



**MINUTES**  
**VSWEA Board of Directors Meeting**  
Wednesday, May 17, 2023  
VIA [Zoom](#)

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**Members Present:**

April Sauer (AS)—Secretary  
John Tanner (JT)  
Danielle Martinez (DM)

Myriah Mhoon (MM)  
Nellie Grossenbacher (NG)  
Ashley Parks (AP)

**Members Absent: Kerstin Kubina, Ben Fong, and Dan Franks**

The Secretary was present, and a quorum was reached.

**Guests**

Invitees of the Board:  
Frank Mirizio (FM)  
Paula Cummings (PC)

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

Orlene Carlos  
Luis  
Me  
JJ  
Monique  
Laura Heaney  
Deb

Marlene Thompson  
MD  
Morgan Davis  
Laura Slayton-Garcia  
Sophie M  
Jennifer Cody  
Tammy/Tom

**Opening Verse/Introductions**

Meeting was called to order at 6:40pm. DM welcomed the public to the meeting and read the opening verse.

The Board members introduced themselves as well as FM.

**Board Applicant Interview**

Paula Cummings joined the meeting at 6:50pm.

DM I'd like to be the first to welcome you and thank you for your application. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

PC From MA. My parents were both educators. Went to College of MA in Amherst. Moved to LA and worked in finance and marketing and advertising. Son went to private Waldorf school in Elliot, Maine. When she moved to AZ, she looked up Waldorf schools and fell in love with

Desert Marigold. This school is what moved her to Phoenix. Worked as Assistant, Aide, Movement teacher, received Waldorf certification and a guidance counselor certification.

DM What made you interested in joining the board?

PC She's been working with LDC the last couple of years. It's given her an understanding about the high school realm and the school in general. It led her to believe that working with the board would be an interesting challenge.

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

PC My knowledge of business and finance will help. My marketing and advertising experience could be helpful as well. Her experience as a teacher will help as well.

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

PC This is possibly a teacher perspective. The aftereffects of Covid is a concern. The students are still struggling with their will forces. We have too many tardies and lateness. We're struggling to get the kids to engage. We need to find some solutions for that.

AP What do you think is going well at Desert Marigold right now?

PC One thing that is really positive is all of the site improvements. The beautification of the campus, in particular the high school. The new lounge is great. The stage, and the almost completion of the woodshop. All of those things are really positive.

AP What has the board done well this past year?

PC From what I understand, the development of the sustaining funds has been good. I think that's fantastic.

NG What could the board do better or differently?

PC Possibly becoming more visible to the community. If there's a way to join the board with the community would be great. Money is always an issue. Part of the board's job is to get that money moving.

NG What types of volunteering have you done in the last month?

PC As a teacher, the last few things I've done include working on the senior play. I gathered supplies and bought some. We have an upcoming poetry/plant sale evening next week. I've been putting in a lot of time to make that a success.

NG What is your availability for time commitment to the board?

PC My time is flexible. I'm available for board meetings. I'm not sure what committees there are, but I'm interested to hear more.

MM If selected as a board member, what committees or projects would you like to focus on in your first year?

PC I'd like to hear more. If there's a marketing committee that would be a good fit for me. It could help families that are already here or reaching out to families we'd like to add.

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

PC I'm hoping there's not a conflict of interest.

MM Let me rephrase that. Having different hats within our community, how will you manage in those separate roles?

PC It's important to get to know people and work with them. Being open and listening is always important.

MM How do you work through conflict with your peers?

PC To remain professional and stay calm. Really listening to others—what their problems are and what solutions they might offer. Working through that together is important.

AS I want you to toot your own horn. What have done at DMS that's amazing and you're proud about?

PC Being a part of the LDC was great. I'm a good teacher and a strong leader. I can keep the kids in check but bring out their creative side. I like to work on musicals and plays. I think those have been really successful. I feel that I am strong in most areas that I work in, and I work very hard.

JT You and I have always worked well together, so I appreciate you.

PC I appreciate you too.

JT Maybe you could speak about your relationship to anthroposophy and to Steiner and his ideas.

PC After working at the school and then going through foundation studies and got certified, I really believe that having the capacity to know that we're all here and have been put here to develop together and to really honor childhood and make sure that the students are becoming their highest selves, and we too need to be striving to be our highest selves. As I was sitting for the last meeting, I found a Rudolph Steiner quote I'd like to share: "I was united with you. Stay now united in me. So shall we speak together. In the language of eternal being. So shall we work together. Where deeds find their fulfilment. So shall we weave in the spirit. Where human thoughts are woven. In the word of eternal thought." These words really resonate with me. The idea of working together and finding the truth, Steiner thought that good judgment is very important to develop in our students and in ourselves so we can make a better world.

JT Thank you, PC. That points us in the right direction. Thank you for the opportunity to ask a question.

DM PC, do you have some questions for us?

PC I would like to know about the committees if you can speak to that.

DM We don't have any official committees but some informal working groups. AP works with PC and Parent Education. AS is our charter rep and wears a lot of hats. NG worked closely with Sophie to help with the sustaining fund. MM and Ben have been hunting for grants and keeping up on compliance and governance. JT of course is on the LDC. Dan Franks is our treasurer and is in the process of moving back. I was on a budget review team working to come up with compensation rates for this year. We are missing our board president tonight, but she's been working with SPED, budgeting, complaints, compliance, etc.

PC What has been a major challenge in the past?

AS I think that organization was lacking, and we have been doing a lot of work to put everything in writing. We have playbooks now and internal documents for regular processes. For instance, this evening we simply had to pull up our election process timeline and everything is right there. The goal is to leave information for new members so that if anyone resigns or completes their term, the new members will know what to do. We're constantly working on that, but it's going well.

