



North River Collaborative Board of Directors
Friday, December 15, 2023 - 9:00 AM
Minutes

Present: Alan Cron, Christine Godino, Julie Hamilton, Peter Schafer, Joseph Baeta, Jeff Szymaniak, Ryan Powers, Mark Bodwell, Liz Legault, Paul Tzovolos, Marie Grable, Ellen George, and Ruth Hersh (DESE Liaison)

Absent: Matt Ferron

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Alan Cron at 9:05AM. Ruth Hersh from DESE introduced herself to the Board and advised she would be meeting with the Executive Director and Board Chair soon.

I. Executive Session

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) “to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining 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.” (Attachment)

Motion: Julie Hamilton made a motion “To enter into Executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining 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 declared”. Jeff Szymaniak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

II. Approval of Minutes-November 3, 2023

Motion: Joe Baeta made a motion to approve the minutes of November 3, 2023. Julie Hamilton seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

III. Approval of Warrants- Ellen George, Director of Business Services, advised the Board that, based on the recommendations from the auditors, the warrant process will be changing in February of 2024. Moving forward, the cover page of the warrant will include the gross payroll numbers in addition to the net numbers. Also moving forward, the warrant will be sent to the Board for electronic signatures through BLUE INK. The signatures of the Treasurer, Executive Director, and Board Chair will be needed prior to Friday of each week.

Motion: Julie Hamilton made a motion to approve the warrants. Joe Baeta seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Discussion/Action Items

- A. Acceptance of the FY23 Audit Report-**Ms. George reviewed the FY2023 Audit which found significant deficiencies in internal controls. Ms. George told the Board that the Collaboratives budget was overstated by \$100,000 (but it was not a loss nor was it a mis-accounting of monies.) There were four other points regarding the process. As an example, there was an error with a utility bill that hadn't been sent and this was never documented. Our auditors have requested that moving forward all errors must be documented with a plan to address the concern moving forward. The auditors have also requested that the NRC budget be entered into Accu-fund earlier in the budget process. In addition, the auditors have requested that the Collaborative submit a letter of corrective action for the deficiencies in internal controls found in this current audit and moving forward use the corrective actions as a

benchmark. Ms. George advised the Board that for the FY24 budget process, member district Business Managers and Assistant Superintendents will be invited to an overview meeting following the second formal reading of the budget with the Board and asked to review our budget and suggest any changes necessary.

Motion: Julie Hamilton made a motion to accept the FY23 audit report. Jeff Szymaniak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

- B. Acceptance of the FY23 Cumulative Surplus-** Ms. George announced to the Board that the cumulative surplus is 28.12% which amounts to \$382,861 over the 25% that NRC will be retaining. This 3.21% over the retainable cumulative surplus will be distributed back to the member districts in the form of credits towards tuition, transportation and/or district services based on percentage of services used by each member district. Superintendents, Business Managers, and Directors of Special Education will be notified of the amount of their credit by the end of December 2023. The credits received must be used by April 30, 2024. Any credit not used by April 30, 2024, will be returned via check to the town or school district.

Motion: Julie Hamilton made a motion to accept the FY23 Cumulative Surplus. Peter Schafer seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

- C. Acceptance of the FY23 NRC Annual Report-**Mr. Tzovolos reviewed the highlights of the 2023 Annual Report which speaks to the 5 benchmarks and provides an overview of the programs and services of the Collaborative for the past year. Mr. Tzovolos advised the Board the annual report will be posted to the Collaborative's website and sent to DESE before the December 30, 2023 deadline.

Motion: Julie Hamilton made a motion to accept the NRC 2023 Annual Report. Joe Baeta seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

- D. FY24 General Fund Revenue and Expense Projection-**Ms. George introduced two new financial reports to the Board, one that gives a snapshot of the financial standing of the Collaborative as of November 2023, and one that gives a comparison of last fiscal year to this current fiscal year for the same time period. Ms. George also noted that discrepancies between the two years are noted on the report which includes deferred revenue, changes in insurance allocations, rents to school districts, the North River School mortgage which has been paid off, as well as some pay off on vehicles. The Board complimented Ms. George on the report and asked that she give the detailed reports twice per year to the Board for review especially after the annual audit.

Motion: Julie Hamilton made a motion to accept the FY24 General Fund Revenue and Expense Projection reports. Peter Schafer seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

- E. Approve the transfer of up to \$55,000 from the Health Insurance Retirees Trust to the General Fund for the purpose of reimbursement to North River Collaborative for the payment of Retirees Health Insurance July 2023 to December 2023-**Ms. George explained the request for the transfer of \$55,000 from the Health Insurance Retirees Trust was to pay back the Collaborative which transfers the money to the Health Insurance Retirees Trust twice a year to pay the retirees medical insurance.

Motion: Joe Baeta made a motion to approve the transfer of up to \$55,000 from the Health Insurance Retirees Trust to the general fund for the purpose of reimbursement to North River Collaborative for the payment of the retiree's health insurance from July 2023 to December 2023. Julie Hamilton seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

- F. Approve the purchase of two Ford T350 Transit Vans in the amount of \$133,002.60 -**Ms. George explained that two Ford T350 Transit Vans are scheduled to be delivered shortly to the Transportation department and would need to be paid for upon delivery.

Motion: Liz Legault made a motion to approve the purchase of two Ford T350 Transit vans in the amount of \$133,002.60 for the Transportation department. Jeff Szymaniak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

G. Acceptance of Staff Resignations, Hires, Terminations, and Changes in Contract

Motion: Joe Baeta made a motion to accept the staff resignations, hires, terminations, and changes in contract. Liz Legault seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

H. Staff Salary Increase Rate Verification-Mr. Tzovolos reviewed the factors for the staff rate increase for the next fiscal year and passed around a sheet for the board to review for accuracy for their district rate increases.

I. Other Matters of Interest to Board Members

V. Informational

J. Transportation Recruitment Flyer Reminder

K. Professional Development Offerings- Mr. Tzovolos announced to the Board that he is now a CPI Trainer and will be able to train the NRC districts.

Motion: Joe Baeta made a motion to adjourn. Liz Legault seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35AM.

Respectfully submitted by:
Julie Hamilton, Board Secretary
NRC Board of Directors