

## Common Ground Board of Directors Meeting Minutes: January 27, 2025

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### Board of Directors Minutes

[Microsoft Teams Link](#)

[Microsoft Teams Recording](#)

**Present:** Alexis Smith, Alisha Crutchfield, Brian Kelahan, Carly Osborne, Jeff Carter, Liz Cox, Michelle Sepulveda, Peter Ludwig, Sarah Field.

**Staff:** Amanda Byam, Deborah Greig, Elena Augusewicz, Joel Tolman, Monique Frasier, Rebecca Holcombe.

**Public:** Margaret Randle

### Welcome

Alexis called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm.

Public Comment (5:33): N/A

### Business Requiring Approval (5:33)

- [Minutes of the December 16th Board Meeting](#)
  - Liz moved to approve the December meeting minutes. Jeff approved. All in favor. 1 abstention from Ky.
- [Minutes of the January 10th Board Meeting](#)
  - Jan 10. Ky moved. Brian approved. Passed unanimously.

Motion for Certified Resolution:

- Motion to retroactively take Cherry and Karen off the bank accounts and add Jeff and Monique as signers. Alexis and Elena will remain as signers.
  - Peter moved. Ky seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed.
- Motion to Revoke [this certified resolution](#) as of 12/31/24 since Karen left the organization.
  - Jeff moved. Liz seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed.

### Invoices Needing Approval (5:39)

- [ABM Cleaning Contract \\$7,762.64 per month](#) - annual increase for min. wage adjustment, **\*budgeted**. Please bring a motion to approve for recurring monthly payment at this rate through Dec. 2025 to the Jan. board meeting.

- [MK Golden LLC \\$6900](#) - One time Arbitration fee for a case that occurred over the summer.  
**\*unbudgeted**
- Thurston Foods \$5,208.67 - regular food bill **\*budgeted**
- [Automated Building Systems \\$9869.30](#) - Remainder of \$14,099 contract from this summer to repair and replace major computer hardware that runs the springside HVAC systems. **\*unbudgeted**- This specific item was not budgeted for but there is room for allowance in this \$138,000 budget line, with this expense we are at \$90,000
- **Equitable Financial** \$10,734.70 (NHEP) and \$7050 (CGHS) - 403b Contributions for first quarter of the year **\*employee funded account**

Brian moved to approve the above invoices. Jeff seconded. All in favor. Approved unanimously.

## **Executive Director Report (5:41)**

[Link to January Director Reports](#)

## **Committee Reports (5:42)**

Minutes of all Committee Meetings will be posted on the [Board of Directors Webpage](#) by the end of each month.

## **Audit/Finance Committee (5:42) (Jeff/Elena)**

The regular meeting of the finance committee was held on January 23rd.

The meeting agenda and notes from the Audit/Finance Committee can be found [HERE](#).

## **Finance Report:**

Monthly Financial Package Presentation (Margaret)

- [CLICK HERE to view](#)

Jeff shared the projected \$528K deficit, with grants coming in and special services provided in consideration.

Liz asked about how much the Special Ed billing will represent in the deficit reduction.

Elena answered that they are not sure yet, since each student has to be analyzed individually, but she is committed to having this done for invoices to be sent out by Friday.

Liz asked Jeff what the \$800K is in the financial package.

Jeff answered that it is not the deficit, it's the cash balance.

Liz asked if we can expect to bill the same amount as last year.

Elena shared that she is hoping to meet the budgeted number or higher.

Brian added that he did a quick addition, earlier today, of what's ready for billing at this point. From what was entered for the first semester, he shared that we will be higher than \$175K. With the second

semester included, he expects to meet the \$350K budgeted number. Brian added that it's very likely that NHPS is going to fight this.

Elena stated that the old MOU for last year was \$130K and added that this year's, so far, was close to \$100K for one semester, with no admin fees and more students to analyze. She shared her belief that this number will go up dramatically and stated that NHPS has been pressuring Monique to sign the MOU, but they have not.

Liz confirmed with Elena that the MOU wasn't signed and a lawyer was consulted. Liz shared her belief that we will go above the budgeted amount for SPED revenue and asked if there are other grant revenues not included in the financial statements. that considering SPED billing, we will be in a deficit.

Elena answered that she is confident in the budgeted number for grant revenues that could come in by June 30th, once grant drawdowns and reimbursements are addressed. She shared that we are behind in grant drawdowns, which is why grant revenues are low, due to the volume of grants and steps involved.

