Collaborative for Educational Services
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
June 23, 2021 at 6:30 - 9:00 PM
(Approved)

Join Zoom Meeting: https://collaborative.zoom.us/j/81590443907
Meeting ID: 815 9044 3907

Present from the Board: Dan Hayes, John Cotton, Mike Knapp, Cathy Englehardt, Stephen Sullivan, Denise Storm, Matt Wilhelm, Don Sluter, Jonathan Schmidt, Suzanne Crawford, Jen Mallette, Maureen Nichols, Heather Hala Lord

Present from CES: Karen Reuter, Sarah Molloy, Sherry Smith, Barbara Siegel, Kathy Levesque, Angela Burke

Call to Order and Introductions - Dan Hayes

Dan Hayes called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM. Dan noted that we have some housekeeping to do and then if we have a quorum by the approval of minutes, we will have the Board vote, if not then the executive committee will vote.

Public Comment

Tom Grover made a short statement regarding the salaries of DYS and SEIS teachers and the one-time acknowledgment and appreciation payment on the agenda.

Don Sluter commented that we have heard these concerns over the years and would like to better understand the issue.

Maureen Nichols and Angela Burke joined the meeting.

Approve Minutes of May 19th, 2021 Board of Directors Executive Director Interviews, May 26th, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting, and June 15th, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting

- A copy of the minutes were included in the Board packet: May 19th, 2021 Board of Directors Executive Director Interviews on page 3, the May 26th, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting on pages 4-15, and the June 15th, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting on pages 16-18.

Mike Knapp motioned to approve the minutes of the May 19th, 2021 Board of Directors Executive Director Interviews, May 26th, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting, and June 15th, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting. Don Sluter seconded the motion.

Dan asked if there were any amendments to the minutes and there were none.
A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.

**Hires and Separations for 5/16/2021-6/15/2021**

- A copy of the hires and separations report for 5/16/2021-6/15/2021 was included in the Board packet on pages 19-20.

*Jen Mallette motioned to approve the hires and separations for 5/16/2021-6/15/2021. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

**Executive Director Onboarding - Cheryl Rogers**

Dan shared that Cheryl Rogers was unable to make it this evening so Karen Reuter shared an update on the Executive Director onboarding. Karen shared with the Board that Cheryl Rogers, Sarah Molloy, and herself have planned out the first month and are making sure Dr. Gazda meets with all of the Cabinet members individually. It is structured so he meets with the Cabinet in the early days. Sarah did research and read through Todd Gazda’s entry plan and we are trying to leave room for meetings he wanted to have, including with external stakeholders. We will be linking any documents we feel he might need to get up to speed on the organization in the plan itself.

Dan added the HR team is very dedicated to this process. There is lots of thought and planning that is going into this and Cheryl and her team have been very diligent in providing a good plan. Dan and Laura will meet with Dr. Gazda as well and will do everything in our power to make the transition smooth.

Dan thanked Karen for her hard work and maintaining the duties and responsibilities for the Deputy Director position as well as Interim Executive Director. It’s been running smoothly and he thanked her for her dedication to different duties and responsibilities.

**Appointment of Secretary and Authorized Signer**

*Mike Knapp motioned to approve, as of July 1st 2021, the appointment of Todd Gazda as the Secretary of the Board and, as the incoming Executive Director of the Collaborative for Educational Services, Todd Gazda will be 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. Don Sluter seconded the motion.*

Dan asked if there were any questions or a discussion. There were none.

*A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*
Financial Report - Barbara Siegel

- A copy of the financials for the period ending in 4/30/21 was provided in the packet on pages 21-22, the FY22 Budget and FY22 Rates on pages 23-40, and the FY22 Finance Committee Schedule on page 41.

She explained that things look very good. She pointed the Board to the Changes in Fund Balance on page 21 and gave the following highlights:

- As compared to the prior year, while we have lower revenue and lower expenditure, overall we’re in a much better position.
- The bottom of the page shows the net change. Our Shared Services (Operations & Business Development) are showing a $115K surplus at April 30th, compared to a $5K deficit at this time last year.
- Birth to Age 22, while they have a deficit at April 30th, it’s still an improved position compared to last year’s much larger deficit.
- Professional Services has the largest swing, having been at an $88K deficit last year, showing a $138K surplus at this time.
- The agency overall is at a $35K surplus on April 30th.

