

From: Jeru EliJah <jeruhopkins@gmail.com>
Subject: My Email for the 5:30 Zoom Meeting on 4/25/2022
Date: April 25, 2022 at 10:28:41 AM EDT
To: Bob.Parker@nhep.com

Hey, I'm Jeru Hopkins, a 2021 graduate from CG. Recently, I've heard about the terminations of some of our beloved teachers including Mr. Mo. I don't know every detail, so I won't act like I do, but what I do know is that I've been more looked after by the staff during my 3 years at Common Ground than I have been the previous 9 years at various public and alternative schools. Although I've never had Mr. Mo as a primary teacher, he's taught me numerous things especially techniques on how to adjust my attitude and the way I go about things. He would always check me on the way I go about situations and even add some humor inside the message to keep me focused on what he was trying to relay. Now if you remember how I was then you would know I was no easy task to handle at all, but even tho I wasn't his task nor responsibility, he always looked out and wanted me to stay on the right path and do right along with the other students he looked after. The selflessness he brung to campus everyday is the very essence of what Common Ground is about, but letting him and people like him go over nothing could say a lot about the type of people who are in control. I hope a conversation can occur that includes understandings on both sides and agreements that lead to these wonderful people back doing what they love and what we love them for doing.

Sincerely, Jeru

From: Sarah Miller <asarahmiller@gmail.com>
Subject: concern regarding staff cuts
Date: April 24, 2022 at 10:04:04 PM EDT
To: monica.maccerafilppu@nhep.com
Cc: Eliezer Cruz <eliezerleecruz@gmail.com>, bob.parker@nhep.com, babz.rawls-ivy@nhep.com

Dear Monica,

We write as longtime Common Ground stakeholders following the announcement of high school staff cuts due to budget deficit. We understand that budgets are complex and we don't have access to all the relevant data - nevertheless, it is concerning to learn that staff proposed for layoff are longtime educators, some with 10+ years of service to Common Ground, while recently-hired administrative staff are proposed to remain in place. It is also concerning that some of those proposed for layoff were leaders in organizing the new CG union, raising the question of whether they are targets of retaliation.

The anti-unionization messages deployed by CG administration last Fall were inconsistent with the values of mutual support and community-building that we have come to associate with the

organization. It also put CG's positive reputation in the New Haven community into danger. We hoped that the positive union vote would bring an end to this unfortunate turn of events and are sad to learn otherwise. We now request that the current approach be reconsidered, in order to prioritize direct student services and fairness for CG's workforce.

Thank you.

Sarah Miller and Lee Cruz

From: Allison Hornak <allison.hornak@nhep.com>
Subject: written testimony for 2/25 CG board meeting
Date: April 24, 2022 at 9:25:42 PM EDT
To: Bob Parker <Bob.Parker@nhep.com>

Hello Bob,

Please see the attached for my written testimony to the board for tomorrow's meeting.

Sincerely,
Allison Hornak

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Allison Hornak
(they/them)
Art Teacher
9th Grade Guidance Co-Teacher
Common Ground High School

[LINK TO PDF HERE](#)

From: Keith Lambert <keithjeffreylambert@gmail.com>
Subject: Staff Cuts and the Loss of a Home
Date: April 24, 2022 at 8:53:11 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhep.com

Mr. Parker,

We've met quite a few times. I was an English / Language Arts teacher, guidance counselor, head of data teams, and drama club facilitator at CGHS for 15 years.

I'm sure you're getting a lot of these emails, so I'll keep it brief.

You've been there as long as I have. You know in your heart that the decisions being made by leadership over the past few years are killing the beauty and authenticity of our school, and none of that is the fault of covid or unions. A school that speaks of community? Family? Nurturing? Equity? Justice? I see none of this in the present leadership. Institutional memory is fading...a once glorious place for kids to grow and learn. I've seen with my own eyes the curricular changes filtering into the building. Unimaginative. Canned. Typical. Common Ground High School was not built to be typical. Nothing in its foundation has ever dared to whisper typical.

You chase out (in my case, and the case of many of us) or outright deny (in the case of present cuts) the very spirit of a place, you can't expect it to survive, let alone bloom. These are the people that fed the roots. Tirelessly.

And you owe them much better than all this.
Fix it.

