Collaborative for Educational Services

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)

June 24, 2020

Virtual Zoom Meeting


Present from CES: William Diehl, Barbara Siegel, Sarah Molloy, Kelly Hernandez, Karen Reuter, Cheryl Rogers, Angela Burke, Isolda Ortega-Bustamante

Call to Order and Introduction of New Board Members

The Board Chair, Dan Hayes, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Dan informed the Board that we will do each vote by roll call. Sarah will call out names asking for votes. Quorum established.

Public Comment

No comments were provided.

Recognition of Service: CES: Leslie Lemoine, Liz Etheridge, Corky Klimczak; Retiring Superintendents of member districts

Bill provided recognition and gratitude to three CES employees, Leslie Lemoine, Liz Etheridge, and Corky Klimczak. These individuals have recently departed after providing an extended length of service at CES. Their dedication is greatly appreciated and will be missed.

Bill also shared that three superintendents of member districts are retiring - John Robert of Hatfield School District, Tari Thomas of Orange/RC Mahar School District, and Michael Sullivan of Gill-Montague School District. In addition, Sheryl Stanton is leaving the Granby School District, and is assuming the superintendent position for Mohawk Trail. It was noted that they brought a lot of knowledge and wisdom to their positions. Bill advised he is looking forward to welcoming four new superintendents.
Approve Minutes of May 27, 2020 Board Meeting and June 16, 2020 Finance Committee Meeting (votes required)

A copy of the minutes from the March 25th, 2020 Board of Directors meeting were included in the Board packet.

*Mike Knapp moved that the Board approve the minutes from the May 27, 2020 Board of Directors meeting. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. John Cotton abstained. None opposed and the motion passed.*

A copy of the minutes from the June 16th, 2020 Finance Committee meeting were included in the Board packet.

*Mike Knapp moved that the Board approve the minutes from the May 19th, 2020 Finance Committee meeting. Jennifer Mallette seconded the motion. Carole Bergeron and Steve Sullivan abstained. None opposed and the motion passed.*

CES Presentation - Program plans for upcoming year and reopening

Bill stated that he would like to take the opportunity to provide the board with the programs’ plans for the upcoming year and he asked the program directors to attend.

Karen Reuter started by greeting all that were in attendance. She advised there is not full clarity of what the fall will look like for Mt Tom and HEC Academy. There will be some expectations in place including safety protocols. On 6/5, guidance was released from the state and CES’s Operations team is working to obtain the safety supplies needed to open the academies. Human Resources is working to create guidelines for CES with the recommendations from DESE and the CDC. There are Department of Public Health trainings that are necessary and in place for staff to be trained prior to returning to the facilities. It is important for CES to make sure we are delivering appropriate trainings. Karen provided the nurse at HEC is awesome and will be a key member of the team responsible for preparing the guidelines for the students to return in the fall. Some of the items they are considering are touchless hand sanitizers and extra sinks for hand washing stations. The challenge is that HEC has small classrooms which will create physical restrictions in preparing the classrooms with proper social distancing and the Commissioner’s guidance. The team is trying to be agile, flexible, and going with the flow as this a fluid situation. She also noted HEC is concerned about transportation and the safety plans; they will need to monitor this area.

Mt. Tom is unique due to its partnership with Holyoke Community College (HCC) which plans in the fall to be 98% remote and bring in only those who have labs. The cafeteria and library will be closed. The MT administrators will need to consider other options available for them to hold classes. However, HCC has expressed their commitment to the program and wants to continue to partner with CES. The Picknelly Transportation Center may be an alternate location and is being considered. Before going this route, the administrators are seeking what HCC will require to be able to go back onto their campus, if it is at all possible. However, this option will be a
ghost town and may not be the best option. Karen expressed that we hope to have more details soon.

Early Childhood is planning to maintain their grants through mental health and family engagement. The funders have advised there is no change to their funding and they will use the standards provided by the state. They are considering hosting playgroups outdoors. Their mental health work has continued, directly with families, and it is providing consistent service. They are making plans for fall programming, while ensuring that children and families will be safe.