Barbara reminded everyone that this is a picture of a moment in time and does not express where we’re going to wind up. She previously had anticipated the deficit would be around $450K. Currently she thinks it will be closer to $300K. There is potential we could even possibly reduce that to get a balanced budget. There are still a lot of PD contracts remaining in Salesforce. Her colleagues will review Salesforce and check that the work is complete so we can bill for it.

Related Services, which has been running a deficit for several years, will likely end up with a $70K deficit. HEC Academy had been anticipating a $350K deficit but significantly reduced expenditures, reducing the deficit to $250K, the equivalent to about 4 students. Mt. Tom will have a very small deficit. Early Childhood will break even. After School will have a small surplus. Overall, for Birth to Age 22 she is anticipating around a $300,000 deficit, but again there is plenty of opportunity for this to change for the better.

Licensure, including SEI Endorsement, is slated to be at a deficit of $72K, R&E a surplus of $11K, Healthy Families & Communities a deficit of $20K, and Professional Development a $125K surplus. Combined, Professional Services looks to end the year with a $44K surplus.

Barbara explained that she wishes she was able to report more definitively, but the way our business works we don’t get to recognize our revenue until the work is complete. We have work that takes place right up until the end of the year. For example, if specialists are not able to meet with students we will not be able to collect that revenue but we won’t know that until the year is over.
Barbara then reviewed the Statement of Activities on page 22. We were able to cut expenses to balance the Shared Services budget while the Birth to Age 22 and Professional Services budgets still have deficit budgets.

Barbara brought the Board’s attention to the column labeled “FY21 Changes to Date to Budget” and noted that in Special Revenue, Professional Services increased their budget by $292K with a $200K Facebook grant and several others totalling $92K. The DYS grant decreased by $300K due to the funder’s request that we return lapse funds from unfilled teaching positions.

Barbara asked if there were any questions and there were none.

*Jen Mallette motioned to accept the 4/30/21 financials and FY21 adjusted budget as presented. Suzanne Crawford seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

Barbara then explained that last month she presented the FY22 budget, which included all of our tuition and fee for service rates. Legislation and the CES agreement require the Board to take a month to consider the proposal before voting on it. She asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

*Jen Mallette motioned to accept the FY22 budget and rates, as reviewed during the May 2021 meeting. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

Regarding the approval of the 2% one-time acknowledgement and appreciation payment, Barbara explained that it does not apply to the union staff because they already received a COLA for FY21 which the rest of the agency has not yet received. The union staff received a COLA that was added to their base salary thus carrying forward into the next fiscal year. The one-time payment to non-union staff is not added to the base salary and so they will be at the prior year’s salary for the new fiscal year.

Jen shared with the Board that the Finance Committee agreed they wanted to make it equal for everyone and since there are those who get a guaranteed raise they agreed that the people who are not a part of that COLA should also receive an increase. Dan added that there were also some conversations about retention. Jen said they also looked at it for morale purposes and that they want to think about ways to maintain staff so there isn’t a high turnover. Dan concluded that their other thought was making sure in the future to make mechanisms to build a COLA into the budget.

Mike Knapp asked a question about how many non-union employees were eligible for this so Barbara gave an estimate of 200. He then asked if they will get a COLA applied to their 2021 paychecks. Barbara explained that for the union members who received a 2% COLA they received it as retroactive about 6 weeks ago and then that carried forward in their pay for the rest of the year and it’s in place July 1st. If they negotiate for a COLA for FY22 then that would
be applied at that time. Mike asked for clarification that the non-union employees did not have a 
COLA. Barbara said that is correct because we started with a deficit budget. FY21 and FY22 
are the first two years where we did not build a COLA into the budget. Coming to the Board with 
a deficit budget is also a precedent she had not experienced before. Dan added that we were 
being fiscally conservative and careful and if we can’t afford it at the end of year then we won’t 
ask for it. Because it's a little brighter right now we are asking for this.

*Jen Mallette motioned to provide a 2% one-time acknowledgment and appreciation payment to 
all eligible non-union employees. Mike Knapp seconded the motion.*

Mike noted that he finds it helpful to see proposed salaries for the coming year, whether 
aggregate or down to certain lines along with the percent increases. That kind of nitty gritty can 
really help with knowing what's going on. Barbara said she will make a note to discuss this for 
next time.

