A new board member orientation meeting was held at 6:00 PM
Attendees present were Bill Diehl, Maryann Reynolds, and Kelly Hernandez.

Call to Order and Introduce New Members
Dan Hayes called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

The Board did introductions and reviewed expectations of utilizing the mute option on Zoom and announcing your name when contributing and voting.

Public Comment
Dan provided time guidelines to allow all who are interested in commenting the opportunity. Twenty-two educators and staff from HEC Academy and from Special Education Services attended the public comment period. Four HEC Academy teachers and clinicians spoke about the reopening plans for HEC Academy and staff concerns about the plan, including concerns about when and how to begin conducting in-person education. Comments also included the incredible dedication of the staff; profiles of our students that may make social distancing or mask-wearing more challenging; concerns about budgets, job security and contracts; concerns about willingness to invest in building a better program that encompasses the SJE principles; people are the heart of HEC Academy.

Dan thanked all who have spoken this evening and reflected on HEC Academy. He has enjoyed meeting the students, speaking at graduation, and meeting the staff.

Approve the Minutes of the 6/24/2020 Board Meeting and of the 8/4/2020 Finance Committee Meeting (votes required)
A copy of the minutes from the June 24th, 2020 Board of Directors meeting were included in the Board packet.
Jonathon Cotton moved that the Board approve the minutes from the June 24, 2020 Board of Directors meeting. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds abstained. None opposed and the motion passed.

A copy of the minutes from the August 4th, 2020 Finance Committee meeting were included in the Board packet.

Don Sluter moved that the Board approve the minutes from the August 4th, 2020 Finance Committee meeting. Gene Stamel seconded the motion. Maryann Reynolds abstained. None opposed and the motion passed.

CES Fiscal Year 2021 Budget as Amended
The following documents were included in the Board packet:
- FY21 Proposed Adjusted Budget
- Proposed Scenarios
- Acronym definitions

Status; context; considerations

Bill reminded the Board that every year in May, they are presented with a draft budget for the following fiscal year. Then, at the June Board meeting, a final vote is taken to accept the budget. Establishing a budget always has its challenges due to the unpredictability of services, students, grants, etc., but CES has always presented a balanced budget. FY21 is even less predictable due to the challenges COVID-19 has provided. Typically, CES does very well depicting a prediction of the coming year based on history and expectations. This Spring, the Board was presented with an annual budget for FY2021 which was based on a number of significant unknowns. This budget suggested a notable deficit, partly due to unknowns, and CES would benefit from additional time and information to present an amended and more informed budget. Therefore, at the June Board meeting, the CES Executive Director and Director of Finance and Operations requested that the Board schedule this special meeting to provide an amended budget that reduced some of the uncertainty. The deficit being presented is primarily related to COVID-19 expenses.

Presentation and discussion of amended budget; discussion of circumstances that impact the current deficit; presentation and discussion of scenarios for reducing the budget deficit

Barbara took the opportunity to thank all of the CES staff, department heads, and the Operational Continuity team for their effort to create this budget. She proceeded to present the Board with a deficit budget that is thoughtful and put together with conservative numbers, but with optimism about the capacity of CES to meet expanded expectations. The CES team has exceeded expectations before and believes they will again. The deficit was proposed to be $1.125M. Details of the proposed budget can be found in the Board packet on pages 18-25. Barbara proceeded to narrate the details of the budget.
As part of the presentation, or in response to Board questions and comments, Barbara provided additional information, which included the following:

