A new board member orientation meeting was held at 6:00 PM

Attendees present were Karen Reuter, Kelly Hernandez, and Heidi Gutekenst with Dan Hayes joining midway.

Call to Order and Introduce New Members

The Board did a roll call of introductions and a quorum was established.

Dan Hayes called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Dan Hayes welcomed all and spoke about not utilizing the Chat options in order to keep all communications open and inline with the Open Meeting Laws.

Public Comments

Dan Hayes provided his appreciation to all in attendance. He provided recognition that we are all going through challenging times and we want to support students, teachers, schools and the communities. We are all in this together and appreciate everyone’s efforts to navigate through these uncertain times.

Approve Minutes of the November 18, 2020 Board of Directors Meeting & January 19, 2021 Finance Subcommittee. (vote required)

- A copy of the minutes from the 11/18/2020 Board of Directors meeting was included in the Board Packet on pages 2-6.

The Board of Directors’ meeting minutes were approved with the amendment of the meeting called to order time to 6:36 PM and Maureen Nichols being in attendance.

*Don Sluter moved to approve the minutes of the 11/18/2020 Board of Directors meeting. Laura Fallon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Heidi Gutekenst abstained. None opposed and the motion passed.*
A copy of the minutes from the 1/19/2021 Finance Subcommittee meeting was included in the Board Packet on pages 7-8.

Jonathan Schmidt moved to approve the minutes of the 1/19/2021 Finance Subcommittee meeting. Jennifer Mallette seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Heidi Gutekenst abstained. None opposed and the motion passed.

Appointment of Secretary and Authorized Signer (Vote Required)

Dan Hayes advised that this portion of the agenda is a technicality now that Bill Diehl has retired as Executive Director and Karen Reuter is now the Interim Executive Director. For transparency reasons, we are voting to add Karen Reuter to be an authorized signer.

Laura Fallon moved to approve the appointment of Karen Reuter as the Secretary of the Board and, as the Interim Executive Director of the Collaborative for Educational Services, Karen Reuter is authorized, empowered, and directed on behalf of the Collaborative to sign, seal, execute and deliver any and all contracts, agreements and other documents on behalf of the organization, as allowed by law. Gene Stamell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Hires and Separations for 11/16/2020-1/15/2021 (vote required)

- A copy of the hires and separations for the period of 11/16/2020-1/15/2021 were included in the Board Packet on pages 9-10.

Dan Hayes explained the Board of Directors are required to vote to accept the hires and separations.

Don Sluter motioned to approve the hires and separations for the period of 11/16/2020 - 1/15/2021 as presented. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

Heather Hala Lord joined the meeting.

Financial Report  (vote required)

FY21 Statement of Activities and the Change in Fund Balance for the period ending November 30, 2020

- A copy of the report was included in the Board Packet on page 11.

Barbara Siegel took a moment to provide the following updates:

- CES had set a goal to bring in an additional $25,926 of indirect revenue through additional contracts and grants that were not included in the development of the budget. To date, $47,765 of indirect funds have been brought in and is in line with what happens in a traditional year. We are on track having met, and well exceeded the established conservative goal.

- The November numbers are very good with a $33,000 surplus.

- Related Services - for the first time they have broken even for the period ending November 30th. One of the reasons for this is due to a staff member having retired and the position not being refilled. Along with increasing the time charged for the staffs’ time for writing reports and so forth, which was not captured in previous billing.
Mount Tom Academy is on target to break even by the end of the fiscal year.

Professional Development is close to where they were at the end of last fiscal year and we still have 5 months to bring in new business, creating a great trajectory.

Early Childhood’s consulting has a minor loss but seems to be an invoicing timing issue.

Licensure Department is off on their goals in terms of new enrollments being at approximately two-thirds of where they had expected to be at this time and this will create an impact on the budget. There is support in place to review and assist them with navigating this reality.

HEC Academy is also running at a loss due to the inability to meet the budgeted enrollment of 32 students. The current enrollment of 24 students is the reason for the $105,000 loss that is anticipated to increase. There are additional students being reviewed and the hope is that with the distribution of vaccines, there will be space to support additional students in the last quarter of the academic year. There have been many actions to reduce expenses at HEC Academy and every cut possible is being done. Getting students into the classroom is what is needed to reduce this deficit.

