Collaborative for Educational Services
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2021 at 6:30pm-9:00pm
APPROVED

Join Zoom Meeting - https://collaborative.zoom.us/j/87569228293
Meeting ID: 875 6922 8293

Present: Aaron Buford, Suzanne Crawford, Mallory Ellis, Cathy Englehardt, Laura Fallon, Dan Hayes, Erica Boyd Jacob, Paul Kennedy, Mike Knapp, Heather Hala Lord, David Lubbers, Keith McFarland, Maureen Nichols, Jill Pelletier, Lyn Roberts, Jonathan Schmidt, Donald Sluter, Denise Storm, Julianne Tauscher.


Guests: Tom Dowling (Whittlesey PC), Steve Erickson (Whittlesey PC), Ruth Hersh (DESE).


Call to Order and Introductions - Board Chair Dan Hayes
The meeting began when Board Chair Hayes confirmed a quorum at 6:41pm.

Public Comment
Robert Lawler raised the issue of improving salaries for teachers and concerns about the wide range of compensation. He asked the Board to consider this matter and ways to address it.
Hayes thanked Lawler for his comments. There was no additional public comment.

Minutes of September 29, 2021 CES Board Meeting and November 9, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting

Jonathan Schmidt motioned to approve the minutes of the September 29, 2021 Board of Directors meeting. Laura Fallon seconded the motion. Schmidt amended his motion to include the approval of the minutes of the November 9, 2021 Finance Committee meeting. Laura Fallon seconded the amended motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion carried unanimously.

Annual Audit

Hayes invited the representatives from Whittlesey PC, Steve Erickson and Tom Dowling, to present the annual audit for FY21. Dowling reported that there was a clean audit for the past fiscal year with no findings. The management costs were approximately 10% and this is fairly lean for a large organization. The audit showed a strong year considering the continuing effects of the pandemic. There were not any significant changes from the prior year. The auditors confirmed the accuracy of financial statements produced during the year and stated that the
Board should have confidence in the reliability of these reports. Whittlesey will be filing the Uniform Financial Report (UFR) with the state by the December deadline. (The state extended this deadline due to COVID-related delays at their offices.) CES performed the calculations on the cumulative surplus for FY21. The auditors stated that they agree with this calculation and have no concerns.

Hayes thanked the auditors for all their work on this project. He opened the discussion to questions. Board members expressed appreciation for the strong internal controls and documentation that supported a clean audit. There was discussion about what federal funding is used for at CES, which includes portions of Special Education in Institutional Settings (SEIS), Department of Youth Services (DYS), and after school activities.

*Storm motioned to accept the FY21 audit as presented. Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion carried unanimously.*

**Cumulative Surplus Calculation**

Rebecca Lincoln, CES Assistant Director of Finance, presented the cumulative surplus calculation. If educational collaboratives have an annual surplus over 25%, they must work with member school districts to redistribute these funds. CES’s surplus for FY21 was 5.18%.

*Schmidt motioned to accept the FY21 cumulative surplus calculation as presented. Cathy Engelhardt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion carried unanimously.*

**Review of CES Financials through September 30, 2021**

Lincoln then reviewed the organization’s financials through September 30, 2021. Performance is almost identical to the prior year and within the norms for the month. There has been strong enrollment in some programming and revenue is expected to increase as the school year gets underway.

*Don Sluter motioned to accept the September 30, 2021 financial report as presented. Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion carried unanimously.*

**FY22 Financial Update**

Lincoln presented the FY22 financial update. The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan has been forgiven. Currently there are approximately $1.3M in contracts that have been booked. Additionally, special education services are now being invoiced through Salesforce and this is improving information available to participating districts as well as payment tracking. HEC Academy enrollment is strong and Mount Tom enrollment is being improved. The FY22 budget was approved with a deficit and the business office recommends using some of the PPP funds to cover part of the operating expenses for the year.

