



NORTHSHORE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

Board of Directors Minutes September 15, 2023

Present:	Beverly:	Dr. Charochak
	Danvers:	Mr. Bauer
	Hamilton Wenham:	Mr. Tracy
	Ipswich:	Dr. Blake
	Lynn:	Dr. Alvarez
	Lynnfield:	Ms. Vogel
	Manchester-Essex:	Ms. Beaudoin
	Marblehead:	Ms. Cresta
	Masconomet:	Dr. Harvey
	North Reading:	Dr. Daly
	Pentucket:	Dr. Bartholomew
	Reading:	Dr. Milaschewski
	Rockport:	Dr. Branco
	Salem:	Dr. Zrike
	Tri-Town:	Dr. Morrison
	Triton:	Mr. Forget
NEC:	F. Rosenberg	L. Fleming
	K. Mahoney	K. Mahoney
	M. Bourgault	Facilities Dir.
	J. Zeigler	AFT local 4293
	E. Aldrich	Dir. of Tech
Absent:	Gloucester:	Mr. Lummis
	Nahant:	Dr. Pierantozzi
	Peabody:	Dr. Vadala
	Swampscott:	Ms. Angelakis

I. Call to Order and Welcome to New Members and Introductions

Dr. Morrison called the meeting to order at 8:02 am. The board welcomed new members, Mr. Dan Bauer, Superintendent, Danvers Public Schools, Dr. Evonne Alvarez, Superintendent, Lynn Public Schools and Ms. Michelle Cresta, Interim Superintendent Marblehead Public Schools. Ms. Rosenberg and members of the board welcomed NEC's Director of Finance and Operations, Mr. Larry Fleming to his first official meeting.

II. Approval of Consent Agenda

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Forget and seconded Dr. Daly to accept the consent agenda which include the May 2023 BOD Minutes and September 2023 Appointments and May, June, July and August 2023 warrants as presented.

VOTE: The motion was moved unanimously

III. Executive Directors Report and Priorities for FY24 Full report will be attached to minutes

IV. Treasurer's Report - Mr. Mahoney reviewed the May, June, July and August 2023

Treasurer's Reports (which will be attached to minutes following the board meeting). The monthly reports reflect our overall cash position which remains consistent with sufficient funds on hand to meet net cash requirement. Ms. Rosenberg thanked Mr. Mahoney for all of his help and support to NEC. She reminded new members that his responsibility is to make sure the board has direct report or access to a treasurer.

There were no questions.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Tracy and seconded by Dr. Blake to accept May, June, July and August 2023 Treasurers reports as presented.

VOTE: The motion was moved unanimously

V. Update on FY24 Budget to Date Mr. Fleming gave an update on FY 2024 extended school year for revenue vs payroll. Both revenue and payroll were over budget, leading to a very small negative compared to budget. It was a successful ESY program overall.

- KOG had a net of \$58k vs budget, total net was \$906K. The census was +5.
- NSAU had a net of -\$29,216 vs budget, total net was \$298k. The census was right on, but PR
- was \$29k higher than budget. Will drill down into PR variance.
- NSAL had a net of -\$18k vs budget, total net is \$123K. The census was -3, revenue was -\$24k but we only gained \$6k in PR.
- Recovery had a net of \$4k vs budget, total net was \$30k. The census was +3.
- Soar/Embark had a net of -\$16k vs budget, total net is \$223k. The census was -3.
- TVA had a net of -\$8k vs budget, total net was \$88k. The census was +2.

Mr. Fleming also reported on new business office procedures. Business office is learning to utilize Infinite Vision system to its full capacity and shift to a purchase order system. In the past Northshore Education ran more like a small business the shift is to operate more like a public school for reporting purposes.

There were no questions for Mr. Fleming.

Dr. Morrison thanked Mr. Fleming for his fresh ideas and perspectives. He thanked Ms. Rosenberg, Mr. Mahoney and Mr. Forget for a smooth change in financial leadership.

VI. Facilities/Capital Planning Update: Ms. Rosenberg gave an update on the pending HVAC project. Powerpoint is attached.

