APPROVED

# Hill View Montessori

# Minutes

## Board of Trustees Meeting

**Date and Time**
Thursday September 24, 2026 at 6:30 PM

**Location**
75 Foundation Ave, Haverhill MA 01835

**Trustees Present**
A. Fergus, J. Hood, J. Landry, K. Laureano, P. Carelis, S. Stecher

**Trustees Absent**
K. Bridges, N. Williamson

**Guests Present**
G. Whitson, H. Herklotz, J. Gibbons, N. Dolan, Natali Mercedes, Rahul Garhwal

### 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 Sep 24, 2026 at 6:32 PM.

#### C. Public Comment

No public comment.

### D. Approve Minutes - AUG Retreat

J. Landry made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees - RETREAT on 08-20-26.
J. Hood seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

### E. Approve Minutes - June

J. Landry made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 06-25-26.
J. Hood seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

## II. Updates

### A. Board Goals

- Jeff L. reviewed the Board goals established during the August Retreat.
- A tracking document was created to monitor progress on the goals throughout the year.
- Goals discussed included:
    - Formalize a succession plan for the school leader. Jeff L. will begin working with Ginger on this.
    - Formalize a Board succession plan. This is already underway.
    - Increase the number of high-quality Board members to 12 while representing diverse backgrounds and needed skill sets.
    - Increase the school community's understanding of the Board, measured through parent/staff surveys.
    - Establish strategic community/business partnerships.
    - Develop and implement a new trustee onboarding plan.
    - Increase the Board's understanding of key assessment/data tools.
    - Maintain at least 80% full Board attendance.
- Board norms, commitments, and additional goals from the retreat were also included in the tracking document.
- Documents will be saved in BoardOnTrack for future reference.

### B. BOARD GOAL - Meeting Attendance

- Jeff L. created a spreadsheet to track attendance and plans to share an update each month.
- Attendance has been almost entirely full so far.
- Board is currently on track toward the goal of having full attendance at least 80% of the time.

### C.

**Directors Report**

- Ginger shared that the school year is off to a great start overall.
- She noted that many unexpected day-to-day issues come up between Board meetings and plans to continue emailing the Board when significant situations arise so members have basic awareness.
- Beginning of year DIBELS and STAR testing has been completed.
- DIBELS results are trending approximately 10 percentage points higher than this time last year, particularly among returning students in grades 1–8.
- Discussed continuing to emphasize the partnership between school and home, including encouraging families to continue reading with students.
- MTSS improvements are underway as part of the Strategic Plan, with Niamh spearheading the work.
- Attendance continues to be a focus, including chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and frequent early dismissals.
    - June has been working on improved tracking systems.
    - Teachers and social workers are involved.
    - The approach is intended to be supportive rather than disciplinary, including identifying barriers preventing students from consistently attending the full school day.
- New security cameras are installed and have already been useful in reviewing incidents.
- MCAS/accountability data appears to be moving in a positive direction, although there is still room for improvement.
- The school is addressing an increase in racist, hateful, and discriminatory language among students.
    - Families were reminded of school expectations.
    - Advisors, SEL teachers, classroom teachers, and morning meetings are being used to educate students and reinforce expectations.
- Sprinkler work resulted in approximately **$15,000 in unexpected costs**.
    - Previous deficiencies had reportedly been documented for several years.
    - Required work has now been completed.
    - There was discussion about whether the extent of the work may allow it to be treated as a capital expense.
    - Additional unexpected HVAC and electrical expenses also occurred.
    - Overall, the building is now in good standing with inspections.
- **Family Ambassador Program**
    - 14 families volunteered as ambassadors.
    - 11 new families signed up to participate.
    - Ambassadors attended events such as the Popsicle Party, Open Houses, and Wildflower Block Party.
    - The next major opportunity will be enrollment events in January.
- Two Open Houses have been held and were well attended.
- HVM participated in the Wildflower Montessori Block Party.