Kathy Levesque reported they are offering collaborative special pricing to Lexikeet, an online provider for translation and interpretation needs. Given the growing needs for family engagement and for messaging about many changes, CES will be offering similar special pricing for Lexikeet to districts. Her team will be providing districts and schools support with communication and technology expertise. They are also exploring how to assist with additional district needs surrounding remote learning, access to AP courses online, etc. Currently they are exploring additional vendor partnerships that we can provide at discounted rates. Requests for shared remote learning platforms are also being addressed. Many districts are set but more research is needed as to what has and needs to be adapted. The idea is to wait for more details about the guidelines for the coming school year before working on a platform.

Angela provided details on professional development. DLAC (digital learning committee) is working with departments to give guidance and provide support through the different phases along with spearheading internet access. CES is also looking for more opportunities to work with districts. The SJE initiative, remote learning planning, early childhood social emotional learning, and other initiatives are continuing to do consultations and virtual workshops.

This spring, CES chose to forgo the annual assessment survey due to COVID and chose to do an in-field survey to establish what the professional development needs were according to the educators. There were great responses with significant needs for fall scheduling. There were 157 responses around social justice equity, trauma, and support for mental health needs. Teachers are seeking better tools and practices around virtual teaching, as well. 93% polled expect to do PD virtually in the evenings and during after school hours. Special education educators are concerned with how to structure classrooms and best ways to teach.

Bill provided information regarding the DYS and SEIS contracts. They are also having challenges around reopening and need to be more nimble than usual. Bill also discussed the regular (virtual) meetings of superintendents, CES’s Professional Learning Communities, and other cost effective ways to support districts. He requested if the Board members hear about things their districts might be interested in, to please reach out to CES.

Dan thanked Karen, Kathy, Angela, and Bill for providing their plans and acknowledged it is a lot of work with the constant changes.

Approval of the 5/31/2020 financials
The following documents were included in the Board packet:

- Changes in Fund Balance FY20 for the Period 7/1/2019 through 5/31/20
- Adjusted Statement of Activities General Fund through 6/30/20
- Statement of Activities FY20 for the period 7/1/2019 through 5/31/20

Barbara started with the Changes in Fund Balance FY20 for the Period 7/1/2019 through 5/31/20 report. The column comparing years is blank due to this being the first year this report is being provided; next year we will have numbers to compare. Barbara reviewed the numbers, noting that there is a $91K deficit at HEC Academy which will be larger by the end of the school year. Had there been just 2 more students the school would have broke even.

Next the Adjusted Statement of Activities General Fund through 6/30/20 report was reviewed. This report was created to illustrate the impact of the funds available from other sources. The $300K from the Fund Balance that the board authorized to be used in FY20 would eliminate 2/3’s of the anticipated FY20 deficit. The $5.85M from the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) would eliminate the deficit completely should the loan be forgiven. We expect to have at least $4.5M forgiven, possibly even more. Barbara recommended not using the $300K for this fiscal year because if the loan is forgiven, it will create a healthy surplus. There was conversation about our eligibility for loan forgiveness. There are conflicting opinions but we remain optimistic that it will come into fruition.

Finally, the Statement of Activities FY20 for the period 7/1/2019 through 5/31/20 report was reviewed. Barbara noted that it is reflective of all the financial position previously discussed and shows where the adjustments have been made since the last report. The 2nd column reflects the proposed amended budget that requires the board’s approval.

Dan motioned to accept the financials and to accept the amended budget. He also suggested the board do a combined vote to preserve the need for two roll calls.

Don Sluter moved that the Board accept the financial report and the amended FY20 budget as presented. Suzanne Crawford seconded the motion. None opposed and the motion passed.

Approval of the amended FY20 budget

See above

Approval of Operations budget + rates for FY21, as reviewed in May 2020

The following documents were included in the Board packet:

- Operations & Business Development Budget FY21

Barbara reported that her colleagues and she have reviewed all the department budgets and drew the boards’ attention to the Operations & Business Development Budget FY21 reports.
There is an added $75K for COVID related expenses for touch free entry items, additional cleaning, and entry system upgrade, to name a few. Bill contributed that in order to move forward we propose that the board authorize starting FY21 with a 1/12th budget for both July and August. Bill proposed that the board could convene in August to approve the complete annual budget. It was asked if the 1/12th is a strict figure and it was advised that it will not be but it will be reported in August along with budget. There was also inquiry about the plan to extend the 1/12th budget for retirement funding. It was advised that CES pays the retirement every 2 weeks as part of the payroll process and it is already accounted for. At this point, the members will be voting on the operations budget reported on last month.