PC What is the biggest concern facing DMS right now?

DM Hiring and finding the right fit for our students, budget matters, enrollment, and community outreach. I see a lot of room for improvement.

AS A continuous issue is drama, for lack of a better word, and gossip popping up. It's something we're always working on. We've done a lot of work in this area, but the issue comes around again and again. We're working on it. Town Halls have been helpful. NG and Sophie meeting with community members has been helpful. Board members turning up to events is great.

PC Yes, I definitely like to talk with people face to face. Communication is so important.

DM We did the contemplation and that helped a lot.

NG Thank you, PC, for your time.

DM Thank you, PC, again for joining us.

PC left the board meeting at 7:20pm.

DM moved to elect Paula Cummings as a board member of the Valley of the Sun Waldorf Education Association. MM seconded. No further discussion. Votes in favor: MM, DM, AP, AS, JT. Opposed: NG. **Motion Passes.**

DM To review the votes, that's MM, DM, AP, AS, and JT in favor, and NG opposed.

DM moved to accept the votes in adding Paula Cummings as a member of the Valley of the Sun Waldorf Education Association board. AS second. No further discussion. Votes in favor: MM, DM, AP, AS, JT. Opposed: NG. **Motion Passes.**

DM PC, you are now a member of the VSWEA board. Welcome.

## Parent Council Updates

DM Parent Council sent us an update via email. They have nothing new to report. They are still waiting on financial updates.

### **Executive Director Updates**

FM It's the last weeks of school. Everyone's hair is on fire. I want to welcome Ms. Cummings to the board. Thanks for throwing your name in the hat. Congrats to Ms. Lopez. All third graders have passed their state tests. The credit goes to the teacher for moving the kids from point a to point b. We will slowly start getting the results from the rest of the grades. At the beginning of the year we got a B rating, and we're hoping to be a B or greater. It's a packed final week. We have a staff meeting and a luncheon to say thank you. On top of all of that, Steve and Hector are getting the campus put together before all these activities. An AC went out this week, and we're trying to fix that. We hired an English teacher. He's certified 6-12 and we're happy to bring him on. We have a Spanish opening and a first grade opening. Dr. Darian and I have been working hard to find someone. Our summer training is up to 21 teachers. This is truly remarkable. I thank the trainers. They've been doing such a good job that other schools are catching on. We will be graduating 4 teachers, who will be fully Waldorf certified. Enrollment is at 295. We're pushing for high school as we don't have many openings in the grades. The Town Hall is June 8<sup>th</sup> on a Thursday.

DM I think I saw that the day was extended. Is that right?

FM The kinder is the same, and they get out at 12:15pm. The high school will be from 8am-2:30pm. The grades will be 8am-2:25pm. We are giving every class the same amount of time and giving everyone a 5-minute passing period. We think this will help out our families who have a hard time getting here at 2pm.

DM and FM discussed 301, community college programs, and current job postings.

### **Financial Update**

DM Shared her screen to show the Balance Sheet as of April 30th. Lists assets, total liability, accounts payable. Total Liability and Equity: \$3, 363,372.58. Shared her screen to show P and L forecast with Budget. We had to readjust for student enrollment. 290 is now in the enrollment category for the revised budget. Shared screen to show Expanded Balance Sheet.

FM I met with Monique last week, and we're healthy. We will be able to meet our increases for our staff. Our insurance went up, but we're okay. We're just hoping to add some more students to help increase our budget.

DM Shared screen to show Profit and Loss. Net Income at \$382, 059.11. When will we have May figures?

FM The first week of June.

### **Proposed Motions**

DM moved to approve the 4/19/23 regular meeting minutes. MM second. No further discussion. Votes in favor: AS, DM, MM, NG, AP. Abstain: JT. **Motion passes.**

DM moved to approve 4/19/23 Executive Session meeting minutes. NG second. No further discussion. Votes in favor: AS, DM, MM, NG, AP. Abstain: JT. **Motion passes.**

DM moved to go into Executive Session for discussion of a specific contract renewal. I invite Frank Mirizio into the session. MM second. No further discussion. Votes in favor: AS, JT, DM, MM, AP. Opposed: NG. **Motion passes.**

Executive Session began at 7:56pm.

**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 8:18pm.

### **Continuing Business/Open Issues**

#### Survey Update Discussion

DM I want to thank AS for the updates she sent me. Kerstin made some updates as well which made it a lot shorter. Any other follow up?

NG I like the survey. I think it's very thorough. I think it's important. I'm just happy. I like the separation to keep our finger on the pulse of the community.

DM Any additions? Okay, then are we ready to send it out 5/19? And for how long?

AS If it goes out on Friday, we can keep it up until the first Friday of June.

#### 2023-2024 Board Meeting Schedule

DM AS shared the board meeting schedule. Any issues with that?

AS I'm not hearing from anyone, so I'm going to make a motion

AS moved to approve the 2023-2024 Board Meeting Schedule. NG second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: AS, JT, DM, MM, NG, AP. **Motion passes.**

### **New Business**

No new business.

Myriah Mhoon left the meeting 8:18pm.

### **Announcements**

DM The next board meeting is 6/7 at 6:30pm via Zoom. Shared some upcoming events.

DM moved to adjourn the 05/17/23 board meeting. NG second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: AS, JT, DM, NG, AP. **Motion passes.**

**Closing Verse**

AS read the closing verse.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:21pm.

Prepared by AS on 05.17.2023.