There is an expectation that there will be a loss of $500,000 in the Special Education Department by the end of the fiscal year.

COVID continues to impact the budget.

Barbara then drew the Board’s attention to page 11 of the Board Packet, Changes in Fund Balance. She provided a high-level overview of the data provided with a focus on the comparison of last year versus this year.

Dan Hayes provided appreciation for the examples of how and why the numbers are where they are. He explained that all the departments are being looked at and seeking ways that they can modify their trends.

Karen Reuter advised that COVID pandemic has created its challenges but it has also created opportunities which are reflected in the Professional Services area, especially with the need for Social Justice & Equity (SJE) platform work.

The floor was open for discussion and questions that included the following:

Clarification on a comment from the Finance Subcommittee meeting was sought and Barbara explained that currently there is not a lot of enrollment in the Teacher Prep program.

Inquiry was made on the net savings for laid-off individuals and if the contracts allow for those laid off to be hired by member districts seeking to fill a role. Karen Reuter advised that CES has not had many layoffs rather the savings is made by reorganizing the department to not fill the vacant position.

Appreciation for the way CES restructures and collaborates with surrounding communities to navigate the needs that surface.

New practices have been established to benchmark and meet with departments to review the expectations while enlightening many across the agency in the budget process. The goal is to bring knowledge and empower staff to understand the fiscal impact their department has on the budget.
FY21 Adjusted Budget for the period ending November 30, 2020

- A copy of the report was included in the Board Packet on page 12.

Barbara proceeded to review Page 12, the Statement of Activities. The two figures listed are the only additions/changes to the budget in the special revenue. She also reviewed the percentages in the second to last column showing that CES is doing well spending less. The January numbers should show the budget-to-actual is trending closer to the expectations. There were no comments or questions on this report.

*Laura Fallon motioned to accept the adjusted FY21 Statement of Activities, the Change in Fund Balance, and the adjusted budget for the period ending 11/30/2020, as presented. Kyle Belanger seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

FY22 HEC Academy Summer tuition rates, effective July 1, 2021

- A copy of the materials reviewed were included in the Board Packet on page 13-15.

Barbara Siegel brought attention to page 13 of the Board Packet and reviewed the FY22 HEC Academy Summer tuition rates. The budget was built on a 10 student enrollment versus the 18 in years past. The idea is to be conservative with the budget due to COVID while having hope that we will be able to accept more students, in turn adding more staff at various intervals. Last summer a program was developed for students in the program to receive social-emotional services and the plan is to promote this program for this summer as well. The hope is this will help generate more revenue. The budget does not include any occupancy costs because they are charged to the school year students as we would have this cost despite the summer program. The COLA of 2% listed is a holding place marker until the FY22 budget is presented for Board approval of the possible COLA.

The comparison of other programs was reviewed on page 14. Our rates are below the individual averages.

Dan Hayes added that the Finance Subcommittee met and it was interesting to hear from the superintendents at the meeting who recommended approving these rates. The fees need to be released to the districts and the COLA needs to be built in now to be negotiated later. Jennifer Mallette agreed with the rates and the quality of the program is reasonable.

*Laura Fallon motioned to accept the FY22 HEC Academy Summer tuition rates effective 7/1/2021, as presented. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

Building Equitable Support for Children with Disabilities (BESCD) Presentation (*Desiree Lalbeharie-Josias, Emily Koester, Emily Bouvier*)

Karen Reuter welcomed Desiree Lalbeharie-Josias, Early Childhood Director. Who introduced Emily Bouvier and Emily Koester of the Early Childhood team. Emily B. shared her screen while they presented the attached presentation. They briefly reviewed the services they provide with focus on the Building Equitable Support for Children with Disabilities (BESCD). Upon completion of the presentation they fielded comments and questions:

- It was expressed how impressive the work is that goes into these types of programs.

