



## Legacy of Dr. Josie R. Johnson Montessori Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes Tuesday, Nov 10, 2020

**Meeting Date:** 11/10/2020

**Start time:** 12:07PM

**Adjourned:** 1:19PM

**Location:** Zoom Conference Call

**Submitted by:** Emerald Woodberry

**Board Members Present:** Emerald Woodberry, Kenna Cottman, Sherri Green, Renae Dressel, Matthieu Culp, Christopheraaron Deanes

**Board Members NOT Present:**

**Staff Members Present:** Tonicia Abdur Salaam, Jamal Abdur Salaam, Fabienne Hopkins, Destiny Roberts, Olutimilehin Olusanya

**Guests Present:** Peggy Elliott Pugh, Anastasia, Dr. Tolefree, Filicia Roberts, Jaralyn Roberts, Katherine Beecham, Kerri Lewis, Paris Gatlin, Robert Murry, Shawna Maryanovich, Stanley Roberts, Toni Williams, Jim Martin, Jackie Williams

1. Call to order in the open meeting
2. Discussion on the mediation with the board that has been requested by school leaders (added 11/6)
  - Community member asks for more detail around the call for mediation
  - Board chair speaks to attempts to share feedback with school leadership, the information was not well received and a request was made by school leadership for mediation.
  - Mr. O comments that there have been allegations towards leadership that are not true, he finds that there is an open door policy, and this is one of the best opportunities and a wonderful place to work
  - Community member asks if there is a place where they can find additional context around the allegations - Board Chair responds with additional context
  - Community member shares the feedback that she hasn't heard any specific names of those that have supposed allegations being brought against them. She has concerns with the board being direct.
  - Jim Martin legal representation comments that because JJ legacy is a public school, it limits the information that can be disclosed in open meetings (Data Practices Act). The subject of the allegations has requested that the portion of the meeting be open when we move to discuss the allegations. The board has a legal obligation to investigate whether or not there is merit to those allegations and take action accordingly
  - Board co-chair comments that intent of the meeting was to discuss the allegations and decide as a new board how to proceed (mediation or other options)

- Emerald, Christopher-Arron & Sherri support mediation conversation to be able to mend relationship between Board & School Leadership and move forward
  - Matthieu asks questions around potential HR conflicts and whether or not mediation covers the HR concerns. Emerald comments that mediation is in addition to and not in place of investigating allegations
  - Shawna asks questions about the confidentiality of the cost of the contract that we are reviewing. Kenna comments that it was requested to be discreet by the vendor, Shawna asks that prior to the board making the vote we disclose all of the details of the contract.
  - Christopheraaron comments that he thought mediation and investigation were separate. Jim weighs in that the person that is hired to do the investigation (if needed) should be separate from mediation.
  - Dr. Tolefree confirms that if we move forward, her role is strictly about repairing harm in relationships and restoring community at JJ Legacy. It is not to do any type of investigation or HR duty.
  - Jim weighs in on board's legal obligation to conduct investigation as promptly as possible and take action on the results.
  - Mrs. Tonicia comments that as school leaders they have not had a process in which they have been presented with facts and have not been invited to meetings to discuss any challenges that have supposedly been brought to the board chairs. They are not concerned about the allegations, they are concerned about the lack of process.
3. Consideration of allegations or charges against an individual subject to the authority of the board of JJ Legacy Montessori Charter School.
- Request was made via Zoom Chat by Mrs. Tonicia to keep the meeting open ("I am officially requesting the meeting stay open. Per the law. Discussion of "the performance of an individual who is subject to its authority" unless the individual who is the subject of the meeting requests the meeting be open in which case the meeting must be open. Minn. Stat. § 13D.05, subd. 3(a). "Preliminary consideration of allegations or charges against an individual subject to its authority" unless the individual who is the subject of the meeting requests the meeting be open in which case the meeting must be open. "If the members conclude that discipline of any nature may be warranted as a result of those specific charges or allegations, further meetings or hearings relating to those specific charges or allegations held after that conclusion is reached must be open." Minn. Stat. § 13D.05, subd. 2(b).")
  - Jim Martin comments that names of people that have made allegations should not be made public in this space
  - Kenna summarizes that several staff members have left in the last month to 6 weeks, and they have expressed reasons for leaving the have to do with the treatment they received from Tonicia. There are people still on staff that have expressed they have received bullying from Tonicia.
  - Renae summarizes concerns from staff - feeling belittled and not respected. Culture of blame. HOS makes things personal, has poor boundaries, staff are encouraged to share

personal information and it is used against them. Fear of retaliation and bullying from HOS if they disagree. Sharing of personal information with others. No safe place to report concerns, grievances or differing opinions.

- Community member asks how many people have filed allegations - co-chair states that there have been 6 to 8 staff members
- Emerald, Matthieu, Sherri, and Christopheraaron support third party investigation.
- Christopheraaron asks questions about process to hire an investigator, whether or not we are clear to move forward with mediation, and asks for clarity around the number of people that have filed formal complaints.
- Renae states that even if things have not been brought as formal complaints, it is our legal responsibility to look into them and resolve them. We have 4 written complaints.
- Mrs. Tonicia asks for specific times, dates, places and examples
- Christopheraaron states that mediation is paramount before or in tandem with the legal investigations
- Jim clarifies that legally the school has to investigate allegations that if taken on their face as true, would be violations of law or policy. It is up to the board to pass a resolution to engage and hire the investigator
- Mr. Jamal comments that he's not sure of the direction he needs to move in as a school leader and is unsure of the timeline of everything in progress. He's feeling as though they are not appreciated in this space and is surprised that we're discussing this right now and the lack of focus on the children.
- Mrs. Tonicia states that there are two people that have wanted to take back what they shared with the board because they felt coerced.
- Renae states that we should move forward with making a determination.
- Mrs. Tonicia states that she wants the board to be investigated as well

4. Ask for a motion on hiring a third party investigator

**Motion** - Motion to hire a 3rd party investigator (made by Matthiew, seconded by Sherri)

**YAY:** Emerald Woodberry, Kenna Cottman, Sherri Green, Renae Dressel, Matthieu Culp

**NAY:** Christopheraaron Deanes

**ABSTAIN:** N/A

**ACTION:** Motion passes.

5. Closing commentary - Kenna summarizes action steps. Christopheraaron reiterates the need for mediation and that he is not comfortable with how we are proceeding. Renae states moving forward we need to solicit

6. **Motion - approve contract with Dr. Tolefree (made by Christopheraaron, seconded by Renae)**

- **Discussion** - what is the amount and can we make sure there isn't a conflict of interest . Concerns with approving the mediator without knowing the cost of the investigator. Dr. Tolefree states cost of contract as proposed is \$3500 but subject to change pending the amount of time the healing takes

**YAY:** Emerald Woodberry, Renae Dressel

**NAY:** Kenna Cottman, Sherri Green, Matthieu Culp, Christopheraaron Deanes

**ABSTAIN:** N/A

**ACTION:** Motion does not pass.

**7. Adjourn**

**Motion** - Motion to adjourn meeting (motion made by Kenna, seconded by Emerald)

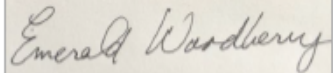
**YAY:** Emerald Woodberry, Renae Dressel, Kenna Cottman, Sherri Green, Matthieu Culp, Christopheraaron Deanes

**NAY:** N/A

**ABSTAIN:** N/A

**ACTION:** Motion passes.

Submitted by: Emerald Woodberry

Signature: 

Date: 11/17/2020