



Mill Falls Charter School creates life-long learners by providing an intellectually rich and challenging experience delivered through the Montessori tradition. In a safe and peaceful setting, dedicated educators foster students' individuality, creativity and critical-thinking skills to fully prepare them for future scholastic, civic and personal success.

MFCS Meeting Minutes for October 20 2021

Public Meeting held via Zoom

For Zoom Meeting information or difficulties connecting, please email office@millfalls.org

1. **Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public:** Connors called the meeting to order at **5:50pm**. Following the school policy of limited building access to staff, students, Special Education service providers and emergency personnel, the Board met remotely. For meeting access, public was instructed to contact office@millfalls.org. There were no members of the public who requested access before or during the meeting.
Present: Connors, Talbot, Bee, DePasse, Marr, Levin, Butterfield, Bashir, Corriveau, Dalton.
Absent: Trombley, Wrubleski
2. **Announcements/Updates:** Levin shared that McCeil Johnson formally resigned from the Board after years of service. She will be organizing a small gift as expression of our thanks for her many years of service.
3. **Governance Committee**
Butterfield and Levin brought forward the nomination of Danielle Dalton to the Board of Trustees, following the meeting they had with her after the September Board meeting, which Dalton also attended as a guest,
Motion: Bee motioned to approve the nomination of Danielle Dalton to the Board of Trustees; Connors seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.
4. **Public Comment:** No Public Present
5. **Meeting Business**
 - a. **Approval of Minutes** from September 15, 2021 meeting
Motion: DePasse motioned to approve the minutes; Talbot seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.
6. **School Reporting**
Educational Program Director (*please see the attached report*)
In Wrubleski's absence, Levin highlighted a few items from Wrubleski's report:
 - **International Peace Day** included an outside assembly this year for COVID safety where Upper Elementary Students read Peace (by Todd Parr); the children sang 'Light a Candle for Peace'; and each classroom and all staff participated in a Peace Walk. During the course of the day, the students also engaged in peace-related activities and discussions.
 - **Scholastic Book Fair** was held at school last week. We will receive over \$1300 in Scholastic dollars which is based on books sales.
 - **Professional Development:** Today was the first full day of professional development since our Staff Opening Days in late August. Today's focus was on our math program and is part of a deep dive into reviewing and reinvigorating our math instruction based on student data. Our guest speaker was Biff Maier, a renowned Montessorian who talked about philosophy and steps to move forward in support of our students. Biff's work with us, and the analysis of our student data (being done by our Math Interventionist, Colleen Lacroix) are both supported by our federal ESSER funding.

Executive Director (*please also see attached report*)

- Levin began by speaking about work she's been doing related to our **Charter Renewal**. Thus far we have had a health department inspection as well as a facility inspection by the DOE, all part of our renewal process.
- Earlier today she met with the landlord's Broker, Roger Dieker, to discuss the **lease renewal** process. She was joined by the broker for Mill Falls, Will Kanteres, who led Mill Falls through all other lease and lease renewal processes, pro-bono. We informed Dieker that we are interested in a 5-year term, with the right to renew twice thereafter. Dieker asked Levin to share a list of any maintenance issues or other upgrades that the school is interested in having attended to at this time. Levin asked Dieker if there would be any space adjacent to our current space that might be coming available any time soon. She explained that while there are funds for school expansion, it requires additional student body growth, which is not possible in the current space we have. Dieker also confirmed that a new educational program has moved into the building; they discussed traffic flow. Dieker will be asking the landlord to provide an up-to-date building plan (following recent construction as this is required in the Emergency Response Plan filed with Homeland Security annually). He will also discuss rates and terms with the landlord which will be the subject of subsequent meetings. Connors asked if relocation is anywhere on the table? Levin shared that Kanteres has and continues to look for other potential sites. Nothing is currently available in the area that fits our needs.
- **Covid Update:** Levin shared that as of last week we had 10 active cases, with 1 more added over the weekend. Each case requires reporting and communication to staff, families and the health department. She also shared NH Department of Health documentation detailing the school cases across the state. Mill Falls is managing spread well thus far, which shows that masking and cohorting are very effective mitigation measures, especially among our wholly unvaccinated young student body.

7. Program:

A: Annual Meeting/Board Engagement:

Connors began this section noting that she would like to hold off on the full annual meeting, because she feels that the Board needs to spend some time engaging in some professional development in order to prepare properly for people to commit to officer roles and general board service. Like the school, the Board has also been impacted by COVID. Butterfield added that she took the liberty to connect with a group we have worked with in the past called BoardOnTrack which is an organization focused specifically on charter school boards. She has a meeting with them on Friday to get an overview of their current programming. Levin noted that they have many free resources, as well as other fee-based programs to support our Board work. Connors shared that she would like the Board to engage in a retreat/workshop in Nov/Dec to support this process and that Levin will be sharing a doodle poll to solidify that schedule. Levin and Butterfield noted that BoardOnTrack is focused on governance including articulating goals and monitoring Board progress in reaching those goals. Levin added that we do have some great resources within our reach for potential facilitators at our retreat. We also have a great document that captures trustee experience, interest, committee service, and more that we should visit during or in preparation for the retreat/workshop.

