

Central Massachusetts Collaborative

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Dr. Susan Farrell, Executive Director
Beverly Tefft, Finance Director
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Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, January 28, 2021, at 8:30 a.m.
14 New Bond Street, Worcester, MA 01606

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Maureen Binienda, Chair, Superintendent of Schools, Worcester Public Schools
Dr. Ruthann Goguen, Superintendent of Schools, Webster Public Schools
Dr. Kristine Nash, Interim Superintendent of Schools, Oxford Public Schools

Also Present: Dr. Susan Farrell, Executive Director, CMC
Beverly Tefft, Director of Finance and Operations, CMC
Joseph Meichelbeck, Treasurer, CMC
Kay Seale, Manager of Special Education & Intervention Services, Worcester Public Schools
Triada Frangou-Apostolou, Department Head, Worcester Public Schools

1. Superintendent Binienda called the Meeting to Order at 8:55 a.m.

2. Approval of the November 19, 2020 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes (voting item)

Dr. Goguen made a MOTION to approve the November 19, 2020 Board of Directors meeting minutes.

Superintendent Binienda seconds the MOTION.

3. Director of Finance & Operations Report

a. Warrants

Mrs. Tefft introduced five (5) warrants for November and December 2020 which will be sent to the Board for signature.

b. FY21 P&L @ 12.31.2020

Mrs. Tefft summarized revenues and expenses for the time period ending December 31, 2020. She was happy to report that the Collaborative had budgeted for fifty (50) out of district students however the actual number rose to seventy (70) out of district students. Additionally, there are several pending referrals for the forty-five (45) day assessment center which is promising towards increasing student numbers. The Recovery High School program currently has five (5) students which is below the required thirty (30) students to recover expenses for the program.

Dr. Goguen thanked the Recovery High School staff for a student from Webster that recently graduated from the program.

Mrs. Tefft informed the Board of various expenses including air filters that arrived in January and an anticipated increase in legal services this year due to impending union contract negotiations. Beginning in January, Mrs. Tefft will be tracking encumbrances and there will be a snapshot to show the projections each month.

Additionally, Mrs. Tefft was happy to report that the Business Office has been fully staffed since September 2020. One Business Office Assistant handles payroll and all benefit related matters. The second Business Office Assistant handles all billing, accounts payable and accounts receivable. Both were involved in the annual audit and the team is working to create a smooth workflow process.

c. Increase in taxes

Mrs. Tefft updated the Board on an expected property tax increase for the New Bond location. These specific annual true-up expenditures have been reviewed by the Collaborative legal counsel; however, due to the terms of the triple net lease, there is little that can be done to avoid the increased taxes.

d. Treasurer's Report

Mr. Meichelbeck had no new updates for the treasurer's report at this time.

e. OPEB Trust

Dr. Farrell updated the Board on the status of the OPEB Trust committee. It has been challenging to locate a retiree to join the committee however Dr. Farrell will reach out again to obtain interest.

Dr. Goguen mentioned the original agreement was to assemble a committee that would meet approximately four (4) times per year.

Dr. Farrell will regroup with Mrs. Tefft and Mr. Meichelbeck and report back in the February Board meeting.

4. Executive Director Report

a. Acceptance of Donations (voting item)

Dr. Goguen made a MOTION for the Board to accept the following donations:

- DonorsChoose.org, "Being Safe Is In Our Hands" for CMP, unknown amount;
- DonorsChoose.org, "Wobble While We Work" for HLC, unknown amount;
- Toys for Tots, Christmas Donation for RGA, estimated value of \$2,000;
- Toys for Tots, Christmas Donation for CMP, estimated value of \$2,000;
- Two Screens for Teachers, "Request a Free Monitor" for RGA, unknown amount.

Dr. Nash seconds the MOTION.

b. Student Enrollment Updates

Dr. Farrell introduced the student census for January 2021 which remains at four-hundred thirty-six (436). Additionally, Dr. Farrell was pleased to report that the Collaborative continues to receive referrals for the assessment center. Leadership is looking at the potential to expand this program.

c. Staffing Updates

Dr. Farrell presented the January 2021 staffing updates. The Collaborative currently has one (1) open BCBA position, six (6) open teaching positions and twenty (20) open Instructional Assistant positions. The leadership team is looking for ways to recruit new hires and have also collaborated with Worcester Public Schools for candidates.

Dr. Farrell updated the Board on the continued challenges of recruiting Instructional Assistants due to the pay scale. The Collaborative has had several candidates decline positions due to receiving offers of higher pay elsewhere. Dr. Farrell suggested adjusting the pay by removing the lowest pay and realigning based on this change. She also mentioned that the stretch pay over the summer reduces the amount of money staff take home in each paycheck and CMC may want to consider an opt out of stretch pay for IAs. CMC leadership has been advised that any adjustments would need to be limited to work already begun as professional and Instructional Assistant staff have moved to unionize and a demand to bargain letter has been received.

The board stated the salary scales should remain unchanged at this time and Dr. Goguen suggested reviewing the current open instructional assistant positions and consider reorganizing staffing to better support student needs.

d. COVID Updates

Dr. Farrell explained that the Collaborative continues to stay focused on how to remain open safely. Since the previous Board meeting, there has been a spike in cases from the end of November through January 2021. Fortunately, most of these cases occurred during times when the Collaborative was remote.

d. Quarterly Reports

Dr. Farrell introduced the Quarter One and Quarter Two reports. The first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CMC reopening committee worked throughout the summer to develop a safe reopening plan for staff and students. Dr. Farrell has been pleased with the new health and safety protocols implemented during the pandemic. Throughout the second quarter, students and staff have learned how to navigate the world of hybrid learning with grace and perseverance. Dr. Farrell has maintained regular contact with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the local Department of Health and the Board to report the impact of COVID-19. Staff and families have been kept apprised of COVID-19 cases and when appropriate, close contacts were placed on quarantine and advised to seek guidance from their personal physician. The increased connection with families has been extremely beneficial to all.

Superintendent Binienda mentioned new guidelines about face masks and restraints. With lower class sizes, behavioral interventions have been reduced.

f. Program Updates - Music Department Presentation 9:30AM

Dr. Farrell introduced Mr. Matthew Sowersby, the Collaborative's phenomenal music teacher. Mr. Sowersby discussed the music program and new software that allows students to create original music. Three (3) students Jedidiah Perez (THRIVE), Analyah Velez (CMP) and Victoria Gray (RGA) presented their original music compositions.

Dr. Farrell praised the students and thanked Mr. Sowersby for their hard work and presentation.

5. Member Requests/New Business

Dr. Farrell was pleased to announce the Collaborative has received a grant from the state in the amount of \$41,000 which will help offset some of the COVID expenses incurred.

Additionally, Dr. Farrell announced the Recovery High School program has an MOU in process to partner with a local mental health agency. This partnership will help send referrals to the Recovery High School program and there is no cost to the Collaborative. Dr. Farrell added that leadership is working hard to create a more balanced approach to marketing this program to families. There is a need to explain how the program will benefit families and Dr. Farrell explained the harm reduction method used by the Recovery High School program.

6. Executive Session

Dr. Goguen made a MOTION to enter Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L.c.30 A sec 21 to discuss strategy for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel and with respect to collective bargaining (Teachers and Instructional Assistants) or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. The Board will not reconvene.

Superintendent Binienda seconds the MOTION.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn NeJaime