APPROVED

Hill View Montessori

Minutes

Board of Trustees - RETREAT

Date and Time
Thursday August 20, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Location
75 Foundation Ave, Haverhill MA 01835

Trustees Present
A. Fergus, J. Hood, J. Landry, K. Bridges, K. Laureano, N. Williamson, P. Carelis, S. Stecher

Trustees Absent
None

Trustees who arrived after the meeting opened
K. Laureano

Guests Present
G. Whitson, H. Herklotz, J. Gibbons, Julia Bowan, N. Dolan

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

J. Landry called a meeting of the board of trustees of Hill View Montessori to order on Thursday Aug 20, 2026 at 5:09 PM.

C. Public Comment

II. Updates

A. Annual Board Retreat

Introductions:

- Julia Bowen introduced herself and shared her background with Prospect Leadership Group and MCPSA.
- She has worked with Ginger over the past year supporting school leadership and also works with charter school boards.
- Julia shared her experience leading a charter public school and serving in Board leadership roles.
- She emphasized the importance of effective Board governance to a school's success.

All attendees went around the room, introduced themselves, and selected a quote that stood out to them.

Board Governance and Responsibilities
Julia reviewed the retreat goals:

- Build community.
- Strengthen understanding of the Board's role and expectations.
- Review the Strategic Plan.
- Develop Board and committee goals for 2026–2027.

Julia explained that charter schools are public schools governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board holds the charter and is responsible for ensuring accountability.
DESE Expectations:
The Board is responsible for legal and fiduciary oversight, financial and academic monitoring, evaluating the school leader, strategic planning, succession planning, reviewing student outcomes, and maintaining effective governance.
Jeff H. noted that DESE also looks for evidence of Board decision making in meeting minutes.
Breakout Discussion
Board members broke into groups to discuss governance expectations. Key themes included:

- Understanding governance versus daily management.
- Maintaining compliance and documentation.
- Developing succession plans.

Scott questioned what would happen if Ginger or the Board Chair unexpectedly left. Julia noted that succession planning is something DESE looks for.
The group also discussed examples of charter schools facing governance, financial, or academic challenges. Julia explained that DESE typically provides conditions and opportunities for improvement before more serious action is taken.

Governance vs. Management
Julia reviewed the distinction between the Board and school Leadership.
Board responsibilities include:

- Mission and strategy.
- Financial and legal oversight.
- Monitoring student outcomes.
- Strategic Plan approval.
- Board recruitment and development.
- School leader evaluation.

School leader responsibilities include:

- Daily operations.
- Staff hiring and supervision.
- School culture.
- Resource allocation.
- Implementation of strategy.

Julia emphasized that Ginger directly reports to the Board.
Jeff L. mentioned that Board members have sometimes stepped into operational areas during periods of transition, but the goal is to maintain clear boundaries.
Board members were encouraged to attend school events and stay connected while avoiding daily management. Staff or parent concerns should be directed through Ginger.

Governance Case Studies
Board members worked in small groups to discuss governance scenarios.
Budget Reallocation
The Board may ask questions about budget changes, while leadership generally manages operational spending within the approved budget.
Student Achievement
Andy and Nick discussed the importance of leadership identifying concerns, developing an improvement plan, explaining how progress will be measured, and providing updates to the Board.
The Board monitors outcomes while leadership determines how to address them.
Hannah mentions that academic performance is complex and Board members need appropriate context without becoming responsible for instructional decisions.
Public Relations / Discipline

The group discussed protecting confidentiality, allowing leadership to handle student discipline, avoiding individual Board comments to the media, and following proper communication channels.

Open Meeting Law
Julia reviewed key Open Meeting Law requirements:

- Board deliberations generally must occur during public meetings.
- A quorum should not discuss Board business through group email or shared documents.
- Committees must follow Open Meeting Law requirements.
- Executive session is limited to legally permitted situations.
- Meeting minutes must accurately document Board discussions and actions.

The group discussed attending other committee meetings while remaining mindful of quorum and posting requirements.

Board Norms and Commitments
Board members broke into groups to discuss what they need from one another to work effectively.

Expectations included:

- Be present and prepared.
- Honor commitments.
- Communicate when unavailable.
- Allow respectful disagreement and different perspectives.
- Practice effective meeting management.
- Participate in governance professional development.
- Attend schoolwide events when possible.
- Maintain communication with Ginger.
- Revisit Board norms throughout the year.

The group also discussed balancing meaningful conversation with keeping meetings productive and on schedule.

7:06 p.m. – 15-minute break
Strategic Plan Review
Ginger presented the Strategic Plan as a roadmap to help the school operate strategically rather than reactively.

Goal 1 – Academic Excellence and Student Well-Being

- Strengthen curriculum and instruction.
- Improve academic outcomes.

- Strengthen student supports and MTSS.
- Reduce chronic absenteeism.
- Strengthen family partnerships.

Goal 2 – Financial Sustainability and Development

- Align the budget with strategic priorities.
- Strengthen fundraising and development.
- Build strategic partnerships.
- Increase Board participation in philanthropy.

Goal 3 – Board Capacity and Governance

- Strengthen Board composition.
- Recruit members with needed expertise.
- Improve onboarding and training.

Goal 4 – Facilities and Learning Spaces

- Become more proactive with facilities needs.
- Address issues before they become larger problems.
- Improve learning spaces.

Goal 5 – Enrollment, Retention and Community Engagement

- Maintain strong enrollment.
- Strengthen family belonging and community engagement.
- Build staff culture.
- Increase alumni engagement.

Goal 6 – Montessori Identity

- Maintain Montessori as a central part of Hill View.
- Blend Montessori with strong instructional practices.
- Support teacher certification and Montessori learning environments.

Discussion
Jeff H. complimented Ginger and the team on the Strategic Plan.
The group also briefly discussed tuition reimbursement and the repayment policy.

2026–2027 Board Goal Development
Julia asked Board members to brainstorm Board-level priorities.
Ideas included:

- Formalize succession plans.
- Increase Board membership and attendance.
- Develop trustee onboarding.

- Increase community understanding of the Board.
- Establish strategic partnerships.
- Improve Board data literacy.
- Standardize data presentations.
- Increase fundraising.
- Review and organize policies.
- Increase Board participation in annual giving.

Board Data Literacy
Jeff H. suggested providing Board members with additional background on MCAS and other assessments before data presentations.
The group discussed strengthening understanding of MCAS, STAR, DIBELS, and other performance data while relying on Hannah and the Accountability team to provide context.

Final Board Goals
The Board identified the following 2026–2027 priorities:

- **Formalize a succession plan for the school leader** – Board Chair.
- **Formalize a succession plan for the Board Chair** – Board Chair/Committee on Trustees.
- **Increase Board membership to 12 with diverse backgrounds and needed expertise** – Committee on Trustees.
- **Increase school community understanding of the Board.**
- **Ensure at least 80% of Board meetings have full attendance** – Board Chair.
- **Establish five strategic partnerships** – Development Committee.
- **Develop and execute new-trustee onboarding** – Committee on Trustees.
- **Develop Board data literacy** – Accountability Committee/school leadership.

K. Laureano arrived at 6:14 PM.
Next Steps

- Committees will develop action steps and milestones for their assigned goals.
- The Accountability Committee will establish a regular meeting time.
- Board norms and goals will be revisited throughout the year.
- Julia asked Board members to complete a retreat feedback survey.
- Julia thanked the Board and leadership team for their participation.

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

J. Gibbons