*A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion passed unanimously.*

Barbara pointed out the FY22 Finance Committee schedule in the packet and that for every 
month there is a Board meeting, the Finance Committee meets the Tuesday before. They start 
at 8 AM and end at 9 AM. Dan noted you can sit in and participate and be a part of 
conversations that happen before it comes to the Board.

**Strategic Planning Update - Karen Reuter**

Our consultants from Strategy Matters will be meeting our new Executive Director on July 7th. 
We feel it's very important to bring him up to speed and have the opportunity to get a status 
update and some input as to how we’re going to proceed. We currently have on the table a plan 
to gather some additional internal information to inform our SWOT analysis and potentially some 
select external stakeholders. Strategy Matters will also do a focus group with the SJE platform 
to dig into some issues from the SWOT analysis. We had initially hoped to present the strategic 
plan to the Board, but we anticipate that once we get back together in late July as a larger 
contingency to have a revised timeline in September. There will be opportunities for Board 
members to join in goal setting and we hope you'll join us. Dan added that this process has 
been ongoing and there were challenges along the way during the pandemic and with so many 
different stakeholders. They are trying to be thorough so we can develop a very effective plan 
moving forward.

**HEC Academy Update - Sherry Smith**

Sherry Smith offered some brief updates. Sherry thanked Dan for attending and speaking a few 
words at the graduation. It was very exciting to be able to have it in person this year. All of the 
graduates came and sat at tables with their families so they could maintain social distance. For 
the majority of graduates it was their first time back in the public with schoolmates and teachers. 
They had 9 graduates in total from Chicopee, Agawam, Greenfield, Hadley, Springfield,
Northampton, Hadley, Easthampton, and Frontier Regional. We awarded two Ben DiMarino scholarships for two students who needed driver's ed. Joan Schuman presented the Joan E Schuman award to Henriz Henry. Henriz also received a full ride scholarship to Western New England University and that award was worth about $85,000 in total. We are all proud of all of our graduates.

We had an enrollment of 26 students. From April 26th - June 15th we received 8 referrals, mostly from member districts, so we have 9 active referrals. We are expected to have around 14-15 students for the summer program, which is great because earlier we were hoping for 10. We do expect ongoing referrals through the summer.

A big important change is a change in our schedule and work hours for the coming fall. For a number of years HEC Academy has been contemplating whether or not to have a later start time. Historically, we start at 8 AM and we've seen it's difficult for students, particularly those who have to come from far away. Some students are on the bus for an hour. In the summer we've seen with a 9 AM start time that they're in a pretty good mood and it's easier for them to engage in class. We saw that Northampton and Amherst are going to move to a later start time. Additionally, this is the first year civics projects were required and a student decided to do a project on how a later start time would affect the students. So they presented this to Sherry and Karen. They looked at the American Academy of Pediatrics, made some calls to transportation companies to see if they could accommodate a later start time, and they did some polls. It was great to see this student engage. We were already leaning towards this and after his presentation were pleased to tell him that we will be running 9:00 - 3:30. We will still keep half days on Wednesday's. That will shift the staff workday from 7:30 - 3:00 to 8:30 - 4:00. We'll pilot this this year.

Heather Hala Lord joined the meeting.

Dan added that he knows former Executive Director, Bill Diehl, was unable to attend the graduation and also appreciated Karen’s very warm speech welcoming students and families and thought she did a great job. He also thought it was great when Sherry talked about the students and recognized staff that she brought it back to the students, really giving them the kudos for their own resilience. He also gets emotional when he thinks about the face of the young man when he won those rewards. This is why we do what we do because of the students and impact on families. He appreciates all of the work of Pedro and his staff.

Interim Executive Director’s Report - Karen Reuter

- A copy of the Interim Executive Director’s Report was provided in the Board packet on pages 42-62.

We were able to get our Board report out early for this meeting and the interesting thing is many things have happened since then. Some really good news she'd love to share is:
EEC has a new project with Families First to create this family ambassador program. It's the only grant funded program in MA that was awarded this. The idea is to increase engagement and to offer parents training to be able to offer more advocacy for their students and enhance family engagement policies. The funds were primarily focused on CFCE and Headstart sites. We were excited we were the only organization awarded that funding and speaks to the quality of our program.