Liz asked if there is something we should be considering to help expedite the process, in terms of part-time help, especially if it's data entry that's not high-level work.

Elena answered that it isn't up to her and she believes this is high-level work, since it's not just data entry. She added that we have a full time grant writer and they are all doing the work, including working with YPTC to make Quickbooks a better source for grant information - everything takes time.

Liz clarified that she was referring to what Brian was doing, with entering numbers.

Elena followed up by explaining the process of moving funds based on payroll reports, categorizing grant purchases, and more that comes with the grant drawdowns - which require multiple parties involved in the grant.

Liz asked if the SPED fees are different from the grant drawdowns.

Elena answered that it's not the same.

Brian asked Elena about the forecast under "Other Grants and Contracts," in the financial package on page 8, being \$388K short of the budget and if we are sure that deficit will be closed.

Jeff answered that it falls on the Finance team and the Development team. He added that they are working with YPTC to streamline a lot of cumbersome systems, and that the reporting and documenting takes chasing down people to complete the drawdown.

Elena reiterated that she is confident that the grants they budgeted for will come through.

Rebecca asked for clarification on where children's programs revenue shows up in the reports to ensure that it's not overlooked. She added that all her revenue may not be in for the year, but she

knows what she'll bring in and when. Rebecca stated she was not sure if all of that was included in the revenue projections. fall under the budget and wanted to make sure that it's captured.

Margaret shared that the program revenues projection should be pretty close, as they tried to get them to match the way that programs came in the prior year, and that "Other Revenues" appears to be coming in very close to budget as well.

Rebecca clarified that she wanted to make sure that the budget wasn't looking worse than it is, due to children's programs revenue being missing.

Ky asked if there is any understanding on how the new executive orders and limits on federal funding might affect CG financially.

Elena answered that they have not received any formal communication on this and have moved forward with their regular federal monthly drawdowns.

### **Audit Report:**

- Both CGHS & NHEP State Audits were submitted by 12/31/24
- These are presented as Draft, the finished documents are in process and have no changes.
  - [CGHS Draft](#)
  - [NHEP Draft](#)
  - There were two findings, they are listed here along with the [Corrective Action Plan](#)
- CGHS Federal Audit was submitted to the IRS on 1/15/24

Alexis asked if there were any actions that needed to be taken for the audit that was submitted.

Jeff answered that there are none, and they will now be able to take the audit to request the increase on their line of credit at the bank.

### **Search Committee (6:02) (Jeff)**

- The search committee ended the search process with our final interview on January 17th 2025.
- The board met to review the candidates on January 21st.
- The candidate will be selected in the executive session January 27th.
- The governance committee will be meeting this week to start the transition process.

Jeff thanked everyone for their work in the search, so far. He shared that the board will go into executive session tonight to make their final decisions. Jeff added that they had 85 applicants, came down to 6 semi-finalists, then 2 finalists - 1 who withdrew, causing them to find a third who was very tightly aligned with the other final candidate. He shared that they will be making a job offer in the next coming days, and that the governance committee has started discussing the onboarding and transitions.

### **Governance Committee Report (6:03) (Ky)**

The governance committee met on January 23rd.

Ky shared that this is her first board meeting back, since the summer, from medical leave and that she followed a lot of what went on, rejoining governance in December and now chairs the committee as of this month. She urged everyone to reach out with any governance concerns.

The committee discussed filling the parent rep slot on the board and Ky stated that they have at least 1 candidate plus potential others. The committee is reviewing their credentials and plans to reach out to the others for next steps. They also discussed filling other board member positions and are following up on several leads. Ky urged the board to let her or Alexis know if anyone has recommendations. She shared that they will follow up with the development committee on one of the leads that may be useful for their committee.

Ky stated that they are reaching out to the student board members, especially Heaven who is new to the board, to make sure they have the info they need and to answer any questions. She also shared that the committee is still deciding on a regular meeting time, due to schedule changes.

Ky added that governance discussed a contract negotiations or compensation committee for the incoming new ED. This ad hoc committee was something they did the last time they hired an ED, so Alexis will determine that committee. They also discussed a Board of Ed rep, which Alexis will follow up on to understand who qualifies and make sure they're up to speed.

The committee is meeting again this week to discuss the ED transition committee and determine next steps for that. They will provide another update after that meeting.