- Last year, the state reduced CES's indirect rate on many grants to 8%, which is not equal to the actual rate. All collaboratives received a fixed cap, most at 5%. CES pursued a correction (to the actual indirect costs) last year, and continues to do so. Some grants and contracts from other state agencies do provide an accurate indirect percentage.
- Early Childhood has been making great investments to create and roll out new offerings, including PD, and people are working hard to make this happen to help offset the deficit.
- HEC Academy has a new goal of 25 in-person students or the potential of 28, if they can be serviced remotely.
- Related Special Ed Services is an area that has expenses that exceed the amount that can be covered based on the rates we charge. Increase in a rate would likely create a decrease in customers. While this has been an issue in the past, the Board had made the decision that it values these services and wants them to remain in place to support member districts. Work has been done to capture more of the time utilized and billed to cover more report writing, counseling, and attending meetings.
- Healthy Families and Communities along with Research and Evaluation are thriving departments that are providing a surplus. These bodies of work are in high demand.
- Licensure is hard to predict due to milestones and individual paces. Predictions are based off of prior years’ data but it can vary with a possibility to break even. It was clarified that part of this program is practicums that take place in the classroom and needs to transpire to obtain the fee.
- Professional Development is an extensive team of experts and typically summer enrollment is usually the lowest semester of revenue. However, this summer they exceeded their revenue expectations. It is unknown if this is a trend yet and we will see how the next 2 semesters run. There is optimism built into this specific budget.
- ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) Certification has had a lot of interest, including beyond MA. CES has been certified to provide this service remotely.
- It was clarified that if a district chooses to go remote rather than in-person CES is in potential danger to lose grants and contracts from DESE to serve districts, but do not know for certain. However, in the Spring, CES was allowed to provide adjusted deliverables and are optimistic this will be the case again.
- The $150K COVID-19 costs include supplies, additional cleaning, and capital improvements to the Northampton buildings.
- The fringe costs were refined to the exact salary per employee with a small decrease in health insurance along with the dental insurance remaining nearly the same rate.
- Clarification was requested regarding the United Way grant that was put on hold in the Spring. It was advised it has been renewed but with a decreased budget.

Bill stated that the 2021 amended budget is not usual -- a balanced budget is typically presented each year. Bill also clarified that the operating budget and cash budget are not one in
The operating budget has depreciation listed, which is not the case for the cash budget. In addition, CES has been very proactive seeking ways to decrease expenses and is working to increase revenues. Having gone virtual seems to have benefited PD and we are looking at opportunities with Pre-K - 3 early literacy. Requests have increased for SJE assistance, as well.

The FY20 final budget will be completed and submitted for approval at an upcoming Board meeting. All of the final numbers have not been established but it currently looks like it is approximately a 300K deficit rather than the 400K previously advised.

The following options of how to improve our fiscal situation for FY21 were discussed in the Finance Committee meeting and brought to this Board meeting.

1. Barbara spoke about the FY19 $300K fund balance that was approved by the Board for use in FY20 for deferred expenses such as facilities improvements. That money was not spent before the pandemic closed schools and offices. A vote by the Board was requested so that these funds would be used in FY21. This would bring the deficit down to $825K. Plans will also continue to find reductions in expenses and increases in revenue.

2. In addition, CES received a PPP (Payroll Protection Program) loan for $5.824 million. If the loan is forgiven, it would result in a positive fund balance in FY20 which could then be allocated in FY21 to further reduce or eliminate any deficit. The PPP loan is based on CES’s expenses in defined areas during an eight week time period at the end of FY20. These expenses included $5.7M in salary/fringe, $9K in mortgage/interest, $18K in rent, and $26K in utilities for a total $5.754M spent and $70,409 remaining. There are two options for the remaining balance - convert it to a loan to spend on other expenses or return it. Barbara recommended that CES return the remaining funds. If the PPP loan is forgiven we will have $5.8M added to the FY20 revenue creating a surplus with the potential to move some of the funds to balance the FY21 Budget.

Some questions and comments were raised and discussed including:
- Timeline of the final date to return the remaining funds. It was advised these guidances have not been reviewed yet but more will be known by September. Barbara is currently working with the accountants to review the numbers, ensure they are accurate, and prepare for an application for loan forgiveness. The application is not yet available, but should be soon.
- Uncertainty, unknown, waiting to hear were consistent themes, along with opportunity, investigating revenue streams, and ways to improve. Acknowledgement of the entrepreneurial spirit continues to be strong at CES.
- Appreciation was provided for the hard work the team has provided establishing the budget and multiple options.
- It was acknowledged that it is definitely a very trying time, especially financially, and not knowing what the future holds.
Carol Bergeron disconnected from the meeting prior to voting the following motions.