Dan motion to accept the operational budget and rates for FY21 as presented.

John Cotton moved that the Board accept the operational budget and rates for FY21 as presented. Mike Knapp seconded the motion. None opposed and the motion passed.

Approval of 1/12th of FY 2019-20 budget to be agency budget for July 2020 and for August 2020

Barbara proposed using 1/12th of the FY 2019-20 budget as the budget for July and August 2020. Then have a special board meeting in August to vote on the FY21 budget.

Dan motioned to accept using 1/12 of the FY20 budget for July and August and to have another meeting in August.

Don Sluter moved that the Board accept using 1/12 of the FY20 budget for July and August and to have another meeting in August. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. None opposed and the motion passed.

The finance committee meeting will be held on August 4 at 8:00 AM and the dates will be posted to the websites.

Dan provided appreciation to Barbara stating, “It takes a village.”

Approval to hold a Board meeting to review and approve a FY21 amended budget, as well as other time-sensitive matters; to be held on 8/12/2020 at 6:30-8:00 PM

Bill requested that the Board hold a special meeting on Wednesday, August 12, at 6:30-8:00 pm, primarily to review and approve the FY21 amended budget and other time-sensitive matters.

Mike Knapp moved that the Board holding a board meeting to review and approve the FY21 amended budget and time-sensitive matters on August 12 at 6:30-8:00 PM. None opposed and the motion passed.
Bill announced he will have been with CES for 10 years as of this September. He started as the Deputy Director and for the past 7 years he has been the Executive Director. He proceeded to announce to the board his plans to retire at the end of December. He has loved the time he has spent at the Collaborative and appreciates having been able to collaborate with district superintendents and other partners, with an amazing staff and a very supportive Board, and he is blessed to do what he loves and to love what he does. He plans to pursue spending more time stone sculpting, swimming, and with his grandchildren. CES has done a lot of work preparing for this type of transition and has staff members who possess all the great attributes to continue the progress of the agency.

Dan provided Bill has done a tremendous job. He has helped the Collaborative move forward with a reorganization and crafting of the cabinet. The agency is in a good position for a seamless transition with a strong leadership team. He applauded and gave appreciation to Bill for the team he has built.

**Motion to go into Executive Session (MGL 30A, Section 21, Subsection 2 – “... to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.”)**

Dan explained that we will be going into Executive Session pursuant to to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.

*Jonathan Schmidt moved to go into the Executive Session and Michael Knapp seconded the motion. A roll call vote was done and the motion passed.*

Dan invited CES staff members Bill Diehl, Cheryl Rogers, Kelly Hernandez, and Sarah Molloy into the Executive Session.

Dan provided an explanation to why Bill’s announcement was not put on agenda as he wanted to allow the board to hear this news from Bill prior to publicizing it. He and Bill spoke and would like to discuss Bill’s contract. Cheryl summarized the contract and the request to renew the terms to extend and provide an additional 6 months salary. There was a grammatical error noted to change the word ‘with’ to ‘wish’.

Dan asked for a motion to approve the Executive Directors amended contract with the grammatical correction.

*Laura Fallon moved that the Board accept the Executive Directors amended contract with the grammatical correction as presented. Michael Knapp seconded the motion. None opposed and the motion passed.*

**Motion to return to Open Session**

*Don Sluter moved to return to Open Session and John Cotton seconded the motion. A roll call vote was done and the motion passed.*
Kyle Belanger joined the meeting.

David Young moved that the Board accept to ratify the Executive Director’s contract. Don Sluter seconded the motion. Kyle Belanger abstained. None opposed and the motion passed.

**Next steps for CES Leadership**

Dan initiated the discussion to move forward with a search process for an ED. Previously, a search firm was hired but Cheryl Rogers, HR Director, will work with Dan to develop the process and share with the board.

