



**Elm City Montessori School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
2 July 2020**

Attendees: Fernando Muniz, Michael Van Leesten, Jose Cuapio, Julia Webb Keith Krolak, Haci Catalbasoglu, Eliza Halsey, Susan Clark, Dave Low, Alayna Stone, Alex Lunding, Amelia Allen Sherwood, David Weinreb, Tamiko Jackson-McArthur

Meeting was called to order at 5:34 pm

**Board member introductions**

**I. Meeting Minutes**

- A. The May 2020 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

**II. Public Participation**

- A. There were no members of the public in attendance.

**III. Updates and Reflections on ECMS Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism (ABAR) work**

Prior to discussing the ABAR work, the guest speakers Amilia, Dave, and Alan gave personal introductions to the board on their respective roles with ECMS, followed by introductions by individual board members.

- A. Amelia outlined her experiences and contributions to the ABAR work over the past several years at ECMS
  - 1) First noticed how racism and bias was perpetuated in the early days of ECMS teaching.
  - 2) Teaching staff was predominately white.
  - 3) When Julia Webb came on board as the new principal, discussions occurred around mutual understanding and a path forward for building a community of care.
  - 4) The first year the focus was on identity and understanding our own work and our own biases through undoing racism.
  - 5) Attended a Montessori for Social Justice conference in Massachusetts in 2016
  - 6) Amelia was the Family Partnership Coordinator and will now move into the role of ABAR Director.
  - 7) ECMS now has an ABAR organizer, involved teachers, and families and board members attend ABAR meetings
  - 8) Now working towards understanding whose voices are heard, who is being marginalized, as well as a better understanding of the impact intent and who benefits from the decisions that are being made.
- B. Julia spoke the importance of the work that has been done by Amelia and how her focus has helped guide the ongoing transformation of ECMS
- C. Amelia spoke about creating pathways for Montessorians of color How to retain and attract people of color
  - 1) ABAR panels are focusing on teachers and how to retain and attract teachers of color
  - 2) Julia added that a Black teacher will join the staff in September
  - 3) Even with the limitations of COVID there have been a lot of student contributions to current protest movements.
- D. Several individual Board Members provided personal reflections on the ABAR work at ECMS
  - 1) Alayna : facilitating the task force for the ABAR Pathways
  - 2) Dave: working with Sound School's faculty to create better awareness
  - 3) Tamiko : believes in the ABAR work that ECMS is doing and is glad to support it.
  - 4) Fernando: Relayed his experiences in a criminal justice nonprofit organization and the practical applications of racial relations that are involved there
  - 5) Adriana – bringing the ABAR work to Clifford Beers and having conversations with family members back in Texas

- 6) Haci: Growing up in Turkish family – having uncomfortable conversations with conservative family members. Currently working as an intern with the lieutenant Governor to make ABAR training mandatory for police officers.
- 7) Jose: making sure that the conversations with family members is not condescending to them. It has been helpful to have age appropriate conversations with his son. Conversations also need to be anti-sexist as well as anti-racist.
- 8) Mira: Having race conscious conversations with parents and family. Want to connect ECMS to help support the ABAR work that needs to happen in Hamden schools. Worked with colleagues to write a public statement on anti-racism.
- 9) Julia: Pointed out that we are all complicit and that we need to acknowledge our inherent racism in order to do the necessary work that must be done. It would serve our institution to join in the ABAR discussions as much as possible.

#### **IV. Strategic Planning/Work Group Updates & Next Steps**

Alex prefaced his presentation with thoughts on his dedication to racial justice.

- A. Alex recapped the Strategic Planning Committee work groups during the past several months
- B. Eliza recounted the efforts through the work groups to create an ABAR Director position.
- C. Fernando provided a recap of the Long-Term Facilities work Group
  - 1) Met four times over the past four months
  - 2) Blake Street location was determined to be the best location for ECMS from all the facilities available in New Haven currently
  - 3) The group is recommending that ECMS purchase the property at 495 Blake Street.
  - 4) Alayna asked about funding from New Haven Public Schools for ECMS and how that might affect a purchase.
  - 5) Mira asked about the risk of not having the charter renewed. Fernando responded that there was a very small likelihood that the charter would not be renewed and that influenced the recommendation to purchase.
  - 6) Tamiko asked what would happen if enough members of the BOE does not support the mission of ECMS. Dave Low pointed out that if for some reason the charter was not renewed that it would be a moot point because the building would turn into something else. ECMS needs to plan for the eventuality of the school and not for eventuality of what happens if there is no school.
  - 7) Mira mentioned the importance of emphasizing the differences between the charter schools that are embedded in and responsible to their communities, and the charter schools that are run by charter management organizations and are not responsive to their communities.
- D. Alex concluded that the work groups are moving at different paces out of necessity and that it is okay for some work groups to complete their work later than others.
- E. Eliza proposed that Erdkinder committee updates be postponed until the next board meeting. The board agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:02 PM

END OF MEETING NOTES

Meeting Minutes respectfully submitted by Keith Krolak.