



# COMMON GROUND

NEW HAVEN ECOLOGY PROJECT, INC

*Cultivating habits of healthy living and sustainable environmental practices within a diverse community of children, adults, and families.*

## Meeting of the Board of Directors

### Minutes – January 5, 2010

**Present:** John Jessen, Melinda Stylos-Allen, Kim Futrell, Enroue Halfkenny, Jonathan Knisely, Wendy Battles, Arthur Latimer, Michael Doolittle, Liz Cox, Joel Tolman, Melissa Spear.

**Regrets:** Claudia Merson, Jen Burke, Elizabeth Turnbull

**Minutes:** Members reviewed the minutes. Kim moved to accept and Arthur's was the second. The minutes passed with Joel's correction.

**Race to the Top:** Liz introduced the program: a \$180 million application for stimulus funding to schools. CT SDE will apply and commissioner wants school districts and charters to support the application by signing the MOU. Participants agree to embrace these things; goals and standards assessments, data systems to support instruction, great teachers and leaders, and turning around schools, (priority school districts). The first 3 goals we certainly support. Strengthen high schools around the state; feed our data to the feds via the state; teachers and leaders, an assessment system beyond test scores.

Charter school network is in dialogue and there is some uncertainty on how it will support the effort. SDE probably won't push parity for funding either thru increased per pupil or money to follow student from sending district, even if it improves the application's chances. We, along with other charters, can sign the MOU and add a letter of support, and publicly continue to work with state to improve the charter school funding issue that weakens the application. Michael moved to support RTTT and Arthur was the second. The board voted to approve signing the MOU.

**Program:** A job description for garden manager should be ready to post later in the week. Friday is midterm of the second trimester and it has been a quiet period with a gradual shift into calm. Teachers are using this calm for reflection and enhancements to the recent curriculum adaptations. The first segment of Lessons from the Land, the navigational exhibit project with the Peabody, is nearly ready and a proof is ready for review.

**Budget:** Arthur introduces the 990 (tax document) as a connection to donors and the federal government which can be used to assess how well we meet our non-profit tax requirements. It has been influenced by the move towards transparency that will presumably keep us safe from conflict of interest or odd compensation. He may have described the new more demanding form as a pleasure or a fascinating window.

IRS may review governance issues so that could be an additional route to audit. On the 990 the accountants combined nhep/CG books into one document. They had asked for a mission statement and one was created the added more detail than “education” that the accountants listed. There are some additional accounting/financial management improvements pending; some related to the audit and others tied to improvements in QuickBooks. We may need to include/develop whistleblower, compensation, document retention policy for the process. Our budget P& L sheets could be presented in a FASB (the financial accounting standards folks) encouraged format for non-profits and that would help the accountants too. The work on that material will continue.

**Donor:** Annual Appeal return may reach \$20,000 this year, and appointments with Joel/Melissa to figure out individual involvement will be scheduled. Another donor training is a good idea and Joel will doodle to organize another session. Spring cultivation events are on the board for planning (ideas?). And new money has arrived from the Ag Dept to support the harvest pavilion.

**E.D. report:** So much of the activity around the site requires some new planning so we’ve begun conversations with designers to solicit proposals for site master planning process. It will require a review of the CELL document and we’ll need to figure out how to proceed possibly simultaneously. As money comes in for building, we need to decide where things can go to make site an efficient and welcoming place. A master plan or guidance document makes that possible. Project budget is ideally 15-\$30,000 and master-planning process could evolve into the strategic planning process. Finally, there was brief discussion of the conversation between the New Haven Land Trust, Community Foundation, and Common Ground board/staffers regarding the Community Gardens and a possible partnership with Common Ground providing resources for the gardens. All agreed it would be impossible without funding from the Foundation for this effort. Further discussion or a proposal is the next step.

After a documentary slideshow the meeting adjourned.