



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 Board Meeting Minutes for January 19, 2022

Public Meeting held via Zoom

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting convened at 5:50pm by Connors.
Welcome: Under Gov Exec #12 and 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. **Note:** There were no members of the public who requested access before or during the meeting.
Roll Call: Connors, Trombley, Butterfield, Levin, Wrubleski, Bashier, DePasse, Dalton, Corriveau, Marr
Not present: Bee
2. **Announcements/Updates:** Connors shared that Trustee Donna Talbot sent a letter of resignation earlier this week, effective immediately. Levin added that Talbot would like to stay involved and is interested in small projects – event and/or admin related.
The Board discussed holding future meetings in person beginning in April, unless the community spread remains at/returns to a threatening level.
3. **Approval of Minutes** from November 2021 meetings.
Motion: Marr motioned to approve the Nov 2021 Meeting Minutes; Trombley seconded.
Vote: Unanimous.
4. **Montessori Moment:** Lesson taught by Colleen Lacroix, Math Interventionist to a Lower Elementary student. Lesson began with skip counting exercise, then moved into use of color bars.
5. **School Reporting**
Educational Program Director: Wrubleski shared that the **Suicide Prevention Protocol** is now in place. They were introduced to staff during our January Professional Development Day. Staff had an in-depth discussion the protocol and provided input. We will utilize mobile crisis intervention in the event of a high-risk situation. This resources, available through the Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester can provide advice, speak to student, or come to the school and meet with student in person, all depending on need. Additionally, they can help determine next steps.
Butterfield asked: Where in the building does the child go if something does come up? Wrubleski explained that they would go to a private office/space and the protocol would be implemented. She emphasized that the child in crisis would not be left alone. She added that there are steps in the process, and that staff is aware that any of concern should be brought to her, if she is out then to Meryl Levin (ED) or to Grace Eaton (Project Manager).

Executive Director: Levin shared that our contact at the landlord's office in Connecticut assured her by email today that they'll be sending along a **lease** for renewal next week.
Levin notes that she shared out the **new protocol for COVID** which reflects the changes now required by the DOE/DHHS as guided by the CDC changes in isolation and quarantine time. The information was sent out to the school community last Friday and went into effect today. Levin will be picking up more home testing kits from the Homeland Security Offices in Concord tomorrow to help families if they cannot afford home testing.

She reminded Trustees that the **2022 Lottery Enrollment Period** is in full swing. She asked if anyone had ideas for a **2022 Lottery Official** (person must not be affiliated with the school) and reminded them we continue to look for paraprofessionals and subs.

She finished her report noting that the **2021 Annual Appeal** collected over \$11,000.

Connors reminded the Board that Mill Falls has a big birthday this year! She highlighted the need to celebrate the students, staff, board, creators of Mill Falls, even though COVID is making this quite difficult.

6. Program:

a: Code of Conduct Policy: Levin described this newly required policy which is linked to a recently pass NH law. Teachers who are certified and teaching at traditional public schools in the state, are required to abide by a certain code of conduct; their certification depends on it. Since NH charter schools aren't required to hire certified teachers, there is nothing binding them to the code of conduct, nor is there a way to find them in default of the state-accepted code. The legislature realized there was a gap, and this new law attempts to address that. However, while certified teachers are held personally responsible for upholding the code, this law puts that responsibility on charter schools. Additionally, the state does not have a mechanism to report teachers who break the code at charter schools. For those at traditional public schools they release a list of teachers who lose their certification. This policy must be in place for our upcoming Charter Renewal. Levin has written the policy based on the law, reviewed it with the DOE's legal advisor, and asked Butterfield to review it for legal language and accuracy to our other current policies.

Connors thanks Levin and Butterfield. The Trustees discussed the policy, noting a few typos and then moved to approve.

Motion: Connors motioned to approve the Code of Conduct Policy; Butterfield seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.

b: Board of Trustees Annual Meeting

- **Officer Slate:** The Trustees discussed the officer positions and arrived at the following slate:

Chair: Jill Connors

Vice Chair: Heather Marr

Treasurer: Jeff Trombley

Secretary: Sara Bee

Motion: DePasse motioned to approve the slate; Butterfield seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.

