



New Heights Board of Trustees  
January 25th, 2022  
Starting Time: 5:00pm  
Location: 1690 Main Street  
Brockton, MA 02301  
Join Zoom Meeting

**Zoom Meeting:**

Description:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6822448291>

I. Call to Order at

II. Approved Board Members List

- A. Mike Sullivan
- B. Ollie Spears
- C. Graham Bengen
- D. Judge Phillips
- E. Vinnie Marturano
- F. Emmanuel Daphnis
- G. Steve Bernard
- H. Nicholas Christ
- I. Kimberly Zouzoua
- J. Christina Alves

III. Roll Call

A. Board Members Present

- 1. Judge Phillips
- 2. Manny Daphnis (left at 6:25)
- 3. Nick Christ
- 4. Christina Alves
- 5. Mike Sullivan
- 6. Steve Bernard
- 7. Graham Bengen (@5:12)
- 8. Vinnie Marturano (@5:15)

B. Members Absent

- 1. Ollie Spears
- 2. Kimberly

IV. Reading and Approval of Minutes from Board Meeting on 1/6/22 A.

Moved by Nick

B. Seconded by Manny

- 1. Judge Phillips Aye
- 2. Mike Aye

3. Christina Aye

4. Steve Aye



5. Passed unanimously

#### V. Reports

##### A. Chairperson's Report (Mike Sullivan)

###### 1. Contractual Discussion (Executive Session)

a) mike suggested this wait until end of meeting to not hold people up

##### B. Executive Director's Report (Omari Walker)

###### 1. Building Purchase/ Sale Update

a) working with Mass Development

b) Stressed to them that we need to close by June, which Mass development said should not be a problem

##### C. New Business

###### 1. Commissioner Riley's Recommendation (vote needed)

a) Mike explained that the commissioner has provided new guidance regarding contact tracing

(1) Omari explained that on Mondays we pool test everyone who is signed up and send those to the lab then we rapid test anyone who was in a positive pool. Once we know who has covid we contact trace using seating charts and sign in/ out sheets

(2) Anyone who is a close contact has to go home for 5 days before they can test and then can come back with a negative test

(3) Tim gave a presentation linked here:

[Positive Cases and Close Contact Data](#)

(4) Omari explains that the commissioner is recommending that we forgo contact tracing in order to do more at home tests. If we pool test Mondays and tell students/ staff to do their home test on Thursdays we can potentially test our community twice a week. The catch is that we only have 250 of our 856 member community signed up so we would need to do a major push to get parents to voluntarily sign up for pooled testing and take the at home test- 2 forms. Finding that not everyone is willing to be tested regularly. Thinking of doing a raffle.

(5) We believe this is a more effective way to keep

community safe in comparison to contact tracing. Omair is making the recommendation that we take the commissioner's recommendation as long as we can get a large portion of our community to commit.



Otherwise, the board reserves the right to reevaluate whether or not to contact trace instead

- (a) Steve: How many people are signed up for contact tracing?
  - (i) Omari: we contact trace in two different ways- if positive pools produce positive cases and if families call in. Tim what is the number for pool testing?
    - (a) 276- 200 students and 76 staff members out of 743 students and 137 staff (870 total)
  - (ii) Graham- this is only about one third of the population
  - (iii) Mike clarified that everyone is subject to contact tracing depending on who is positive
  - (iv) Steve asked how many people we anticipate signing up for at home test
    - (a) Omari; there is a reluctance to sign up for pooled testing possibly due to fear that there is somehow a way to get covid from pooled testing. At home testing may seem cleaner and I would anticipate that we would have a higher sign up rate. We have not yet incentivized signing up (pizza parties, raffles etc) as other districts have and we need to. We also got documents form the state in many languages so parents and students can administer them at home. If the board

supports the take home test over the contact tracing we would have to do some due diligence in getting people signed up and knowledgeable



(v)

Graham: only about a third of the staff are signed up- we have a vaccine mandate but if people are not signing up for the alternative to that then... how come people are not signing up?

(vi) Steve reminded that the mandate and the recommendation from the commissioner are two separate issues

(vii) Mike agreed and explained that pool testing is getting a general sense in the school

(viii) Omari explained that we can't sign anyone up for take home tests until this vote from the board. He pointed out that 100% of the staff willingly took at home tests after winter break and mlk long weekend. He is confident 100% of staff would be willing to participate

(ix) Judge makes the motion to approve the take home tests in lieu of contact tracing in concordance with pool testing

(a) seconded by Vinnie

(b) Christina (Aye)

(c) Mike (Aye)

(d) Steve (Aye)

(e) Graham (Aye)

