

**Town of Hartford Selectboard and Board of School Directors**  
**Combined Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, September 11, 2019 @ 6:00 PM**  
**Hartford Town Hall, Room 2**

School Board Members Present

Kevin Christie  
Peter Merrill  
Nancy Russell, arrived at 6:24  
Russell North  
Michelle Boleski

Selectboard Members Present

Kim Souza  
Dennis Brown  
Dan Fraser  
Alan Johnson  
Jameson Davis  
Simon Dennis

Administrators

Tom DeBalsi, Superintendent  
Noel Bryant, Assistant Superintendent

Administrators

Brannon Godfrey, Town Manager

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Christie at 6:03. He asked for a moment of silence due to the significance of the day.

Mr. Dennis called the Selectboard meeting to order at 6:05.

**2. Public Comments**

None

**3. Changes, Additions and Approval of Agenda**

Mr. DeBalsi announced that Curtis Reed is unable to attend, Mary Gannon is present.

Moved by Merrill, seconded by Boleski to approve the agenda with one correction, motion carried.

**4. Items Requiring Board Discussion and Possible Action**

- **Overview of Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan – Curtis Reed, Vermont Partnership**  
Mary Gannon gave a brief overview of the scope of work. She noted her appreciation for the welcoming feeling during the interview and initial work period. She sees the job as meeting, engaging, and dialoguing with community folks, not an opportunity to point fingers. When the challenges have been identified a strategic plan to address those issues will be created. It was noted that some staff members are curious about how the plan will be carried out. Initial conversations have begun, Curtis is working with the municipality and she is working with the school. The contract states that up to twelve weeks will be spent in gathering information beginning July 15, 2019. She asked that if anyone wants to see her please let Mr. Godfrey or Mr. DeBalsi know.
  
- **Combined Board Community Engagement**
  - CATV interviews, board chairs
  - Use of video media to bring issues forth
  - Enable superintendent to engage with the community
  - Promote student teams to discuss, on social media, issues facing students
  - Institute a community working group for community engagement
  - Designate second monthly school board meeting for public engagement
  - Advertise for town board openings and ad hoc committees
  - Improve Town meeting attendance, how?
  - Designate part of the Selectboard agenda to a community topic and encourage community members to attend
  - Student representatives to the Selectboard, currently school board has one representative

- Joint meeting at public gatherings, ie football game, have a table set up with representatives ready to talk to community folks
- How do we humanize the meetings?
- Identify ways to let people know that their opinions do matter
  
- **Marketing Strategy for Hartford**
  - Hartford brand, have a common "logo"
  - Rec Dept new logo and tagline, "Five villages, three rivers, one town"
  - Highlight activities in Hartford
  - Budget support from both parties, marketing study
  - Use Instagram, #thisisvt, to share photos of Hartford
  - "Welcome to Hartford" sign in Round-a-bouts on Route 5, highlighting the rec logo and the hurricane
  - Replace banners on light posts from the 250th with the new logo or hurricane
  - Ad hoc joint committee to address the marketing activities
  - Reality Assoc President to meet with school board
  - Public Relations firm, on retainer, to assist as needed
  - Niche, ranks colleges and communities, works with community to promote their offerings
  - Explore grant opportunities
  - Work with developers to ensure increased housing includes low income housing
  - Identify barriers for increased housing, ie removed impact fees
  - Develop a plan and have someone put together all the marketing steps
  - How can Hartford create resettlement communities for new Americans

Mr. Godfrey and Mr. DeBalsi will discuss a way to move this forward.

- **Homelessness in Hartford**

We have homeless children in our community. We have many resources available, ie LISTEN, HAVEN.

Mrs. Russell shared her work with Chief Kasten, and school staff- Mr. DeBalsi, Mr. Fogg, and Mr. Heavisides to list what is needed to assist our homeless students. Currently we need to have a washer and dryer available for laundry use at Hartford High School, we have food available now. She is working with others to identify how to help these children face the upcoming winter. She is working with the local and regional Rotarys, and will be presenting at an international Rotary meeting next week. She will be writing a grant to assist these needs.

