



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