

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, December 9, 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, Sara Schieffelin, Chris Korczak, Dawn Reesman, Joe Wyman, Kathleen Szegda, Jill Richmond, Tala Elia
- Regrets:** Jen Matos
- Facilitator:** Matt
- Notetaker:** Noelle
- Guests:** (As listed in the Zoom participant information) Alec MacLachlan, Laurel Loomis, Peter Kennedy, Nancy Childs, Kerri Simonelli, Gaby Blaustein, Emily Boddy, Melysa Friedman, Marguerite Durant, Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Emily Lees, Joy Kinigstein, Beth Adel, Grace Tiso, Cait, Gina, Dan Klatz, Bobby, Alex Niemiec, Meg Colenback, Scott Meyers, Andrew Sirulnik, Tamara Kupfer, Myssie Casinghino, Mary Price, Rachel Merrell, Maggie Dietrich, Seana, Andrea Hearn, Paula Yolles, Carol McMurrich, Zoe Klatz, Jeanne S., Sam Schoenberger, Tiffany Ross, Stephanie Mattrey, Rashida Krigger, Joanna Morse, Helen Korczak
- List keeper:** N/A because of “raise hand” function on Zoom
- Timekeeper:** Chris
- Mission statement read by:** Lara

Topic	Discussion	Action (if necessary)
Announcements/ Appreciations/ Acknowledgements	<u>Announcements:</u> <u>Appreciations/Acknowledgements:</u> Deirdre thanked everyone who helped with the remote Winter Fair (wreath making and other activities) and said that it went really well.	
Any thank you notes needed?	None	
BOT Visibility this month?	Deirdre noted that the Winter Solstice Celebration is coming up. It will be remote.	

Minutes	Noelle asked if Joe wrote the newsletter blurb. No one wrote a newsletter blurb last month. Noelle said the minutes would be revised to note “N/A” under “Newsletter blurb.”	Dawn moved to approve the minutes, as amended; Chris seconded; the minutes, as amended, were approved by consensus.
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<p>Public Comment</p>	<p>Tamara Kupfer advocated that increasing the amount of in-person learning is the right path for the school. She stated that the school is safe and the data supports increased in-person time. She said that the school needs to come up with a long-term plan and it needs to be shared with the entire school community.</p> <p>Paula Yolles said we are at a pivotal moment in deciding how to proceed. She said that one of the best things about Hilltown is the sense of community. She said that it is starting to feel like it is teachers vs. parents who want increased in-person time. She said that the current system is not sustainable, because there is in-person and remote learning at the same time. She asked the Board and Directors to stand behind what had been offered at the beginning of the year (teachers could request to work from home) until the end of the year.</p> <p>Laurel Loomis said that the staff put their trust in the Directors and the Board to protect them. She said they are not feeling safe. She asked, if this is the case, how will the school maintain its sense of community.</p> <p>Maggie Dietrich talked about how remote learning has negatively impacted her child and how much things improve when he goes to school for two hours per week. She said that she believes the school can put in place increased in-person time and protect the safety of students and staff. She urged the Directors and Board to take quicker action.</p> <p>Marguerite Durant referred to the survey that was discussed at the school's listening session last week. She said that the priorities identified were safety and equity. She said that a large number of students are remote only and, if in-person time is increased and remote instruction is decreased, we need to consider how that will impact the remote-only students.</p>	
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<p>Charter Board Survey (Kelly)</p>	<p>Kelly noted that Board members had received a Charter Board Survey from the Charter School Association and asked if the Board will be participating. Deirdre said that the survey asked a lot of the questions that DESE asks when it makes a site visit. She said that she thinks the purpose behind the survey is to see if additional training/education is needed for Board members.</p> <p>Matt encouraged everyone to complete the survey. Kelly said it is due on December 11th.</p>	<p>Board members will complete the survey by December 11th.</p>
<p>Enrollment Policy (Kate)</p>	<p>Kate referred to the revised enrollment policy (dated 12/7/20). She said this is something that is required by DESE. She said it has expanded since last year, but all of the detail was required.</p> <p>In response to a question from Chris, Kate said she could do a summary for people to read that would be easier for people to comprehend.</p>	<p>Kelly moved to accept the revised enrollment policy, as drafted, with the addition that the Directors are able to make non-substantive changes; Joe seconded; the Board approved the revised enrollment policy by consensus.</p>
<p>Special Subcommittee Work/Needs (Dawn/Matt)</p>	<p>Dawn asked for Board members to volunteer for two special subcommittees: (1) to conduct the Directors’ evaluations; and (2) to address the portion of the current Long-Range Plan on the roles and responsibilities of the Directors. Dawn said that this work needs to be done now despite the pandemic, because the Directors need more feedback than they are currently receiving and, if there is a change in Directors, their roles and responsibilities need to be clear. She said she would like to be on the second subcommittee.</p>	<p>Dawn will send an email to the Board members asking for volunteers.</p>
<p>Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion (Karen)</p>	<p>Karen reported that all subcommittees are supposed to be looking at JEDI issues. She said in the Facilities Committee, they are looking at building accessibility issues. Kate spoke on behalf of the Finance Committee and the request for JEDI training presented to that committee. She said that they are</p>	<p>JEDI will look at whether there are other training options and ways to be creative. Matt will reach out to the Charter School Association to see</p>