We received notification from DYS that we have work to do and contract negotiation ahead of us but the intent is to enter into a contract with CES for DYS services.

We have a brand new 21st CC learning center. Even in the report it says we submitted it, but we’ve gotten confirmation that Dexter Park will be running for the Fall.

Karen also wanted to point out some highlights from the report:

- Video from SPIFFY coalition meeting with legislators that's interesting
- As Sherry said, the graduation at HEC Academy was wonderful. We have graduates all over the state at DYS, SEIS, Mt. Tom, and the Academy. She thinks the total is higher than 50, which is pretty amazing.
- Honored Carole Jackewisch who has been a teacher for over 20+ years. Most recently she was a teacher at Mt. Tom and was a very valuable asset for this. She leaves a big whole to fill.
- In DYS the Annie E. Casey foundation donated $10,000 for scholarships for youth and the awards will be given to offset the costs of university degrees, trade certificates or college credits and support efforts to further post-secondary education and so forth and had two students who were awarded two of those scholarships.
- Important initiative in DYS - Rethinking History Initiative. The goal is to create a professional learning community of teachers to examine their own beliefs through a decolonized lense. This process will continue and roll out for the Fall.
- Professional Services (this number is probably out of date), is already at $217,000 for FY22 and Karen thinks that number is already up to $250,000 so that's a good sign that our services are highly sought. We are very optimistic with that start.
- Have some wonderful testimonials from individuals who access our coursework. We like the qualitative responses we get to help us better respond and prepare our courses for future educators. We hope that we can always be providing the Board with some sort of authentic feedback so you can get a sense of what people are saying about the programs we offer.
- R&E continues work for DESE on Safe and Supportive Schools. They are working on a new training series called the equity imperative.
- HR is very busy recruiting and hiring. We have really stretched all of the methods we’re using in order to recruit and hire. We have had some vacancies in SEIS programs this year and need to focus on that. The earlier we do that the more likely we are to find the appropriate candidates and reach out to a more diverse group of candidates. There was the first internal job fair hosted and the HR team felt it was really something to consider moving forward with because there was a lot of really good feedback and opportunity to engage with highly qualified candidates. There have also been some social media
campaigns and that's a joint effort between Communications and the HR Team. In the first two weeks we reached 42,218 people and received 394 click throughs, in other words we're building it and tracking it and it does appear to provide a lot of good avenues to engage our workforce.

- Business Development team is working on building and updating our website. That's quite an endeavor and will probably continue through the Fall.
- Marketing group is working to understand what kind of PD we should be offering and how we can remain viable and relevant in terms of our offerings.
- The grants list is not as long this time since we just met in May.

Angela noted that Professional Services has $295,000 worth of contracts

Dan noted that the Collaborative is always very entrepreneurial and one key is assessing how a program does and whether there needs to be changes to it. He presents to Shutesbury and his superintendent came from Dexter Park so she was very excited about the project there. He also appreciated the list of ways we’re looking at attracting candidates. He also brought up the internal messaging in the report and that Cathy brought up perhaps that is an opportunity to offer a blurb in there about the Board so it keeps a better connection between the Board and those who work at CES. Dan had a question about the connection between HEC Academy and Riverside. Sherry mentioned it’s the Pre-ETS Program (Pre-Employment Transition Services) and often most of the public high schools will have a Pre-ETS liaison assigned to their school. What happens is we can make individual referrals for those we know the needs of. This might be career exploration or matching up with potential internships. This year Riverside Industries has been assigned to be our liaison. Pedro has met with them and in the coming year we'll be working with them to send individual referrals to match them up. One of our graduates will be attending over the summer. The vocational opportunities and being able to partner with them allows us to add to our program in ways we weren’t able to because resources are limited. She expects to be able to report on this as we move into the Fall.

Dan thanked everyone for the work that goes on behind the scenes.

Suzanne noted that although it’s a lot to read through she really appreciates the detail and asked that we share this as a separate PDF to share with school committees.

**Topics of Board Interest**

Dan asked if there is anything percolating now or that the Board would like to add to future agenda items. There were none. Dan added that anyone can email himself, Karen, or Sarah if there is anything they want to hear about to discuss or if there is a part about the Collaborative they’d like to learn more about.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 PM.