Present from the Board: Denise Storm, Brigid O’Riordan, Dan Hayes, Humera Fasihuddin, Jennifer Mallette, Barbara Doyle, John Cotton, Jonathan Schmidt, Laura Fallon, Matt Wilhelm, Maureen Nichols, Heidi Gutekenst, Christy Boudreau, Keith McFarland, Steve Sullivan, Julianne Tauscher

Present from CES: Karen Reuter, Sarah Molloy, Sherry Smith, Pedro Gomes, Safire DeJong, Romina Pacheco, Cheryl Rogers, Barbara Siegel, Kathy Levesque, Angela Burke, Art Scott, Isolda Ortega-Bustamante

A new board member orientation meeting was held at 6:00 PM
Attendees present were Karen Reuter, Sarah Molloy, and Brigid O’Riordan.

Call to Order and Introductions – Board Chair Dan Hayes
Dan Hayes called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM.

Public Comment
Dan Hayes mentioned the caucus / presentation about equity and inclusion that he attended. If you had an opportunity to see it, it was phenomenal.
Humera Fasihuddin mentioned the presentation she attended about equity and school funding. There will be a recording that she’d be happy to share. It was shocking to look at per pupil disparity on spending. She would like to consider how to lend support to less wealthy communities to narrow the equity issue.

Approve Minutes of January 27, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting & March 23, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes (Vote Required)

- A copy of the minutes of the January 27, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting was included in the Board packet on pages 2-9.

Dan Hayes noted if you were not in attendance that does not mean you need to vote or abstain.

Jonathan Schmidt moved to approve the minutes of the 1/27/21 Board of Directors meeting. Heidi Gutekenst seconded the motion.
Laura Fallon proposed an amendment to the minutes on page 8 to read: “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."

Laura Fallon moved to approve the minutes of the 1/27/21 Board of Directors meeting as amended. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

- A copy of the minutes of the March 23, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting was included in the Board packet on pages 53-56.

Laura Fallon moved to approve the minutes of the 3/23/21 Finance Committee meeting. Jennifer Mallettee seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

**CES Presentation: Social Justice and Equity (SJE) - Safire DeJong and Romina Pacheco**

Karen Reuter introduced Safire DeJong and Romina Pacheco.

Safire and Romina shared the slidedeck with the group and began their presentation.

- A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.

Kathy Levesque joined the meeting.

Cheryl Rogers joined the meeting.

Pedro Gomes joined the meeting.

Upon completion of the presentation they fielded comments and questions:

- Dan Hayes thanked them and their team for bringing awareness and learning experiences for all. He mentioned he attended both SJE conferences at Holyoke Community College and Easthampton High School. He appreciated the youth-centered approach and thought both were phenomenal.

- Dan also noted that due to time constraints they had to do a short presentation, but asked the Board to consider all of their work, such as supporting the Executive Director search in garnering a diverse pool of candidates and the team redacting information that could lead to revealing age, gender, or race. The team narrowed the pool from 80 to 12 candidates based primarily on skills and life experiences. He thinks what they’re talking about is practiced here.

- Humera Fasihuddin thanked them for their presentation and serving as a resource for their districts. She shared a website, hadleylearns.com, with the group and mentioned that their next meeting (History of US Housing Discrimination) will be their biggest as they’ve opened it up to surrounding communities.
Humera brought up coaching teachers on good equitable pedagogy and about practices they have been accustomed to that exclude children or don’t foster connection between all types of students. She asked about providing resources to districts about this. Safire responded that they do coaching and professional development that leads to coaching and have worked with districts to build district scorecards so they are able to do their own audit in order to build that resource from within the district.

Humera offered talking with them about the work they’ve done in higher education.

Laura Fallon brought up that as school committee members they are constantly asked to weigh in and take sides in state assessments, whether they should be looking at different systems than MCAS and whether there are impediments or it’s to the benefit of underserved students. It’s a complicated issue and hard to know what to advocate for from a civil rights perspective and what’s best from a social justice perspective. When talking about moratorium or a new system what does a socially just system look like? She asked Safire and Romina if they have any resources or can think about addressing in the future. Romina responded that they haven’t directly done work on that recently, but have thoughts about it informed by familiarity with data that other folks have done. They don’t have anything at their fingertips, but they’re happy to follow-up. Dan suggested perhaps connecting with Division 10 and reaching out to Romina and Safire as far as training or information.