Sincerely,
Keith Lambert
Sent from my iPhone

From: Larry Dome <ldome614@gmail.com>
Subject: Statement to Board members
Date: April 24, 2022 at 5:32:52 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhep.com, babz.rawls-ivy@nhep.com

April 24, 2022

Dear Mr. Parker and Ms. Rawls,

I am writing to you because I have been following events at CGHS over the last couple of weeks. It is with great dismay, sadness and anger that spurred me to write to you both. I was a teacher at CGHS for 12 years before retiring in July of 2019. I made a very purposeful decision to make my teaching career at CG. I had the opportunity to teach at a regular public school in Trumbull, but I was convinced of the importance of the role that CG played in New Haven and surrounding communities, so I elected to pursue my teaching career at CG. I believe that almost every teacher at the school seeks out this institution because of the stated and perceived mission and goals of the school and NHEP in general. The decision is one of hoping to make a difference in the lives of students who have so often been short changed and overlooked by our society.

This decision has a personal economic impact on each and every teacher, deciding to be at CG means a significantly smaller paycheck and potentially less benefits. Even with these

shortcomings, I have rarely seen a more thoughtful, creative, dedicated hard working group of individuals. I had an extensive career in business before becoming a teacher and the kind of energy of the staff at CG I only experienced at one company I worked at. It is a rare institution that can attract such a talented hardworking group of employees.

The fact that the staff of the high school and the community programs decisively voted to unionize says a lot of how things have changed since I left the school. People vote to unionize when they reach a point of feeling they are not being listened to, they feel unsafe, and have unrealistic expectations and goals set for them. I was hopeful that the board and the administration would recognize this and make every attempt to mend the apparent rift and rebuild a good working relationship with the staff of the school and community programs. What I have seen over the last couple of weeks tells me that this has not occurred.

The timing of notices concerning individuals' employment status and the announcement of a draconian restructuring was stunning in many ways. First is the fact that union contract negotiations did not start until April 19th and the layoff notices had already started coming out and only a couple of days later the official notification of the restructuring was announced. This in my mind says that there is not going to be good faith negotiations but instead a bloody battle. Second, this all starts to come out in the middle of a major fund-raising event for the school. I made some very serious commitments to support R2R this year and now find myself having to answer a lot of questions from potential donors among friends and family.

Having been in management at the last company I worked for, I had to frequently make difficult staffing decisions either related to employee performance or due to current economic conditions within the company. I was shocked to hear from many of my friends/colleagues that much of this was being done by email and letters. I cannot think of a more disrespectful way of handling such traumatic news for employees. Although I am sure that it will be denied, it smacks of retribution for having unionized.

Finally, laying off almost a quarter of the teaching staff has left me in shock and almost speechless, not for the damage this does to staff who will exit the year unemployed and not to the staff that remains to try to hold the school together, but for the damage that will be done to students.

Students need stability, they need routine and they need to be able to trust what is going to happen each day when they come to school. All of this will be gone if the restructuring plan is not rescinded. Guidance groups are the heart and soul of the high school, they are the foundation of what school culture looks like. The importance of having that teacher mentor for 4 years cannot be minimized. This plan will be devastating to guidance groups that lose their teacher and it will create uncertainty and a lack of trust for the rest of the student body. Will their teacher leave, be fired? Who will be coming into our guidance group, how many people will there be in our guidance class now? Guidance groups most effective at 12 – 15 students, with much less staff will that still be true?

This will be a very de-focusing end to the year if this plan is carried out and it will surely carry on into the following year. CG is once again under the state microscope concerning student achievement. This plan could be disastrous for student achievement, if a quarter of the staff is laid off, how are these achievement goals going to possibly be reached. With the student's sense of stability and security undercut, how interested are they going to be in attaining goals that are set for them?

I cannot imagine how difficult it was to manage through the last two years because of the pandemic, but as everyone begins to try to get back to something that feels normal, this restructuring is not what is needed for the students.

I first arrived at CG as a volunteer in 2006 and in all the years I have been involved with CG I have never felt so scared and worried about its future. I write to the board because the buck stops with you. You are there to provide the necessary oversight and to make decisions that will help CG to continue to thrive and continue to be an important member of the community. Therefore, I am asking that you stop the implementation of this restructuring plan, that the budget be re-evaluated and look for ways in which to retain much more of the staff. Most importantly that the board and administration work to rebuild its relationship with the staff. It would truly break my heart to see CG become like so many other charter schools where staff is managed using a revolving door, it would ruin the uniqueness and value that this institution has developed over its history.

Respectfully,
Larry Dome

From: A'Lexus Williams <a'lexus.williams@nhep.com>
Date: April 25, 2022 at 2:37:07 PM EDT
To: Bob Parker <bob.parker@nhep.com>
Subject: 4/25/2022: Written Testimony

Hello Bob,

I have attached here in this email my written testimony for tonight's Board Meeting.