- Screenagers screening scheduled for October 6 at 6pm.
    - HVM purchased the rights to screen the documentary.
    - Focus is helping families understand technology, AI, screen use, attention, and related issues.
    - Haverhill Public Schools, River Valley, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Library, and others have been invited.
- **The Hive**
    - First session had four offerings that filled to capacity.
    - 55 unique families / 61 children participated.
    - Financial assistance was provided to all eight students who requested it.
    - Session 2 expanded from four offerings to six due to demand.
    - Cooking continues to be particularly popular.
- **Math Support**
    - Two additional staff members are providing small-group math support through both push in and pull out instruction.
- **Enrollment**
    - Capacity is 306 students; current enrollment is 307.
    - The additional student provides some protection against withdrawals.
    - Waitlist is approximately 313 students.
    - Discussion included reasons students withdrew, including moves, need for a different educational environment, and families selecting neighborhood schools.
- **Faculty Updates**
    - Gene was hired as the second-shift custodian and has received very positive feedback.
    - HVM now has three substitute nurses.
    - Patsy Murphy resigned and was replaced by Olivia O’Brien.
    - Rob Stevenson resigned in September; John Notaro was hired to fill the facilities/custodial role starting September 29th.
    - Facilities responsibilities were reorganized. June will continue handling the management/coordination side of facilities, while John will focus on facilities and custodial work.
    - A UE assistant resigned and a replacement candidate has been identified, start date TBD.
    - Ginger has been checking in individually with new faculty about how they are settling in.
- Grade-level Dean structure is going well, particularly in Upper Elementary and Middle School. Erin has been especially helpful with investigations and parent communication.

### D. Head of School - Review Goals

- Ginger’s proposed goals were reviewed:

    - **Academic Excellence/MTSS:** Implement a comprehensive school-wide MTSS framework by June 2027.
    - **Student Academic Growth:** Increase academic growth in grades 1–6 using STAR and MCAS student growth percentiles, targeting an average SGP above 50%.
    - **Financial Sustainability:** Maintain a balanced budget and at least 60 days cash on hand.
    - **Enrollment/Retention/Community Engagement:** Strengthen family engagement, onboarding, Family Ambassador programming, and retention.
    - **Student Well-Being/Belonging:** Improve attendance, reduce chronic absenteeism, administer a student climate survey, and provide family education activities.
- Board discussed the proposed 95% student retention measure and how withdrawals outside the school's control should be treated.
- General agreement that retention is useful to monitor even when individual circumstances may explain why a student leaves.
- Andy raised the question of staff, noting that none of the proposed goals directly addressed staff satisfaction, development, or retention.
- Discussion included potentially using staff survey results and retention of high-performing staff as measures.
- Ginger was asked to develop an additional or revised goal that quantifies staff engagement/satisfaction for discussion at the next meeting.
- Board was comfortable with the remaining goals, final approval will wait until the staff-related goal is addressed.

### E. Annual Report

- Annual Report was submitted by the leadership team on time.
- Noted that the process was completed efficiently.
- No major questions were raised.

### F. SPED Executive Summary

- Special Education Executive Summary from the previous year was presented for Board review.
- No questions or concerns were raised.

### G. Faculty Liaison

- Natali is serving as the Faculty Liaison this year.
- Discussed developing a simple format/template for communicating Board information back to staff.
- Discussed possibly including a monthly staff question/survey.
- Goal would be to encourage regular staff feedback and identify potential issues before the annual survey.

- Board discussed starting with something light/fun to get staff accustomed to participating.

## H. Strategic Plan

J. Landry made a motion to Approve final draft of the Strategic Plan.
J. Hood seconded the motion.

- Final draft of the Strategic Plan was reviewed.
- Board agreed it captures the priorities previously discussed and aligns with Ginger's goals and the accountability plan.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

## I. PTO & Foundation Update

- Crescent Farm PTO event scheduled for the following evening and planned to take place rain or shine.
- Going forward, Foundation and PTO updates will also be requested for Board meetings.