Safire DeJong and Romina Pacheco left the meeting.

HEC Academy & Mount Tom Update - Sherry Smith, Pedro Gomes, and Karen Reuter

Dan Hayes welcomed Sherry Smith and Pedro Gomes.

Sherry informed the Board that recently we’ve had up to seven kids for in-person and on a hybrid schedule of 4 days a week in the mornings and then back online from home for the afternoon. That’s been going very well for those who are able to attend school. They’re hoping to have all kids return on May 3rd. They have 23 students enrolled as one just moved out east so we are down one. They have ten students who would like to return to in-person and eleven who have chosen to stay remote. The decision was made either by the family or by the student themself because they are an adult. They have two on the fence who they think will land on not returning to school.

Pedro expressed to the Board that actually going into a class and seeing it is pretty amazing. Some classes are way more successful than others. It’s a sea of black icons or cameras pointed to the ceiling. What teachers are doing to engage the students though is amazing. It’s a totally new skillset. They try not to be monotone, use intonation, polls, the raise hand feature, monitor chat, and support staff reaching out to students via text if they take too long on breaks. It’s different classroom management and he is very pleased with our teachers and the work they’ve been putting in. Sherry added that she is very proud as well. She’s also gotten positive feedback from families about how much reaching out they’re doing.

Dan brought up that several months ago it was a difficult job as members of the Board to open the school and there were concerns about safety. He’s happy to see things have worked out and there was a lot of effort to create a safe environment. He also recognized the need for students to have
this connection and appreciates the efforts they put in. He asked if there have been any thoughts about a committee at HEC Academy. He’s not sure if that is something that might be helpful to have people at the school level make policies. Karen Reuter noted that there is a leadership team amongst the staff where they have the opportunity to offer input. Sherry noted that the team consists of herself, Pedro Gomes, Tones Smith, two special educators, and a reading specialist. They meet weekly to discuss topics that arise in the school and their student council is very active - they have projects that bubble up to leadership. Karen added that they also introduced a metrics team that monitors statistics and positivity rates and did invite teacher representation in order to do just what Dan suggested so staff feel they have a voice at the table. One of the greater strengths at HEC Academy is the relationships and the personal care and attention the students get at HEC Academy and that’s a testament to the team’s commitment.

Karen proceeded to update the Board regarding Mount Tom Academy. They have been in person all year and were beginning to welcome more students to return in person. The Commissioner has advised that parents/families still have the choice to remain remote.

_Jonathan Schmidt left the meeting._

Dan thanked everyone for their work.

_Pedro Gomes left the meeting._

**Hires and Separations for 1/16/2021-3/15/2021 (Vote Required)**

- A copy of the hires and separations for 1/16/2021-3/15/2021 was included in the packet on pages 57-58.

Dan Hayes explained that it is a collaborative rule that the Board needs to approve the hires and separations.

_Laura Fallon moved to approve the hires and separations for the period of 1/16/2021-3/15/2021 as presented. Jennifer Mallette seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously._

**Financial Report - Barbara Siegel (Votes Required)**

- A copy of the Changes in Fund Balance and Statement of Activities for the period ending 1/31/21 was included in the packet on pages 59-60.

Barbara Siegel directed the Board to the Changes in Fund Balance document on page 59 and drew their attention to the lower part of the page, noting that she will start there and go up. She provided the following updates:

- Looking at the net change since the last Board meeting through Jan. 31st and as compared to last January, overall it’s a great improvement in the situation since last year. The major change would be a reduction as compared to last year, but we’re still looking at a deficit.
- There is a $13,500 deficit in Shared Services (Operations and Business Development) and she is really pleased it’s at this point. Departments have worked hard on controlling spending and bringing in revenue. We have had very good results as a result of those
efforts. Otherwise we would have seen a much larger deficit in the Operations area. She is anticipating landing somewhere around $150,000 in deficit in Operations and Business Development from the original deficit of $643,000, which is quite a lot of correction.