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A'Lexus Williams
Social Studies Teacher/Instructional Coach
Common Ground High School

[LINK TO PDF HERE](#)

From: Win Vitkowsky <win.vitkowsky@gmail.com>
Date: April 25, 2022 at 3:01:01 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhep.com
Subject: Testimony for 4/25 Board meeting

[LINK TO PDF HERE](#)

[LINK TO STUDENT COURSE ANALYSIS FALL 2021](#)

[LINK TO "WIN'S FINAL WRAP UP" DOC](#)

From: Dan Jordan <dan.jordan@nhep.com>
Date: April 25, 2022 at 3:22:59 PM EDT
To: Bob Parker <bob.parker@nhep.com>
Subject: written testimony for 4/25 board meeting

Hello,

Attached is my written testimony, to be included in the notes/minutes for the 4/25 Common Ground Board of Directors meeting. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Dan Jordan

[LINK TO PDF HERE](#)

From: Jolene Ball <joleneball26@yahoo.com>
Date: April 25, 2022 at 3:35:33 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhep.com
Subject: staff changes at common ground school

Good afternoon my name is Jolene Ball I am a parent of an 11th grader at Common Ground High School. We have recently become aware of the decisions regarding the staff changes you are trying to put in place. As my daughter has been a student there for 3 years I have come to know 90% of the staff very well. I have heard some of the staff names who are on the list, and I am very concerned because some of the staff mentioned are the ones that I have noticed go above and beyond for these young adults.

Throughout the trying time of the pandemic these staff members were constantly reaching out and offering support not only for the children but for the parents as well. If we didn't

understand the work being given, the teacher would take the time to explain it to the parents so we would be better equipped to help our kids.

Even now Mr. MO is not currently my daughter's math teacher but is more than willing to keep an eye on her. He has helped me numerous time with her or answering any questions I may have. He goes above and beyond the call of duty because he truly cares. He is just one example of the amazing staff that you have. To lose that much wonderful people that our children have been blessed to have guiding them through their most difficult years would be a great shame. The effect on their mental health of losing contact with people they have a strong bond with prematurely is traumatic.

Thank you for your time,
Jolene Ball

From: Brian Springsteen <bc.springsteen@gmail.com>
Date: April 25, 2022 at 4:13:57 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhp.com
Subject: Written Testimony, Board Meeting April 25, 2022

Hi Bob,

I hope you are well. I have attached a written testimony to be submitted to the Common Ground Board of Directors for tonight's meeting.

Warm regards,
Brian Springsteen

[LINK TO PDF HERE](#)

From: Christopher Cane <christopherjohncane@gmail.com>
Date: April 25, 2022 at 4:08:56 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhp.com
Subject: Chris Cane - Written Testimony and Documentation for CG/ NHEP Board Meeting - 4/25

Hello Bob,

In the event that I'm prevented from sharing at the board meeting this evening, please find my written testimony and documentation of my "scope of work" or job description changes before

and after meeting with management to discuss whether or not I would receive a raise with the title change and new duties.

Best,
Chris

[LINK TO TESTIMONIAL PDF](#)

[LINK TO SCOPE OF WORK \(BEFORE\)](#)

[LINK TO SCOPE OF WORK \(AFTER\)](#)

From: Maribel Treichel <maribel.treichel@gmail.com>
Date: April 25, 2022 at 4:47:10 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhep.com
Subject: Very Concerned Parent

Mr. Parker

I am a very concerned parent of a junior student at Common Ground. The reason why we chose CG was because of what the school stood for. I brag to everyone I meet who's thinking about high schools for their children how incredible this school is. It is incredible because of their staff. I have never witnessed so much support for our children. When I sat there at orientation I thought to myself how I was just going to hear a bunch of BS just so you guys could sell your school to these parents, but I was so wrong. Everything that was said that evening Common Ground has delivered, until now. During the pandemic I witnessed first hand how your staff logged on after hours to support our children. I have friends who teach at different schools all over New Haven who were in disbelief on how above your staff went to support our children in a time when everything was so uncertain. I have so many examples that I as a parent have also witnessed. How at any giving moment your staff will reply to my emails whenever I have a concerned on how my child is doing, or how they have came together to give my son the support he needs to succeed. Our children show up every day because of them. It is a very small school, they are family and as a parent with all this crazy stuff going around in the world it is very comforting that they have them when we can't be there. We are 2 months away from this school year to be over. Junior year being one of the most important time in my son's high school years and we are dealing with this, now. Your staff will not be the only ones affected by this, please think about the students you all vowed to put first. Thank you for your time.