(f) Motion Unanimously passed

## 2. Mandated Vaccinations

a) Omari: Asked for staff to be able to speak and explained that he is a supporter of staff vaccination but the mandate was in response to fear of not having enough staff to stay open since unvaccinated staff may miss many days of work- now that the board has accepted the commissioner's

recommendation he feels he can support removing the mandate but some need to be heard

- b) Steve strongly recommends that the board stand by the mandate and move the date two weeks out as recommended in the email previously sent by Omari
- c) Graham asked for and received clarification



- d) Vinnie asked if there was a space reason for why we needed the mandate?
  - e) Mike explained that he believed it was focused around the amount of time someone might be out and others who might have to cover for them
  - f) opportunity was given for public comment and wait time was given
  - g) Graham: torn, needs to know how this impacts kids education and wellbeing
  - h) As Mike understood it, the mandate was about employee time and not about preventing the spread of COVID although he recommends everyone get vaccinated but that is not the reason for the mandate so he recommends a repeal
  - i) Vinnie- you may recall at the last meeting I abstained from the vote although he understood the national. With the alternative now available, the mandate should be repealed can not understand why someone would not vaccinated but with this new alternative, he encourages the board to rescind the mandate
  - j) Manny: agrees that since being unvaccinated no longer has an operational impact, should be repealed
  - k) Nick: agreed with Manny, Mike and Vinnie
  - l) Graham asked Omari if he is comfortable if this gets repealed?
    - (1) Omari: believes everyone should be vaccinated but does not think it is appropriate at this time to have the mandate
  - m) Graham motions to rescind the policy mandating vaccines for staff at NHCSB
    - (1) Seconded by Nick
    - (2) Christina (Aye)
    - (3) Vinnie (Aye)
    - (4) Steve (No)
    - (5) Manny (Aye)

- (6) Mike (Aye)
- (7) Judge (No)
- (8) Motion Carries 6 to 8

### 3. Staff Retention Presentation

a) Will Libby presents the presentation linked here:

Retention/Morale Board Presentation



- b) Will explained his interview process and that he still plans to check in with the remainder of the staff to ensure we are meeting all needs
- c) Presentation: staff love the kids, the growth opportunities, the values, growing into new roles, diversity of staff and students, curriculum, doing meaningful work, supports given
- d) Deltas: pay, turnover of staff, PTO (paid time off), want for multi year agreement, space in the building,
- e) Omari: as we looked at the data and had conversations, we wanted to identify what we could do and what we could not based on the model-these are listed below
  - (1) Salaries (vote needed)
    - (a) currently at 97% of BPS but ask more of our teachers in prep
    - (b) omari asking to increase the pay scale from 97% of BPS to 101% of BPS- should make us more competitive in retention and hiring - does impact the budget
  - (2) Paid Time Off (vote needed)
    - (a) Omari explained that in public schools like Framingham you get 15 sick days and 3 personal days. There are many studies that correlate student achievement to teacher attendance. Have already increased sick days from 5 to 8. Recommending that we buy back sick days and compensate staff at \$150/ day in effect starting today- this may help prevent struggling to staff the building at the end of the year
  - (3) Letters of Employment (vote needed)
    - (a) Omari explained that this is something long overdue- in traditional districts, teachers are tenured after 3 years so recommending that staff who have been with us for 3 years

receive a three year employment letter after their third year

(4) Teacher Work Space

- (a) Omari looking for permission to explore the space in the bank next door for teacher work space and to look into getting trailers for staff

f) Discussion of these proposals:



- (1) Mike is not sure he has enough information to make a vote in support of these recommendations. It is important that this is being done and that we are getting feedback to see what is working and areas of improvement. Worry about attrition and are there other things that are causing it? Can we recruit requisite talent our students deserve? All important issues. To him, would be helpful to have more information around why teachers have left in the past? Are we doing exit interviews for teachers who are leaving? What is driving their decision to leave. Brockton is the comparison- but is that the only school district that we should be comparing ourselves too? How do we compare to other charter schools in terms of pay and benefits? Teachers should have more flexibility in charters in order to improve results- how do our salaries compare to them? What does this mean in terms of cost? What important operational projects will have to be deferred and not fund? zero sum cost
- (2) Graham-between now and the next board meeting is there time for a fiscal/ financial analysis of how much this would cost in 2 years/ 4 years/ etc? Not keen on being tied down to one city since we are a charter school. Graham looking for firm numbers before we start accruing more financial obligations. Propose to suspend vote until next scheduled meeting or whenever there is more information cost benefit analysis
- (3) Judge- ought to first acknowledge that we are in favor of being competitive and of treating staff well. However, agree that need more comparisons beyond Brockton public -what other school systems are we

looking at? What are other schools doing for their staff and teachers? Can we look at those salaries and the PTO and employment letter and compare to other schools?