- In Birth to Age 22 there is a large deficit of about $201,000, which is a concerning number. As compared to last year, they are in a much better position when looking at what’s coming in and going out of the organization.
- This deficit includes a small deficit of $6,000 in Early Childhood.
- Related Services are doing quite well with a $12,000 shortfall currently. The Academy did have a small surplus of $15,000 so that helps offset the Related Services shortfall. The number is likely to grow a bit, but considering COVID and the late start getting services in order with districts, that’s a positive trend with Related Services, which has been difficult to maintain a positive number in past years.
- Mt. Tom has a small shortfall of about $5,000. The staff must do a great job because we have two students who graduated early so we did lose those months of revenue.
- The big number is around HEC Academy with a deficit of $198,000 but to put that in perspective, that is equivalent to three non-member district tuitions. While its difficult for her to come to them with deficits it’s understandable during COVID that they’re looking at this number.
- She is pleased that Professional Services and Grants and Contracts have revenue to cover their expenses to date.

Barbara then asked if anyone had any questions. Dan also wanted to mention that Jen Mallette and himself are on the Finance Committee. There are also superintendents on the committee and Rick Martin was in attendance during this past meeting. They do spend a little more time and go in-depth on these numbers during those meetings. Dan asked if Jen had any comments or anything to mention. Jen added that they didn’t talk about it here, but the committee went into how the CES leadership team works together to figure out how to decrease costs.

Barbara added that with students potentially coming back to the classroom we do have an opportunity that we may be able to accept additional students, which would help offset these shortfalls in both Mt. Tom and HEC Academy.

Barbara then drew the Board’s attention to the Statement of Activities document on page 60 and shared the following updates. She mentioned that this report looks at what’s going on in the specific period and how we’re doing for the budgeted time and what the changes to the budget are.

- Looking at the “Changes to Date to Budget” column, in Operations and Business Development, we have reduced the amount of revenue we anticipate bringing in and reduced expenditures that we plan to have. There is $160,000 less revenue but $450,000 less expenditures so that’s a $290,000 swing.
- In terms of reduced revenue, there are several projects we have on the books that are going to be deferred as we don’t have time to complete them this fiscal year. We are not losing the money, just deferring it to next fiscal year.
- For some programs, we won’t be able to spend down their funding and therefore we will not be able to collect that indirect.
• Reducing expenditures is made up of some salary reductions from changes in staff, such as hiring someone at lower cost or when Bill retired and Karen took over there was savings there since we don’t have two positions at the same time for a period.
• The savings in fringe are based on the fact that we have to budget for our HRA support we provide with health insurance. Everyone who has an HMO plan has access, but it only goes into effect when someone taps their insurance. We have some in reserve we don’t think we’ll spend. We don’t start to see that until this time of year and based on the current trend, we’re able to reduce expected cost.
• The office supplies line item was trimmed before, but we’re also seeing further reduction. We didn’t have to spend as much in COVID supplies and did not move forward on some projects with consulting costs.
• For depreciation, the full figure was in there when we initially set-up the budget, but we made a modification in how we’re looking at this so there are some savings there.
• Some COVID capital expenditures have not happened yet. We’ve done a lot, but one thing that won’t happen until next fiscal year is the front door being converted to hands-free.
• We have some other reduced line items such as utility, advertising, and staff development as there are a lot of free and online options.

Barbara asked the Board if there were any questions and there were none so she continued in the same column, but under Special Revenue.

• Birth to Age 22 has a change of an additional $36,000 of revenue and corresponding expenses.
• Professional Services has a change of about $212,000 due to some new grants and contracts that came in.
• After School has a new grant they received.
• SPED received an increase in a nursing grant and an additional nursing grant and a small SPED improvement grant.
• Professional Services received an early literacy grant that we’ve had for at least 15 years if not longer, but this is the latest we’ve received it.
• It’s a $0 balance so there are no deficits in special revenue. Anything not spent either goes back to funder or deferred.

