

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, November 18, 2020, 6:30 pm

- Location:** By Zoom (pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law)
- Present:** Kate Saccento, Lara Ramsey, Deirdre Arthen, Matt Dube, Noelle Barrist Stern, Rich Senecal, Kelly Woods, Karen Sise, Paula Ingram, Jen Matos, Sara Schieffelin, Chris Korczak, Dawn Reesman, Joe Wyman, Kathleen Szegda, Jill Richmond, Tala Elia
- Regrets:** None
- Facilitator:** Matt
- Notetaker:** Noelle
- Guests:** (As listed in the Zoom participant information) Sam Schoenberger, Beth Adel, Mary Price, Keri Simonelli, Emily, Gina Wyman, Marguerite Durant, Helen Korczak, Myssie Casinghino, Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Grace Tiso, Alex Niemiec, Tamara Kupfer, Scott Meyers, Dietrich, Tiffany Ross, Kate’s iPhone, Meg Colenback, Patti Mars Senecal, Andrew Sirulnik, Sara Lunt
- List keeper:** N/A because of “raise hand” function on Zoom
- Timekeeper:** Chris
- Mission statement read by:** Dawn

Topic	Discussion	Action (if necessary)
Announcements/ Appreciations/ Acknowledgements	<u>Announcements:</u> <u>Appreciations/Acknowledgements:</u> Noelle made an announcement that Liz Preston has resigned from the Board. She found it challenging as a community member to be disconnected from the school during COVID and felt that she did not have as much to contribute. She noted that she thought the Board was in good hands. Matt noted that Liz had made a big contribution to the Board and the school and she would be missed. Dawn noted that she appreciated the additional communications from the Directors to parents. She said it has been helpful. Matt seconded this.	

Any thank you notes needed?	It was suggested that we send a thank you note to Liz.	Dawn will send a thank you note to Liz.
BOT Visibility this month?	Each Board member introduced themselves for the three new Board members: Jill, Tala, and Kathleen.	
Minutes	Noelle asked if someone had been assigned the newsletter blurb at the October meeting. Joe said that he had written it. Noelle proposed that the minutes be amended to reflect that Joe wrote the newsletter blurb.	Joe moved to approve the October meeting minutes, as amended; Chris seconded; the Board approved the minutes, as amended, by consensus.
Public Comment Period	None	
Committee Goals (Finance/Facilities)	<p>Rich presented the Finance Committee's Goals: (1) balance the budget; (2) use COVID grants appropriately; (3) review the school's \$0 balance budget policy; and (4) complete a mid-year review of frozen staff salaries.</p> <p>Joe presented the Facilities Committee's Goals: (1) complete an energy audit to determine how/if the system can be approved; (2) analyze the cost/need of mini splits for 6th-8th grade wing; (3) look at the feasibility of creating a barrier to protect the plants outside the school; and (4) have an audit to assess the building's accessibility.</p>	
Revised GABS Proposal	Noelle explained that the proposal for having staff members and teachers serve on Board committees had been revised following the last Board meeting. It was proposed that, if more than one staff member or teacher is interested in the same position and they cannot resolve among themselves who will fill the role, the decision will be made by the committee chair	Noelle moved to approve the revised proposal; Sara seconded; the Board approved the revised proposal by consensus.

	in connection with the GABS chair.	
New Board Members' Committee Placements (GABS)	Noelle proposed that Jill be on the Finance or Facilities Committee (because Facilities involves long-term capital investment); Kathleen and Tala be on GABS or Personnel; and that, if succession planning is done as part of the last LRP (likely to be considered in January), they could serve there as well. Deirdre pointed out we would ask Tala and Kathleen to consult on COVID-related issues. Kathleen expressed an interest in JEDI. Facilities and Personnel both expressed an interest in having a new member. It was agreed that Jill will serve on Facilities, Kathleen will serve on JEDI, and Tala will serve on Personnel.	
Q1 Financial Update (Kate/Rich)	Kate referred to the documents in the Board packet. She noted there was nothing surprising for Q1. Differences from the anticipated budget were two COVID-related grants. This grant money was spent for tents, tablets, things related to the on-line curriculum, and PPE. Funds from one of the grants needed to be spent by the end of the year.	
Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion (Jen/Karen)	Karen discussed possible JEDI training for the Board and the related cost. The Collaborative for Educational Services ("CES") would be able to provide a two-part training (two four-hour sessions) for \$1,580 per session. Comments were made about scheduling in advance so that everyone is able to attend. There was also a discussion about whether it would be possible to reduce the cost by having the training with another school district. Comments were made that the training would be specifically tailored to the school and, as a result, it might not work to have the training with another school district. Kate noted that there was a Board discretionary fund. Deirdre commented that the Board had never spent this amount of money on a project of its own. It was decided that JEDI should write up a proposal with the total cost and bring it to the next Finance Committee	The JEDI Committee will write up a proposal with the total cost of the training and present it to the Finance Committee at the Finance Committee's December 2nd meeting. The JEDI Committee will also send a Doodle Poll for dates for the training.

