



# North River Collaborative Board of Directors

Friday, March 14, 2025 - 9:00 AM

## Minutes

**Present:** Joe Baeta, Paul Tzovolos, Matt Ferron, Mark Bodwell, Jeff Szymaniak, Julie Hamilton, Lori Jodoin, Marie Grable, Ellen George, Alan Cron, Felicia Moschella, and Ryan Powers.

**Absent:** Liz Legault

- I. **Call to Order:** Chairman Baeta called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. He then asked for a motion to go into executive session.

## II. **Executive Session**

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a) (1) "To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual and (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"

Motion: Matt Ferron made a motion to go into executive session to discuss the reputation, character, Physical condition, or mental health, rather than professional competence of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of or complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual and (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 and to reconvene into open session. Jeff Szymaniak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

**Motion:** Julie Hamilton made a motion to reconvene into open session. Alan Cron seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

## III. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from February 7, 2025**

**Motion:** Matt Ferron made a motion to approve the minutes of February 7, 2025. Alan Cron seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

## IV. **Discussion/Action Items**

- A. Adaptive Equipment Lending Program Preview- Paul Tzovolos presented the Adaptive Equipment Lending Program to the Board. Mr. Tzovolos explained the adaptive equipment owned by North River Collaborative has been inventoried and catalogued and is now available for our districts to borrow. North River Collaborative will deliver the equipment to the districts. Paul Tzovolos explained what the process will be for the districts using the equipment he stated the program will be similar to the Easter Seals equipment program.

- Alan Cron asked if there is any liability related to the lending and use of the equipment. Paul Tzovolos advised the Board he is going to work with the attorneys for a letter signing off on liability when using the equipment.
- B. North River Collaborative Wellness Survey- Paul Tzovolos presented the results of the North River Collaborative Wellness survey with the Board and noted the one downside was anonymous responses. He advised the Board that the survey results will be shared with all NRC staff.
1. Survey Results:
    - 100% of responders feel respected
    - 96% of responders said that NRC overall is a positive work environment
    - 75% of the responders feel that NRC is committed to out mission
  2. Spring Coffee Hour Schedule  
Paul Tzovolos advised the Board that there will be coffee hours for every department and location beginning in April through May.
- C. **FY25 General Fund Revenue and Expense Projection:** Ellen George informed the Board that NRC has been conservative with spending because the goal is to stay consistent with the cumulative surplus. Ms. George went on to inform the Board that four new vehicles have been purchased for Transportation and will be paid outright with no financing. In addition, the Learning Center program is expanding with the addition of one new classroom and internal moves, which will require furniture and supplies. Ms. George told the Board that the Behavior consultation is running at a deficit currently but is neutral to the budget of the Collaborative and that Transportation is doing well and surpassing revenue expectations.

**Motion:** Matt Ferron made a motion to accept the FY25 General Fund Revenue and Expense Projection. Mark Bodwell seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

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

**Motion:** Alan Cron made a motion to accept the staff resignations, hires, terminations and changes in contract. Jeff Szymaniak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

**E. FY26 Budget - Second Reading**

**1. Updates and Highlights**

- A 4% salary increase for all staff including drivers and monitors (plus \$1 additional per step for monitors) which is based upon the average salary percentage increase of the settled teaching contracts for member districts for FY26
- Teacher assistant and registered behavior technician salary scales will be increased by 4% plus one additional dollar per step. This will allow us to support staff and remain competitive.
- A recommended additional percentage due to comparable salaried for the Business Manager, Transportation Director and Human Resources Coordinator.
- An increase of 3% for NRC tuition rates for the North River School, Learning Center programs, and SAILS program. Independence Academy will have an increase in tuition based on the foundation budget. The budget also reflects a 15% surcharge for non-member districts with no proposed cost increase impact to Transportation as it is a separate calculation. Incidental route calculation components may show a small increase but no global increase for transportation is proposed at this time.
- The ESY Learning Center program has been restructured to a six-week program instead of a 7-week program.

- An additional ASD classroom will be added to Bryantville in FY26 with 1 additional teacher and 2 additional paraprofessionals.
- Considering future expansion of Independence Academy near the Cape.
- No proposed rate increase for the MSW program for FY26 due to the rate restructuring of a single rate for 2.5 days of support.
- Independence Academy budget is set by foundation.
- Substitute rates increased to remain competitive
- District Services will increase by 3% except for the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Orientation and Mobility (O&M) service rate which will increase by 5% for FY26.
- No overall increase costs in Transportation

## **2. Questions and Feedback**

- Alan Cron Asked for the net value of the 4% across the board increase. Paul Tzovolos explained how the average of increases in the member districts is used in order to be competitive in employee salaries.

**Motion:** Alan Cron made a motion to approve the FY26 Budget. Matt Ferron seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

- F. **Approval of Program Calendars for 2025-2026:** Paul Tzovolos explained to the Board that the calendars are consistent with other school districts. He reminded the Board that the Learning Center summer program would be six weeks this year which provides ancillary benefits for the staff.

**Motion:** Matt Ferron made a motion to approve the 2025-2026 program calendars. Jeff Szymaniak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

- G. **Approval of Board of Director and Special Ed Advisory Calendars for 2025-2026**

**Motion:** Matt Ferron made a motion to approve the Board of Directors and Special Education Advisory Board meeting calendars for 2025-2026. Jeff Szymaniak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

- H. **Approval of Health Disclosure Form: Kelli O'Brien-McKinnon**

**Motion:** Matt Ferron made a motion to approve the Health Insurance Disclosure Form from Kelli O'Brien McKinnon. Jeff Szymaniak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

- I. **Approval of a \$20,000 Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund from FY25 Budget**

**Motion:** Alan Cron made a motion to approve a \$20,000 transfer to the Capital Reserve Fund from the FY25 General Fund. Jeff Szymaniak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

## IV. Informational

- A. Professional Development Listings
- B. Central Office Staff Budget Presentation-Virtual-March 14, 2025 at 1:00PM

## II. Other Matters of Interest to Board Members

- Chairman Joe Baeta commented to the Board that the millionaire's tax is going to affect Chapter 70 money.

- Jeff Szymaniak told the Board he will be attending the Ways and Means meeting at UMass and will send out information to the Board.

Motion: Julie Hamilton made a motion to adjourn. Felicia Moschella seconded the motion.  
Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Meeting adjourned at 9:49 AM

Respectfully submitted by:

Ryan Powers, Board Secretary  
NRC Board of Directors.