



# 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 – December 1, 2009

**Present:** Jen Burke, Elizabeth Turnbull, Melinda Stylos Allen, Wendy Battles, Claudia Merson, John Jessen, Michael Doolittle, Arthur Latimer, Ben Gardner, Joel, Tolman, Melissa Spear, Liz Cox, Rebecca Holcombe, Betsy Sneath

**Regrets:** Knisely, Futrell

**Welcome:** Chair briefly welcomed the members, recognizing new participants and noting that it was a busy night and members had competing activities so the meeting would move quickly.

**Minutes:** After a review Ben moved to accept the minutes. Claudia was the second for the motion and in the minutes discussion Jen recognized the absence of her name on the roster; she attended the November meeting. With the correction, the board accepted the minutes.

**Strategic Profile update:** Liz noted a correction from the SDE to our Strategic School Profile. The percentage of grads employed, civilian and military: 16.7%.

**Administrative:** Betsy reviewed the audit process for this first audit with a new firm. She noted their conversation regarding a check over the amount requiring second signature but processed without. The recommendation is for a policy to include an authorization form for regular expenditures above the amount. The change would be noted in the accounting manual. Some discussion followed on the occasionally dual duties of the board as quasi-public entity that is school board and non-profit board. Ultimately the employee manual, accounting handbook, and HR policies might reflect these realities.

**Program reports:** Liz introduced the report on the SDE School renewal visit November 17, which went very well. There was a team of 10 to review everything, contracts, teachers, board members and will be recommending a 5 yr renewal. This is the beginning of their process so there may be an opportunity for us to help. There will be public hearing scheduled later in the year. A 12-week full time hire in social studies/history has taken over for the faculty member on leave.

Joel left a report on the annual appeal, which had been released around thanksgiving, and directions for campaign contact/follow up with 5 people to encourage their giving.

Rebecca presented the Community Program update reminding that the current focus is on fall and spring (less winter based on budget and impact) so Dec 17 is the wrap and activity starts up again in April. More formal numbers are available but for a general snapshot: 5 staff for weekday programs, Rebecca handled weekend events, 92 kids for afterschool program from Barnard Edgewood, Hooker, Hamden middle

school; field trips 878 since Sept not including nh public during the fall, NHPS schedule o complimentary trip is full for the rest of the season. February vacation planning begins soon and a family survey is pending.

Budget: Members reviewed the report and considered such recommendations as migrating data to Quickbooks for Non Profits (also an auditor suggestion), how to market and manage the kitchen as a revenue resource, educational tool, and a working system necessary for the school.

**ED Report:** Melissa made a brief presentation describing her first week at Common Ground. An initial area for intervention, creative, is the site plan, reinforced after a discussion with Joe on space, what is left, and the construction money or imagined project (The Yale School of Architecture may be possible partners). Where does the facilities/site discussion intersect with other planning and how should the CELL efforts continue were questions that emerged. Planning for maintenance, technology, strategic growth, along with updates to guides that include the accounting and employee manuals, and fundraising seem to be the projects Melissa is discovering and ordering.

John made a motion welcoming and affirming the new executive director. Claudia was the second and the board approved.

Yale School of Management board fellows Melinda Stylos-Allen and ElizabethTurnbull made their introductions. The formal meeting adjourned.