Connors noted that she, Levin and Butterfield will discuss these resources and plan the retreat. More information will follow.

Talbot added that in this process we ought to look over our Board structure, size/design, and consider different types of people who might participate in board work.

Butterfield noted that we should ask the current officers if they are comfortable holding on to their positions for the next few months. They agreed, and with that, she proposed that the Board move this school year's annual meeting to January 2022, providing time for the board to consider our structure, goals and get reinvigorated.

Motion: Connors motioned to accept the motion; Bee seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.

B: Renewal of Trustee Greg DePasse.

As part of the Board's process, they each shared something about DePasse that was meaningful to them in relation to his board service.

Motion: Butterfield moved to renew DePasse as Trustee for another 3-year term; Connors seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.

8. Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 17, 2021 @ 5:45pm

9. Motion to Adjourn: Butterfield motioned to adjourn at 6:52pm; Connors seconded. Vote: Unanimous.



**Educational Program Director
Board Report
October 20,2021**

International Peace Day: Annually, our community celebrates International Peace Day with an all school assembly. Students sing "Light a Candle for Peace", read the book *Peace* by Todd Parr and wrap up the meeting by participating in an all school peace walk. The students then return to their classrooms to make small projects representing their understanding of peace. This day is always a favorite by all.

Scholastic Book Fair: Starting October 4th, we hosted our annual Scholastic Book Fair. Students took advantage of the enchanted forest themed book fair and each enjoyed browsing and purchasing new books. This fall we will receive over of \$1300 scholastic dollars to purchase new books or technology to utilize in our classrooms.

Professional Development: October's professional development focus is Montessori math. Biff Maier from Lexington Montessori just outside of Boston, facilitated a full day workshop on the topic of math instruction in the Montessori classroom, however was informed through a deep dive into our SAS math data and supporting data from our internal bench mark assessment Scholastic Math Inventory. As a staff, we determined our 'cluster' focus of need, brainstormed ways to address these needs through instruction and systems in the classroom. We will revisit our goals in March once again with Biff Maier.

Internal Assessments: Annually in the fall we assess students in the areas of math, reading, writing, and fluency. These assessments are typically complete by the end of October and are used to inform progress reports that will be going home to parents via ALMA. The assessments are also a piece to the puzzle of providing instruction to students.



**Executive Director's Report
For the October 20, 2021
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

Required Reporting

We received our first **2021/22 Per Pupil Aid**. This is based on the reported enrollment.

The **BOY- Beginning of the Year report** has been completed and uploaded to the DOE, as required.

Grace has completed the **Free & Reduced Report**, and we have uploaded it as required. We will soon complete the annual student **Immunization Report**.

Additionally, all students who required **English language assessment** have been assessed by an outside assessor in coordination with our ELL Coordinator, Mindy Kacavas.

Work on our **Charter Renewal** is underway. Last week I met with the head of the Charter School Office, Jane Waterhouse, and welcomed a member of the DOE staff who conducted our Facility Review which is part of the renewal process. An extensive set of materials, documents, surveys and meetings with stakeholders - including members of the Board - are all required for the successful completion of our Charter Renewal. I expect to work closely with the Charter Committee over the next many months in preparation for our renewal visit in the spring.

Board Related

Last month, **Danielle Dalton** joined us at our Board meeting as part of her nomination process. Soon after, Naomi Butterfield and I attended the follow up meeting with Danielle to discuss the particulars of Board service and address her questions. At our October Board meeting we will be bringing forth her nomination.

Additionally, our October meeting will include our **Annual Meeting** – this features the selection of the **2021/22 Officer Slate and Committee Assignments**.

Facility

I reached out to our landlord to initiate the **lease renewal process**. Real Estate Broker, Will Kanteres, will once again work with us to facilitate this process. He has been contacted by the landlord's broker, Roger Dieker, who we have been told will represent them during this process.

As noted above, we have had a clean (every 5-year) **review of our facility** both by the Health Department and by the DOE – all required elements of our Charter Renewal.

COVID Update

As most of you are aware, the case numbers in NH are continuing to climb, even as cases are dropping nationally. The most likely reason has to do with when the Delta variant arrived here – later than it did in other parts of the country. The number of children testing positive has risen to over 30% in recent weeks. It is no surprise, therefore, that eventually some of those cases would be among our students.

We are fortunate to have a strong partnership with our families. They express their appreciation regularly for the care with which we are approaching COVID safety and reporting. That said, all of us have struggled with limited availability of testing that is both affordable and accessible with the delivery of timely results.