The HVAC system at 112 Sohier Road is almost 50 years old and failing. This building houses our largest and most expensive program, serving our most medically fragile students. Replacing this system has been a priority since 2017, but was repeatedly delayed. The situation is now urgent, and has been discussed with the board over the past two years. In fall 2022, with Board approval, we went to bid for an Owner's Project Manager and hired Atlantic Construction. With their guidance, we went to bid and hired an Engineering Design Firm. By the spring of 2023, it was clear that we were looking at a 7-10-million-dollar project. The Board received a detailed update in May of 2023, and agreed that this project was necessary and that we should proceed, understanding that a bank loan of approximately \$8M would be required. The Bid will be ready to post by September 27th. In order to post, NEC needs to demonstrate that it has sufficient funds in hand. Thus, we have obtained a "term sheet" from M&T Bank, stating the potential terms for an \$8 loan. In order to proceed, the Board will need to approve the awarding of a contract, and will need to approve the financing agreement with a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority, understanding the impact on operating expenses beginning in FY25.

Ms. Rosenberg asked how involved Board members would like to be in reviewing bids and the specifics of the bank loan. She emphasized that proceeding with this plan will likely lead to at least a 5% tuition increase for FY25 and beyond, in order to fund loan repayment and other contractual obligations.

Dr. Morrison stated that as long as Administration is providing Board with updates at each stage via email, that should be sufficient. Dr. Harvey agreed, and said we could convene a subcommittee meeting if needed.

Dr. Blake asked how confident are we with these numbers, and is there a concern that they will keep going up. Ms. Rosenberg replied that while we don't yet have final numbers, the OPM and Engineer reported to the Board in May that they have a high level of confidence in the numbers presented.

Mr. Forget reminded board that scope of project was \$500 now its \$10 million. We need to remember this, as a reason why we need to be pro-active and not put off major projects. Ms. Rosenberg agreed, stating that the fact that we own this building is an advantage, and that we need to maintain it as a strong hub for the future. She reiterated that she was involved with advocacy through MOEC to look at the capital funding issues for collaboratives, and that this was a pressing issue across the state.

Dr. Morrison thanked the facilities team and those who have been working on this. He stated that hearing now about the likely tuition increase for the spring was very helpful.

At the October 25th, Board Meeting, Fran Rosenberg and Larry Fleming will present a proposed loan agreement and a proposed contract with selected contractor. These items will require board votes. Signing a loan agreement will require a 2/3 majority. No further questions from board members.

I. New and Continuing Business- Strategic Planning for RHS

Ms. Rosenberg presented the ongoing concerns related to Recovery High School funding and governance and requested that 3-5 board members meet as advisory to Ms. Lipinski and Ms. Rosenberg regarding upcoming RFP and strategic planning related to RHS.

A one-page summary of concerns is available but highlights included:

- Enrollment at the five schools ranges from 5 to 50 students but we all get the same annual grant allotment which has not changed since 2006. Occasionally, we have received additional mid-year funds based on enrollment, but this has not been predictable. Funds are not always released in a timely manner.
- DPH has “supplemented” funding with additional grants, when funding allows, but we can’t be thoughtful in planning ahead because amounts and terms change from year to year, and there is no clear process for setting tuition rates beyond what is required by statute.
- There is still no solution to the lack of transportation for these students creating enormous equity issues between students based on zip code, parental capacity, and individual district’s willingness to “think creatively

Dr. Morrison asked Ms. Rosenberg to clarify what she needed, and whether the advisory group could meet via Zoom. She stated that the immediate ask was for “thought partners” and that they could meet via Zoom.

Five board members agreed to help. Dr. Harvey, Dr. Daly, Dr. Zrike, Ms. Beaudoin, and Dr. Charochak.

Dr. Morrison asked Ms. Rosenberg to share link to MTV documentary on RHS for those who hadn’t seen it. Mr. Forget stated that there is a lot of “opioid money” out there...so this is a good time for discussion. He agreed that the model seems highly flawed.

Dr. Harvey wondered if it should be a charter school?

Dr. Morrison stated “Ms. Rosenberg and all involved at Recovery High School we thank you for caring for these students.”

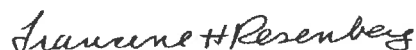
VII. Adjourn

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Forget and seconded by Mr. Tracy to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 am as presented

VOTE: The motion was moved unanimously



Kathy Mahoney, Administrative Assistant to Executive Director



Francine Rosenberg, NEC Executive Director

Executive Directors Report

September 2023

ESY/Summer

It was a busy, but very productive, summer at NEC! All of our ESY programs were fully enrolled, and extremely successful, with students participating in many positive activities, including a lot of time in the community working on social-emotional development!

