



## **Draft Minutes of HCA Board of Directors Meeting**

**February 16, 2022**

**Zoom**

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; Kaitlyn-Pulju, Div2/3 School counselor and Health educator; Fern Desjardins, Maine Charter School Commission.

HCA Parents: Lori Ballard, Alexis Brown, Natalie Summers Capano, Trista Conners, Nicole Doughty, Margo Morris, Erik Sandelin, Joshua Shean, Leslie Watts, and Kate Wing.

HCA staff present for the public comment: Angie Arndt, Mel Christensen-Fletcher, Emily Gadd, Hollie Paul, and Kaitlyn Pulju.

### **Cynthia called the meeting to order at 4:33 pm.**

Consent agenda (Minutes of the January 19, 2022 Board Meeting) was adopted.

Cynthia moved the Public Comment section of the agenda to the end of the meeting.

### **Update from Head of School :**

Scott asked Kaitlyn to present her information on post-HCA advising. She showed a chart indicating the required and optional activities for each of the four years of Division 2/3 regarding advising for the future. In their first year, students must take the First year Seminar. Fourth year students must take a Senior Seminar and meet with the guidance counselor. In both the third and fourth year, students are required to participate in Community-Based Learning Class or an internship or go to Region 10 or take an Early College class. Throughout the years, students have opportunities to explore offerings at Region 10, take a Career Exploration class or an Early College class, meet with the counselor, or go on a college tour. She noted that in keeping with HCA's values, the school emphasizes community involvement and preparation to be citizens of the world.

Scott's Head of School report covered the usual topics of celebrations, upcoming events and trips, Covid updates, staff changes, current enrollment, average daily attendance, chronic absenteeism, early College participation, budget issues, and media coverage of the school. Cynthia said she would be sure to get the exact date and time of the celebrations of learning for trimester 2 to Board members.

To illustrate the status of enrollment for next year as of February 16 compared to various dates last year, he showed this chart.

**2022/2023 (Next Year) Enrollment: 111 (2/16/22)**

	Current	Comparison
Re-enrollment (current students)	<u>As of 2/16/22</u> -102 out of 135 eligible (76%) -Div 1: 52 (75%) -Div 2/3: 50 (76%)  -6 unenrolled (4%) -No response: 27 (20%)	<u>10/1/21</u> -119 out of 150 eligible (79%)
New Enrollment	<u>As of 2/16/22</u> Interest Form: 29 Intent to Enroll Form: 9	<u>As of 2/16/21</u> Interest Form: 19 Intent to Enroll Form: 16  <u>As of 3/25/21</u> Interest Form: 37 Intent: 33

He pointed out that over the years, HCA has not had difficulty gaining interest of potential students and even enrolling them; it’s retaining those students that has been difficult.

**Executive Committee**

The Board took up three required policies that had a first reading last month: IHCDA Post-Secondary Enrollment Options;-IKE Promotion, Retention, and Acceleration of Students; and JRA-R Student Education Records and information—Administrative Procedure. There was no discussion. Ed made the motion, seconded by Kathy, to accept them. On a roll-call vote, the policies were unanimously accepted.

**Finance and Facilities:**

Dave said HCA has received the audit report. He referred to it as a “clean” audit. He said the comments included on the report were of no concern. Some adjustments were needed, but they could be attributed to the transition of personnel this school year.

On a motion by Cynthia, seconded by Peggy, acceptance of the audit went to a roll call vote. The audit was unanimously accepted.

Scott discussed next year’s budget options: As is, bare bones, or consolidating to one campus. He said the school cannot continue as it is; the bare bones budget requires cutting positions; consolidation means the school maintains its core: faculty and current programming. Staying put is not an option because HCA is under enrolled (The charter contracted in 2018 calls for an

enrollment of 210 which has never been met). He noted that at the Parent Partnership meeting last night, parents described the importance of the Division 1 campus because of its outdoor access. This is not true at the Landing. Since HCA owns the Division 1 building, the school should hang on to it.

Kathy asked why the school is under enrolled. Scott said, there is interest. We have trouble retaining kids. He noted that specifically the school changed the pay structure for teachers last year and the retirement system this year, on the theory that retaining staff would lead to retaining students. Furthermore, the steps made to improve the curriculum would increase the number of students and keep them.

