



Board of Directors
Board Meeting Minutes
October 27, 2020

Free Horizon Montessori PK – 8

Montessori for the 21st Century - a place to learn, a place to belong

1. Meeting called to order at: 6:05pm
 - a. Board Members Present: Alison Fuhr, Clark Frye, Doug Klof, Bekky Robbins, Leslie Arboleda, Diane Fox, John Frost
 - b. Board Members Absent (excused): None
 - c. Staff Members Present: Kresta Vuolo, Cyndi Vosburgh, Donnetta McDonald, Vosburgh, Jennifer Levy, Kate Powell (Staff Liaisons)
 - d. Guests: Parents, community members, staff; Matthew Walsh – Community Superintendent for Jefferson County Public Schools, oversee majority of alternative, option and innovation schools.

2. Town Hall
 - a. Guidelines
 - i. Professional name or what you would like to be called should be displayed on your Zoom.
 - ii. Send topics that you would like discussed to Alison and/or Cyndi
 - iii. Topics will be limited to items that pertain to the BOD and its responsibilities.

 - b. Topics
 - i. What is the purpose of the board? Does the board have oversight of the principal or do the mostly function to support?
 1. Primary roles of the BOD
 - a. Set direction of school
 - b. Strategy to move forward and improving
 - i. Kresta is a board member, non-voting ex-officio, we need to have input as we set the direction of the school. Cannot do that without input from the administration
 - c. Oversee the principal, BOD does hire and fire the principal.
 - i. We do provide oversight, responsible for evaluation every year, managerial in that respect. Any manager should both support and provide oversight to their direct reports.
 - d. Assure adherence to Innovation Plan and Governance Agreement that lets us exist within Jefferson County Public Schools. Joint oversight via BOD and the Community Superintendent.
 - e. Set policy.
 - f. Listen and support all aspects of the FHM community.

- g. Fiscal responsibility and oversight via Finance Sub-committee. Very unique piece to FHM that we have board involvement in creating the budget. Partly because of innovation status and previously our charter status, run a little bit differently than neighborhood schools
 - h. Board of 8, 7 elected by community plus Kresta. Sub-committees of the board actually get the work done. The BOD is more of a management board. Example Facilities committee, have a diverse voice on that committee to set the direction of where the building will go.
- ii. What is the reason for BOD Town Hall?
 - 1. It was asked for by the community. Regular board meetings are not structured for public to speak to the board frankly. Tonight, we are here to have a dialogue with the community.
 - 2. We do have regular virtual coffees to increase engagement with the community (not just us, but BOD and CSN as well). Will continue these, and in the future will try to vary the times so that more community members would have an opportunity to join.
- iii. What is the current involvement in the sub-committees?
 - 1. Staff, parent volunteers, board representation.
 - 2. Always room for guests
- iv. What are all of the requirements for the committees?
 - 1. In the BOD policy manual on FHM website, each committee has a page.
 - 2. We are still approving parent volunteers, the website not reflect all parents involved
- v. Will agendas for facilities committee be posted?
 - 1. Yes, we will look into this. Generally a standing agenda that covers existing and future projects.
- vi. Texts going around that we haven't unmuted everyone on the Town Hall.
 - 1. We have a total of 42 people. Not sure how we would manage that dialogue.
- vii. Will school stay open?
 - 1. Decision made at district level in partnership with Jeffco Public Health. Have had sharp increases recently.
 - 2. What are the implications of moving through the dial. Originally had 3 levels, but now middle level has 3 levels of it's own. Currently in that third level of the second phase. What does that mean? Continue hybrid in secondary, in-person in elementary and lower. Will be Jeffco Public Health and governor.
- viii. What do families do when they have an unresolved issue with administration? Is the only option to leave?
 - 1. No, that is not the only option. We have a conflict resolution policy, and an overall desire of conflict resolution. Starts with attempting to resolve issue directly. WE realize that this may not always be able to happen. If

you get to admin level and still can't find resolution, in our policy manual, we have conflict resolution policy, very formal and detailed with timelines. It is done to protect the family that has a conflict and to protect the school. To find a solution we need to be fair and BOD needs to hear all sides, have all information. First, write a letter to the BOD, what you need help with and what is the desired outcome. BOD will bring together everyone to determine the best way to resolve the conflict.