- Hadley has been doing a lot of Antiracism work and introducing these concepts to educators early is so important. Interest in how to bring this to the community and how CES can bring more of this work to the districts.
The scope of work at CES with Social Justice & Equity (SJE) will be considered for a future Board presentation.

Strategic Planning Process Overview Presentation (Josh Moulton of Strategy Matters)

Karen Reuter advised that early last Fall we made a commitment to engage in the strategic planning process despite the leadership changes. After interviewing various groups, CES chose to work with Strategy Matters as they share the same values of inclusion and are able to reflect the broad spectrum of the agency bringing all people to the table to provide input. She proceeded to introduce Josh Moulton, Senior Consultant with Strategy Matters. He shared his screen to present the attached presentation. As he finalized the presentation he advised how the Board can participate and encouraged them to complete the survey and share it with other school committee members. A work group will be developed on a future date. Upon completion of the presentation, comments and questions were taken and included the following:

- The survey referenced was sent out with the Board details and will be re-sent after the link is reviewed for accuracy.

HEC Academy Update (Pedro Gomes)

Karen Reuter introduced Pedro Gomes, Assistant Education Director. He provided the Board with updates on the HEC Academy program, advising they have shifted to a hybrid model with students in-person four days a week in the morning. They also consolidated the in-person learning students to one cohort after many students elected for remote learning. This shift has given them the opportunity to have more touchpoints with high-need students. It also supports the students’ learning because many students struggle with mask fatigue when in full-day in-person, therefore, it allows them to invest and be engaged. It is also challenging due to their reinforcements having limitations in the ability to provide their typical awards due to the community status. There is only one meal time, breakfast, for them to remove their masks, due to lunch being brought home. It has also eliminated the tension for educators to be able to focus on students in-person and remote learning.

Time was taken for comments and questions that included the following:

- What is CES's approach to teachers’ preferences for not being in-person and how is it being handled? Karen advised they seek any appropriate accommodations they may need and the changes that have been made were driven by staff concerns for the special population.

- It was noted that there was a plan but they have been flexible to the needs. Not to mention, knowing and addressing what the services that these students need is impressive.

- Is there a bigger decline in students being present and engaged than prior to COVID? If so, how is it being addressed? It is mixed, some are significantly doing better and some are worse. When a student has not arrived, support staff is reaching out immediately to the student. When that step is ignored, they reach out to the family to proceed with establishing how to support and get them on track. The phases will eventually lead to contacting the district. There are tiered approaches to make sure they are helped socially and emotionally. The team approach to monitoring has been a hallmark of the program and is proving its worth.

Dan Hayes, on behalf of the Board, provided appreciation to Pedro Gomes and the HEC Academy staff. He misses visiting the school and students, as he had in the past.

Executive Director Search Update (Cheryl Rogers)
Dan Hayes explained that Cheryl Rogers is spearheading the search process and it is underway. He reminded the Board of their engagement that was established and approved at the previous meeting. He communicates with Cheryl regularly and requested for her to bring the Board up-to-date on where in the process we are. Cheryl provided that, to date, there have been 89 applications received with a large diversity pool as a result of posting the position in 16 different recruitment avenues. The acceptance of applications will close on 1/31/2021. It is also finalizing time of assigning staff members to the screening and interviewing committees along with establishing superintendent participation. The hope is to finalize these placements and the goal is to start screening the candidates the first two weeks of February. Then, moving finalists to the interview committee with hosting the interviews the last week of February and beginning of March. She welcomed questions and comments that included:

- Part of Cheryl’s role is to review the 89 candidates to make sure they meet the established criteria before moving to the screening committee.

- The diverse applicant pool is due to intentional efforts that were put into the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) recruitment and retention plan that was previously established and the avenues that provide a platform that draws diverse candidates in line with our mission and values. For this search, they looked at local, regional, statewide, national associations, networking associations, and what our colleagues were doing. They navigated who is drawing diverse candidates and posted on an additional 20 platforms for our typical avenues. It has provided an excellent variety that stayed within the approved budget. The position was also brought to two job fairs where they were recruiting for teachers and ran this position alongside of it. An analysis of the outcomes will be done.

Dan Hayes provided his appreciation that the internal functions are practicing what they preach.

