Western Communities Montessori Society
Meeting of Directors – Minutes

Meeting Date:	October 15, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.
Location:	4075 Metchosin Road, Victoria (Staff Room)
Attendees:	Sam Auerbach, Ardys Baker, Kris Wilson, June Ling, Mackenzie Reeves, Cat Brooksbank, Matt Loken, Anastassia Bennett, Chelle Fox, Betina Pickelein, Danny Buchanan, Stacey Weir, Justina Leson + Society (in person and via livestream)
Regrets:	None
Distribution:	WCMS Board (Directors and Ex-Officio) and WCMS Society
Quorum (Majority Required):	Met. All in office Directors present.

Item	Discussion
1.	**Call to Order – 7:30 p.m.**
2.	**Adoption of Agenda** Ardys moved motion to adopt the agenda.
3.	**Board Update** **<u>1. Director Change – Sam Auerbach</u>** Robin Parker is unable to continue as a Director. The Board will leave the Director position vacant until the AGM. Action: This information will be communicated in the October Board newsletter. The board would like to thank Robin Parker for the countless hours of volunteer service and dedication he has given to Westmont. The board will send Robin a small gift in recognition and appreciation of that commitment before the next board meeting.
4.	**Old Business** **<u>1. Monthly Newsletter – Ardys Baker</u>** Ardys would like to receive information from the Committee Chairs ASAP after the committees meet. The goal is to send out the monthly newsletter a week after the Board meeting. 7:33 p.m. – Matt Loken arrives

5.	**Committee Reports** **<u>1. Head of School – Betina Pickelein</u>** Discussion: Betina highlighted the staff team and ways in which staff step forward to share their passions. The feedback on the Friday weekly update newsletters is that they are too long, so each program will be highlighted once in a 6-week rotation. With the upcoming Staff Pro-D Day coming up, a group will be going to the Montessori conference in Vancouver. They are collaborating with Maria Montessori Academy and Selkirk Montessori. Others are staying here for a workshop with Montessori expert, Irma, and some staff will refine programs and lessons they planned. Betina confirmed that the administration is brainstorming on the following: ways to build up the grade 6 cohort as it currently only has 8 students and open houses to retain existing families. Discussion on ways to attract new families and bring more awareness to Westmont: open houses; community events such as garage sales that are paired with an open house; camps; renting out rooms to the community; and speaking positively about the school generally in public. We discussed reaching out to the broader community to invite them to an open house and using camps as a way to promote the school during the offseason. **<u>2. Finance – Kris Wilson and Anastassia Bennett</u>** Kris moved motion to Approve the Finance Committee Terms of Reference as presented. Approved – all; Opposed – none; Abstained – none. **MOTION PASSED.** If there are any questions on the budget or suggestions on costs savings and generating revenue, please contact Kris at kwilson@westmontschool.ca. Questions were raised about the bond/deposit and students withdrawing in June 2026. Anastassia confirmed the Head of School makes the decision on refunding the deposit when special circumstances arise. **Board responsibility for the Family Bond and Student Deposit** The Board is responsible for governing both the Family Bond Program and the Student Deposit. This includes approving the policy, ensuring funds are properly recorded and available for refunds, approving material changes, and ensuring the programs are administered fairly and in accordance with WCMS policy and applicable law.

What the policy says

The Family Bond is a $5,000 refundable bond, with one bond required per family. Its purpose is to support the capital plan used to fund the school's long-term capital needs.

The Student Deposit is a one-time $1,000 deposit per student, payable at enrolment. It is refundable when the student leaves the school, less any outstanding arrears, and subject to the withdrawal policy. Students re-enrolling must pay outstanding arrears before acceptance. If arrears remain unpaid, the deposit may be applied to those arrears and the student may not be re-enrolled until the deposit is restored to $1,000.

For both programs, the Board approves the policy and any material changes, ensures accurate records and refund obligations are maintained, and ensures funds are not treated as unrestricted operating revenue. The Head of School and Business Manager are responsible for day-to-day administration, including records, refunds, arrears, and financial reporting.

	Student Deposit	**Family Bond**
Amount	$1,000 per student	$5,000 per family
Primary purpose	Secures enrolment and protects against arrears	Supports the school's long-term capital plan
Refundability	Refundable when the student leaves, less arrears and subject to withdrawal policy	Refundable under the Family Bond policy
Accounting treatment	Current liability tied to the individual student's enrolment	Longer-term liability tied to the family's bond
Use of funds	May support operating liquidity, subject to proper accounting and refund obligations	Intended to support capital planning and long-term capital needs
Board approval needed for material changes	Yes	Yes
Routine administration	Head of School / Business Manager	Head of School / Business Manager

	The Board is also responsible for the Society's overall financial viability, including capital funds, long-term financial planning, and capital expenditures. Because bond proceeds are tied to capital planning, the Board, not the Head of School or a committee, must decide how those funds are used and ensure they remain available when families are entitled to refunds. **3. Head of School Recruitment – Ardys Baker** Ardys moved motion to Approve the Head of School Recruitment Committee Terms of Reference as presented. Approved – all; Opposed – none; Abstained – none. **MOTION PASSED.** Discussion: This is an *ad hoc* committee that has been struck and convened. The Committee has had a couple of meetings and will be moving forward with an ambitious work plan. The goal is to produce a recruitment package for the Board to use, based on extensive engagement with the Society. Engagement sessions with staff have occurred. There are plans to conduct surveys with Society members and convene in person engagement sessions. Engagement with students is being planned, as appropriate, based on discussion with Betina and Danny. This recruitment package will be presented to the Board for decision and then the Board will launch the active recruitment in January. A further discussion is needed on which of the 3 shortlisted recruitment firm is to be retained, especially as the Committee is taking on the front-loaded process to develop of the Head of School job description, etc. **4. Building and Site – Matt Loken** Matt moved motion to Approve the Building and Site Committee Terms of Reference as presented. Approved – all; Opposed – none; Abstained – none. **MOTION PASSED.** Discussion: The quotes for the lights along the top gravel road are almost finalized. The aim to have the lights installed and active before December. A past PAC fundraising idea about a large electronic sign to provide information on school activities was raised. Chelle Fox advised that the idea was looked into and installation of the sign requires digging down 6 feet or more for support purposes. Others noted that it could be installed on the side of the PAC cabin and be paid for through a fundraiser that is separate from the budget for the parking lot/driveway lights.