- (4) Vinnie- maybe aThe Joint finance and academic excellence subcommitte is in order to take a deep look at this- ultimate goal is to offer as much as we can to encourage staff but overall compensation is a key factor. All organizations are struggling right



now and we have a responsibility to take a close, comprehensive look at this proposal

- (5) Graham suggested that there are other more creative alternatives for a package of incentives and a recognition of the good job people do. Stability is important with the employment agreement

(6) Is there a time frame?

- (a) Mike does not think there is, just a situation where we have to look and make decisions quickly. We have a fiduciary obligation to thoroughly investigate.
- (b) Graham would like to know how teachers and staff would rank these proposals in case we cannot do them all
- (c) Mike suggested we create a subcommittee to due a deep dive and meet prior to the February meeting
- (d) Omari agreed and said our deadline is really the third week of February because that is when staff are really starting to look for jobs and we start kicking staff recruitment into high gear. Do not want to lose staff at the rate we did last year
- (e) Judge asked what steps we have taken towards identifying who is coming back and who does not get a letter?
- (i) Omari said that letters go to everyone and some have conditions
- (ii) Judge: not sure why you can't give the letter and explain in the letter that there is a negotiation occurring with the board but if no changes are made



here is your salary? Stability is an important issue. Additional years can also be explained as an ongoing discussion in the letter to get past step one to give staff stability

- (iii) Christina Alves agrees with Graham and Judge and wants to be part of the The Joint finance and academic excellence subcommittee to review the other options



(iv)

Graham- you can write the contract to include information about what happens if someone is underperforming.

- (v) Judge thinks we should be consistent- Principal and ED should be able to send letters to staff/ teachers that employment is extended for one or two but everything should be uniform so nothing should happen until the board votes in his opinion
- (vi) Graham proposes allowing a two year employment agreement
- (vii) Judge- those who we do not wish to extend- do they have an appeal?
  - (a) Omari- right now everyone has a one year agreement expiring in June- so there is no repeal- everyone gets a letter but there are some that have outlined what they need to do to get their full agreement- this might be reassuring even if we stay with current pay scale- may give some security to people
  - (b) Judge- should include the understanding that we are working with the board to get

salaries out

(viii) Graham proposed that ED and principal be allowed to give conditional or non-conditional letters for two years without making salary promises or other promises without it being discussed

(f) motion to allow omar to send out letter for two year with or without conditions

(i) Judge motioned

(ii) Graham Seconded

(iii) Christina (Aye)

(iv) Nick (Aye)



(v) Steve (Aye)

(vi) Vinnie (Aye)

(vii) mike (Aye)

(viii) Unanimous

(g) Judge does not want to rush this- thinks we have come a long way just allowing the commitments- Christina agrees with Judge

(h) The Joint finance and academic excellence subcommittee meeting should take place as soon as possible. committee will include Christina, Nick, Manny, Mike, possibly Graham

## VI. Reports of Special Committees

### A. Academic Excellence Committee (Pastor Manny)

#### 1. Updates (vaccine mandate at MCC)

a) Manny had to leave so Maria will present these pieces

b) Presentation that was given:

EC Board update - Jan 2022

c) most students were able to submit proof of vaccination

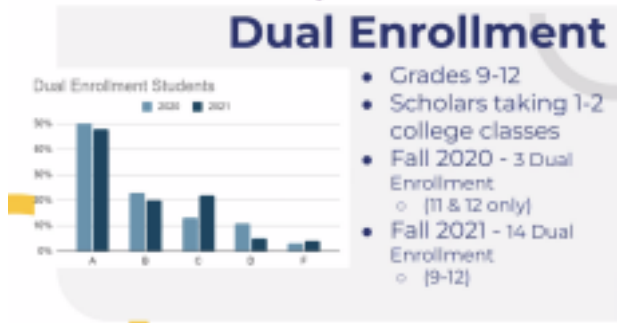


d)

#### 2. Grade Distribution Data

a) grades will reflect students femur last year and this year we

see 212 dual enrollment students because we increased the number of students in grades 9 and 10 taking college classes



b)



c)

### 3. Early College Policy for Struggling Students (Vote Needed)

## Early College Academic Support Policy

#### Academic Warning

If a scholar's previous semester's grades reflect one D, F and/or W (Withdrawal), the scholar will receive an Academic Warning. An Academic Warning designation means that the Early College and School Counseling departments will closely monitor the scholar's progress for one probationary semester. Families will be notified of a scholar's Academic Warning status with a letter from the Director of Early College and Post-Secondary Partnerships. A scholar will be removed from their Academic Warning status if they demonstrate satisfactory grades. If a scholar continues to have one or more D, F and/or W in high school and/or college classes, they will be on Academic Probation.

