

**Hartford Board of School Directors**  
**School Board Community Engagement Meeting Minutes**  
**March 24, 2021 @ 6:00 pm**  
**Online Meeting**

**Members Present**

Kevin Christie  
Peter Merrill  
Nancy Russell  
Russell North  
Havah Armstrong Walther  
Dylan Morse

**Administrators Present**

Tom DeBalsi  
Cathy Newton  
Roy Hathorn

**1. Call to Order**

- Welcome Select Board Members, HCOREI Members
- Changes, Additions and Approval of Agenda

The public was invited to attend the meeting using the link <https://zoom.us/j/93301988404>, meeting ID 933 0198 8404.

Mr. Christie opened the meeting at 6:00 PM. He welcomed the Hartford Select Board. Mr. Dan Fraser, Select Board Chair, called their board to order at 6:00 PM. There were six Select Board members present: Dan Fraser, Joe Major, Ally Tufenkjian, Dennis Brown, Kim Souza, and Rachel Edens.

Moved by Mr. Merrill, seconded by Mrs. Russell, to approve the agenda as presented, motion carried.

There were five members from HCOREI present.

**2. "Continuing the Conversation" Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion – Dr. Mary Gannon**

Mr. Christie turned the meeting over to Dr. Gannon.

She gave a brief overview of the work that she's done in Hartford. She referenced the Strategic Plan which outlines the work for the school and town regarding anti-racism, equity, and inclusion.

She outlined the goal for the evening: to clarify language as the strategic plan is laid out so that folks are on the same page or at least in the same chapter; relationship building across these groups; and reflect on how our own individual lived experiences inform how we do this work.

She reminded the group to keep the community of Hartford at the center and the focus of the strategic plan. This will make a difference with the work.

Members shared thoughts about the importance of vocabulary and the need to develop a common understanding of a term.

Dr. Gannon divided the group into five break out rooms to discuss and define a term: equity and equality, diversity, inclusion, bias, and systemic racism; what does the term mean for you in your Hartford Role; and what challenges are there? Groups reported back some of their discussion points.

Dr. Gannon encouraged all members to read the Strategic Plan, it supports the cross fertilization and the resources. The plan is a template and can be revised. The work on the plan is happening in a variety of ways with many in the schools and community. She thanked the group for their work tonight.

Mr. Christie reminded the group that the second board meeting of each month is a community engagement meeting. He invited the Select Board to join in any of those meetings. He thanked Dr. Gannon for her work with the group.

Mr. Merrill thanked all attendees for joining in tonight's activity.

Mr. Fraser entertained a motion to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:00 PM, motion carried. (Joe Major moved to adjourn and second by Ally Tufenkjian)

**3. School Board Business**

### **- Auditor Selection Process**

Mr. Christie noted that the previous auditor, RH Smith, was offered a one year contract.

Mr. North shared he was very impressed with their work, they took a collaborative/working approach to the audit. He asked for Mr. DeBalsi and Mr. Jake Vezina's opinions.

Mr. DeBalsi shared that the auditors work mostly with Jake, Jim, and the office staff.

Mr. Jake Vezina noted that last year two firms applied but one withdrew. He noted that the firm was great to work with. There was a lot of prep work in May and June. When they came in they were ready to go. He recommended using this firm for three years.

Mr. North agreed that three years is an appropriate time frame given there aren't a lot of competing firms and it allows for continuity. Mr. Merrill, Mr. Christie, and Mr. DeBalsi agreed.

Moved by Mr. North, seconded by Ms Walther, to offer the current auditing firm, RH Smith, a three year contract, motion carried.

### **- Appointments, Retirements and Resignations**

- HCOREI Member

Sarah Campbell, reappointed for a third term

- Town/School District Meeting Committee

Ryan Scelza

### **- School district retirements, resignations and appointments**

#### Retirements

Ann Rydjeski, DBS, 37 years

Lois Burriss, DBS, 37 years

Jeanette Hutchins, WRS, 31 years

Joe James, HHS, 19.5 years

Kathy Bishop, OQS, 26 years

Laurie Hausler, District, 21 years

Tom Ostler, HACTC, 39 years

The retiring staff members represent 210.5 years of service to the district!

#### Resignations

Robert Palmer, HACTC

#### Appointments

Cassandra North, Spanish HHS

Doug Heavisides, Wilder School Principal

Moved by Mrs. Russell, seconded by Ms Walther, to appoint Cassandra North, HHS Spanish. Motion carried with Mr. North abstaining.

Moved by Mrs. Russell, seconded by Ms Walther, to accept the retirements, the resignation, the committee appointments, and the reappointment of Doug Heavisides as the Wilder School Principal. Motion carried.

Michelle Boleski announced to the board that she had applied to the town for appointment on the Town Charter Committee.

### **4. Meeting Monitoring**

The monitoring report was completed by Ms. Walther, the meeting was satisfactory.

### **5. Next Meeting**

- Ends Reporting (Mr. Hathorn and Mrs. Newton will review format/timing)
- School Board Work Plan (report assignments for May 12th, Mr. Merrill and Mrs. North volunteered)
- Remaining Board Meeting Schedule for 2020-21 School Year (1 June meeting? Summer retreat)
- School Board Summer Retreat Ideas (topic, speaker, facilitator?)

Mr. Christie suggested Mr. North and Ms Walther brainstorm around community engagement topics. Mr. Merrill suggested reviewing the multi-year facilities plan.

- Finalization of the Wilder School- project report, budget, student programs, potential open house
- High School Graduation/end of year activities

**6. Adjournment**

Mrs. Russell shared with the board, on behalf of Katie Trombley, that some students met with HHS principal Nelson Fogg about concerns. Katie was happy with the outcome of the meeting.

Mr. DeBalsi reported that there will be a vaccine clinic for staff on Monday at the high school. He is working on a clinic for the community.

Moved by Mr. Merrill, seconded by Mrs. Russell, to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 PM, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cherrie Torrey  
Recorder

Next Regular School Board Meeting is April 7, 2021 at 6:00 PM, moved up due to school vacation.