Barbara asked if there were any questions and there were not so she continued to the far right column illustrating the percentages.

• In every case the revenue and expenditures are running neck-and-neck and that’s good.
• In Birth to Age 22 it’s less than one percent and everywhere else the revenue and expenditures are either even or revenue is running ahead of expenses ever so slightly. That’s really good.
• We continue to watch our budgets very closely and are monitoring spending. We have a team of people reviewing everything in Salesforce to make sure we capture every possible revenue and get it billed out to the folks using our services.
• We can see the effect COVID has had especially in school settings.
• We have reaped the benefits in remote work in that it has reduced expenses in facilities and travel.
• For indirect, we had a goal to earn just shy of $26,000 of new indirect to support the Shared Services budget. Through last week we have received $61,000 of additional
indirect from when we initially budgeted. That is an increase of $14,000 from the last report she gave the Board.

- While overall she doesn’t like presenting deficits, it’s evidence of the work we’re doing to get as close to a balanced budget as we can.
- She would like to reserve the opportunity to potentially come back in May to discuss a COLA, but she is not prepared to do that yet.

Barbara asked if there were questions. Dan noted that an increase in indirect equates to a lot of grants so that’s a lot of work and effort from a team of people to get new business, which has brought new revenue. Even amidst a pandemic when we’re looking at cutting costs we’re also looking at opportunities to increase revenue so he appreciates all the work everyone is putting in.

Jennifer Mallette motioned to accept the adjusted FY21 Statement of Activities, the Change in Fund Balance, and the adjusted budget for the period ending 1/31/2021, as presented. Laura Fallon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

**Executive Director Search Update - Cheryl Rogers**

Dan Hayes introduced Cheryl Rogers and the topic. He mentioned that doing this Executive Director search in-house, although the Board has given parameters in terms of budget, the cost of doing it in-house is substantially less than going outside the agency and hiring a consulting firm, which is what we did last time. He believed it was around $80,000, which Barbara Siegel confirmed. Dan appreciates all of the work Cheryl is doing.

Sherry Smith left the meeting.

Earlier in March the screening committee completed their review and made recommendations. On March 17th the interview committee started scheduling interviews. The goal for completing interviews is on April 9th so we are very close to the final weeks of the interview process. After that the interview committee will meet to make a decision and select candidates to move forward. The hope is to shoot for a full day virtual event for the candidates to meet staff, have small interviews with departments, and participate in a town hall for a question and answer session that will be open to the entire CES workforce. The goal is to record that process so people can view and provide feedback at a later date if they can’t attend. We are on track and hoping to send out the save the dates and engage staff in the process. Then we will select a date in May to have a full Board interview.

Dan wanted to make sure the Board understands that the role of the Board is to hire the Executive Director so they have a very big responsibility. As we get closer to the date, they will talk about it more and will have more information about the candidates that end up being moved forward. He added that the experience in working with Cheryl has been phenomenal. She has been very open and transparent and pleasant to work with. She’s done a great job of really engaging each committee in order for the committees to be a part of the process to ensure things run smoothly and efficiently. So far this process has been very good. He also wants to recognize and appreciate not only those who were part of the screening committee, but also those on the interview committee -
Screening Committee Members: CES Board members Suzanne Crawford, Don Sluter and Jennifer Mallette; CES staff members Isolda Ortega-Bustamante, Director of Development, and Romina Pacheco, Social Justice & Equity Specialist; Hadley Superintendent, Dr. Annie McKenzie; and former board member, Cathy Englehardt.

First Interview Committee Members: CES Board members Jonathan Schmidt, Laura Fallon and Dan Hayes; CES staff members Albert E. Johnson-Mussad, Leadership and Instruction Continuous Improvement Specialist, and Darnell Thigpen Williams, Associate Director of DYS Professional Development; and Easthampton Superintendent, Dr. Allison LeClair.

