

**HUMAN RESOURCES AND NOMINATION COMMITTEE**

**MARCH 6, 2025 – 2 PM VIA ZOOM**

**In Attendance:**

Ms. Robin Zimelman, Committee Chair

Ms. Renee Winsky, Secretary

Mr. Craig Ballew

Mr. Bruce Wright

Dr. Karen Rigamonti

Mr. Rob Hair, MSB Superintendent

Ms. April Tucker, MSB Director of Human Resources

Ms. Valerie Johnson, MSB Executive Assistant

**Absent:**Ms. Marion Mullauer, Board Chair

**Call to Order:** Ms. Robin Zimelman convened the meeting at 2:05 pm and commented that Ms. Marion Mullauer would not be in attendance.

**Approval of November 12, 2024 Minutes:** Ms. Zimelman motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Renee Winsky. The motion passed.

**REPORTS:**

**Board Vacancies:**Ms. Zimelman commented that for the first time in her recent memory, the Board is at full capacity. The Governor appointees, effective July 1, 2025, are Mr. Ray Brown, Ms. Katie Penny, Mr. Lou Smith, Senator Guzzone, and Delegate Smith.

Ms. Zimelman announced that Rabbi Lauren Tuchman, has been elected and will join the Board at the March 28, 2025 meeting.

**Potential Board Candidates: Ms**. Zimelman stated that she received a nomination for Ms. Mary Rose Cook. Ms. Mullauer and Mr. Hair met with her. Ms. Cook, an estate and trust lawyer with a great-niece at MSB, has been engaged with the school through her role as President of a ski club that has supported MSB through annual fundraisers. She was enthusiastic about joining the board and asked thoughtful questions about board involvement.

A motion was made by Ms. Zimelman, seconded by Ms. Winsky, to present Ms. Cook for election to the Board of Directors at the March 28, 2025 meeting, following the HR Nomination Committee's recommendation on March 6. The committee was asked for consent approval, with all in favor.

Ms. Zimelman reported that Dr. Karen Rigamonti recommended Ms. Jill Eidelman, a retired former MSB speech therapist, for a future board position. Ms. Mullauer has spoken with her and considers her a strong candidate. Ms. Zimelman has a meeting scheduled with Ms. Eidelman. With Ms. Mullauer and Dr. Grasmick leaving the board on June 30, 2025, two vacancies will open.

Mr. Hair stated that based on MSB’s legal counsel’s guidance regarding electronic voting in the state’s Open Meetings Act, electronic voting is no longer allowed. Nominations and votes must occur in meetings.

Ms. Eidelman’s nomination will be presented and voted on by the Committee at its next meeting. If approved, her nomination will be submitted to the Board for a vote at the June 13, 2025, meeting. She will not be eligible for a board seat until July 1, 2025.

The Committee discussed the school counsel’s guidance on electronic voting in relation to the Open Meetings Act. Mr. Hair noted that Ms. Mullauer is coordinating a presentation by MSB’s legal counsel to the Board on Open Meetings Act regulations.

**HR REPORTS: Ms**. April Tucker commented that the HR Department has focused on MSB’s strategic vision of building a multicultural, highly skilled workforce, expanding the applicant pool, and making good progress on retention goals over the last semester.

The current total headcount is now 404, up from 399 in December 2024, due to additional hires for newly enrolled students requiring one-on-one paraeducators.

**Turnover Statistics:** Turnover in Q2 FY25 is 3.0%, down from 3.4% last year. From August 2024 to March 2025, turnover is 5.5%, a significant drop from 10.7% in the same period last year, reflecting a 50% improvement in retention. MSB’s turnover rate is now below the national average.

The decrease is attributed to better staff fit, rigorous onboarding, early mentoring, and increased support for academic staff, especially those new to working with visually impaired students. Enhanced professional development and a more stable HR department have also contributed to improved retention and responsiveness to staff concerns. New staff members are assigned a mentor for a set period, with check-ins at 30, 60, and 90 days.

