

Gloucester Montessori School

Board Meeting

August 11, 2015

Present: Carlos Morales, Anna Morales, Jess Hendricks, Jennifer James, Pat Landau, Marianne Burroughs

The meeting opened with a discussion of the school's evolving financial aid program. Currently there is one family receiving one of the two 50% scholarships that were offered for the 2015-2016 school year. A review of a prior report presented by Marianne Burroughs followed, with the following points of discussion:

- Clarification of the goal of the program – is it to give current deserving families financial aid or to allow new families who may not have the means to participate in the program? Can one financial aid offering provide both?
- Acknowledgement of the three-year cycle – how to structure the program so that families can participate in the full three-year program without having to completely reapply each year. Should a family receive the aid for the full three years?
- How to divide the aid among qualifying families – should the school set aside a lump sum (ex. 5000.00) to be divided among up to five families or offer fewer aid packages of larger amounts each. This might be more impactful for families with lesser means.
- Tying financial aid to enrollment- creating a ratio of financial aid packages to total enrollment in order to maintain necessary operational income.
- Handling application deadlines – structuring deadlines to allow time for new families to apply during the late spring and summer (or even mid-year) when they typically seek admission to the program. It was suggested that we have open application for new families for pro-rated aid amounts throughout the school year. For example, existing families could apply in February or March and new families apply at the time of enrollment.
- In essence, offering two types of financial aid; one geared for returning families and one for new families, each addressing the three-year cycle through re-application and adherence to acceptance criteria (level of need, school commitment).

In conclusion, in light of a strong, overall sentiment to offer several larger financial aid options to new families, Marianne offered to put together several different plans and budget scenarios for the next meeting. It was acknowledged that this program should be finalized for next year by next January 2016.

The next topic was the possibility of incentivizing enrollment in the upper elementary program. It was suggested that a tuition freeze be used to encourage “pioneer” families to support the growing program. It was noted that the decision to enroll a child was not purely financial – teachers, curriculum and facilities all play a role. The question was asked: should the school ask for a commitment from families in order to develop the program or does the program need to be in place first? The discussion concluded that key elements of the program should be in place before expecting family commitments. Families should be kept apprised of these developments and informed of the school’s progress.

Next, the facilities committee (Carlos) presented a brief update regarding plans for an elementary addition. After meeting with several building contractors, cost for the new building was estimated from 140,000 to 240,000, depending on the size and type of structure. The lower estimate was for a modular building; this option is closer to the school’s budget and still offers flexibility of design and speedy construction. Research, including exploring classroom needs and floorplan options is continuing.

Several final issues discussed were:

- Jennifer James offered to oversee the annual solicitation letter, which should be initiated as soon as possible.
- Planning for The Kids Carnival on September 12<sup>th</sup> is well underway. Several vendors inquired about fees for participation; it was decided that a 25.00 fee would be appropriate.
- Next Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 29<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 pm.