Mr. Christie mentioned the Hartford Community Coalition summer meal work, \$15,000-17,000 were raised to support community children. One librarian shared that during the summer program children were forming friendships while meeting at the library for lunch.

Mr. Johnson inquired about the possibility of the schools being open during the summer months. This would make the facilities more welcoming. Mr. DeBalsi noted that the formal academic programs end in June, but there are several programs held in the buildings during the summer months. A goal of the district is to have the buildings open later in the day for students who are not supported after school at home.

Ms. Bryant shared data beginning in 2010, an average of 50 students are homeless. The district has a homeless referral system, there is federal money available to purchase food and school supplies. All schools have a backpack program and send food home with students. Two major needs are housing and transportation. Any displaced homeless student has a right to remain a student in Hartford and the district must provide transportation. Students get their meals provided through a federal grant program.

Ms. Boleski noticed last winter that there were several people on the street, she shared her concerns about the lack of warming spots for these folks.

Mr. DeBalsi will be the school board liaison to the Hartford Committee on Homelessness.

- **Town/School Reporting – traditional vs. new models**

Mr. Godfrey shared a document from VLCT regarding requirements about reporting. All that is required is a copy of the auditor's report. He noted there are some options about how to inform the community. If there was a change there would need to be a motion approved by ballot at Town Meeting. Digital reports would be a cost savings, hard copies would also need to be available. This could highlight summaries and include links for the background details. This should be a searchable document. Could we use Google Form for community members to request a hardcopy?

Mr. Christie thanked Ms. Bryant for her work with the school report. She shared that the data the district typically reports has changed in format at the state level. Any member of the public has access to this data. She will be able to include a link to this site this year in the report. She feels that working with a graphic artist would improve the overall document appearance, this makes it more of a marketing tool. The district office would be able to provide copies for the meeting if hard copies are needed.

- **Facility Projects and Bonding**

Mr. Dennis introduced the topic by suggesting a staggered bonding cycle from both boards. The town will be discussing their 6 year plan soon and are relying on staff to identify timing needs.

The district has a 25 year improvement plan which was created with a study done by an engineering firm years ago. Many projects have been completed.

Many members felt that there should be communication between the boards so that major expenditures are identified and coordinated if possible.

Mr. Godfrey and Mr. DeBalsi will have future discussions about potential bond needs.

- **Ways to cost save by working together, ie. Technology, purchasing, etc.**

Mr. Christie opened the topic by suggesting that both groups work on purchasing similar items together to improve purchasing power.

- Vehicle purchases
- Payroll system
- Computers, other technology items
- Grounds/maintenance equipment
- Other services that we both need, ie liability insurance
- Landscaping work/lawn care/cemeteries

Currently both IT departments meet regularly. There are some items we will not be able to share due to state requirements, other items would be easily prorated by use.

- **Town Meeting Cycle Planning**

Mr. Dennis opened with information about the Town and School Meeting Committee who used to organize the planning of the events. Mr. Godfrey outlined the course of work necessary for the events. Currently the town staff and some volunteers are handling the duties. A description of the committee is in the town charter.

Mr. Dennis inquired about the possibility of incorporating these duties into a Civics class. Mr. DeBalsi answered that this was not able to become part of class work. There are other liability issues with students doing some of the tasks. Community service time could be earned.

Other Ideas:

- Ask a civic organization to do a community service project

- Look for a community member to complete tasks for a stipend
- Other volunteers, advertisements will be placed, community members will be appointed by both boards

**5. Other – Next Combined Meeting Date**

Mr. Dennis referred to an email from the Energy Committee about action on a climate emergency. Ms. Boleski asked that the committee make a presentation to the boards.

Mr. Christie shared information about the Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Foundation grant opportunity. He suggested that Hartford put forth an application for this grant. He will refer this to the Hartford Community Coalition.

The chairs will schedule another meeting in six months, right after Town Meeting.

**6. Adjournment**

Moved by Merrill, seconded by Souza, to adjourn the meeting at 9:25, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Cherrie Torrey, recorder



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