	A society member wondered if there are any government grants available for the maintenance given the change to daylight savings. Because we are in the midst of a provincial election, it seems unlikely. **5. Marketing and Fundraising – Sam Auerbach** Sam moved motion to Approve the Marketing and Fundraising Committee Terms of Reference as presented. Approved – all; Opposed – none; Abstained – none. **MOTION PASSED.** Discussion: The first committee meeting will be at end of the month. The committee will work with Building and Site Committee to coordinate fundraising for larger items. On the marketing side, the goal is to come up with an annual calendar, such as when to advertise for enrollment. While most of the work falls on operations, the Board does have a soft mandate to fundraise and ensure the marketing budget produces the intended result as per the strategic plan. Examples for fundraisers: Having Victoria LEGO Users Group (ViCLUG) or a classic cars event held at the school with admission by donation and coordinate the events with a school open house. The committee will work with PAC to plan an annual fundraiser and create a procedure for its execution going forward. Committee will review the source of the referral traffic outlined in the monthly marketing report. Referral traffic rose from 165 to 1047 month over month. Committee will review engagement quality on the website. An average time of 45 seconds was spent per page. **6. PAC – Chelle Fox** Discussion: Upcoming events are detailed in the PAC newsletter and meeting minutes. PAC is looking into a fundraising mural wall where a family would purchase one or more tiles, paint it, and then it'd be installed on a wall. Eventually, the tiles will create a giant image. It is to be a visual representation for the fundraising for a long-term goal. (Note: This is not the same mural or concept that is being prepared for painting on a building.) The PAC received the $20 per student grant from the government. This amount will be distributed between each program. Betina advised that there will be a new fundraiser this year for the graduation class for a prom night.

6.	**New Business** **<u>1. Board Meeting Date Changes – Sam Auerbach</u>** Due to conflict with school evening events, the following Board meeting dates are being changed: • Thursday, December 10 to Monday, December 14 (Society invited Board meeting) • Thursday, March 4 to Monday, March 8 (Society invited Board meeting) • Thursday, May 13 to Monday, May 10 (AGM) Betina has confirmed new dates are not in conflict with other events. All meetings will start at 6:30 p.m. **Action: June to request update with school calendar.** **<u>2. Bylaws and Policy Update – Sam Auerbach</u>** Discussion: With ongoing bylaw and policy reviews, it was decided that the Board will maintain an ongoing SharePoint tracking document to capture ideas and suggestions for updates to the bylaws and Board Policy Manual, to ensure they do not get lost. After the Head of School Recruitment Committee has finished its work, there may be a formal shift in focus to bylaw and policy updates and strategic planning. Ardys is working on the bylaw updates. With respect to bylaw changes, the Society will need to vote on each change clause by clause. This is expected to happen at the May 2027 AGM. **Action: Ardys will upload a tracking document onto the Board's SharePoint and ideas and suggestions for bylaw and Board Policy Manual updates can be added to it.** **<u>3. Crosswalk – Chelle Fox and Danny Buchanan</u>** Discussion: Danny has talked to an outgoing Metchosin city councilor on how to petition Metchosin to install a sidewalk by Pears Road. **Action: Danny will look into a letter drafting campaign and how to present the letters to council.**

7.	**Business from the Floor** **<u>Agendas and Minutes</u>** Discussion: A reminder was provided that all Committee Reports need to have the name of the author and that the agendas/minutes need to have everyone's last names when they're first mentioned. For this year, the goal is to post the Board meeting minutes on the Westmont website within 14 days of the Board meeting. There was a delay uploading the September minutes due to a website access issue that has been rectified. **Action: Ardys will continue to include a link to the Governance page on the Westmont website, where the meeting minutes are posted, in the Board newsletters.** **<u>Volunteer Recruitment</u>** Discussion: Questions were raised about the need to "interview" volunteers for Board committees. The Board clarified that while there may be a better word choice than "interview", the intention was to ensure that those volunteering understood the committee's mandates, were a fit in terms of experience and skillset, and had the requisite time to commit to the committee work. The "interview" was not meant to preclude anyone from volunteering. It was noted that some members ended up declining to volunteer after learning about the required time commitment during the interviews for the Head of School Recruitment Committee. The Building and Site, and Marketing and Fundraising Committees welcomed all those who volunteered and Finance did not have any volunteers. **<u>Society Member Comment</u>** A member raised concerns regarding past Board decisions and actions and the impact of the transition on the school community. No motion was proposed. The Board listened carefully to their comments and thanked the member for sharing their perspective.

	<u>Upcoming Meetings</u> Broad discussion on Directors only meetings versus Society invited meetings. **Action: Board to consider meeting structure on an ongoing basis.** **Action: Board will consider adopting general meeting conduct guidelines to support respectful, open, and orderly meetings.**
8.	**Meeting Review and Adjournment** Moved by Ardys. Meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.