



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

March 17, 2021

Board Members Attending: Cynthia Shelmerdine, Nancy Anderson, David Jean, Peggy Muir, , Sally Mackenzie, Alan Youdsnukis, Kathy Wilson. Absent: Barbara Merson, Ed Harris Scott Barksdale, HOS; Andrew Smaha, Finance Director

Members of the Public:

Fern Desjardins, Board member of the Maine Charter Commission.

Luke Mattisen and Elijah D'Alessio, HCA students and members of the Div 1 Civil Rights Team

Cynthia called the meeting to order at 4:36 pm.

Consent agenda (Minutes of the February 24, 2021) was adopted.

Head of School Update

Scott noted that the second trimester ends this week. The third one begins next week.

Administrators are planning for next year. HCA will return to a five-day school week with early release on Wednesdays. The planning takes into consideration that high school students will be considered “adults” for the purposes of the COVID-19 vaccine. Middle school students will likely not have received the vaccine. HCA will maintain the same bus schedules as they had this year: separate routes for Division 1 and division 2/3. This worked well this year. The school hours will be Div 2/3 7:30 to 2; Div 1 9 to 3:30.

At the end of this year administrators will begin strategic planning with support from their EL developer. They will have training in the process and then move on to other stakeholders: teachers, Board of Directors, parents, etc. The Board of Directors has the final say on the strategic plan. This work is part of the renewal process for our charter which will expire in 2023.

Scott said enrollment for next year is low but steady so far. Seven 5th graders have enrolled for next year. Reenrollment of this year students is strong. In fact, there may have to be a lottery for at least one grade in the middle school.

Fern Desjardins, a HCA's liaison for the Charter Commission, said that all the charter schools are seeing low enrollment as are community colleges.

At this point, about 5:20 pm two students, Luke Mattisen and Elijah D'Alessio, members of the HCA civil rights team at Division One, joined us to present a proposal regarding Confederate symbolism i.e. flags, T-shirts that sort of thing. They want to restrict the presence of such material in the school to educational purposes only.

Board members expressed their appreciation for the thoughtful and impressive work of these students as well as their working toward something they passionately believed in. Board members asked such questions as,

- Should other hate speech symbols be included in this policy?
- Do we already have a policy that covers this kind of display in schools?
- Should the other divisions of the school be advised of this proposal and asked to participate in the development?
- Should school policies generally be more explicit in support of civil rights?

After congratulating the students for their work, Cynthia asked Scott to work with the students to check on the questions asked. Since we are in the process of ensuring that our policies are complete, this work comes at an opportune time. Further, Cynthia asked the students if they would be willing to consult with the board in the future regarding student attitudes and experiences. The students left at 5:45pm.

Finance Committee

Andrew described the budget development process for the next few months with the outcome being a budget on which the board will vote in June. The financial planning's priorities represent a three-year plan resulting in a solid student enrollment of 205.

The priorities are

1. Health and safety
2. Investing in teachers to ensure retention
3. Program development, especially with the aid of EL

Andrew said he and Scott had been comparing HCA salaries to other charters as well as local school districts. He will share the salary bands created at the April Board meeting. Peggy Muir wondered if the school could offer teachers a longer-term contract.

Academic Oversight

Cynthia reported on the committee meeting held on March 8.

Susan Prince joined the group to talk of how our most vulnerable students are faring in this on again off again year. Susan reported that the "attending" ones are doing fine – that is, either attending via remote or in-person. But those who don't show up are a problem. She has initiated zoom meetings and home visits. There are attendance problems with about 20% of Div I students

and probably 40% at Div II and III. Susan said this mirrors what her colleagues are finding in other schools with kids of this age.

The other issue discussed by the committee related to HCA's graduation requirements. The leadership team will develop a proposal for discussion by the Academic Oversight Committee on April 5.

Executive Committee

Cynthia reported on the Charter Commission's mid-year report on HCA. Enrollment and attendance are the major issues noted.

She also mentioned the list of policies that HCA should have as well as how the Executive Committee is reviewing our present policies for completeness and accuracy.

Dave Jean took issue with the amount of time the school and the Board have to take on policy development and analysis. He asked if the Charter Commission could have templates of policies. This would serve to standardize, to an extent, the policies across schools not to mention save time of administrators trying to find examples or develop them whole.

Fern Desjardins said she would take this issue up with the Charter Commission. Cynthia noted that Jeremy Jones, the new Executive Director of the Charter Commission, says that he wants to be an advocate for charters. In this vein, Peggy Muir offered to reach out to Senator Seth Berry who right now is opposed to charter schools. It would be useful for him to visit the school to see what we offer and how it benefits our students.

Dave Jean asked about summer programming. He believes the school needs to do as much as it can to catch up students who have lost a lot of learning time/ support time during this year. Scott described the plan for the three-week summer program: At Division 1, students will have academics in the morning and adventure experiences in the afternoon; division 2 students have the opportunity to choose mornings or afternoons for their academic work.

Based on her experience in Freeport 's high school summer program, Peggy Muir offered a few suggestions:

Have teachers develop individual plans for each student. Pay teachers to develop the plans. The teachers working during the summer oversee the plans, and the teacher who developed a specific plan decides on the adequacy of the work. Also have three session opportunities for students—morning, afternoon, or evening.

Alan Youdsnukis warned that telling students about making up work during the summer may provide a disincentive to students to complete work during the academic year.

Scott said he would discuss the summer program with the Leadership Team. Covid money would be available to support a more extensive program.

The meeting adjourned at 6:34 pm on a motion by Peggy seconded by Nancy.