

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, February 10, 2021, 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, Dawn Reesman, Rich Senecal, Noelle Barrist Stern, Kelly Woods, Paula Ingram, Sara Schieffelin, Jen Matos, Chris Korczak, Joe Wyman, Kathleen Szegda, Jill Richmond, Tala Elia
- Regrets:** None
- Facilitator:** Matt
- Notetaker:** Noelle
- Guests:** (As listed in the Zoom participant information) Chris Dietrich, Laurel Loomis, Anne Schlereth, Greg Reynolds, Gina Wyman, Vicky Tilbe, Emilie Woodward, Myssie Casinghino, Dawn Graichen-Moore, Chadd Meerbergan, Rachel Lauder, Lily Newman, Jeff, Katie Krauskopf and Scott Meyers, Emily & James Boddy, Alec MacLachlan, Alex Niemiec, Grace Tiso, Jennifer Stauffer, Nan Childs, Tamara Kupfer, Mary Price, Sara Lunt, Kerri Simonelli, Sarah’s iPhone, Kate’s iPhone, Paula Yolles, Meg Colenback, Helen Korczak, Carol McMurrich, Ian Lauder, Casey, Cindy Mahoney, Cinzia Pica-Smith, Dan Bonham, James Saccento, Jeff P., Kate Ewall, Marguerite Durant, Meredith, Rachel Maiore, Renee Greenfield, Sarah Bittenwieser, Tiffany Ross, Jeff Dan, Alison Bent, Carla Clark, Chandler Klose, Kate Aleo, Tim Reynolds
- List keeper:** N/A because of “raise hand” function on Zoom
- Timekeeper:** Chris
- Mission statement read by:** Sara Schieffelin

Topic	Discussion	Action (if necessary)
Announcements/ Appreciations/ Acknowledgements	<p>Deirdre made an announcement reminding people about the consensus process and the spirit of the Hilltown mission statement. She explained how blocking concerns work.</p> <p>Noelle thanked the Health and Safety Team for all of the work they do to keep the students and staff safe: Kate, Lara, Tala, Kathleen, Mary Price, and Kate Ewal.</p> <p>Chris thanked Carol McMurrich for running the ski club again this year.</p> <p>Lara thanked the teachers who came to the Open</p>	

	<p>House in February to speak to prospective parents: Kerri Simonelli, Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Paula Ingram, and Peter Kennedy.</p> <p>At the end of the meeting, Deirdre thanked everyone who spoke for being honest about their positions and concerns.</p>	
Any Thank You Notes Needed?	None	
BOT Visibility This Month?	None	
Minutes	<p>Lara noted that, under “New Business,” “teachers’ salary scales” should be changed to “Directors’ salary scales.”</p> <p>Noelle noted three suggestions that had been given to her:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Under Board committee goals (Facilities): change last sentence to end after “tool.” Add another sentence that says: “The goal of the self assessment is to identify any areas for improvement to the accessibility in the building to come up with a future action plan.” 2. Under Board committee goals (Board): Insert a sentence (which would be the third sentence) that says: “Dawn has put together two subcommittees and they are in the process of setting up meetings.” 3. Under In person/hybrid/remote learning: the paragraph that says: “Jill echoed what Rich, Chris, and Sara said. She asked if we could delay the implementation to the springtime.” Change to: “Jill echoed what Rich, Chris, and Sara said. She asked if we could delay the implementation to the springtime, but continue with the planning process.” 	<p>Jill moved to approve the January meeting minutes, as amended; Kelly seconded; the Board approved the amended minutes, as amended, by consensus.</p>
Public Comment	<p>Noelle summarized how the Board process works: when meetings are held; when and how notice is posted; when and how agenda topics are posted; and when meeting minutes and Board packets are posted.</p>	