- **Committee Assignments:** The Trustees discussed the various committees, agreeing to engage the Finance, Governance and Charter Committees this year, alongside the Board Professional Development that is planned. Service on the committees are as follows:

Finance: Trombley (chair), Marr, Butterfield, Corriveau, Levin

Charter: Dalton (chair), Levin, Wrubleski, Bashier, DePasse, Connors, Bee

Governance: Connors (chair), DePasse, Dalton (Butterfield as needed)

Connors asked all chairs to set a date for their first meeting before the next Board Meeting on Feb 16th.

- **Board Professional Development:** The Governance Committee, led by Jill, will continue discussions with BoardOnTrack in an effort to schedule training sessions for Committees, among other goals.

7. Next Meeting: **Wednesday, February 16, 2021 @ 5:45pm** (Connors, 2 min)

8. Adjournment at 7:21pm: **Motion:** DePasse motioned to adjourn; Connors seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.



Executive Director's Report

For the January 19, 2022
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin

Required Reporting

There are several **small DOE surveys** due over the next week. The annual **US Civil Rights Data Reporting** site has opened. Grace and I will tackle this lengthy report that seeks to capture information about our student body (not individual students). The report is due later this winter.

Board Related

This month's Board meeting includes the **Annual Meeting** during which the Board will assign committee roles and elect new officers.

Facility

As discussed in my previous reports, before December break, I submitted the necessary paperwork to the DOE regarding **Lease Aid** for next year. The DOE staff who manage this program, are aware of our lease renewal work this year. Once our new lease is finalized, I will update the information I sent them.

We learned earlier this month that the landlord now stands firm on this requirement that any maintenance issue – big or small - be shared by email NOT via text/tel with the Manchester-based Facility Manager (something we've done since 2012). So, if the heat is too high, or there is ice on the sidewalks, or some other sort of issue, we are to send an email to the folks in Connecticut, and they will contact the Facility Manager. As you might imagine, this is a clunky form of communication.

The landlord's broker, Roger Dieker, has been contacted by phone and email since our late October meeting about **lease renewal**, but we've not gotten any response. On Friday, I wrote the landlord making sure he is aware of this situation and inquiring about next steps. I'm awaiting a response.

Sharing this piece in case there are some resources among Trustees: As we struggle to find storage solutions, we are looking for cabinets that can be hung on the wall. Perhaps you have a lead to any sources of gently used/still in very good shape wall mount cabinets that can be repurposed for use here, please speak to me directly.

COVID Update

Since our last meeting, NH has adopted a version of the **new CDC COVID guidelines**. Following thorough analysis of the changes, and in close consultation with our partners at the Manchester Health Department, we shared our new guidelines which will go into effect on Wednesday, January 19th at Mill Falls. We shared the 2-page document on Friday (by email and in the newsletter) which I created to help families understand the new protocols. We have opted into the testing component as well as clearance with the Front Office for anyone to return after only 5 days of quarantine (due to home exposure) or isolation (due to positive test, with or without symptoms). The state has removed the School Toolkit from their website, but said they expected schools to design their new protocol while they update the Toolkit. Implementing these new protocols involves recalculating the isolation or quarantine times of those at Mill Falls who are out now under the current protocols. The new CDC and NH guidelines include quarantine requirements for those who are not 'Up to Date' with whatever vaccination they are recommended for (including boosters). The change in guidelines may create staffing issues for those who are not yet boosted.

Related, as reported widely, including this way by NHP: “The New Hampshire state Board of Education advanced a set of rules Thursday that would **effectively ban remote learning** even when schools are dealing with COVID outbreaks or widespread COVID-related staffing shortage.” That decision is no longer in the hands of schools or districts. Any remote learning day due to outbreaks or staffing shortage would now need to be added to the school/district calendar.

In terms of caseload at Mill Falls, though the state caseload is up and over 20,000 active cases, we continue to have a relatively small number, at least for now. We had a few families who contracted COVID over December Break; several of the students at home in quarantine or in isolation were exposed by their family members. We continue to communicate with families of all children feeling unwell, and/or those who have members of the family who have tested positive.