Laura Fallon moved to accept the budget as amended and to add in $300,000 of the fund balance that the Board approved for FY20 to reduce the FY21 deficit to $825,065. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds abstained. None opposed and the motion was passed.

Note: Per Collaborative Agreement Section VII. Finance.C.12: Once approved, the Treasurer shall certify and transmit the budget and related tuition rates, membership dues and fees for services for the upcoming fiscal year to each member district.

Laura Fallon moved that if the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan in FY20 is forgiven, resulting in an increase in the fund balance, to use a portion of that fund balance to apply to the FY21 deficit, contingent on a final recommendation and Board approval at the November meeting. Don Sluter seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds abstained. Jon Cotton opposed and the motion was passed.

Laura Fallon moved that if the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan in FY20 is not forgiven, hence not resulting in an increase in the fund balance, to authorize the CES Executive Director, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Operations, Cabinet members and other leaders, to reduce expenses and increase revenues sufficient to offset a deficit. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds abstained. Jon Cotton opposed and the motion was passed.

A question was raised about whether additional authority is being granted through this motion. Dan explained that the Board has given the Executive Director this authority, but this motion makes that specific to this situation. The Board has asked to be informed of situations that arise. This motion recognizes that the Board understands the ED and Cabinet are working together to address the current financial conditions.

Adjustments to Tuitions for the HEC Academy and Mount Tom Academy

No adjustment to SY tuition; adjustment to daily rate for the Academies due to required changes in schedules (10 days of training) (Information; No Vote Required)

Bill advised that the Commissioner has mandated that the first 10 days of the school year be used as professional development and training days for teachers and staff. This has shortened the instructional school year by 10 days, but not the operational year. The Academies annual tuition will remain the same but the day rate will be adjusted.

Districts are receiving $225 per student through the CARES Act for personal protection equipment expenses. Collaboratives receive no additional state aid but the recommendation from DESE is that this funding should follow the student. In the case of CES (and other
collaboratives), this means the districts will receive the funds and the CES would then bill the districts for these funds to be forwarded and follow the district’s student(s). A vote is needed to approve the billing of these separate funds.

Conversation was had to include:

- It was confirmed the $225 per student COVID relief funds would stay with the school districts if the board does not approve billing the district for the CARES Act funds to follow the students.
- Superintendents were made aware of DESE’s recommendation that this funding follow the student during Zoom meetings with Commissioner Riley and CFO Bill Bell.
- The superintendent that participated at the Finance Committee meeting thought it was logical that the funds should follow the student.
- Clarification was provided that these funds would not be rolled into the tuition cost, rather would be billed as a separate invoice.

Laura Fallon moved to approve the addition of a one-time fee for sending districts of $225 for each student enrolled at the academies, covered by the CARES Act, therefore not impacting the districts original budget negatively. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds abstained. None opposed and the motion was passed.

**Review HEC Academy Reopening Plan**

The following documents were included in the Board packet:

- HEC Academy: Comprehensive Reopening Plan Summary

Sherry Smith reviewed the details of the phased HEC Academy reopening plan that can be found starting on page 28 of the Board packet. As required by DESE, three options were presented: fully remote; fully in-person; hybrid of remote and in-person. DESE prioritized in-person learning and those guidelines are the primary focus of the Academy reopening plan. The re-opening plans call for an initial hybrid approach, and then a staged approach to bringing students into the building. In-person learning is especially important, our students have special needs, and are in DESE’s high-priority category. In addition, we have students who are homeless or in group homes who especially benefit from personal contact with teachers. The work of arranging the HEC Academy building has begun with a focus of 6 ft distancing creating the ability to accommodate a maximum of 25 students. Ashley, school nurse, Dr. Johanson, school physician, and HEC Academy staff provided input on the proposed reopening plan.