	<p>Scott Meyers summarized portions of the parent letter, submitted to the Board and included in the Board packet, advocating for in-person learning.</p> <p>Paula Yolles explained what it looks like when students are in the building (<i>e.g.</i>, how students at home are being instructed remotely at the same time by a teaching assistant). She said that she is in favor of increasing in-person learning, although she does not know how it will work to have students eating in the building, because there is no cafeteria.</p> <p>Greg Reynolds also advocated for increased in-person learning and discussed how hybrid learning is working in the school where he works. He asked Hilltown to be creative and explore all possible options.</p> <p>Meg Colenback advocated for more in-person learning and talked about the mental health needs of children during the pandemic and managing anxiety and fear.</p> <p>Chadd Meerbergan talked about his positive experience teaching at Smith Voc in-person during the pandemic and suggested that the school could be used as a model.</p> <p>Jennifer Stauffer advocated for increased in-person learning and asked that, if there will not be increased in-person learning (either a fully in-person program or a robust hybrid program), parents be notified as soon as possible.</p> <p>James Boddy asked that, as a community, we set our intention that our kids be back in school safely in the fall. He said this would result in the school community leaning in to help make that possible.</p> <p>Tamara Kupfer said that she fears Hilltown is lagging behind other schools in the area with the amount of in-person learning.</p> <p>Chris Dietrich shared an anecdote for why he thinks there needs to be greater in-person time. One of his son's friends decided to try in-person learning (the student had been fully remote). Chris's son had such joy because the friend was at school. Chris spoke with his friend's dad that evening and the student had the same experience.</p>	
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<p>Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion (JEDI) (Jen)</p>	<p>Jen gave an update on the status of the Board’s JEDI training.</p>	<p>JEDI will send a Doodle Poll to schedule the JEDI training.</p>
<p>Friends of Hilltown Update (Myssie)</p>	<p>Myssie thanked all of the donors to Friends of Hilltown. Friends has set up a way to order Dean’s Beans coffee. The anniversary party and fundraiser last spring was canceled. The funds were initially kept restricted in the hopes that they could be used this spring. When that was not an option, most of the donors generously changed the purpose for the funds so that they could be used for other things. Myssie spoke about grants that Friends has awarded to staff (e.g., Alex was awarded grant funds for yoga mats).</p>	<p>Myssie will send a note to Deirdre of the businesses that donated to Friends, so that the school can thank them.</p>
<p>Q2 Financial Update/Goals Update (Rich)</p>	<p>Rich summarized the Finance Committee’s four goals: (1) balancing the budget (this is a fluid year-round goal that they have been able to achieve to date); (2) to use the COVID grant funds appropriately (these funds have been used); (3) review of Hilltown’s zero-balance budget policy; and (4) review the frozen staff salaries.</p> <p>Kate said that the reimbursement numbers for Northampton students have not been released yet. Those numbers will not be released until Q3 or Q4, which means we need to hold off in looking at a revised budget and the current frozen staff salaries.</p> <p>Kate spoke about grant funds that are available in the amount of \$85,000.00 to be used for COVID-related reasons. She and Lara will be working on the grant application.</p>	
<p>GABs Guidance on BOT Communications (Clarification) (Paula)</p>	<p>Paula gave guidelines to Board members for when they are approached by members of the school community. This includes listening, suggesting that the person contact the President and Vice President or appropriate committee chair, or forwarding the comments to the President and Vice President or appropriate committee chair. The goal is to have effective and transparent communications.</p>	
<p>Board Succession Planning (Noelle)</p>	<p>Matt has agreed to stay on as President next year, Kathleen has agreed to serve as Vice President, and Rich has agreed to stay on as Treasurer. There is a need for a Clerk. Noelle asked if anyone is interested to please let her know and emphasized that the Clerk</p>	<p>GABS will continue to work on recruiting new members and trying to fill the Clerk position and openings</p>

	<p>can delegate duties to others.</p> <p>Sara will serve as GABS Chair, Rich will serve as Finance Chair, and Joe will serve as Facilities Chair. Kelly will not know until the fall whether she will remain on the Board as a community member. If she does not, Dawn will serve as Personnel Chair.</p> <p>The bylaws allow for two positions for permanent employees (non-voting). Paula’s term is ending, so both spots are open. Marguerite Durant has taken all of the steps to be on a ballot. Anyone else who is interested should submit an interest form and resume to Deirdre. GABS will follow up and speak with them. The person then needs to attend a Board meeting.</p> <p>Ten voting Board members are confirmed for next year. The By-laws allow for six to fifteen voting members. We have had two community members leave mid-year (Liz and Karen) and now have no community members. We are looking for approximately three new members and are interested in community members. Jen joined GABS for its meeting and gave some great ideas. GABS is hoping that each Board member will contact GABS to suggest one potential Board member.</p> <p>Next year, GABS will be down to just Sara as a returning member. Anyone who is interested in joining GABS this year to help with continuity should contact GABS.</p> <p>Dawn noted that Jill and possibly Kelly will be community members next year and we hope they will give us guidance as to keeping community Board members engaged. She also noted that, with the addition of another committee, it feels like there are not enough people on the Board to fill the committees and do all of the work.</p>	<p>on GABS and will report at the next meeting.</p>
<p>Personal Time Use for Staff (Personnel Committee Update (Lara))</p>	<p>The Personnel Committee approved a provision to use Personal Time on a regular basis to avoid teaching in person until April 1, 2021.</p>	
<p>Pool Testing (Update) (Mary)</p>	<p>Mary explained that Hilltown has been approved for funds for pool testing. The testing will identify asymptomatic kids, which will prevent or slow</p>	