Laura Fallon added that the process has been great and she appreciates Cheryl’s leadership on this. We’ve been really lucky to get so many great candidates and she expects that it will be a tough decision. Dan added that the screening committee narrowed the number of candidates down from 80 to 12 so the interview committee is interviewing 12 candidates. It’s a lot of time and effort so he appreciates what everyone is doing to move this process along in a fair, equitable, and just way.

Memo from Local 509 SEIU - Dan Hayes

- A copy of the 509 Petition to the CES Board dated 3/3/21 was included in the Board packet on pages 61-62
- A copy of the Statement to the Board on the SEIU Memo from Karen Reuter was included in the Board packet on page 63

Karen Reuter noted that CES is a subcontractor of the DYS contract. Dan added that it’s a very complicated setup as it’s contractual through the state and state sets parameters so we don’t have a lot of flexibility in how employees are paid. We’ve tried to advocate for them and work with them in terms of different ways to set up their contracts to make the positions more appealing for longevity.

Karen added that the SEIU represents both employees who work under SEIS as well as DYS and those are different funders. So as Dan referenced, it’s kind of complicated having two funding sources and membership through one contract because it doesn’t guarantee that both funders will agree on the approach.

Dan said overall, they wanted to let them know that CES is doing everything in their power to support students and staff. He asked if there were any questions and there were none.

Board Communications through CES Gmail Accounts - Dan Hayes

Dan mentioned that there are phishing scams where people go onto an organization’s website and find their list of directors and officers. In this case there have been scams using Dan’s name. He would never do that. There are a few ways we can go about this. One is to be aware. There are all kinds of phishing schemes so he asks that the Board be aware of them. He does not send out a lot of correspondence and generally it goes through CES on his behalf. He does that for a number of reasons - it protects you and it keeps a record of the communication. He spoke with Mike Maticke, the Director of Technology, and an option is for Board members to set up their own CES email.
accounts. He believes many people have email accounts through their school committee. If anyone is interested they can set it up with Mike.

Art Scott left the meeting.

**Strategic Planning: Board Focus Group - Karen Reuter**

Karen reminded the Board that during our last meeting Josh Moulton from Strategy Matters joined to give an overview of the approach they are using. What we would like to do is get Board input on key questions in order to inform the plan itself. Strategy Matters is offering two dates: April 6th and 13th. Sarah did send a heads up so perhaps we could answer questions and at least give you those dates. It may not be possible for everyone to join, but we would like to choose one of those dates where we can get the greatest level of participation. It would be facilitated by Strategy Matters. We think they’re doing an awesome job. Dan asked Sarah to send out a poll to see which dates would be best. This is all part of the strategic planning process and he thinks it’s very important so being a part of the process would be great. Karen then let the Board know that we will have additional dates coming up for larger SWOT analysis and bigger group events so we’ll make sure to get those out to the Board as well.

**12. Interim Executive Director’s Report - Karen Reuter**

- A copy of the Interim Executive Director’s report was included in the Board packet on pages 64 - 89

Karen acknowledges that this is a long and dense report so she’s going to highlight a few things that are in the report and a few that didn’t make it in the report. She is also happy to answer any questions.

- There was a question about the prevention needs assessment so she wanted to let them know that it is happening.
- She tried to lift up in her introduction the presentations that the Board would have access to. Sarah Lusardi did a powerpoint that is very interesting. The Communications team did a blog on Amherst mobile market. The Healthy Hampshire team is doing really awesome walking welcome routes.
- Strong Foundations for Young Children will be having a fundraiser at Broadside bookstore.
- Most recently, we submitted a DYS proposal. It is a massive endeavor to put together a proposal of that scope and size. The narrative is 50 pages and you can imagine the appendices. It’s one of our most significant funding sources - almost $16 million annually and the indirect is vital to the organization’s stability so she wanted to give kudos to our team. Isolda Ortega-Bustamante added that there are 500 plus pages of appendices.
- United Way is supporting the After School department for a $40,000 endorsement for our Palmer program, which is one of our older programs.
- She wanted to mention declining enrollment for school districts. She thanked Sarah Molloy as we put together at the end of the report a snapshot of 6 districts that declining enrolment would impact. We did it for all of our schools but presented the samples.
One Board member had requested the list of sites that Cheryl Rogers and her team used for more diverse outreach, which is also at the end of the report.