After the presentation, the Board had questions and comments which included:

- Clarification that 6 feet was recommended over 3 feet by Dr. Johanson due to the nature of the population of the HEC Academy students.
- It was asked if a staff survey had been conducted. HR Director Cheryl Rogers contributed that HR conducted private, engaging, multi-faceted, confidential conversations with the staff that included support options. The overall themes spoken
included safety concerns for students and staff, personal child care concerns due to individual district plans, and their personal health and safety.

- DPH recently distributed matrix tools with towns noted by color, based on the percentage of COVID-19 cases, and hence, the risk of infection. For example, a district being green was one indication that in-person learning was recommended. Other districts being yellow would be a hybrid/remote recommendation zone. Since HEC Academy has students from a number of districts, the question was raised about how the Academy would make decisions based on the matrix and other data. Bill stated that DESE would be advising and providing directives on how collaboratives, as well as regional school districts and vocational-technical schools should proceed.

- Appreciation was provided for the logical and cautious plans provided.

- Concerns for students with special needs falling behind was expressed. It is important to think about the needs of the staff but can’t ignore the needs of the students. This plan has a healthy balance and it is important to have the flexibility to change, if needed.

- Being tech-savvy, there is data that suggests that some students thrive better in virtual learning environments. This was the case for some HEC Academy students.

- The 6 identified students to attend in-person learning for Phase 1 are those with highest need and were disengaged or struggled to engage with previous virtual learning.

- Some students that attend HEC Academy struggle with social interactions. If proceeding with remote learning, these students may not effectively advance their social skills.

- It was explained that the HVAC system is being serviced and will confirm it meets the guidelines. In addition, duct cleaning services are planned.

- Some spaces in the building are small and lack intake and outtake vents, therefore, are being categorized as inadacuit and will not be used as instructional space.

- Dr. Johanson will be reviewing the finalized plans and protocols prior to opening.

John Cotton motioned to approve the Fall Reopening Plan as presented, with the understanding that the situation is fluid and changes to the plan are likely. Donald Sluter seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds abstained. Gene Stamell opposed and the motion was passed.

**Review Mt Tom Academy Reopening plan**

The following documents were included in the Board packet:

- Mount Tom Academy Reopening Plan: Fall 2020

Deputy Director Karen Reuter shared that Mt Tom Academy does not require a DESE submission for reopening but that CES has created a plan that parallels HEC Academy. Since HCC, the regular site for Mt. Tom, is closed, there was consideration for use of the Picknelly Adult & Family Education Center in Holyoke; this did not come to fruition. Therefore, we will start the year at CES, in the two large conference rooms.

Last spring, we found that some of the MT students were very successful with remote learning while others were disengaged. We know that the relationships and support that is provided by
the MT staff is vital in the students' success. Therefore the plan is to be hybrid, with in-person to the degree possible.

Conversation ensued that includes:
- Concern was expressed on what percentage of teachers and staff wants to return to in-person instruction. Karen advised there are 3 teachers and 1 has requested to possibly be virtual. This proposed hybrid model can accommodate this staffing request.
- A question was asked if there was extra care and consideration for cleaning the space between the cohorts' in-person learning sessions. Karen was able to contribute that CES has increased the cleaning protocols and these will be available for the MT space. The days in the facility may change with the fluid needs of the students.
- With the potential of transportation being an issue due to virtual only districts, is there a specific enrollment minimum to transition to one cohort? Karen clarified the maximum in the space available includes the adults and the hope is to enroll 16 students. There is no established number that would be a guide to transition to 1 cohort.
- Concern was raised how this plan could impact the operations at 97 Hawley. At this time, operations do not anticipate being fully staffed until potentially January. For the time being, this is a good use of the space.
- There was a suggestion that what was presented may not be a phased reopen rather a 10 day lag to hybrid reopening. There are no issues or concerns with the plan but it feels that the Board is voting on a hybrid plan that starts 10 days later.

