

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, January 13, 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) Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Alec MacLachlan, Alex Niemiec, Mary Price, Llsa Mascaro, Kate Ramsey, Beth, Cait, Cindy Mahoney, Emily Lees, Gaby Blaustein, Gina Wyman, Grace Tiso, Helen Korczak, Joanna Morse, Kerri Simonelli, Marguerite Durant, Meg Taylor, Andrea Hearn, James Saccento, Myssie Casinghino, Peter Kennedy, Sarah Buttensieser, Anne Schlereth, Paula Yolles, Emilie Woodward, Lisa Mascaro, Mariah Mitchell, Mike Robinson, Stefanie Krantz, Aram
- List keeper:** N/A because of “raise hand” function on Zoom
- Timekeeper:** Chris
- Mission statement read by:** Sara

Topic	Discussion	Action (if necessary)
Announcements/ Appreciations/ Acknowledgements	<p>Matt announced that Karen will be leaving the Board. As a community member, she felt distanced from the school community. She will be missed.</p> <p>Kate appreciated Mary for getting the symptomatic COVID testing for the school community.</p> <p>Lara appreciated Cindy Mahoney for running SEPAC throughout the pandemic. She also appreciated Deirdre, Aram, Marguerite, and Grace for putting on a wonderful and well-attended solstice celebration.</p> <p>Deirdre appreciated everyone who participated in the clothing swap.</p> <p>Kelly appreciated the Friends of Hilltown for donating the money for the JEDI training for the Board (see below).</p>	

	<p>Deirdre announced that she will be retiring at the end of this year.</p> <p>Lara thanked Emily Lees and Nicole for all of their work on the Personnel Committee putting its proposals together (see below).</p> <p>Chris thanked Matt for running the meeting.</p>	
Any Thank You Notes Needed?	None	
BOT Visibility This Month?	The MLK All School will be on Wednesday and it would be very nice for Board members to be present and participate.	
Minutes		Chris moved to approve the December meeting minutes; Kelly seconded; the Board approved the minutes by consensus.
Public Comment	<p>Gina Wyman read a statement to the Board. She said that a large percent of students are not coming to school for in-person time. There is no on-line learning available to them when students are in person. She said that she is able to provide the best quality instruction when all students are remote. She noted her concern for children's mental health and recognized the need for students to have socialization at school and for parents to have childcare. She noted, however, that she is not a mental health professional or childcare provider.</p> <p>Peter Kennedy read a statement to the Board and raised similar issues. He pointed out that he is able to provide only very limited instruction during the in-person time and the proposed Remote + 2 Plan will result in even more challenges in providing instruction and disparity between the hybrid and fully remote learners. He also noted that he has not received any specific information as to when the additional in-person hours are to occur</p> <p>Rachel Merrell pointed out that more families are keeping their children home in light of the increasing COVID numbers. However, teachers are not provided</p>	

	<p>a similar opportunity to remain at home. She said that in-person time should not be added until the weather is warmer and there can be more outdoor learning and more people have received vaccines.</p> <p>Nan Childs said that, yesterday, she had four students, which meant that sixteen students were doing remote learning. This led her to question where she was supposed to devote her time. She said that, while the numbers are this high, she does not think we should be trying to increase the amount of in-person instruction.</p> <p>Sarah Battenwieser appreciated everything the staff has done to have in-person time and said she also understood teachers' concerns about increasing in-person time. She advocated the importance of holding the community together and said that she would support waiting to increase in-person time.</p> <p>Beth Adel said that teachers are currently spread very thin. Preparing the remote-learning lessons takes a lot of extra work. Hilltown teachers are very committed, but it feels really hard to be asked to reconfigure everything again. This is in addition to the risk of possible infection from going into the building. She said the feeling in the building now is really hard and it is difficult to be asked to work more hours with a frozen salary, while also absorbing the cost of using internet from home.</p>	
<p>Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion (JEDI) (Jen)</p>	<p>Jen told the Board that the Friends of Hilltown have generously offered to fund the JEDI training for the Board. Five hundred dollars will need to come from the discretionary fund and the remainder will be paid by the Friends of Hilltown.</p> <p>Deirdre and Dawn pointed out that this left the Board with no funds to do anything else this year. There was a discussion about what else the Board would need the money for. Deirdre explained that, in the past, it has been used for programming or meals or location if there is a retreat.</p> <p>Jill asked if we should have the training at the beginning of next year, since we will have new members on the Board. Matt said that we had committed to having the training this year.</p>	<p>Chris moved to authorize the \$500 from the Board's discretionary fund for the training; Tala seconded; the motion was approved by consensus.</p> <p>Matt will speak with JEDI about moving forward now that Karen is no longer on the Board.</p>