*Storm motioned to accept the amended FY22 budget as presented. Mallory Ellis seconded the motion. There was a question about research and evaluation revenue from Facebook. This work is related to a Facebook initiative designed to help modernize public education programming in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. CES evaluation adheres to*
strict rules for protecting student confidentiality and only provides aggregated data to Facebook. Hayes called for any additional comment. *A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion carried unanimously.*

**Business Office Restructuring Plan**

Todd Gazda, CES Executive Director, discussed the business office restructuring plan. The organization has grown significantly in past years and this has put pressure on the business office. CES has also outgrown its space at 97 and 123 Hawley Street in Northampton, as well as HEC Academy. This is limiting the organization’s ability to provide services to its members. An in-depth review of facilities, physical plant, and space requirements is needed.

To facilitate a focus on operations, and accommodate personnel transitions in the business office, Gazda recommended outsourcing business management services. This consultant model should be fiscally neutral and may ultimately save money on salaries and fringe benefits. A request for proposals was crafted in partnership with the business office and released, with bids due December 1, 2021. The Board had an extensive discussion on merits and concerns about the consultant model of business management services, including staffing challenges, contract safeguards, setting expectations, procurement, and vetting interested firms. Hayes and Gazda will set a special Board meeting on December 6, 2021 for the purposes of finalizing a business management consultant.

**FY22 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)**

Lincoln presented the proposal for a FY22 Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA). In FY21, all CES union staff received a 2% COLA and non-union staff did not. After reviewing the budget and finances to date, CES recommends offering a 2% COLA adjustment to non-union staff who were employed on June 30, 2021. There was discussion about equity and the provision of 2% COLAs to both union and non-union staff.

*Storm motioned to approve a 2% FY22 COLA for non-union employees, retroactive to July 1, 2021. Lubbers seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion carried unanimously.*

**Hires and Separations**

Hayes introduced the most recent hires and separations report. He reminded the Board that this vote is required at all educational collaboratives.

*Englehardt motioned to approve the hires and separations for the period of September 16, 2021-November 15, 2021. Schmidt seconded the motion. There was discussion about recruiting and retention, which has been particularly challenging to nonprofits during the pandemic. CES is facing some staffing challenges and is also looking at alternatives to aid member districts with their recruitment difficulties. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion carried unanimously.*
Annual Report

Gazda introduced the annual report. This gives a comprehensive picture of what the past year was like and how actions by CES staff helped to support students and their families. Gazda thanked Kathy Levesque and the Communications team for all of their work on this material.

Lubbers motioned to accept the annual report as presented. Ellis seconded the motion. There was discussion about the highlights brochure, which will be before the Board in January 2022, and about possible updates to committee listings in the report. These will be reviewed and updated if needed. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion carried unanimously.

CES Updates

Gazda gave the CES updates and began by recognizing teachers who were the inaugural recipients of a monthly award for excellence in the DYS educational initiative. Gazda read the nomination by a student who stated that his teacher “makes me feel that I can do anything - even when I don’t believe in myself.” Gazda discussed his conference attendance, program site visits, meetings with elected officials, and current contract negotiations. These have been productive with open dialogue. Gazda reviewed an initiative to develop more School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) and advocate for their implementation statewide. Gazda discussed the ways that CES is working to support member districts and provide for increased professional development options that have been vital during the pandemic.

Topics of Board Interest

Hayes introduced time to discuss topics of Board interest. Board members had questions about CES support for special education, Mount Tom, HEC Academy, and the monthly resource meeting of area Special Education directors.

Gazda reminded the Board that the Conflict of Interest forms will be released shortly. Board members are required to complete these forms each year.

Board members discussed additional topics including mask policies and responding to issues or complaints surrounding mask-wearing at events or gatherings.

Hayes thanked everyone for their attendance and offered the Board’s gratitude to those members who are attending their last meeting.

Updates will be forthcoming about the special Board meeting to be held on December 6, 2021.

Sluter motioned to adjourn the meeting. Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. None abstained. None opposed and the motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.