Jonathan Schmidt moved to accept the hybrid Fall Reopening Plan as presented, with the understanding that the situation is fluid and changes to the plan are likely. John Cotton seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds abstained. None opposed and the motion was passed.

**Review and approve changed Academy calendars**

The following documents were included in the Board packet:
- HEC Academy Academic Calendar for 2020-2021
- Mt Tom Academy Academic Calendar for 2020-2021

Sherry advised the HEC and MT Academies Academic calendars have been adjusted to reflect the modified 170 day academic year found in the Board packet.

John Cotton motioned to approve the changes to the Academy calendars as presented. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds abstained. None opposed and the motion was passed.

**Review and approve new policy for student handbook regarding wearing facemasks**

The following documents were included in the Board packet:
- HEC Academy: Language for handbook on face coverings
Bill shared that this policy has been obtained from MASC and adjusted for the Academy setting. Karen added that the policy has also been reviewed by CES’s attorney.

Conversation took place to include:

- Curiosity if there has been a discussion or thoughts on the specifications of the type of mask that should be worn. The response was that this has not been included, but more guidelines can be considered after the policy has been accepted.
- There will be extra masks on hand if they are needed.

Gene Stamell moved to approve the new policy for the student handbook regarding wearing facemasks as presented. Don Sluter seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds abstained. None opposed and the motion was passed.

**Executive Director Search-Change in timeline**

Bill shared that the Board, at the June meeting, approved the search for a new Executive Director. At the time, the plan was to aggressively post the position, and screen and interview candidates with the goal of a start date of January 1st, 2021. However, as things have continued to change, it was proposed to move the new Executive Director’s start to July 1, 2021. This change would take the added pressure of a short time-line off of the HR Director and department; they are already overextended due to the demands on them regarding COVID 19, accommodation requests, new positions and on-boarding. This change will also be more in tune with the typical hiring timeline for potential candidates availability along with more time for broadcasting the position, obtaining input, and lessening the financial impact. The recommendation is for Karen Reuter to become the interim Executive Director as of January 1, 2021 until a candidate is hired and starts. This will be a lot of added responsibilities for Karen but she is willing to accept this position upon the Board’s approval. The Cabinet and other leadership will provide Karen with support in this new role.

Cheryl proposed completing the ED survey data over the next 2 weeks and finalizing this with October as the official start of the search process. We would begin the screening process with the screening committee in December and January. Interviews would be held in February. By March, the hope is to have the Interview Committee making decisions and recommendations on the finalists who will move forward with virtual-remote or onsite CES site visits along with candidate worksite visits. The goal would be to bring the final candidate to a special Board meeting in April or to the regular meeting in May. Then the plan would be to extend the offer in May or June to our final candidate who would ideally accept and join CES on July 1st. The goal is to build in enough time to have full opportunity to have thorough visits at CES and at the candidate’s workplace.

Barbara reminded the Board that if an April meeting is held for the purpose of interviewing finalists for the ED position, it would be an additional meeting to the approved scheduled Board meetings.
Dan expressed appreciation of working with Cheryl who has been efficient, organized, collaborative, and doing what she can for all stakeholders to have input. He thanked Karen and provided appreciation for her taking the interim role and knows CES will be in good hands. He articulated his support to move forward with this proposed timeline.

Jonathan Schmidt motioned to approve the change in the Executive Director’s search timeline as presented. Laura Fallon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Maryann Reynolds and Maureen Nichols abstained. None opposed and the motion was passed.

**New Hires and Separations for 6/16/20 - 8/5/20**

The following documents were included in the Board packet:

- New hires and Separations for 6/16/2020-8/5/2020

Donald Sluter moved to accept the new hires and separations for 6/16/2020-8/5/2020 as presented. Jonathan Schmidt seconded the motion. Maryann Reynolds and Maureen Nichols abstained. A roll call vote was taken. None opposed and the motion was passed.

**Adjournment**

Dan Hayes adjourned the meeting at 9:28 PM.