**Turnover Summary by Group:**

**General Administration:** 2 people (10.2%)

**Nutrition:** 1 person (7.1%)

**Education Support:** 2 people (4.0%)

**Education Department:** 6 people (2.9%)

**Facilities:** 1 person

A total of eight resignations occurred, while three were job actions (performance issues), and one was due to excessive absences. About five of the eight resignations were performance-related, with employees choosing to resign before facing termination.

Most who resigned were new hires (less than a year). They received mentoring and performance support through meetings and action plans. Some found the rigorous documentation and workload overwhelming, particularly new teachers. Additional support and training for new teachers are being explored to improve retention.

Only one teacher vacancy remains, currently covered by a long-term substitute. Efforts to maintain a hiring pipeline have allowed quick replacements when teachers leave.

**Recruitment & University Partnerships:** MSB is expanding college and university career fair participation and forming strategic partnerships with universities that align with staffing needs.

New partnerships include:

* + Coppin State: Exploring collaboration.
  + Kutztown University: Engaging with TVI students early to promote MSB opportunities and internships.
  + Morgan State & Towson: Building partnerships for recruitment.

**Enhanced Digital and Targeted Outreach:** Partnering with an advertising company to target social media ads specifically to students in relevant university programs. Evaluating job boards for effectiveness and return on investment.

**Internship and Talent Pipeline Development:** MSB has nineinterns this year (three with teachers, six in related services). Will start recruitment earlier to increase intern numbers for the fall.

**TVI Certification Program Proposal:** MSB proposed a TVI certificate program for teaching visually impaired students at Coppin State. It would be Maryland’s first in-state TVI program, eliminating the need for staff to go out of state for certification. The university is reviewing budget feasibility.

The benefits include:

* High demand for certification.
* Immediate job opportunities for graduates.
* Pathways for MSB Students: The proposal includes job shadowing and higher education opportunities for MSB students at partnering universities, supporting transition planning.

A question was raised regarding paraeducator educational requirements. Ms. Tucker stated a high school diploma, college courses,or state certification obtained within six months of hire was required**.**

The certification test is challenging; some retake it multiple times. Failure to certify may lead to demotion or termination. The school provides support and flexibility with study groups and a structured study program to help staff prepare for the certification test.

**Benefits and Wellness Plan Update:**

* 379 employees are benefits-eligible; 223 enrolled, 156 waived coverage, and 121 participate in the Wellness Program.
* Cigna is pleased with MSB’s wellness engagement, and efforts are ongoing to improve preventive care awareness.
* No significant increase in medical benefits costs this year due to strong data.
* MSB is exploring benefit stability options:
  + Captive insurance groups: Pooling with other companies for stable long-term costs.
  + AIMS ABS program: A network of schools negotiating benefits for cost stability.
* Comparing options to ensure financial sustainability of MSB’s medical benefits.

**403(b) Retirement Plan Update:**

* 60% participation rate this quarter (244 employees contributing).
* Average contribution: 7%; 12% contribute over 10%.
* Participation has declined from 80% to 60% over 10 years, mainly due to the end of automatic enrollment, which MSB is working to reinstate.
* Challenges in auto-enrollment:
  + Substitutes must be manually enrolled after reaching a 500 hours.
  + Payroll system (Paylocity) lacks automation, requiring manual checks to ensure accuracy.
* Goal: Implement auto-enrollment by June for new hires in the next school year.
* Employee Education:
  + MSB is working with Empower to increase targeted employee outreach.
  + Quarterly one-on-one meetings are available, with plans for more educational sessions.

**EEOC Complaints:** Two EEOC complaints were filed in November. The first is a former employee who resigned but later claimed constructive discharge. MSB’s attorney has responded, noting some allegations were untimely. Awaiting EEOC response.

The second is a terminated teacher with severe performance issues who filed a complaint but did not perfect the charge (no formal allegations submitted). If not completed within a certain timeframe, it may be dismissed. Awaiting further guidance from the EEOC.

