do our teachers who have been proctoring well and covering when others are sick. Kudos to Ms. Deb and staff and Mr. Grossenbacher and DF from the computer set up in the beginning.

COVID-19

Mask Requirements

GS Governor Ducey rescinded the school mask mandate. In contrast, to Governor Ducey, the AZ DOE issued a statement regarding the need to continue to wear masks based on CDC guidelines. Cases continue to fluctuate, variants are circulating, affecting more young people than they have in the past. We've received a good split of emails from parents feeling we should remove the policy and parents who feel strongly we should keep the mask policy. What I'd like to talk about tonight with five weeks left in the school year, is this something we'd like to change right now? Is this something we want to adjust or revisit it over the summer before school starts in the fall?

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DF What was the question?

GS Do we want to take any action tonight to change the status quo?

DF He's not an epidemiologist, so he can only base his research on the medical community. The message has been unchanged mostly. The message being that people should still wear masks. Our choice will make some people upset and some people happy.

DM Are teachers offering breaks from mask wearing?

DF Younger grades get breaks with teacher's permission.

FM Teachers have shared with the class, all you have to do is ask if you need a mask break and they'll let you step out and have a mask break.

DM If it was optional, and parents want their children to wear masks all day, could teachers enforce it?

FM If we change our plan we risk sending 100 kids back to online. We are now at 42 online. It's been inching down each week. We're happy that classrooms are filling up. One letter I saw was: 'please don't force us to go back online.' I'm afraid that teachers will not like half their classes back in online.

AS Mentioned an email newsletter for board members they got last week that had links to recent documents from ADE, US Dept of Education, and CDC all saying masks need to be worn at school. Also agree with FM that we may lose students if we change our policy. They would have to go to online. It makes logical sense to stick with the mask policy we have and just finish out the school year and then talk about it again before school starts in the fall.

JT Agrees with the conversation. He is happy to see more students in the classroom and doesn't want to see anyone leave by altering the plan. Teachers will certainly let students take mask breaks. He believes that we can get through five weeks and finish the year strong.

Gs Doesn't sound that there's any appetite to change our strategy, so the mask policy stays in place as is and that may be upsetting to some people, but I agree with everybody here.

FM There is a light at the end of the tunnel. I think those who support Ducey's thoughts, it may help those people to know we're likely to have positive changes coming in the fall.

GS In four months, things will look different. We're not ruling anything out, we'd love to see everyone in the classroom and be free, but we have to live with the reality of where we are today. We finish strong like JT said and keep as many kids in the classroom as we can and keep talking about this over the summer.

JT He's going with Allen Greenspan and saying 'I'm cautiously optimistic.'

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BOARD PROCEDURES

Approval of Minutes

GS moved to approve the 04/07/21 regular meeting minutes. JT second. No further discussion. Vote is unanimous in favor: GS, DF, JT, AS, DM. **Motion passes.**

GS moved to adjourn. JT second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: JT, GS, AS, DF, DM. **Motion passes.**

CLOSING VERSE

AS read the closing verse.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:11pm.

Prepared by AS on 04.21.2021.