In the business office, we were busy with orienting our new Director of Finance and Operations, and continuing our work on transitioning to a purchase order system, fully implementing Infinite Visions software for finance and human resources, and working on our district-wide goals related to safety, technology, equity/ diversity, and workforce development.

We were thrilled to be able to host a number of Professional Development opportunities in August. Several of our member districts sent participants to the ALICE Training for Trainers which we hosted at Northshore Academy, and to the workshop on Adolescent Substance Use which was funded by ECCF. Please note that we are continuing to offer free training on related topics through this grant!!

Setting the Tone

As I prepared for our "Opening" I gave a great deal of thought to the state of ongoing stress and crisis in our public education system. My opening message was, in part: *"We are living and working in a world that feels very unstable and divided. There is lots of fear, anxiety, anger and division surrounding us. There are many things we can't control. But, we can make our NEC Community a strong, loving, kind place where magical, transformative work happens every day. In this room we have a wealth of knowledge and skill. We have love and passion and a deep desire to make life better for our students. So let's control what we can: Our students need us!!"*

In this context, my leadership team de-emphasized "new initiatives" and we focused our energy on team-building, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion, and positive on-boarding of our many new employees. This has been well-received.

In this meeting, I will share, in broad strokes, my priorities for the year. We will discuss, in detail, the financial and capital planning challenges that face us, and I will ask for your support in thinking about the complex issues that continue to affect our Recovery High School program.

Since our work as a Collaborative is a bit different than that of a district, I will divide my reports into three sections: Student Learning and School Climate; Finance and Infrastructure; Advocacy and Regional Initiatives.

Student Learning and School Climate

My leadership team has focused on workforce development at every level. This includes, but is not limited to diversifying our workforce. At orientation this year we held a series of small group discussions on identity and belonging, piloted our first affinity groups for BIPOC and LGBTQ employees, and implemented a new process for welcoming new employees. The feedback from these efforts has been positive, and several teachers have conducted "parallel" activities in their classrooms.

The Kevin O'Grady School has added a second early childhood classroom in response to district needs, and Northshore Academy Lower School has added a K/1 classroom. Given the difficulties in hiring Instructional Assistants, we are needing to "pace" the acceptance of new referrals for these classrooms. We also have "gaps" in our staffing for reading specialists, speech pathologists, and teachers of the visually impaired.

Our "moderate disabilities programs" are piloting the Dreambox software for assessment and individualized instruction in reading and math. So many of our students have significant "gaps" in their learning, and our small classrooms are so diverse, that we are hoping that this will help to provide both remediation for some students and acceleration for others. We are also devoting PD time this fall to continued training on "brain-based learning" and "differentiation" in order to help teachers appropriately engage diverse learners. Our Leadership team has a shared goal of improving our use of the educator evaluation system by conducting shared, focused, and frequent walk-throughs.

Finance and Infrastructure

Over the past year, much of my energy has been devoted to strengthening our infrastructure, and preparing to transition to a new Director of Finance, and new, more efficient and effective systems. We had a smooth transition over the summer, saying goodbye to Glenn Bergevin and welcoming Larry Fleming. Larry has jumped right in, has already set a very positive tone in the business office, and has begun to roll out a variety of new procedures. Most notably, we will be instituting a more complete purchase order system, and shifting our chart of accounts and financial reporting to more closely mirror typical public school practices.

We have added support staff for HR and Technology, and have continued to work on strengthening our Facilities team. This will help us to achieve our goals around recruitment and retention, onboarding employees, improving our safety planning, and meeting our goals related to updating technology. All of our staff have taken refresher trainings on "ALICE" and we are in the process of rolling out the RAVE app for emergency communication. We also have a greatly improved system in place for assuring that all new employees receive their photo ID on their first day of employment.

Although we are working from a balanced operating budget plan, capital challenges remain significant and will be discussed in great detail.

Advocacy and Regional Initiatives

In addition to the training mentioned above, we are continuing to offer grant-subsidized Youth Mental Health First Aid training. We will also continue to host a variety of regional job-alike groups for your special education and clinical leaders.

As president of MOEC this year, I will have an opportunity to network and to advocate on behalf of our region around shared issues related to special education.