**DESE Approval of Annual Audit and Annual Report status**

Karen Reuter advised the Board that in November they presented the Annual Report and Audit. We then moved to submit them in an appropriate timeline. It is common that it will take some time to receive official approval. Our intention is to provide you with a status update that the response is still pending. This length of time is typical.

**Interim Executive Director’s Report (Karen Reuter)**

- A copy of the Interim Executive Director’s report was included in the Board Packet on pages 16-31.

Karen Reuter took the time to provide some highlights to a couple of items. She started with the advocacy role that CES plays for their member districts. Recently, there has been work with Senator Comerford around enrollment decreases over the past that have a potentially devastating impact on district budgets, due to parents concerns around safety and exposure resulting in non-enrollment. A letter has been drafted, signed by many superintendents, and will be moved along and presented. She also mentioned that Bill Erickson, on behalf of CES, has been hosting the Connecticut Valley Superintendent Roundtable for a number of years. They have drafted a letter to move educators up in the vaccine protocol. The Human Services Forum Legislative Breakfast will be attended by CES and will be bringing talking points of the most pressing issues with them.

The highlights of the Annual Report have been summarized in the flyer found in the Board Packet on pages 32-35. It captures the numbers that our programs impact and serve. The goal will be to continue to bring forward presentations of the work that CES is doing.

Karen also provided the news that a new remote program expanding into West Springfield, a non-member district, has requested that CES design and implement a pay-for-service After School
program in all their elementary schools. We are always looking for new opportunities and fine tuning
to make them relevant and responsive. The floor was opened to questions and comments that
include the following:

- What is the percentage of services provided to non-districts? The bulk is to member
districts and is our primary goal. The percentage will need to be calculated and provided.

- Thanks for the superintendent letter and asked what outcomes are being hoped for from
the advocacy. The goal is to communicate and convey the lost revenue in Western Mass
districts. If the revenue is lost and the students return, districts will not be appropriately
staffed. The goal for Senator Comerford is to get before the education chairs to start having
a more broad conversation across the state. The Massachusetts Superintendents
Association started looking at this on 11/1; across the state, the decreased numbers are
alarming.

- The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) had their retreat over the
weekend and it was learned that the census on which funding is based was down 3-4%.
Representative Alice Peisch, Chair of the Joint Committee on Education was in attendance
and stated that she believes it is a speculative problem and will not propose using historical
data. Instead, they will use actual headcounts and adjust later if necessary. This statement
was made very publicly and there needs to be a lot of advocacy in response.

- SPIFFY (Strategic Planning Initiative for Families & Youth; now Healthy Families &
Communities) data has been utilized significantly and it was asked what measurements
and data will be used. This will be rolled out in March as there are some logistical issues
being ironed out. These surveys typically cycle every couple of years with a plan being
navigated.

Questions on acronyms:

- SSoS - State System of Support
- MTCP - Massachusetts Tobacco and Cessation Program
- TALP/VALP - Reflects different areas in the ways students are organized in HEC Academy
(Transitional/Vocational Alternative Learning Program)

Topics of Board Interest

Student Opportunity Act (SOA) and what is the most effective way to address it. Karen advised she
would happily keep the group informed on details that develop with funding. Request to keep an ear
out for the details on the Charter School shortfall. Laura and Karen will stay connected.

Consideration for advocacy regarding MCAS testing for this year and next within the rural areas with
lack of access and internet. This reality is having a huge impact on education. The Massachusetts
Association of School Committees (MASC) has an outline that can be used as a draft to submit this
concern. CES is strongly advocating at the state level that MCAS needs to be face-to-face and not
remote along with additional monies to fund this.

Legislative issue and relieve rural districts of the retirement liability insurance to move the costs to the
state proportional to the district size.

A suggestion was made to consider alternate ways for the members to meet to chat in an
unconference style to communicate their school committee challenges and solicit some solutions.
Support was provided for this idea. Dan will look into this and how it may affect Open Meeting Law
guidelines. There was discussion that the head of MASC, Glen Koocher, could be a source of support
for the idea.
Adjournment

Dan adjourned the meeting at 9:13 PM.