#### Academic Probation

If a scholar has more than one D, F and/or W from the previous semester's grades or, received an Academic Warning from NHCSB, the scholar will be on Academic Probation. Families will be notified of a scholar's Academic Probation status with a letter from the Director of Early College and Post-Secondary Partnerships. If a scholar is placed on Academic Probation for two consecutive semesters, or three total semesters during the scholar's Early College career at NHCSB, they will become a Dual Enrollment scholar taking high school classes. The Early College and School Counseling departments will review the scholar's PACK skills on a case-by-case basis to make the final decision on the number of college classes that is appropriate for the scholar.

a) parents will be involved at each step

b) Vinnie asked why withdrawals are high?

(1) many more students enrolled and half of them are 9th and 10th graders who are younger- students taking college classes for the first time combined

with COVID learning loss

- c) Vinnie- do you have an understanding of how many kids who had been in classes before and had to withdraw?
  - (1) All the students who made it to the campus this year were doing so for the first time- even seniors were the first time college students due to last year's virtual school/ pandemic?
- d) Teachers just had professional development on supporting students in overcoming obstacles- concentrated PD effort on student supports. Deans are doing impact cycle coaching with teacher
- e) Motion To approve policy as presented by Maria
  - (1) Moved by Steve
  - (2) Seconded by Vinnie



- (3) Judge (Aye)
- (4) Mike (Aye)
- (5) Christina (Aye)
- (6) Nick (Aye)
- (7) Graham (Aye)
- (8) Passed unanimously

## B. Finance Committee (Nick)

### 1. YTD Finances

- a) finances in line
- b) tuition is \$300 more per pupil than expected
- c) furniture more expensive than anticipated but by a negligible amount
- d) significant grant funding puts us in a good position encourage that when looking at budget not to take into account some of the grants we have received recently that may not be there in the future
- e) omari announced Suzanne's notice of reduction of hours from full to half time
- f) Motion to accept the report
- g) Steve motioned
- h) Seconded by Judge
- i) Christina (Aye)
- j) Judge (Aye)
- k) Vinnie (Aye)
- l) Graham (Aye)

- m) Mike (Aye)
- n) Motions passed unanimously

## VII. Governance Committee (Vinnie)

### 1. Board Attendance

- a) resulted from the issue in some meetings of struggling to get a quorum
- b) ultimately after analysis of data, attendance of members averaged 78% with a high of 93% and a low of 36%
- c) Of this school year's meetings, we are at 66% average attendance
- d) not as bad as was thought
- e) Sharing the data and may have some individual conversations with some board members who are not able to be with us to ensure there is nothing we can do to improve attendance



f)

Mike added that we should circulate the roles and responsibilities back out to the members again and all should read it to make sure everyone understands

### 2. Christina wondering if it is possible to update the invite to show the time- it was agreed to do this

- (1) Motion to accept the report
- (2) Steve motioned
- (3) Seconded by Judge
- (4) Christina (Aye)
- (5) Judge (Aye)
- (6) Vinnie (Aye)
- (7) Graham (Aye)
- (8) Mike (Aye)
- (9) Motions passed unanimously
- b) Motion moved to go into executive session
  - (1) nick moved and Judge seconded
    - (a) Role Call
    - (2) Graham (Aye)
    - (3) Judge (Aye)
    - (4) Vinnie (Aye)
    - (5) Steve (Aye)
    - (6) Nick (Aye)
    - (7) Christina (Aye)
    - (8) Moved unanimously to enter
- c) Executive Session:
  - (1) This session is regarding Omari's contract. It was

taken up in May of last year but for whatever reason there was no clear vote for the amount of years and salary together. Contract is subject to public disclosure but wanted to give any opportunity for anyone to discuss the contract extension and new salary.

- (2) Vinnie- at governance committee there were conversations that a number of members participated in. Previously there was a five year contract tied to the term of the charter so his contract was expiring at the same time as other considerations. Moved to set base pay in the new contract at \$175,000. External data provided to show that the pay was within the range of similar responsibilities in other schools systems. Came to the May meeting- minutes did not record an actual motion made to authorize the new contract - also



height of pandemic. Was not fully executed. Wording is identical to original contract with the exception of the higher starting salary and additional amounts for year by year raise for five years.

- (3) governance committee recommends that the board accept the contract as stated (and provided prior to the meeting).
- (4) Motion to affirm the contract as presented in the May 2020 meeting made by Graham
- (5) Seconded by Judge
- (6) Christina (Aye)
- (7) Nick (Aye)
- (8) Vinnie (Aye)
- (9) Steve (Aye)
- (10) Mike (Aye)

VIII. Motion to adjourn Executive Session by Judge

IX. Vinnie seconded

X. Steve (Aye)

XI. Christina (Aye)

XII. GRaham (Aye)

XIII. Nick (Aye)

XIV. Mike (Aye)

Meeting adjourned at 7:33