As you may know, **testing has gotten very difficult** – with a shortage of home tests AND a multi-day delay in PCR results. The weather this week also forced the state-run tests sites to close for 2 days. Many families have been waiting 4-6 days for results. We do accept home/self-tests - both BinaxNow and QuickVue At-Home OTC COVID-19 (the test sent out by the state), but as you may be aware, the omicron variant is doing a pretty good job of evading the tests – and only after multiple tests are some symptomatic people testing positive with the home tests.

As NH and national public health officials continue to say, **vaccination (including boosters)** is the best thing we can do to help reduce the case load. Some of our students are now fully vaccinated, and some are in the process. It is our hope that more adults in our community will seek their booster, but as you know, the numbers of vaccinated but not boosted adults is quite high in NH. I continue to share information about where people can find vaccination and testing sites in our weekly newsletter.

Each time we learn of a new case, we follow the many steps of internal and external communication. We are also continuing to send our weekly COVID communication to all families and staff to provide them with the big picture of our caseload. This is especially important as the state’s dashboard has become highly inconsistent this fall, unfortunately.

Enrollment

On January 3, our 2022 Lottery Enrollment Period opened. This is our 11th lottery! The Lottery Enrollment Application will be available online (or by paper if needed) through March 9th, with Lottery Day on March 15th. We hosted our first of four Virtual Lottery Information Sessions (via Zoom) in early January.

Our next Virtual Lottery Information Session will be held on January 25th from 10-11am.

- If you know anyone who is interested in applying (or should be), please direct them to send us an email to Admissions@MillFalls.org asking that they be put on the 2022 Lottery Info List.
- Please encourage friends, neighbors, and colleagues to consider applying to Mill Falls. Thank you!
- We are looking for a Lottery Day Official – if you have any ideas of someone who would enjoy working with Grace, Jen, and I and getting to know us a bit, please be in touch with me directly.

This week we sent our families the **‘Intent to Return’ form** which asks about their enrollment plans for their children for next year. Those are due back at the end of the month.

Human Resources:

In late December and early January, we were fortunate to have three college students join us during their college break time. They were able to fill in when staff was out and add some short-term para supports (as you recall, the staffing shortage has us understaffed in this area). We are so pleased to announce that a former member of our staff who had moved out of the area has moved back and returned to our staff as a full-time para. **Please continue to spread the word - we are still looking for additional paraprofessionals and subs!**

Our 2022 **Anthem** plans are now in place, effective Jan 1. Next up is our **Delta Dental** renewal. We also learned this month that we have been assigned a new **Aflac** representative, a welcome change.

Financial

Our auditor confirmed this week that he expects to complete our FY21 Audit in the next few weeks. Once completed, our audit will be sent to the DOE and posted on our website.

Thus far, Special Education reimbursements from sending districts are arriving in a timely manner.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Earlier this week, our staff was treated to an amazing **luncheon** of traditional Middle Eastern fare, created, and shared by our own Hind Bashier and a wonderful group of other moms who spoiled us with this very generous and delicious meal. The luncheon took place on our **January Professional Development Day** which included our annual Suicide Prevention Training and an extended conversation led by our Social Worker, Maura Barber, about our students' social/emotional health and the work she is doing with students and staff.

Our **Annual Coat (and Warm Items) Drive** was a tremendous success. Our Project Manager, Grace Eaton and I filled our cars with bags and boxes of donated warm winter clothing and toys and delivered them to the **International Institute in Manchester**. The Institute is currently focuses on resettling close to 100 Afghans who recently arrived in Manchester.

MFCS ChildCare Program

As previously noted: 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 from Mill Falls to the Club daily.

Foundation News:

The 2021 Annual Appeal has raised \$10,540 donated by 29 contributors. Notes of thanks were sent out to each donor, most of whom have donated to Mill Falls for years and years. We are so fortunate to have their support. If you have not made your year-end gift, contributions are still being accepted! The Foundation Leadership asks that Board Members join them in **prioritizing Mill Falls in their charitable giving** and send their thanks in advance for your financial support!

The Foundation **currently holds** \$511,749.73 in its accounts (following the transfer noted above).

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