### **School Committee Report (6:07) (Liz)**

The School Committee met on January 22nd.

Minutes from the School Committee Meeting can be found [HERE](#).

Liz shared that the school just finished their first semester, so Monique will provide an overview of some first semester data at the next board meeting. She stated that the school will start the second round of MAP testing soon. Liz explained that this is interim testing to assess growth, progress, and student achievement, which is of high interest to CG's funders and the state - who measure how they're doing on the Corrective Action Plan through MAP progress.

Liz stated that enrollment is at 213, and we were chartered for 230, so we are significantly under-enrolled right now. With CGHS recruitment, which has already begun, they are looking to bring in about 100 students next year to meet that 230 number.

Liz urged the board to encourage any young person they know that might be a right fit for the HS to apply. She shared highlights of CG, a small school that has a lot of big school opportunities, including: Green Jobs Corps - a youth employment & development program, the Early College program - a great opportunity where a lot of students are taking college-level classes and doing well, a strong arts program - with Elm Shakespeare on site and a talented jazz pianist as a full time music teacher.

Liz shared that we should be entering into bargaining pretty soon and there is a lot to do to prepare for bargaining for that contract.

Monique added that, after the second round of MAP, the school day SAT will be coming quickly after - in March. She shared that she will give updates on this, as the school is in preparation mode right now to get students ready, and next month she will report out the academic data for the first semester.

### **Development Committee Report (6:11) (Brian + Committee)**

The Development Committee met on Tuesday, January 14th.

Minutes of the meeting can be found [HERE](#).

Brian shared that they will be sharing the board agreement with the board very soon, which the governance committee has looked at. He asked that everyone get it signed and returned to Alexis by February 15th. Brian stated that the agreement includes an individual pledge for what each member is willing to commit to in terms of financial support of the organization. He encouraged everyone to figure out how much they are able to contribute so the committee can use that number for an estimate of how they are doing to close the deficit.

Brian stated that they want a target of how much they need to bring in, in order to do that, and shared his belief that they are closer to figuring out exactly what the deficit number is. The board can expect to get that document from Brian tomorrow morning and everyone should let him know if they have any questions, once it's sent out.

Ky asked if the board agreement is strictly a financial estimation.

Brian answered that it has a whole list of what a board member agrees to, and what the board agrees to in terms of preparing and supporting board members. He added that the governance committee reviewed the document, made comments, and the development committee incorporated that feedback.

Ky shared that, once the governance committee is not acting as a transition committee, the board agreement process could be something that they take on - not including the funds estimate.

### **New Business (6:15)**

Jeff shared some of the work that YPTC is doing with the finance committee, including the EFS filing that takes place at the end of the year - which shows the school district that CGHS spent all their money accordingly. He added that they are looking at giving more assistance on budget development, being that there are more tools and more refinement that can be done now that Quickbooks is online. Jeff stated that he and Gary of YPTC have been talking and he wanted to share that, if the org makes the investment on these bookkeeping tools, we will have better reporting systems for the people who are tracking the grants and for the management team to see their spending. Jeff added that he has a rough estimate and he is trying to refine that with Gary, so he will try to bring that estimate to the

board next month. He explained that there is good merit to what they're working on and, as the new ED is brought in, they are talking about having them do some training with YPTC so that the ED has a strong grasp of the reports and everything else.

Liz added that YPTC has been a tremendous support, and stated her concern on the true deficit and how the board plans to address that deficit sooner than later.

Jeff concluded that he will try to keep the board posted and continue to give more information.

### **Executive Session (6:19)**

Peter moved to go into executive session. Ky seconded. All in favor.

### **Adjourn (7:49)**

Adjourned at 7:49 (Peter moved and Sarah seconded).

Next Meeting: Monday, February 24th.

### **Public Comment:**

In order to comply with Connecticut Open Meeting laws, any member of the public wishing to participate in the meeting must sign up on the Public Participation Sign-up Document. Sign-ups for Public Participation will open at 5:00 pm on the last business day before the meeting (Friday, February 21st) and will close at 5:00 pm on the day of the meeting (Monday, February 24th) Public Participation is limited to 2 minutes per person up to 30 total minutes. Anyone wishing to make a statement to the board can also submit testimony in writing to [Alexis.Smith@nhep.com](mailto:Alexis.Smith@nhep.com) by 5:00 pm on the day of the meeting. All submitted documents will be included in the publicly shared meeting minutes.