<p>Director Hiring Proposal (Kelly)</p>	<p>Kelly referred to the proposal in the packet and summarized it. Lara pointed out that the hiring committee will interview all internal candidates who meet the minimum qualifications.</p>	<p>Kelly moved to approve the proposal; Kathleen seconded; the Board approved the proposal by consensus.</p>
<p>Extending Tax Credit for COVID Leave (Tala)</p>	<p>Tala referred to the proposal in the packet and summarized it.</p>	<p>Kelly moved to approve the proposal, Joe seconded; the Board approved the proposal by consensus.</p>
<p>Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Plan (Directors)</p>	<p>Lara explained that the goal of the SOA Plan is to identify consistent disparities between student sub-groups and make a three-year plan to address them. The three areas identified are: (1) economically disadvantaged students have lower ELA proficiency scores; (2) female students have lower math proficiency scores; and (3) the school’s educator workforce is not representative of the student population.</p> <p>Lara summarized what the school is doing to address each of these: (1) adopting a science-based reading program (Being a Reader through Collaborative Classroom); (2) already replacing the 6th-8th math curriculum and reviewing the K-5th math curriculum; and (3) diversifying staff through recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Kate explained that the Directors are asking the Board to approve the short form. If approved, it will be sent to the Commissioner and then will be posted. In response to a question from Chris, she explained that there is no downside to the plan.</p>	<p>Chris moved to approve the plan; Jen seconded; the Board approved the plan by consensus.</p>
<p>Committee Goals Update (Matt)</p>	<p>Sara went over the status of the GABS Committee’s goals. GABS resolved the committee roles for the current year, developed a policy for selecting teachers and staff members to serve on Board committees, and conducted two orientation programs for new members. The following goals are in progress: reorganizing the shared Google drives; and Board recruitment and succession planning.</p> <p>Rich said that the Finance Committee will report on their goals next month.</p>	

	<p>Kelly reported that two of the Personnel Committee’s goals--the Hiring Policy for School Directors and Extending the Tax Credit for COVID Sick Leave--were approved.</p> <p>Joe reported on the Facilities Committee’s goals. They are working on improvements to the HVAC units and in getting mini-splits. Nan did research on barriers around parking spaces by the flower beds. They have discussed extending the sidewalk to that part of the building. Jill joined the committee and identified a self-assessment tool. 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.</p> <p>Dawn went over the Board goals for the year. The Board has established the JEDI Committee and will be moving forward with the JEDI training. Dawn has put together two subcommittees and they are in the process of setting up meetings. The Board is also moving forward with the Directors’ performance reviews: Dawn has put together a committee for that purpose. There has been improvement on the availability of Board documents and materials on the web site.</p>	
<p>Standardized Testing Update (Lara)</p>	<p>Testing is different this year. MCAS will be abbreviated. The IOWA test was replaced by the SAT 10. Usually, Hilltown scores above average. The school aims to be in the 75th percentile. With COVID, the school has been average, in the 50th percentile. It is also unclear if the SAT 10 is more difficult than the IOWA. There was less familiarity with it. The conditions under which students took the test were also more difficult this year. Reading scores were higher than math scores.</p>	
<p>In-Person/Hybrid/Remote Updates (Kate/Lara/Deirdre)</p>	<p>Lara read a statement. She explained that a decision not to support the proposal will result in the school staying with the current model. At this time, with the current guidelines, the school’s health and safety team has determined that the most the school can offer for in-person time is the Remote +2 Plan.</p> <p>Kate shared the increase in absences and students who went remote following winter break.</p> <p>In response to questions from Chris, Lara and Kate responded that the goal is to get back outside for</p>	

