Meeting Minutes
9-8-2025

ATTENDEES:
Walter Martin – Chair
Chris Farrell – Vice Chair
Steve Moody – Treasurer
Natalie Wright – Secretary
Marcia Simmons – Board Member
Mark Fleming – Board Member
Kristina Rodrigues – HOS
Scott Sides – K12
John Kramer – K12
Chad Long – K12
Tasha Parnell – HS AA
Marcella Nyte – MS AA
Kelly Shannahan – EL AA
Lea King – AA
Stacey Bryant – EC AA
Sara Struhs – Executive Director

Walter called a quorum and started the meeting by asking Sara to read the mission statement.

Sara read the mission statement.

Walter asked for a motion to adopt the agenda and previous meeting minutes
Mark made the motion; Natalie seconded it. Walter called for a vote: it was unanimous.

Walter recognized there were no communications requested and so moved on to the discussion items starting with the Head of School update.

Kristina shared a power point laying out the current enrollment: as of 9-8-25 there are 4200 students enrolled. She explained this number will come down usually starting in September or the beginning of October.

She said NCVA now has a staff of 268 and while there are a couple openings still not filled, we are in a good solid position as we stand now

Kristina moved on to the school grade confirming for the board that we remained a D this year. Our proficiency numbers were up slightly, but we did not have the same growth as last year. Compared to Durham (our district) we fall right in the middle of the charter schools and we have the same grade as Cyber Academy. Kristina acknowledged we were hoping for more, and confirmed they will be looking carefully at the official numbers when they come out next month.. Looking at the surface level, Kristina said there needs to be a comparison of the growth and proficiency over two or more years to have a full picture. Looking at the year over year should help us see where we were consistently successful and then examine what they were doing to be successful and then sharing those best practices with others who were not achieving the same results.

Moving on Kristina gave an update on the good news being shared about our school. There was a blog post on Skills USA about our program; one about Bryce, a culinary student who recounts why NCVA was such a success story for him as he studied the culinary arts and now is advancing in this work. And WCNC did a highlight story on NCVA in the Charlotte area about heading back to school and what that looks like in a virtual setting.

Kristina updated the board on Skills USA at NCVA and how they have partnered up with them and their project call Parks Clean UP. This year the school outings will have different outreach opportunities for students interested in participating in this program. Also, Tech Thursday, on September 18 will give a presentation on job shadowing at Lowes and what required skills are needed.

Kristina then reminded the board that the outing to the zoo was cancelled last year due to weather and so it will be happening this fall. The zoo has changed this year in that they used to give each student a free ticket to attend, and they are no longer doing that. NCVA has approximately 200 students who, along with their families, enjoy this outing.

Kristina then explained there is a clarification that has been made to the Employee Handbook this year on PTO and reimbursements for weather shutdowns in regions.

Kristina told the board that CTE has budgeted 3 positions to help with the following projects:

A teacher who will engage students with Skills USA to engage students.

A school psychologist who is being hired.

And a HS Registrar position is being added so there will be one registrar for each school.

Kristina moved on to give an update on the renovations at the office in Durham. One contractor has been out and will be giving an estimate and two others are scheduled to come out soon to do the same.

Kristina asked if there were any questions:

Mark thanked her for the report and asked her to report on 5 yrs of data year over year grades. He also said he would like to see the FRE numbers and state averages. And lastly, he would like to see what the school grade for each of our schools – EL, MS, and HS would be if they were graded separately.

Marcia asked Kristina to use the HOS discretionary funding from the board to cover the costs of the zoo tickets one per family. Kristina agreed that it is a good use of those funds.

Kristina did ask about funding for the gaming computers. They will cost approximately $2850/computer and we need 12. They will be given to students and discussion followed about student responsibilities for the computers and covering repairs if they are damaged.