Cynthia said these points should be more explicit selling points to parents of potential students.

Kathy asked, “Do we know why they don’t stay?”

Scott replied, the reasons given are that the school is too far away; it’s not what the student wanted, it’s not academically challenging; or a student feels ready to return to his/her home school.

What followed was a series of questions and comments from the Board members.

The topics highlight the need for more information gathering in order for the Board to be able to make a decision at the March meeting. That tight timeline is required because student recruitment for the school must be clear about the location for next year; teachers need to be able to plan for next year; the school must get approval from the Charter School Commission; and work has to begin preparing the facility(ies).

### **Topics**

- What are the costs to keeping Div 1 building functioning as well as adding additional space?
- What is the timeline for a decision as well as a plan for the future at a new location?
- What would be sustainable over a longer period of time than 1 year?
- How much would opportunities and programming change for Div 2/3 in a move to Harpswell?
- How much could we get for the WHS?
- What are other possible locations, not necessarily at the Landing?
- What are implications of all grades together on one campus?
- Where does this change fit in the charter renewal process for next year?
- How do parents feel about this change? students? teachers?

Scott said the school is surveying those important constituents over the next week. He expects to have results of the survey and more specific thoughts re: costs and numbers by the first week of March.

### **Public comment**

#### Parent Speakers

- Erik Sandelin has a son who will be a senior next year. The school has been so important to him and his parents. He would not do well at another school. The small

class sizes are what work for him. He will definitely stay at the school. Erik would love to see HCA continue on.

- Kate Wing has a fifth grader. Kate would be very distressed if the school moved from Harpswell because the outdoor opportunities are so important to her and her child.
- Trista Conners has an 8<sup>th</sup> grade daughter for whom HCA has done so much. She would not do well in a regular school. The small community helps her child and alleviates her anxiety. She hopes it would stay in Harpswell, but she will go wherever it is although she does have concerns about all the ages together.
- Nicole Doughty expressed concern for her 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Alexis Brown has boys at Division 1 and Division 2. They love school even though they travel from Lewiston. Could see being at the Landing but she also recognizes that modular classrooms are everywhere around schools.
- Lori Ballard is the parent of a Div 1 student who is looking forward to high school. She said her child likes school, so we must be doing something right. Lori likes the potential for community involvement for high school student. She just wants to be sure the core values of a newly consolidated school remain the same. She does have a concern about how kids of different ages would be separated.
- Leslie Watts has a 7<sup>th</sup> grader and a 10<sup>th</sup> grader. She said they were lucky to find HCA when they moved from Texas this year. Her kids love school. She appreciates how much everyone at the school cares and appreciates that the school prioritizes staff. She says her family is at HCA for the long haul.
- Natalie Summers Capano has a 6<sup>th</sup> grade son for whom the school has done wonders. He was in trouble all the time at his other school. She likes the outdoor opportunities at Div 1. Her other son goes to day care at the Landing where it's all pavement.
- Margo Morris's comment in chat was read out. She has a fifth grader who loves Harpswell. She wondered about renting or buying modular buildings.

Staff who spoke during the public comment:

- Hollie Paul is a special education teacher. She is concerned about the potential for multiple moves if that is what is required. She thinks that would make it harder to attract students.
- Angie Arndt expressed her thanks for the meeting and said this was a healthy process.
- Mel Christensen has taught in many different spaces in her years at HCA. She sees lots of opportunities to make her science teaching much more doable at the Harpswell school. She says, make a plan and do it well. She knows she can adapt.
- Emily Gadd enjoys working with all the committed people at the school. She knows how hard it is to meet all the needs. She hopes there will only be one move.
- Kaitlyn Pulju sees the school in a unique position because of what could come next for HCA. She acknowledges the specialness of the Division one campus, but it will be important to balance the needs of the three divisions. The timeline is crunchy, but she knows the staff can make it work.

Fern Desjardins, HCA's liaison on the Charter Commission, said the Commission would help to make what is planned work. She said that the process requires lots of conversation among all parties. It's important to get ducks in a row.

Cynthia thanked all who came and spoke. The school has done miraculous work through the years. It's too important to lose. We will gather the information needed--as much as is possible to be able to make the decision quickly. She urged people to contact her or Scott if they had other thoughts to express.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting adjourned at 6:53 on a motion by Cynthia, seconded by Kathy.