	<p>in-person instruction as soon as possible (once snowfall/plowing is done) and that they have not surveyed staff as to how many intend to get the vaccine.</p> <p>Dawn raised a question about what happens if the in-person learning is shifted to outdoors and the weather is bad (<i>i.e.</i>, whether school would be canceled). Kate said that she did not know of a reason why they would cancel. They would want to use the building if it was pouring or if there were high winds.</p> <p>In response to a question from Kathleen, Lara responded that whenever something is gained, another thing is lost. If there is more in-person time, it can negatively impact the quality of the remote instruction.</p> <p>Rich asked if the Directors support the plan and think it is the right thing to do, since they have all of the data. He asked if they think it is better than the way things are now. Lara responded that it is her job to bring the plan forward, but that she fully trusts the process. She discussed equity concerns and said that she thinks some students are being underserved by not having enough time in the building. At the same time, some fully remote learners are not having as robust of an experience.</p> <p>A number of Board members thanked the Directors for putting the proposal together.</p> <p>Jill asked how teacher absences will be addressed with the Remote +2 Plan. Lara said that it is not a good policy to build a program that is based on substitute teachers. But if we need to have teachers off site for quarantine or health reasons, there should be adequate staffing.</p> <p>Paula asked when the Work-From-Home Plan would be shared with the staff. Lara explained that the Remote +2 Plan and the Work-From-Home Plan are separate. The school will resolve the Remote +2 Plan and then address Work-From-Home Plan.</p> <p>Chris asked, if the Board approves Remote +2, would review of the Work-From-Home Plan need to come back before the Board. Kate and Lara clarified that each individual work-from-home arrangement was always subject to change based on programmatic</p>	
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	<p>changes and would not need to come back before the Board.</p> <p>Tala commented that she does not see the risk-benefit analysis of the Remote +2 Plan as a public health issue (because of the mitigation strategies in place in school), but rather the risk-benefit to students of increasing in-person vs. remote learning.</p> <p>Rich said that he could not vote for the Remote +2 Plan in good conscience, because the teachers are already stretched too thin. He doesn't think the extra hours will be sufficiently beneficial.</p> <p>Chris echoed Rich's comments and said that he would have a blocking concern about reassessing the Work-From-Home Plan if teachers are not able to work remotely if that is their preference.</p> <p>Sara said how compelling she found what the teachers said during the public comments. She said that the two hours is not worth the risk. She noted that parents who are asking for more time would like full days, not two hours, so the plan does not address this concern. She asked if there was another or better way to make the social connections for kids happen.</p> <p>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. Jen also expressed a blocking concern.</p> <p>Kathleen asked if it was possible to delay implementation of the plan, because of the COVID numbers right now.</p> <p>Tala stated that she agrees with a lot of the sentiments expressed. She asked if the teachers could be involved in the planning so that mitigation strategies could be included that would address some of their concerns.</p> <p>Dawn noted that some parents who are asking for more in-person time are looking for full days, but others are seeing the benefit to having two hours in person and would like to increase that. She also noted that, if there is a delay, it means implementation does not begin until March or April.</p> <p>Joe said he supported the idea of the Directors</p>	
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	<p>meeting with the teaching teams about what the Remote +2 Plan would look like.</p> <p>Chris asked if we should take the burden that is already in place off of the teachers (<i>i.e.</i>, reducing the current in-person time).</p> <p>Because there were six blocking concerns, there was no forward movement on the plan.</p>	
Committee Reports - Questions Only	None	
New Business	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarifying the process for setting Directors' salary scales 2. Board succession planning 3. Q2 financial update 4. Friends of Hilltown update 	
Meeting Wrap-Up/ Evaluation	<p>Next Meeting: February 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 9:08 p.m.	

Tentative Agenda Topics for February 10, 2021 Board Meeting:

JEDI

Clarifying the process for setting Directors' salary scales

Board succession planning

Q2 financial update

Friends of Hilltown update