Dan reviewed the ED Search Process proposed outline that was shared with the board via screen sharing. The goal is to create a process that is inclusive. Cheryl will be the liaison and will be looking at the job description, advertisement options, the budget, and this will be more cost effective if done in house by the HR department. Dan advised the salary range will be reviewed, then a survey will be created to see what the Board may be looking for in the next ED, and a screening committee will be established to review applications. The idea is for the screening committee to have 3 board members, 2 CES staff members, 1 superintendent, and 1 community member (who will be appointed by the Board chair). Once the number of candidates is reduced, there will be a first interview committee which will have 3 board members, 2 CES staff members, and 2 superintendents (1 from each county). Additional search process steps will include possible site visits (depending on the ability to do so with COVID). The finalist(s) will interview with the full board. Dan also provided a list of Cheryl’s responsibilities as she will be working directly for the board in this search process.

Suzanne contributed that her district just hired a superintendent with a virtual hiring process that was very successful. Dan expressed how encouraging this is to hear. She also provided that there were a lot of group meetings/town hall style zoom sessions with teachers, community members and the board. They requested questions be submitted in advance and were addressed in the meeting. Cheryl will connect with Suzanne for more details on how this was executed.

Cheryl gave the board a work plan, with final interviews to take place by the November Board meeting. She welcomed the opportunity to review the Executive Search work plan with the Board members and this was shared virtual on the screen. She drew attention to the targeted timelines bringing attention to the need for a quick turnaround to prepare advertisement materials to be posted by July 4th weekend. The goal is to recruit for 30 days and have the screening committee begin reviewing the applicants in the beginning of August. The next step would be to have candidates screened between 8/24-28 and interviews held 9/7-18. Additional key dates were also addressed.

Mike Knapp inquired if there will be a specific number that will move from the screening phase to the interview process and Bill advised the goal would be to have about 3 candidates move forward.
Laura pointed out there are some grammatical errors in the job description and asked if suggestions were wanted. Dan provided that all suggestions are wanted and requested to be sent by email. It was discussed that LPVEC recently went through a similar hiring process and may be a good option to consult with. Dan offered to connect with Bill Fonseca and Jake Oliveira. He also stressed that this timeline is an outline and plan of how to proceed. It does not prevent input, thoughts, ideas, or the potential for future changes and there is room for flexibility as the search progresses.

Laura provided that she believes it would be helpful for those chosen to be on the search committees to have guiding principles on what is valued by the board prior to the screening with a ranking system. Dan advised they do plan to create a guide. Cheryl explained that we will be using a survey for attributes, challenges, skill sets needed, and will have a priority list of attributes to be used during the screening and interview questioning stages. With pre-planning we can include the board's suggestions and incorporate them into the search process.

Dan proposed that it might be good for the screening committee to also be part of the site visits. Any of the Board members who want to be involved will be able to be in with the multiple stages of the search process. He reminded the members that this is an outline for approval but they are able to amend, change, and adapt as the process is underway. The goal was to be as inclusive as possible but need to have something in place to move forward. He recommended any and all suggestions, thoughts, and ideas be emailed to him and Cheryl.

Concern in regards to the time commitment needed was made.

It was advised that the screening committee will get a packet of candidates that meet the main requirements and given a screening tool with the survey data of attributes important to CES. The committee will have approximately a week to complete their review and narrow down the pool then send their determinations to Cheryl. The screening committee was established with the following volunteers: Carole Bergeron, Don Sluter, Jennifer Mallette, and Suzanne Crawford as an additional or alternate if needed.

The interview committee will be provided interview questions and packets for the candidates moving forward. A pre-planning meeting will be needed to create parameters to keep the integrity of the search. The proposed time frame for this work would be September 7-18. The interview committee was established with the following volunteers: Jonathan Schmidt, Laura Fallon, Dan Hayes, and Carole Bergeron an additional or alternate if needed.

