



Board of Directors First June Meeting Minutes

June 6, 2017, 4:00pm at Mountain Song Community School

Mission: Mountain Song Community School (MSCS) is a community of families and educators dedicated to the conscious evolution of the whole child utilizing developmentally appropriate holistic education that nurtures body, mind and heart. Our aim is to bring forth healthy, confident, free-thinking, self-directed children who are passionately engaged with their education and empowered to contribute positively to the world.

Present in attendance:

Board: Aubrey Fennewald, Pedro Almeida, Rita Issagholian, Michael Katzenburg, Jennifer Barnes (by phone).

Staff and Public: Tracy Gonzales, Nancy Carson, Evan Manz-Jackson, Karen Brown, Dan Kurschner, Mike Harris, Elise Basescu, Stacie Koskinen, Cambria Miller, Grian McFadden, Steve Shapiro, Sarah White

4:00 I. Welcome & Group Check In

Consent Agenda:

Approve the Agenda

Motion to approve Agenda by Rita and Pedro seconds, passes unanimously

4:10 II. Public Comment

Nancy Carson: Started with positive comments of school, board, staff and the school. Would like to see Raj stay on for stability, a new person would have a large learning curve; spoke to Raj needing time and room to grow.

Sarah White: Objections to board decisions is not out of disrespect, timing of news was a shock and "abysmal", timing hurt because our moral was already low; if it's part of Raj's decision, I can support that, but I second Nancy's voice that a year would be good so that we have enough time to find best candidates and not be void of leadership. The position itself needs to be looked at, there is a pattern going on of gossip that seems to affect that role; the stresses on the ED is a lot; we need to have a close evaluation of that position and we need supports put in place for that position. We need the full year to come up with a succession plan to and a true transition plan. A void of leadership in the past has lead to staff having to pick up the slack and we can't afford another year of staff turn-around and stresses like that on the staff.

Elise Basescu...: Knows what Raj has worked with in the past two years, has been intense, we are at a tipping point; I feel like we're finally making headway and that would fall apart if Raj leaves now. He's making headway on implementation of processes. A lot of the survey results are process oriented and we need summer to catch up.

Stacie Koskinen: My first year teaching, last year I was a parent. When I came in as a parent, I heard of the previous chaos, yet when I came in I felt as a parent a sense of stability. Felt very secure and in having my daughter here at this school regardless of turnaround status. I felt like Raj had instilled great stability. Also having been in a previous district, I felt that when I saw and see the level of commitment, whether or not they agree with each other, is great and has been the best year of teaching I've ever had. I felt very well supported, despite other things going on. I feel like at the end of the school year, with so many new teachers coming in, it's more important than ever for us to maintain our director. If there's a sense of our director leaving or disagreement on the board, that will not be good. I feel like we're in a place that we finally know what we need. Three Streams is finally taking off and that is in large part due to our director. We need him to stay to help us implement the processes that he has begun.

Eva Manz-Jackson: Thank you for your work, I was part of the board the last time we had a director change, and I was part of the part when we hired Raj. I feel like we should honor Raj's request for another year because that's what he's asked for and because this is a difficult time of year to hire. I come from a place where family is considered and factors are considered for family. I also do not feel comfortable filling out any more surveys when afterwards the PD is let go and the ED is let go. I don't feel safe filling out any more surveys. I wouldn't have if I'd know that it could result in people being let go. I haven't seen an improvement plan for the director.

Mike Harris: I sense a greater sense of unity and professionalism. It seems like we have a good mix of skills this past year. Want to share some background of myself: had a privilege of consulting when I first came on here, have a professional background in music and music styles in curriculum and such, have had opportunity to watch Raj grow who was asked to captain a sinking ship. When that happens, attention must be given to keeping ship afloat and attention other details cannot happen. He's done a great job. On the other hand, there are some things, systematically, that need great attention and adjustment. Mountain Phoenix did some work to address the director structure, and I think it warrants our attention. There are not clear boundaries between PD and ED duties and responsibilities. There are not clear boundaries between teacher expectations and admin. That is a SYSTEM problem, not Raj's problem. And that is something we can all address. I was very disappointed with the timing of the letter. It was really misplaced and it made me question judgement and character of board. I believe we are in a place where we CAN move forward, and that Raj is the person to do that for the next one to two years. He's in the best position to address some of the systematic problems we've brought up. He's in a position for growth and opportunity in the next two years that I'd like to see him have. He's also in a chemistry position... I came on because of him, as are some current new hires. I see that he carries the heart of the school. I've seen that people disagree with him strongly, yet he makes room for discourse and and remains open. I believe the discourse with parents should come from the board, NOT from the director. He needs, and teachers need to know that they have support of board. Admin and teachers should not be bullied by parents or have to deal with that, and we need the support of the board. It's unfortunate that disrespectful parents have been allowed to have voice. The timing and the wording of the email, which has already gotten out to the community, has been taken by them that Raj was fired. I can understand why by the wording in the email. By my standpoint, the negative contention out there will be that they have won if Raj is not allowed to stay on. I feel like there is ample resources for him to stay given the number of people coming on board.

Dan Kurschner: I feel like the bigger problem we all need to deal with is to stop the negativity. We need a positive and better way to deal with what is not right. The school may not survive if we cannot stop it. We may have another director come in and the same thing can happen all over again if we cannot stop it.

Steve Shapiro: I've known Raj before Mountain Song. He asked us to come on board to help with reading. I had a parent put a note in my box that put me to tears for her gratitude. I've never been at a school (and I've been a lot) where I see the connection that teachers have to kids that they do here. That would be very sad if that was disrupted in my mind. It's amazing to see each teacher and kid have their character blossom. To see the consistency change that I've seen change over the last year is AMAZING. I don't want to see it disrupted.

Grian McFadden: I think there are problems in this school, and I think they are systemic. I was surprised by the announcement, and I was surprised to hear that it wasn't from him (Raj). I think there are things that can be fixed, and I think they can be fixed by you, or I think they can be fixed by someone else. I don't think you need to feel obligated that it has to be you (Raj). I don't think anyone should be obligated to stay in a position they don't feel right in. I feel like I have some things and actions I could share with the board to help with some of the things we need to fix systemically. I am supportive of whichever way it goes. We have a strong school, and I support whichever way it goes.

4:40 **II. Executive Session** CRS 24-6-402(4)(f)(I & II) - Personnel Matters
Motion to enter into Executive Session by Rita, Pedro Seconds, passes unanimously
Enter Into Executive Session: 4:48pm
Out of Executive Session: 8:08pm Pedro motioned, Rita second.

5:55 **III. Review of and Vote on June 6, 2017 Minutes**
Approval of Minutes is tabled until next regular meeting of the Board

6:00 **IV. Adjourn**
Rita Motions to adjourn at 8:09pm and Pedro Seconds, passes unanimously

**UPCOMING DATES for your calendar:*

- Board meeting 6/20
- PG Work Session...TBD?