2. We can't help the school grow and get better if people just walk away.
- ix. Sarah Choinard – feel like there is a sense of unwelcomeness at the school that I don't love, specifically to volunteering. However, don't feel that is supported by the school (obviously not this year). Volunteered and very accepted by kids teachers, when I go to press the buzzer to walk in the school, not a welcoming feeling. Feels very intense coming into school, very intimidating. Administration, front desk, etc. Not a welcoming feeling. Stayed because we like the teachers. Has been frustrating, thoughts of leaving because of that. I think that when you say we want parent involvement, needs to be a follow-up of a very welcoming feeling from everyone (including administration).
1. Culture issue, that is very specific to fostering a welcoming environment at the school. What are ways that we can improve the culture of the school?
 2. There's process and policy that we have to follow, but it could be done in a warmer way.
 3. Jennifer Whitton-Trujillo – I've had opposite experience, always emailing, never felt unwelcoming, in 2020, school has done much better about communication about what is going on. Knowing what to expect might be helpful. Example, when you come into volunteer, here's what to expect.
 4. Judy Luehring – President of School Accountability Committee. Attending tonight, there is some good feedback, Accountability Committee, school climate is one of our main goals. We just talked about this at the meeting last month and what to do about school climate. Issue of front door has come up recently. Ways to improve, etc., please reach out to me or Donetta. We know there's a problem, but we need solutions. "I felt this way, how about we do it this way"? Have had issues at the front, but still did not fully understand the policies.
 5. April Couvillion – set way to have conflict resolution, so many people that are having similar issues, seems unproductive, or a larger group issue. Could we have that conversation as a larger group instead of having 1:1 meetings? Problem with not any one person in particular, or some structure of the school. Seems biased to have someone heavily involved in their own evaluation.

- a. BOD can't discuss specific situations in a public forum because it's confidential. Have policies and procedures, following district process which follows Colorado law.
- b. Seems biased to have someone heavily involved in their own evaluation.
 - i. Bringing in some outside experts to try and determine what the problem is. Haven't heard it from the staff, but it might be because they don't feel comfortable being honest with the BOD.
 - ii. Matt Walsh – have experience in this, have worked with 25 or 30 schools, will be the 7th or 8th “listening tour” I've done with the school, when staff doesn't feel safe, go in and bring in another Community Superintendent (Tom McMillan – oversees all charter schools). Give staff 15 minutes, what's going well, what needs to be improved, what solutions can you offer. Listen, take notes, and ID themes. Want to hear directly from staff that are comfortable. Want to gather the body of evidence. If we're truly committed to solving the problem, this is a great way to go about it. Won't be sharing specific answers, but overall themes.
 - iii. Last year, we were exploring how we could get more for the principal evaluation, i.e. bringing in district staff. Year 3 or year 4 of having consistent questions, and we're eager to look at the results and see if they've changed over time. BOD survey does not provide supervisory feedback because we aren't educators. As a BOD, decided we'd like to administer both surveys so that we can track over time and the responses that staff provides. Also wanted Kresta to have the opportunity to have the feedback from Matt. We are doing both, conducted anonymously. District evaluation is later in the school year.
- x. Dianna Armentrout – don't have a problem with any particular staff person, when child has had a not great experience and then to hear lip service about policy, hard to understand conflict resolution, can't go back in time.
 - 1. Does something need to change? Did we not follow policy. Don't use policy and process to institutionalize things, but to ensure that every kid gets the best experience as possible separate from the intense feelings that we feel in these situations. Need to have those things in place to rely upon because we're not unique in many ways as an elementary school. Cannot know all of the discussions and nuances that went into setting policy. Policy manual was created by previous members of the board, governance committee, created by parent volunteers, most of

whom had children in the school at the time of adoption. Created by people volunteering their time and effort, formal process vetted by lawyers, etc. Necessary tool to keep any organization operating successfully.

- xi. Nicole Steinbach – very grateful that we chose to do this. Appreciate additional information about how district is getting involved. Thank you to attendees. Encourage everyone to be brave and share. There are a lot of negative comments flying around. Would like the BOD to think about changing functionality and trust the community to do the right thing. I focused on policy and process in my letters, people wrote you emotional letters, the answers people received accused them of enhancing rumors. My ask is that if there are processes, everyone follows those. No one should be surprised and attacked. Want to say that Leslie did not organize the letters that were sent.

- 1. If the reading of responses was that we felt they were enhancing rumors that was not the intent. We are taking them seriously and addressing them, just cannot do that in a public forum.

- xii. Tony Schiess – is conflict resolution expected to be followed between admin and staff?

- 1. Yes, in the employee handbook. But beyond that, we would like to have a culture of individual conflict resolution, but there is a process and desire for us to address conflict and try to resolve it. One of the reasons we are bringing in Matt Wash and district, we need to understand what is going on in the school.

- xiii. Donetta MacDonald – we want to gather this information and make Free Horizon a better school.

- c. The Board members that have been elected to represent the community, and we are passionate about making the school better. We want to dig into the hard stuff that will truly make this better. Lots of humans working together, imperfect, but we should do our best.

4. Adjournment at 7:33pm

In accordance with the Colorado Open Meetings Law, also known as the Sunshine Law, the Board must give notice to the public anytime they schedule a meeting of more than three (3) board members to discuss business concerning the school. The Colorado Sunshine law does allow for the meetings, or portions of the meetings, to be held privately when the subject matter being discussed must remain confidential so long as no formal action is taken during the private portion of the meeting, called the "executive session". The Sunshine Law strictly defines eight (8) criteria under which a private executive session can be held, personnel discussion being one of them. The law also states the community must be informed of the meeting and the criteria under which an executive session must be called.

Bekky Robbins