## J. Board Succession Planning/Bylaw Discussion

- Board succession planning is one of the Board's annual goals.
- Jeff L. created a draft succession plan using resources from Robert Carpenter (Massachusetts Charter Public School Association).
- Discussed maintaining current descriptions for Board officers and committee chairs.
- Committee on Trustees will review existing descriptions to ensure they are accurate and current.
- Discussed creating a Board Composition/Skills Matrix to identify current strengths and gaps.
    - Board generally felt the matrix was useful.
    - Finance, legal, and facilities were identified as particularly important skill areas.
    - Each Board member will complete the matrix before the next meeting and return it to Jeff L.
    - Results will be used to identify future recruitment priorities.
- Discussed the process for identifying, vetting, and onboarding new Board candidates.
    - Current informal process generally includes meeting with the Chair/Vice Chair and Ginger and observing a Board or committee meeting.
    - Committee on Trustees will further review and formalize this process.
- Discussed ensuring Board composition reflects the diversity of the school community and potentially incorporating demographic information into planning.
- **Board terms/bylaws**

    - Julia Bowen noted that HVM's six-year maximum Board service may be shorter than other organizations, where 8–10 years may be allowed.
    - Current structure is three two-year terms.
    - Board discussed whether allowing additional terms could help retain members with valuable institutional knowledge.
    - No decision was made, discussion will continue at a future meeting.
- Additional bylaw items to review:
    - Board/officer job descriptions.
    - Responsibilities of each committee.
    - Clarification of the Clerk role.
    - Treasurer role remains necessary, Jeff is currently serving as interim Treasurer until another qualified person is identified.

## K. New Business

No new business.

## L. Committee on Trustees

- Jeff H. discussed Paul, Scott, and Jeff H. met September 8.
- Initial meeting focused on restarting the committee and clarifying its role.
- Reviewed relevant bylaw definitions and materials from the August Retreat.
- Future work will include Board recruitment, succession planning, and onboarding.
- Committee will meet on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30pm.
- Next meeting: October 1.

## M. Accountability

- Hannah discussed, Kevin and Nick were introduced to the different types of academic/accountability data the Board reviews and how the committee has historically used the data.
- MCAS scores are no longer embargoed, so committee members now have access to the data platform.
- Next meeting will focus on co-designing the October data presentation.

## N. Development

- Hannah discussed that Development work is going very well.
- Members have participated in/hosted three networking/community events, including:
    - Wildflower Block Party.
    - Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce event.
    - Haverhill Chamber of Commerce event hosted at HVM.
- Annual Fund has officially launched.

- Discussed the importance of 100% Board participation in the Annual Fund.
    - Amount donated is less important than demonstrating full Board participation.
    - Some grantmakers specifically look for 100% Board participation when considering funding.
- Staff participation in the Annual Fund is also being encouraged.
- Rock & Roll Bingo planning was discussed, follow-up will occur regarding committee involvement and communications.
- Jeff H. discussed opportunities to incorporate student created artwork into future fundraising events.
- HVM continues working to strengthen relationships with Wildflower Montessori schools and other community organizations.

### O. Finance

- Jeff L. discussed the First financial review of the fiscal year.
- Overall, there were no significant surprises or concerns.
- There had been concern going into the review because of unexpected facilities expenses.
- Current target spending level was approximately 17% of the annual budget.
- Most categories are currently below that target.
- Some early year salary savings resulted from employees beginning in August rather than July.
- Admin supplies were higher, which is expected at the beginning of the school year.
- Audit expenses are currently higher because the annual audit is underway.
- Audit is progressing well with no major findings reported at this point.
- Auditor presentation is anticipated next month.
- Facilities spending was approximately 19% compared with the 17% target, largely due to necessary sprinkler, electrical, HVAC, and other building work.
- Despite those unexpected costs, financial metrics remain healthy.
- DESE expects approximately 60 days cash on hand, HVM currently has approximately 120 days.
- HVM is considered low risk across the relevant financial categories.
- Next month, Board will review the overall financial process and clarify the roles of Ginger, the Board, Finance Committee, June, and other parties.
- Longer-term discussion:
    - Board should begin thinking about future major capital expenses such as eventual roof replacement.
    - A Board member with facilities expertise could help with long-term lifecycle and capital planning.

## III. Closing Items

### A. Next Meeting

- Next Board meeting: October 22.
- Anticipated items include:
    - Accountability/data presentation.
    - Financial process/roles review.
    - Accountability terminology/glossary.
    - Continued discussion of Head of School goals and staff engagement.
    - Continued Board succession/bylaw discussion.

**B. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
J. Gibbons