Maribel Treichel

From: Emerson Zecena <emersonzecena10@gmail.com>
Date: April 25, 2022 at 4:51:05 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhep.com
Subject: CGHS Testimony Reading Emerson Zecena

Good afternoon; I hope this email finds you well!

I have listed the testimony I will be presenting below.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1611ZZWtGvW1cBMT6lpx0YISweq3DpDPtml_PY7sJe04/edit?usp=sharing

Warmly,
Emerson Zecena

[LINK TO PDF HERE](#)

From: Jesse Delia <jessedelia@gmail.com>
Subject: CG Board Meeting Testimony
Date: April 25, 2022 at 5:01:15 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhep.com

Dear Bob,

I am reaching out with testimony for today's board meeting. I'm concerned by the move by Common Ground's director not to renew staff contracts. I'm asking that the board vote to renew all contracts and urge administration to engage in an open, transparent planning process. No one should be fired in such a thoughtless way during a pandemic. I would also urge the board to reconsider the admin decision to contract a costly, anti-union lawyer.

Thank you,
Jesse

From: Emma Bogush <emma.bogush@nhep.com>
Subject: Written comment for board meeting 4/25/22
Date: April 25, 2022 at 7:44:12 PM EDT

To: Babz Rawls-Ivy <babz.rawls-ivy@nhep.com>, Bob Parker <bob.parker@nhep.com>, Cherry Pacquette-Emmanuel <cherry.pacquette-emmanuel@nhep.com>, Monica Maccera Filppu <monica.maccerafilppu@nhep.com>

Hello,

I strongly ask management to rescind these lay-offs, find work for all staff, and do right by our students and educators.

Thank you,

Bo Bogush
Environmental Educator

From: Alexa Cervo <alexa.cervo@nhep.com>
Subject: Written Comment for Board Meeting 4/25/22
Date: April 25, 2022 at 7:40:36 PM EDT
To: bob.parker@nhep.com
Cc: Monica Maccera Filppu <Monica.maccerafilppu@nhep.com>, Cherry Pacquette-Emmanuel <cherry.pacquette-emmanuel@commongroundct.org>, Babz Rawls-Ivy <barbararawls.ivy@gmail.com>

Hello,

I ask management to rescind lay-offs, find work for all staff, and do right by our students and educators.

Thank you,

Alexa Cervo
Environmental Educator

From: "Sindelar, Charles" <charles.sindelar@yale.edu>
Subject: comment regarding staff layoff
Date: April 25, 2022 at 7:32:29 PM EDT
To: "bob.parker@nhep.com" <bob.parker@nhep.com>

Dear board members, having heard of the last minute staff layoff decision being voted on at today's board meeting, I have tried keep an open mind. Among my concerns was the short notice that was given to any of the concerned parties, including the staff as well as students and parents. These concerns have only grown as I listened to the many testimonials at the meeting. It seems there is overwhelming opposition to this decision, and I have heard no meaningful justification for it. I hope the board listens to what it has heard tonight. If the board votes to go through with the layoffs, you can expect my voice to join the many who will surely protest.

Respectfully,

Charles Sindelar

Charles V. Sindelar, Ph.D.
Dept. of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry
Yale University

From: Miranda Bailey-Russomano <m Bailey.russomano@gmail.com>
Subject: I'm appalled
Date: April 25, 2022 at 6:52:25 PM EDT
To: Bob.Parker@nhep.com, monica.maccerafilppu@nhep.com

Hey Bob and Monica,

Although I wasn't able to speak tonight, I wanted to reach out and share my feelings. I hope that you two hear my words and acknowledge them. I have a long history with Common Ground, and going to this meeting has left me in tears. Allison said that they felt like Common Ground has lost its soul and I'm feeling the exact same way.

I was taught at CG to stand up for what is right and here I'm standing up for all of the teachers that have received nonrenewal notices. It's not just and it's not fair.

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Best Wishes,
Miranda Bailey-Russomano
(they/them)

From: Sarah Tracy-Wanck <s.tracywanck@gmail.com>

Subject: Public Testimony CG board meeting 4/25
Date: April 25, 2022 at 5:27:59 PM EDT
To: babz.rawls-ivy@nhep.com, bob.parker@nhep.com

[LINK TO PDF](#)