Karen wanted to give kudos to the Operational Continuity Team, a group facilitated by Kathy Levesque. It was designed originally to continue operations, such as payroll, when we went remote. It has since morphed into a critically thinking group to manage the deficit and Barbara Siegel is amazing in leading and providing that data. At the same time, we are expanding programs and new revenues coming in.

In terms of superintendents, we continue to host weekly meetings, which have been helpful for superintendents to process demands from the commissioner and sort through all of the challenges they’re facing.

The Connecticut Valley Superintendents Roundtable (CVSR) is another group that we host that represents Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties. She thought it was interesting that Laura Fallon method MCAS testing because that group is working on letters to request a stop on testing this year. Laura’s question was about how effective those tests are and how do we understand the needs of at-risk students or those who might be of the global majority. She’s excited we might be able to follow up on this.

In regards to the DYS proposal, Isolda added that the DYS team and Rebecca Lincoln worked on the budget, and Lauren Parent on graphic design and all were fantastic in all of the work required on the application.

Dan thanked Isolda and the team.

Dan is hoping that reading through the report the Board will see districts being mentioned and what CES is doing to support those districts. He highlighted the testimonial from Mt. Tom families, encouraging the Board to read those. DYS is also doing a racial trauma conference on April 12th and this year the DYS art show is going to be virtual. He has gone to Boston to see the art show in the past and it’s incredible, but he thinks it’s even more amazing that it’s crafted by individuals who used art to help their own healing process and transform themselves into the people they want to be. He thinks it’s remarkable and when we think of the Collaborative you still don’t realize the breadth and depth of what they do, not only locally throughout the state but all over the country. He also thought the Design Thinking work was amazing – a person from South Hadley who designed a tent like housing solution for runaways.

Karen answered a question about the innovative pathways program, explaining it’s a program sponsored by DESE and is about Baker’s expansion of what success can look like for students and that there are alternative pathways other than college. So the innovation pathways program follows that thinking and the idea that career readiness is an option. It’s exposing students to those opportunities.

### Topics of Board Interest

Laura Fallon mentioned that a couple years ago Easthampton had a similar issue as them - their middle school ran into a problem where students were using the confederate flag as a background on Zoom. There was a question whether that falls under freedom of speech and it got kicked up nationally. They now have an upset community, but they also had a Facebook page that started that was promoting the JFK white student union. It turns out, once the police got involved, that it was a white supremacist group trying to recruit their middle school students. They brought out the
Attorney General and FBI to talk to their students. They've spent time and money on how to address whether you can ban symbols and which rise to the level of hate symbols and to look at policies in Massachusetts. There weren't really any other policies, just a temporary ban in Easthampton and a dress policy. The state of Oregon ran into a similar problem and the Board of Education banned them statewide and issued an immediate decree that each district had to put together a mandatory policy. So they turned to their legislation and apparently there is a bill that Senator Comeford and others have signed on. She wants them to be aware if this occurs in their districts it's a tough problem and wishes it be addressed statewide. Districts are differently resourced and a student shouldn’t feel unsafe just because a committee isn't willing or able to look into banning symbols or have the social capital to get their legislatures on board. If it interests them, she hopes they can support the bill and she will be meeting with legislatures to see if it can be expanded upon to include districts.

Dan asked if she could send us something with more information and how they could get involved. He knows it's a topic of interest and glad she brought it forward. The role of CES in terms of advocacy is in terms of providing data. It's great CES isn't pushing for certain data, but providing information and data to help people determine what is best.

*Jonathan Schmidt joined the meeting.*

Humera shared a link with the Board: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cJxPqT1d7hBePW5BDZ9jSo1ibtykDa5C/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cJxPqT1d7hBePW5BDZ9jSo1ibtykDa5C/view?usp=sharing)

**Adjournment**

Dan thanked everyone for attending and doing what they do to support their school and staff. The meeting adjourned at 8:27 PM.