We are also fortunate to have the partnership of the Manchester Health Department who has worked closely with us every step of the COVID journey. Each new positive case at Mill Falls is reported to the Manchester Health Department (as per the protocol) and we send a communication out the impacted classroom (and if required, bus) and to all staff. As set forth by the Governor, DOE and DHHS, the ONLY people who we can require to quarantine due to exposure at school are household contacts (siblings, parents, guardians, etc.). We have had several siblings who have been learning from home due to home exposure. In our letter to families, we urge them to seek a PCR test 3-5 days after exposure AND consider self-quarantining for 5-7 days after exposure. Again, we are not allowed to require either of those who have been potentially exposed at school.

Once we learn of a positive case and/or required quarantine due to exposure at home, we work with the teaching staff and family to set the child up for remote learning when/if the/she are well enough to participate. A reminder that we have hired one of our remote teachers from last year who is our Student Resource Assistant. This is a part-time position and provides up to 3 hours of support to those students who are learning from home. She does not provide live lessons, but she holds a morning meeting of all at-home learners and maintains close contact with the children during their time away from their classrooms. This position will be paid for by ESSER III funds.

Once per week, we report the full school caseload. On Friday we reported to our full school community via email that we have 10 active cases spread over 6 of our 7 classrooms. We have spoken at length with the Manchester Health Department about the current state guidance in relation to our rising case load. A cluster is 3 or more related cases among members of a defined group (in our case classroom) and an outbreak is 3 or more clusters in the building. However, the current state restrictions make it extremely difficult for the school to send an entire classroom into remote learning. Further, the Board of Education is considering a new law put forth by the Department of Education that would make it nearly impossible to send a classroom (or school) into remote learning due to a heavy COVID caseload. We have been told by the Education Commissioner that this rule would not go into effect until January. As you might imagine, managing the growing number of cases is proving to be extremely time consuming for our admin team. We have implemented a well-planned step-by-step process, but there are numerous steps that must be followed for each and every case.

MFCS ChildCare Program

Due to the COVID pandemic, this program is suspended until further notice. Several families have been able to enroll in childcare at the Boys and Girls Club; a bus transports the children daily.

Enrollment

We have had a few start-of-the-year departures and have been able to quickly fill those spots and are currently operating as a full house (168 students) as we have nearly daily this school year.

Financial

I have provided our auditors with request files for our **FY21 Audit** which will be done remotely this year. Once completed, our audits are sent to the DOE and posted on our website.

Special Education: This month we sent out the first set of SpEd service reimbursement invoices to the current sending districts who have resident students with IEP's enrolled at Mill Falls and receive services from our special educators and/or paraprofessionals. At this time our SpEd Team and paras support students from 5 different districts including Manchester. In addition, there are a few students who receive services directly from their sending districts or by those contracted via the districts.

As you are aware, there is a severe staffing shortage related to paraprofessionals. At the end of the summer, Laura notified all impacted sending districts that like them, we did not have sufficient applicants to meet the number of paraprofessionals called for by our students' IEPs.

Bedford and Goffstown have collaborated to hire and share the costs of a paraprofessional to work with their students at Mill Falls who are in the same classrooms. Manchester has not been able to provide additional supports. A reminder that the law puts the ultimately responsibility of meeting the students' IEPs with the sending districts.

Title Funds: As discussed previously, we have moved forward with our title funding in the following ways: Title 1 to fund our part-time Upper Elementary Interventionist (though this position is not yet been filled); Title II to support our staff professional development work and our ongoing Montessori Audit and Planning work with Elizabeth Slade (a reminder that some of our professional development will be paid for by ESSER/COVID relief funds); Title IV funds to support work in ensuring that our education program is equitable for all of our students. We just received word on Friday that the DOE has put together a new Title III consortium in support of our ELL program. We, along with the Birches Academy Charter School will be part of this new group.

ESSER/CARES Funds: A reminder that we have previously shared our plans for our ESSER III funds. Review of the plan can be found here: <https://millfalls.org/mill-falls-esser-funds-usage-plan/> To date, we have completed our reimbursement requests for the ESSER I funds and uploaded our budget for the ESSER II plans which has not yet been approved by the DOE team.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

This month's Professional Development Day will include a catered lunch provided by a Mill Falls Family who owns a local middle eastern restaurant. Last month on our Professional Development Afternoon, Trustee and Mill Falls Mom, Hind Bashier, provided an incredible meal for our staff. We are so very thankful for the kindness our families share with us!

Human Resources

In late September, we welcomed a new part-time paraprofessional, and the full-time paraprofessional hired by Goffstown/Bedford noted above. Both are wonderful additions to our team!

Foundation News:

The Foundation currently has \$511,680.23 in its accounts.

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