	<p>transmission. It is done by putting a Q-tip on the inside of a child’s nostril. The children will do it themselves. Mary will test the K-1s and any second grader who does not feel comfortable doing it. If there is a positive, each individual will be tested separately using a rapid test, which they have at school. The individual identified will then be kept home for the quarantine period and their close contacts will be notified.</p> <p>Mary said we are having no transmission in school, but as we are increasing time in the building, this will help continue to keep everyone safe. The school will still use all of the same mitigation measures (masks, handwashing), but this will be an additional tool in the toolkit.</p> <p>The state will cover the cost for the first six weeks and then the school will pay for it. Parents will need to consent. Mary will send out the consent form after the meeting. The pool will be taken weekly. Since there are two cohorts, she will do it on Mondays and Tuesdays. She will then be able to do rapid testing on Wednesdays if there are positive tests.</p> <p>In response to a question from Chris, Mary said that most people who responded to the survey she had sent out are interested in having their children participate. She also answered other logistical questions.</p>	
<p>In-Person/Hybrid/Remote Updates (Kate/Lara/Deirdre/Tala)</p>	<p>Tala gave a presentation on COVID transmission in schools. On slide 10 in the presentation, the student and staff rates reflect incidence rates not positivity rates. She said that we have learned a lot over the last year about COVID and COVID in schools. She summarized studies that were done in the United States and other countries that showed rates of in-school transmission was minimal and often lower than community rates when school mitigation measures were in place. She also pointed to information on the DESE website and summarized how many students and staff have tested positive in the state. She explained that she took a very balanced view when examining the data. However, the data shows that there is very minimal transmission in schools and investigations of transmissions shows that it is usually related to failure to use mitigation methods, such as masking and proper ventilation. The data shows that the risk of being in school buildings is not higher than and, at times is lower than, community</p>	<p>Jill moved for the Board to create a task force, as proposed, with an emphasis on creating a timeline to increase in-person learning for the spring; Chris seconded; the Board approved the proposal by consensus.</p> <p>Matt will send an email to the community,</p>

	<p>transmission.</p> <p>Kate presented the results of the recent parent survey: 98.6% of respondents said they planned to get the vaccine when available. 72.3% of respondents reported that they would like more on-site time. She broke down the reasons given in favor and against increasing in-person time.</p> <p>Deirdre summarized the responses from the student surveys. Most students responded that what was going well for them was the in-person time and what was not going well was not seeing their friends. The main response to what would make their school experience better was seeing friends. 64.2% of students said they would like to have more in-person time (19.8% said they were learning remotely). She noted that the students' responses were very similar to the parents' responses.</p> <p>Lara summarized the responses from the staff surveys. 100% of staff intend to get the vaccine. 57.7% said that they do not want to see more on-site time offered for 4th-8th graders. A number of people felt that the school would not be able to offer more on-site time without impact on the curriculum for remote learners. The main things teachers expressed needing before implementing more in-person time would be getting vaccinated, others getting vaccinated, and teaching outside.</p> <p>Kate said that timing is critical. The Directors are recommending that the school establish a task force, chaired by the Board President, to address these issues. It would be made up of three Directors, the Board President, one other Board member, two parents who are not members, and two teachers.</p> <p>Dawn said that she supported forming a task force so that blocking concerns to moving forward can be worked out and then a plan can be presented to the Board.</p> <p>Jen proposed that a student be on the task force. Kelly commented that this be done in such a way so that it is emotionally appropriate for the student.</p> <p>Joe suggested that the task force set clear benchmarks and a timeline for decisions.</p>	<p>informing them of the task force and asking for those who are interested to contact him. He will then speak with them and select members.</p>
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	<p>Deirdre and Matt explained that the task force would be an advisory committee that would report to the Directors who would ultimately present the plan to the Board.</p> <p>Matt responded that the task force would need to address two things: (1) more in-person time in the spring; and (2) more in-person time in the fall. Kathleen and Noelle pointed out that there is an issue as to timing and the creation of the task force will delay decisions about increasing in-person time in the spring.</p> <p>Matt asked that anyone interested in serving on the task force contact him and he will speak with them. He will also send an email to the community by the end of the weekend asking for interest. Matt and the task force will determine how to incorporate a student member or a student working group.</p>	
Committee Reports - Questions Only	None	
New Business	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning for annual meeting (GABS) 2. Review capital budget 3. Finance Committee update 4. SAT10 update 	
Meeting Wrap-Up/ Evaluation	<p>Next Meeting: March 10, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Facilitator: Matt Snacks: N/A Drinks: N/A Newsletter blurb: Joe</p>	
Review Action Items	Reviewed action items.	
Adjournment	Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.	

Tentative Agenda Topics for March 10, 2021 Board Meeting:

JEDI
Planning for annual meeting
Review capital budget
Finance Committee update
SAT10 update

Succession planning update
Task force report