The starting salary for this position was discussed next with Cheryl reporting that according to salary surveys the salary range is between $126,000-$189,600 with a mid-range of $158,000. Discussion was had in regards to these numbers and opinions were expressed that included the feeling that $189K was very high and $120K is really low with the mid-level range being reasonable for the budget size of CES; we also need to keep in mind the complexity of the agency.
In response to questions about how this range compares to the salaries of western MA superintendents, Cherly reported that the Western mass superintendent salaries surveyed were between $130-180K and it varies on the area.

Dan proposed if the superinidents are between $130-180K it seems to fit with the algorithm and perhaps we go with the figures proposed because it is not far off. He asked the members how they felt about the range? The responses included that they felt it is best to listen to the HR professionals, it is best to have a wide range, and the informal consensus was to keep the range and move forward.

The search budget was discussed next and it was shared virtually via screen share. Cheryl provided an explanation of the budget and interest in running the position ad in multiple locations. A few items that are added into the budget are the cost of contingent airfare, possible lodging needs, temporary help for HR, possible travel for site tours, refreshments, legal consults, and relocation assistance package. The budgeted total is expected to be $12,109. Barbara reported that the previous search was $80K. Cheryl provided there is no additional compensation for her work on this search because she plans to utilize other HR staff to assist in covering her time while committing some of her regularly scheduled hours to working on this search. Dan provided the mileage calculation is incorrect and the relocation allotment could be negotiated in the final contract. He suggested that the total be left as is with an informal consus agreeing.

Diversity of the search is important and research has already been done to reach diverse candidates and this includes posting in 7 new areas including diversity-focused job sites, national associations, and education leaders. The goal is to strive for a rich, qualified, and diverse pool.

Dan motioned to approve Cheryl Rogers as ED Hiring Coordinator, approve ED outline of the search process, the work plan timeline, the job description as amended with grammatical errors, a salary of $126,400-$189,600, and a search budget of $12,109

*Jonathan Schmidt moved that the Board approve Cheryl Rogers as ED Hiring Coordinator, approve ED outline of the search process, the work plan timeline, the job description as amended with grammatical errors, a salary of $126,400-$189,600, and a search budget of $12,109 as presented. Carole Bergeron seconded the motion. None opposed and the motion passed.*

*New Hires and Separations May 21st - June 15th (vote required)*

A list of the new hires and separations from May 21st to June 15th were included in the Board packet.

*John Cotton moved that the Board approve the hires and separations from May 21st-June 15th. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. None opposed and the motion passed.*

*Evaluation of the Treasurer (vote required)*
The following documents were included in the Board packet:

FY19 CES Performance Review of the Treasurer

Barbara advised that the evaluation of the treasurer looked remarkably similar to the previous year. There has not been much difference in job functions and performance except that he has been receiving the documentation electronically and it has been going smoothly. Barbara advised he was unable to join this evening’s board meeting but will try to do so in September.

Laura noted the document was dated 2018 and it was agreed this needed to be updated.

Dan asked for a motion to approve the evaluation of the treasurer with the amended date.

Mike Knapp moved that the Board approve the evaluation of the treasurer with the amended date. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. None opposed and the motion passed.

Report on the Boards input into the evaluation of the Director of Finance & Operations

The following document was included in the Board packet:

Board Survey: Evaluation of the Director of Finance and Operations

Bill reported that one responsibility of the board is to provide input on the Director of Finance and Operations evaluation. It was a wonderful tribute to Barbara. The work she has done on the complex budget is commendable. On behalf of the Board, Dan thanked Barbara.

Barbara responded that she has requested to align the board packet with noting the page numbers to the attachments on the agenda.

Executive Director’s Report

A copy of the Executive Director’s report was included in the Board packet.

Bill referenced that the time was 8:59 PM and requested that the Board members read the report and pass it on to their School Committees. Bill will also forward the report to the superintendents. As the report details, CES is keeping very busy and involved during this unprecedented time and he commended the staff for all they are doing.

As the meeting came to a close, Dan thanked all for attending and being a partner in managing CES. He acknowledged the collaboration and participation of the Board members during the meeting. He shared that his role is to guide through the agenda and reminded members that it is their agenda and stated his appreciation for the board’s guidance and corrections.

Adjournment (vote required)

Dan Hayes adjourned the meeting at 9:03 PM.