

Minutes of HCA April 12, 2022 Board Meeting

Board Members Attending: Cynthia Shelmerdine, David Jean, Sally Mackenzie, Peggy Muir, Ed Harris, Barbara Merson, and Kathy Wilson.

Also in attendance: Scott Barksdale, HOS; Amy Bundt, Director of Finance and Operations; Angie Arndt, Mel Christensen-Fletcher, Mae Applegate, HCA staff members; Jana LaPointe, former Maine Charter School Commission member; Laurel Wishman, Carina Wishman, HCA Community members; John Terhune, *Times Record*; J.W. Oliver, *Harpowell Anchor*.

Cynthia called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm.

Cynthia welcomed members of the Board and participants.

The consent agenda (Minutes of the March 16, 2022 Board Meeting) was adopted.

Scott began by saying that he had hoped for a clear-cut choice from Tuesday's Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) meeting. He and the HCA staff want to continue to refine the consolidation plan and hope for a better outcome from the Commission soon.

Barbara made the motion that the Board support the school's resolve to continue to revise and refine the plan for consolidation. Kathy seconded. On a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Mel described the meeting she, Cynthia, Scott, and Mae had with Jeremy Jones and Gina Post, staff members of the MCSC. Jeremy and Gina outlined what the school needed to provide to gain acceptance of the consolidation plan.

- A revision of the proposal
- A timeline for all tasks required
- A community engagement plan
- A financial plan

She explained that she would be developing the time-line; Mae, the community engagement plan; Scott, the financial plan; and all three of them would collaborate on the revision of the proposal.

A discussion of the various pieces followed.

Peggy said the location of the school in Harpswell provides an important organizing principle: the coast, fields, forests are symbols of the work and learning at the school.

Regarding the timeline, Dave suggested an app that created a "living document" with start and end dates for each aspect of the project. Mel said that Jeremy suggested one the Commission uses.

Barbara said the logistics of the site work need to be very detailed indicating deadlines as well as who is overseeing each step. She recommended having a Plan B. She said to provide the information both ways: chronological and also by specific project.

Peggy said the school should provide a weekly update to keep the public aware of progress through the school year and into the summer. Dave agreed.

Dave said, "Sometimes good is good enough. It doesn't need to be perfect."

Ed said, "And it must be doable."

Mae explained the pieces required in the community engagement plan, all of which have been ongoing, so it's a matter of documenting goals, plans, and actions. She has started a spread sheet for managing the required parts: average daily attendance, chronic absenteeism, enrollment, parent and family engagement, and student engagement. The goal is to see data with an upward trend in each category.

Board members offered suggestions of ways to publicize the school at such venues as festivals, farmers' markets, weekly concerts in Brunswick and Bowdoinham, parades, Equality Maine.

Mel and Angie discussed marketing tools that have already been produced and some have been distributed.

Barbara noted that another school had received a grant from the Commission for marketing. Scott said there was still a lot that school had to pay for the work of the consulting company.

Scott noted that a parent who was interested in the school said it was expensive, and he lacked transportation to the school. Obviously, the public aspect of HCA has to be emphasized. Rebranding might be a consideration.

Scott talked about how to present the financial picture. They want to see profit and loss for the past three years and then a forecast for the next two years. Dave said he'll be able to meet with Scott and Amy at the end of next week.

Cynthia said the budget needs to be viable and sustainable. She suggested Scott present three different scenarios: with the loan, without the loan, and with 190 students. She also noted that the septic system has been inspected. There's no need to do anything in that regard. A savings.

Dave said his preference is to present one set of numbers based on a set of assumptions. Plan B is not an option. The budget should be as strong as it can be.

Barbara told about the incredibly successful drive for donations over the past few weeks. In one important situation, a parent made the ask.

She emphasized that fundraising has to be a Board-school community enterprise. We should look at all opportunities, e.g., a Go Fund Me campaign set up by a staff member and ready to go.

Peggy said to be sure to consider in-kind donations. They should be monetized and tracked.

With regard to the revision of the proposal. The advice from MCSC is to knit the vision and strategic plan into the proposal. This can involve focus on field work, EL, leadership development of both staff and students.

Peggy complimented all the involved in the work that got the plan this far. Dave chimed in with specific congratulations to the leadership on the Board and in the school.

The Board will meet at 10 am Wednesday morning on Zoom to hear about progress on the various parts of the plan.

Public Comment

Jana LaPointe congratulated the Board and school on everything we're doing. She had some advice:

- Know what the MCSC wants. Be sure they provide specific feedback.
- Keep fundraising. See if you can do it without a loan.
- Don't over promise. Do two budgets: one with the assumption of 170 students; one based on 190 students.
- Go to people's homes to welcome kids.
- "I'm with you all the way," she said as she held up an envelope with her check to support the school.

Cynthia thanked her and Bob Kautz for speaking at the Commission meeting on the school's behalf.

On a motion by Ed, seconded by Kathy, the Board went into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. (Reason: 1.a Discussion of compensation for Interim Head of School)

On a motion by Kathy, seconded by Sally, the Board exited the Executive Session.

The Board voted on a salary for the Interim Head of School.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30.

