

**ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE**

**SEPTEMBER 10, 2025 – 8 AM VIA ZOOM**

**In Attendance:**

Mr. Mark Potter, Committee Chair

Mr. Craig Ballew, Board Chair

Ms. Mary Rose Cook

Ms. Karen Malinowski

Mr. Rob Hair, MSB Superintendent

Ms. Marlo Jacobson, Advancement Director

Ms. Valerie Johnson, MSB Executive Assistant

**Excused:** Mr. Bob Travers

**Call to Order:** Mr. Mark Potter called the meeting to order at 8 AM.

**Advancement Reports:** Ms. Marlo Jacobson presented the following:

**Brand Refesh:** The need for a rebrand is driven by the observation that current messaging and visual identity are outdated and do not fully capture or communicate MSB’s mission and impact, especially to new audiences.

The rebranding proposal aims to raise MSB’s visibility, recruit staff and students, and attract new donors by developing a new brand identity that reflects the entire community.

The process will involve input from all stakeholders—staff, donors, Board members, and the broader community and includes hiring an outside agency to ensure objectivity. An estimated budget of $49,000 is proposed.

There was discussion about the importance of developing quantifiable data or metrics to track visibility, donor recruitment and applications to justify the rebranding effort to the full Board. Data will be gathered from peer school rebrands (Perkins and Texas School for the Deaf and Blind). Research other nonprofits’ rebranding ROI.

The Committee was asked to approve moving the rebranding concept forward to the Governance Committee for further Board consideration.

Mr. Potter put forth a motion, seconded by Ms. Karen Malinowski, to move the rebranding concept to the Governance Committee. A vote was taken and the motion approved. Mr. Potter will present the rebranding proposal at the Governance Committee meeting.

**Fundraising Goals**

* The unrestricted fundraising goal for last year was $550,000, which was exceeded by $5,877.
* The restricted fundraising goal was also exceeded by $20,300.
* Vehicle donations surpassed the goal by $32,000.
* Bequests: On average, MSB receives about three bequests per year, with an average amount upwards of $50,000 and a weighted average of $125,000.
* Year-over-year performance shows that large grants can cause significant jumps in fundraising totals for certain months.
* Planned Giving is already over goal for the current year, while other campaigns are just beginning.
* **The total amount raised for the year was $1,033,511.**

Ms. Jacobson reported that monitoring year-over-year and campaign performance will continue, especially as new grants and donations are anticipated in the coming months.

Continue to track the results of recent solicitations, including back-to-school donations, to assess progress toward current fundraising goals and maintain focus on areas that have already exceeded goals (such as Planned Giving and vehicle donations) while working to boost other campaign areas that are just beginning.

**Legacy Society (Planned Giving):** Ms. Jacobson stated that the Legacy Society has been dormant since COVID and one of the goals is to reactivate it by launching a comprehensive planned giving campaign, starting with sending letters to identified prospects (such as donors over a certain age who give under $50 annually).

Mr. Potter suggested organizing an event for current Legacy Society members at the school, to include meeting with Superintendent Hair to have lunch, in order to keep these important supporters engaged.

Ms. Mary Rose Cook commented that MSB should engage with the legal community, particularly estate and trust attorneys, by sponsoring events such as a breakfast group for these professionals. This would provide an opportunity for MSB to present and promote Planned Giving and the Legacy Society. Ms. Jacobson stated that MSB would be happy to sponsor such events and welcomed further involvement and suggestions. Ms. Cook expressed interest in becoming involved with these efforts.

**2026 See Beyond Festival:** Ms. Jacobson stated after four years of holding the See Beyond Festival in April—three of which were significantly impacted by rain—the decision was made to move the festival to October 3, 2026. The new timing in October is intended to provide better weather and an opportunity to engage families early in the school year, as well as to allow more time to secure sponsors. The change is anticipated to increase attendance and improve the overall success of the event. The Committee was in agreement with changing the 2026 festival date.

**Board Talking Points:** Ms. Jacobson reported that concise talking points with key phrases will be created for Board members and MSB advocates to use.

The goal is to provide Board members and advocates with concise, unified talking points to ensure consistent messaging about MSB’s mission, impact, and funding needs.

An inclusive language quick guide will be developed. It was emphasized that Board members should be able to clearly communicate that MSB is **state-supported** but **not fully state-funded**, as this is crucial for effective fundraising.

These points will be condensed into a one-pager for clarity and ease of use. The one-pager will then be further shortened into key phrases or prompts that can be printed on a pocket card to distribute to Board members and other advocates.

**Board Challenge Match Campaign – Athletics Facilities Project:** The Committee discussed launching a “Challenge Match” as a mini capital campaign. The campaign will be an internal, grassroots effort—no outside counsel will be hired. The fundraising goal for the campaign is set at $3 million, which represents the gap between state funding and the total needed for the construction project.

The plan is to reach this goal through targeting grants and major donors, as well as other internal fundraising strategies. The Committee agreed to move forward with this approach.

**Collaborative Fundraising Events:** Mr. Potter stated that the Maryland Science Center staff had a wonderful experience participating in the See Beyond Festival in April and expressed an interest in doing more collaborative activities with MSB in the future.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Potter adjourned the meeting at 8:45 AM.

**Next Meeting:** Schedule before the December 12, 2025 Board meeting.