Marcia commented that while the students need to have some responsibility, we do not want to prevent any of the students from participating in this team sport. Chris suggested we lease the computers so to help cover repair costs if needed. It was generally agreed that students need some responsibility for the computers, and asked Kristina to come up with an equitable solution. Kristina said she will see what she can speaking to Lenovo about their lease/repair policies.

Walter asked if there were any more questions for Kristina. Hearing none, he asked Chad to give the financial report.

Chad said his presentation would be quick. We added $1m to the budget with additions we made and therefore this year we will run a $1m deficit. There were a few things that were new items this year: $50k for new teachers to receive new computers; $50k for increase to the student internet reimbursement.

Walter asked if there were any questions for Chad and hearing none, he asked Sara for the Executive Director's update.

Sara said there were several things to go through tonight.

There were 4 new people hired: 3 teachers and 1 school psychologist. They were all approved.

She then asked all Board members to mark their calendars for two upcoming events:

1) November 8 will be the Academic Meeting at the office in Durham. This is the annual meeting when we more thoroughly examine the academic results from the previous year and what changes we should be considering for this year.
2) February 6-8 will be the annual board workshop. This year it will be held at the J.B. Duke hotel. Specifics to follow.

Sara then moved on to discussion of the bonus policy. She explained that in the document she sent out earlier the dates were changed because we now know we did not make the C grade last year but the board had previously voted to keep the same dollar amounts the same for this year and so that is reflected in the documents.

The board has a thorough and rigorous discussion about bonuses, longevity pay and administrative bonuses. After much discussion, Walter asked that the policy be tabled until the next meeting and asked Sara to update and resend the policy to reflect their changes.

Sara suggested they move on to the voting. Walter agreed.

Walter asked for a motion to approve the monthly bill. Mark made the motion. Chris seconded it. Walter called for the vote: it was unanimous.

Walter asked for a motion to approve hiring a registrar for the HS from the CRD. Marcia made the motion. Mark seconded it. Walter called for the vote: it was unanimous

Walter asked for a motion to purchase the gaming computers. Chris made the motion. Mark seconded it. Walter called for the vote: it was unanimous

Walter asked that the vote for the bonus structure be tabled until the October meeting.

Walter asked for a motion to approve the employee handbook. Chris asked that we see the changes or have Kristina explain them to us before we vote on them. Kristina explained the changes that were made:

1) Update to the no smoking policy: Kristina said this was specifically to clarify that there is no smoking while on camera teaching, during testing, or at school events.
2) Update to the Severe Weather Policy.
   Kristina explained it was to clarify if one section of the state was experiencing severe weather and not able to have internet, that did not mean that the whole state was excused from teaching.
3) Update on second jobs/moonlighting
   Kristina explained that moonlighting needs to be shared with NCVA and they must work 9-5 as stated in their contracts. Also, they are not allowed to use their work computers for personal use.
4) 10min arrival before classes start best practice.
   Kristina said the 10 min arrival before class is a best practice – but, it is also something that is expected. A teacher should be in the classroom before students arrive to make sure everything is working and ready for class. Marcia also said students should not be in a classroom without a teacher, which Kristina absolutely agreed with and stated the good thing about the platforms this year is once a teacher leaves the classroom, all students are removed from the classroom as well.

Chris thanked Kristina for the information.

Marcia asked about the meal reimbursement policy. Kristina said it was simply to codify for the staff that being on business somewhere outside of their home does not mean the school would cover all their meals for that day. If they were monitoring testing, for example, they would be reimbursed for lunch. If they were required to stay overnight, then all meals would be covered.

Kristina then said the bonus policy would be an addendum to the Employee Handbook once the Board votes on it.

With this discussion finished, Walter called for a motion to approve the Employee Handbook. Chris made the motion. Natalie seconded it. Walter called for the vote: it was unanimous.

Walter then called for a motion to Adjourn. Mark made the motion and Marcia seconded it. Walter called for the vote: it was unanimous.

The meeting ended at 6:15 pm