	<p>meeting. Once approved by the Finance Committee, the proposal could be brought back to the Board for final approval. Joe asked that, in the interim, the JEDI Committee start to work on dates so that they are in place if the proposal is approved.</p> <p>Jen referenced the letter that the JEDI Committee had sent to the school community.</p> <p>Deirdre said that she reached out to parents who had approached the Board previously about JEDI issues to see if they could put together a parent group, but had not received adequate responses to proceed further.</p>	
<p>Community COVID Update (Kathleen)</p>	<p>Kathleen explained that she is the Director of Community Research and Evaluation at the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts. They look at the average daily incidence rate per 100,000. She broke it down by the country, the state, and Western Massachusetts counties. She also explained the community COVID risk categorization. Based on those metrics, as of last week, Easthampton was a yellow community (1.05% positivity rate) and Northampton was green (.77% positivity rate). They also look at school cluster data. She said there has been a lot of household transmission.</p> <p>In response to questions, Kathleen and Tala explained that the spread in schools was lower than in the community. This is because of the protective measures (masking and social distancing) that are used in schools. In schools throughout the country, where precautions are taken, there are not widespread clusters.</p> <p>Kathleen emphasized the importance of continuing to track the data. Tala explained that the data is very nuanced.</p> <p>Mary noted that she has seen no COVID fatigue at</p>	

	school among the staff or students.	
<p>In-Person/Hybrid/Remote Updates (Kate/Lara/Deirdre)</p>	<p>Lara stated that in-person learning has gone very well. The plan is to extend in-person learning for the K-1 group to four times per week. She explained that this is possible based on all of the work that goes into coordinating the pick-up and drop-off. Protective measures have been working well (<i>e.g.</i>, wearing appropriate masks, hand sanitizing, single-use bathrooms, no eating in the building (eating outside the building is working for the limited students who are there for the whole day)). A staff member has been hired to oversee outdoor eating, sanitizing, and maintaining social distancing in hallways.</p> <p>Kate said that she was very proud of the school. She discussed the steps that were taken in the fall for reopening and the implementation of the plan for teachers and staff to request to work from home. Twenty-one out of fifty-one are in the building. Thirty staff members are working either entirely or partly from home.</p> <p>Lara and Kate explained that we are at a crossroads with the weather getting colder. The school can no longer rely on being outside. Lara said that the school wanted to have a minimum of two hours of in-person learning for all age groups and that would need to be in the building. They noted that we are coming to the end of our ability to individualize staff members' needs and preferences. It would cost approximately \$45,000 to hire substitutes for the sixth through eighth grade teachers. Students could come into the building and teachers could teach from home; there would need to be staffing in those rooms, which would be done by the substitutes. We would also need to increase costs for cleaning and special education services.</p> <p>Lara clarified that the questions for discussions are: (1) how much does the Board want to spend from the</p>	<p>Chris made a motion to release \$45,000 in emergency funds to the Directors to hire substitute teachers to bring the 6th-8th graders back in the building; Joe seconded; the motion was approved by consensus.</p> <p>Matt made a motion that the Domain Council form an Executive Committee (made up of the committee chairs, Tala, and Kathleen) to review the work-from-home policy (and return to the Board to present it); Dawn seconded; the Board approved by consensus.</p>

	<p>emergency funds on staffing in-person learning; and (2) do we want to revisit work-from-home policies we created at the beginning of the year; and (3) if we do want to revisit those policies, what will be the criteria for evaluating work-from-home requests and will we use the same committee to consider that.</p> <p>There was an extensive discussion about the use of emergency funds to pay for substitutes, allow teachers to continue to work from home, and get the older students into the building for at least two hours per week. It was acknowledged that the entire \$45,000 would not need to be spent, as this budgeted through the end of the year and students would likely be back outdoors in the spring. However, there was an acknowledgment that a longer-term plan was needed, because the school could be facing the same circumstances next year.</p> <p>The Board agreed to allow Matt to convene an Executive Committee to revisit the work-from-home policy, but only if that committee reported back to the Board for final approval. Chris noted that he did not want to approve authorizing a committee that had final decision-making authority, because it could result in a plan requiring teachers to return to the building against their wishes.</p> <p>Tamara Kupfer discussed the issues raised in the letter submitted to the Board by parents and the need to have kids in the building more. James Boddy echoed these comments and stated that teachers could be legally required to return to the building and that all employees prefer to have clear expectations.</p>	
Committee Reports - Questions only	None	
New Business	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Directors' evaluations 2. Report from Personnel Committee 	

	3. Director hiring proposal	
Meeting Wrap-Up/ Evaluation	Next Meeting: December 9, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. Facilitator: Matt Snacks: N/A Drinks: N/A Newsletter blurb: N/A	
Review Action Items	Reviewed action items.	
Adjournment	Meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.	

Tentative Agenda Topics for December 9, 2020 Board Meeting:

- JEDI
- Executive Committee Proposal re: Work-From-Home Policy
- Directors’ Evaluations
- Report from Personnel Committee
- Director Hiring Proposal