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REVIEW:** Ms. Tucker reported that policies are being reviewed andvarious groups have input, the Staff Advisory Council and Supervisors, to create policies that work for both the school and staff. Recently, the following policies were reviewed and implemented:

**Personal Mobile Device Use Policy:** This policy was implemented due to the need for multi-factor authentication on our computers. The policy clarifies that some personal device use is required for authentication and addresses appropriate usage on campus, particularly for student-facing staff.

Ms. Tucker commented that the staff received instructions through emails and training sessions on how to install and use the authentication app. Compliance is monitored by IT, as staff must register a device for authentication.

Additionally, the policy clarifies AirPods/earbud use on campus. Employees with approved accommodations for disabilities may use AirPods/earbuds, and they may also be used under special circumstances. The policy now specifies that accommodations must be approved in advance to prevent informal approvals that could put Supervisors in a difficult position.

Concerns were raised about staff walking around with AirPods and listening to music, which the policy aims to address.

**Weather and Major Emergencies Policy:** Updated to ensure equity in pay when the school is closed. Previously, hourly staff had to use leave while exempt staff did not. Now, if the school is closed, hourly staff do not have to use leave, with five snow emergency days built into the calendar. If closures exceed five days, staff will need to use leave.

A question was raised about whether the school might contradict state government emergency closures. Ms. Tucker clarified that if the state declares an emergency and students are already on campus (as it is a residential school), the school will remain open to ensure the safety and care of the students. The school would not close in such situations, as it prioritizes the well-being of the students who are already present.

**Remote Work Policy:** The discussion on the Remote Work Policy covered several key points and recommendations. These considerations aim to ensure clarity, security, and compliance while providing structure to remote work arrangements.

* **No Maximum Distance Defined:** The policy does not set a maximum distance from campus for telecommuting. Since only a few administrative roles qualify for remote work, it hasn’t been a concern, but it’s something to consider.
* **Work Location Expectations:** There was concern about employees teleworking from public places like Starbucks or hotels rather than home. It was suggested that the policy should clarify whether employees are expected to work from home and if prior approval is required for working from other locations.
* **Formalizing Remote Work:** Before the pandemic, remote work was discretionary, but the new policy aims to codify guidelines to ensure consistency and accountability.
* **Privacy & Security:** The policy should explicitly require remote work to be conducted in a private, secure environment to prevent unauthorized access to sensitive information.
* **Internet Costs:** Employees should be responsible for paying for their own internet when working remotely.
* **Workers' Compensation:** The school should consult its workers' comp carrier to determine liability and any necessary policy provisions for home offices.
* **Returning Equipment:** There should be clear terms for returning school property upon resignation or termination, with potential consequences for failure to return equipment.

Following Ms. Tucker’s report, a discussion took place regarding Executive Orders on DEIA, and procedures regarding Immigration Officers (ICE) arriving on Campus.

**DEIA Considerations and Strategic Planning:**

* The school does not currently have a DEIA committee or formal statement, but principles are embedded in hiring practices to ensure broad candidate pools.
* A DEIA committee was previously planned for January 2025, but in light of executive orders, the decision was made to not move forward.
* Legal counsel has been consulted and advised that executive orders do not currently impact the school, though the school continues to monitor federal and state actions.
* To avoid misinterpretation, it was suggested that the decision to not move forward with the committee be stated publicly at a board meeting and documented in meeting minutes.
* A previous draft of the strategic plan included DEIA objectives but was not the final published version. The updated 2025 strategic plan should be referenced in board records.

**ICE on Campus Procedure:**

* A procedure is in place if ICE agents come on campus.
* Staff do not have knowledge of students’ immigration status.
* If ICE arrives, **Security and administration will handle the situation**—teachers and staff are not to be involved. The policy has been communicated to staff, and Security is trained on the procedure.

**Federal & State Funding Impact:** While MSB does not receive direct federal grants, much of the state education funding is federally sourced. Concerns were raised about potential federal department closures affecting special education funding, but the specific impact is unclear at this time.

**Adjournment:** With no further business to discuss, Ms. Zimelman adjourned the meeting at 3:20 pm.