

**2018-2019 MCC Governing Board
Special Meeting
May 15, 2019**

MINUTES

MCC Board Members – All Present. Paul Kohlenberger, Board Chair; Desi Woltman; Julie Waters; Elizabeth John; Lauren Herzberg; Carole Herrick; Alicia Plerhoples; Raj Mehra; Terri Markwart; Megan Markwart; Kat Kehoe

MCC Staff Present: George Sachs, Executive Director; Holly Novak, Exec. Assistant; Sarah Schallern Treff, Performing Arts Director

Guests: Several people from the community (listed below)

CONVENE THE MEETING

Chair Kohlenberger convened a Special Meeting of the 2018-2019 Governing Board of McLean Community Center on May 15, 2019 at 8:32 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Kohlenberger welcomed members of the public in attendance. Each person had an opportunity to introduce themselves and give a comment, if they wished to. Xavier Jimenez – current Youth candidate; Iza - Maria Federaro-Guertin's daughter. Enrico Guertin – son of Maria Federaro-Guertin. Maria Federaro-Guertin – current Adult candidate; Nick Guertin; Luke Levasseur – McLean citizen and member of Virginia Democracy Forward. John Farrell – resident of Reston, Virginia. Merrily Pierce, MCA liaison; Barbara Protacio – current Adult candidate. Ben Closs. Lori Boerner – VADF; Alizé Ashraf – current Youth candidate. Lindsea Strelser – current Youth candidate; Carla Post – current Adult candidate; Anna Krause-Steinrauf – current Youth candidate.

ADOPT AGENDA

Chair Kohlenberger asked if there were any amendments to the Agenda. The Agenda for the meeting was not accepted as written. It was requested to be changed, as follows:

1. Time for additional Public Comment: that members of the public be able to speak at the end of the meeting as well, after hearing all discussion by the Board.
2. Table the “Recommendations for Future Elections” until the board has consulted the Fairfax County attorney as to whether such recommendations are legal.

Chair Kohlenberger amended the Agenda as follows:

1. We will offer an additional process for final Public Comments at the end of this meeting.
2. “Recommendations” are now officially struck from the Agenda. The Elections Committee may review them next Board year.

REVISE DATE OF NEXT UPCOMING REGULAR BOARD MEETING

It was proposed to change the date of the next Board meeting to May 29, 2019, to ensure quorum. It was approved by the Board unanimously. The MCC web site and Fairfax County Public Announcement Calendar would be revised accordingly.

PARTISAN PUBLIC COMMUNICATION IMPACTING YOUTH CANDIDATES

The purpose of this Emergency Meeting was so that the entire board, in fairness to all members, would have the opportunity to hear concerns that were brought to the attention of the Finance Committee on May 14,

2019 prior to the election on May 18. *Megan Markwart (Youth Board member) read her written statement aloud.*
[see ADDENDUM]

DISCUSSION **Many differing opinions were expressed.*

The Elections & Nominations Committee Chair confirmed that all candidates were told that the MCC election was non-partisan. Several Youth candidates confirmed that they understood the election was to be non-partisan: Sabrina Benmira; Lindsea Strelser; Anna Krause-Steinrauf. Also, current Youth Board members Megan Markwart and Lauren Herzberg confirmed that that had been their understanding. While neither the MCC's Memorandum of Understanding nor its Elections Policies & Procedures addresses partisanship explicitly, all Board Members agreed that the MCC election is non-partisan. Disagreement ensued as to the contours of 'non-partisan', with the majority of Board Members taking a more robust view of the matter than the minority. Nevertheless, it was unclear to Board Members how "non-partisan" should be defined and if/how they could compel campaigns to remain non-partisan. It was agreed that further discussion and consultations would be appropriate in the next Board year. No official action was taken.

USE OF MCC VISUAL IDENTITY BY CAMPAIGNS

It had come to the attention of the MCC that the MCC logo on the front of the MCC building had appeared in the background of certain campaign photos. It was discussed whether this constitutes improper use of the MCC logo, versus use of a MCC logo image in printed or digital material. Various opinions were expressed, but no final conclusion was reached. The Board determined that no further action was necessary in this case. Chair Kohlenberger reminded candidates that use of MCC logos in campaign materials constituted a violation of the MCC Elections Policies and Procedures. He asked that, as in previous cases, MCC staff notify candidates using MCC visual identities in campaign materials and ask that they desist from doing so.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Those members of the public still present were given the opportunity to speak once more.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kohlenberger thanked everyone for being present, and adjourned the meeting at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Holly Novak – Executive Assistant to the Governing Board

(see following page for ADDENDUM)

ADDENDUM – written statement from Youth candidate/Board member Megan Markwart

Before explaining the reasons why we have found ourselves here tonight, I want to say that it was not my intention to go after certain candidates or board members, but rather to ensure the ethical election process the MCC is proud to uphold.

As a youth in my community, it takes a lot of courage for me to campaign to my classmates and strangers and persuade them to vote for me. I have spent hours making and distributing fliers, campaigning on social media and around town. After speaking with my fellow candidates, I know they have done the same.

After receiving a flier on Monday night from Virginia Democracy Forward, I was shocked to see that a political group, one that I and most other teenagers have never heard of, has been endorsing two youth candidates. Their flier states: "If you have or know teens," vote for these specific youth candidates we have chosen from the two high schools. To me, this does not seem geared towards high schoolers. This seems geared toward parents, instructing their children to vote for the two candidates without consideration of the others. It has been made very clear numerous times that the MCC elections are non-partisan and should reflect coming together as diverse members of the community.

This is why I became frustrated that the youth candidates were being endorsed by a political group that I had never had the chance to speak to or share my ideas with. Unfortunately, after some research, I now understand that multiple members of our Governing Board are involved with this organization, including Alicia Plerhoples, who is the co-founder of Virginia Democracy Forward. An advertisement endorsing candidates appeared in the Virginia Democracy Forward newsletter entitled, "McLean Community Center Turning True Blue," alluding to the increasing number of progressive Democrats taking over the "artistic and recreational opportunities provided by the Center." In the letter, MCC board members*** Alicia Plerhoples, Kat Kehoe, and Julie Waters are pictured along with candidates Suzanne LeMenestrel and Maria Foderaro-Guertin. As the endorsements appeared in social media posts, fliers and newsletters, I find it hard to believe that none of the board members affiliated with this group saw anything of the kind. Unfortunately, the Facebook endorsements have been taken down since last night, but a copy of the screenshots should be in your packets.

I know there are other concerns with the adult candidates and MCC logo misuse which I will let other members elaborate on, but as a Youth member on this board, I believe it is my responsibility to ensure an ethical election to create better leaders for the future; and the best way to do that is by bringing issues like this to light. I found it extremely disappointing that a political organization would target teens to turn this election from a self-made victory into a one-sided blowout. Thank you.

**** NOTE: Board Members named herein denied knowledge of their photograph being used adjacent to the endorsement of a slate of candidates in the communication referenced. Their ignorance was confirmed at the meeting by the publisher of the communication. Regardless, no provision of the MCC Election Policies and Procedures precludes those Board Members not serving on the Elections and Nominations Committee from endorsing candidates for election.*