	<p>trying to determine how to budget for the training. Kelly shared that the new staff folder was shared with the Personnel Committee and they are starting to discuss how to incorporate best practices in recruiting and hiring. Sara reported that JEDI will be an agenda item moving forward for the GABS Committee.</p> <p>Karen also reported that the initial request for funding for the training was denied by the Finance Committee, but the Finance Committee said they could present a revised proposal. Karen said that they would be submitting a revised request for \$3,160 for the training. She advocated that this is important work and we will not be able to go forward in a meaningful way if the Board does not have the training and vocabulary to have meaningful discussions about JEDI issues.</p> <p>Chris asked if JEDI was asking for the money for this year or as part of the July budget. Karen clarified that it is for this year. She said JEDI was authorized only until July. If the training will be put off, JEDI will need to be authorized for another year and it is putting the whole issue off.</p> <p>In response to a question from Kelly, Rich and Chris explained that the funds were denied because the funds had not been allocated (there is nowhere to take the money from; there is only a \$500 discretionary fund), unless this is designated as an emergency and made part of an emergency fund. Dawn and Sara advocated that we be creative in trying to arrange for this training/work without it necessarily costing such a large amount. Chris advocated that he would not be opposed to pulling from the emergency fund with the understanding that it be replenished. Kate noted that the Finance Committee will be bringing a revised budget to the Board in February. She clarified that we do not have an “emergency fund”; we have reserves.</p>	<p>whether there are grants available.</p>
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	<p>Myssie Casinghino, on behalf of the Friends of Hilltown, said that she would be willing to look into how they might support the cost. Deirdre said that the money from Friends of Hilltown has already been allocated in the budget.</p>	
<p>In-Person/Hybrid/Remote Updates (Kate/Lara/Deirdre)</p>	<p>Lara went over the timeline from July through December. She explained that the plan going forward is to move to remote plus two for the 4th-8th graders. She said that the Directors will be assessing in January when they can move to this next step. Lara explained that the matter cannot be resolved this month, because of: the scheduling, transportation, and communication challenges; having more students on site for extra support; the school currently administering standardized tests; the school preparing progress reports; having staff out unexpectedly; and issues of parity between remote and on-site challenges. She said that the Directors’ plan is to work toward the next phase in January and that three issues need to be resolved: the pace of change; clarity on the curriculum; and ensuring the remote program is not overly diluted.</p> <p>Kate discussed school safety and the groups that the school consults with on safety issues. DESE has identified Northampton as its target municipality and the Northampton Director of Health has said that there is no reason for the school to go fully remote at this time. She said that if someone tests positive, the staff and parents of the students in that cohort will be notified and that cohort will go remote.</p> <p>In response to questions from Karen and Noelle about the Board’s role vs. the Directors’ roles in the hybrid plan, Laura explained that the Directors are tasked with developing the best policy they can and then they submit that to the Board for their comments and hopefully support.</p>	

	<p>A number of Board members advocated for having a plan that is shared with the school community. Kate and Lara explained that the most we can do this year is remote plus two for everyone except for the K-1st grade students who will have remote plus four. They explained that this is based on the safety protocols and mitigation strategies (<i>e.g.</i>, having spaces for individual cohorts, not having crowded common spaces, having work spaces for teachers to be in the building with their masks off if they need to be to teach to remote learners). Kate said that, if we wanted to go beyond that, it would mean looking at expanding facilities and staffing.</p> <p>Lara explained that, in January, the Directors can provide a timeline.</p> <p>Kelly cautioned that we still need to make sure that there is flexibility built into the plan and timeline.</p> <p>Dawn advocated that we assume everyone is coming from a place of best intent.</p>	
<p>Work-From-Home Procedure</p>	<p>Matt explained that the Executive Committee met following the last meeting to address the work-from-home procedures and whether changes were needed. He stated that the Executive Committee had determined that no changes were needed at this time and there is no policy or proposal in front of the Board.</p> <p>Chris asked if there was anything in the procedure that prevented teachers who were on site from requesting to work from home. Lara said that it could happen that a work-from-home plan might not be renewed if it did not fit with program needs.</p> <p>Lara explained that use of the \$45,000 that the Board authorized at the last meeting is on pause, because</p>	

	<p>upon further review, the Directors thought that the use of substitute teachers did not work with the school’s programming.</p> <p>Dan provided clarity and a historical perspective on the school’s reserves.</p> <p>Joanna Morse asked for clarity on the process for allowing teachers to work from home and having substitutes in the building. She said that she does not feel heard and she knows she speaks on behalf of other teachers. She said this is a pivotal moment in the relationship between the Board, the teachers, and the staff.</p> <p>Chris advocated that teachers should not feel they have to come into the building against their will.</p>	
Committee Reports - Questions only	None	
New Business	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update from all committees on progress on committee goals 2. Succession planning for next year 3. Personnel Committee policy for streamlining the future hiring process for Directors 	
Meeting Wrap-Up/ Evaluation	<p>Next Meeting: January 13, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>Facilitator: Matt</p> <p>Snacks: N/A</p> <p>Drinks: N/A</p> <p>Newsletter blurb: Joe</p>	
Review Action Items	Reviewed action items.	
Adjournment	Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.	

Tentative Agenda Topics for January 13, 2021 Board Meeting:

JEDI

Update from all committees on progress on committee goals

Succession planning for Board members

Personnel Committee policy for streamlining the future hiring process for Directors