

NH Home Education Advisory Council (HEAC) Minutes for April 21, 2023 Meeting

Location: Granite State College, 25 Hall St., Concord, NH

In physical attendance: Mike Koski, Jen Pereira, Heather Barker, Michelle Levell, Rebekah Woodman, Shireen Meskoob.

In remote attendance: Althea Barton (family obligation, alone in room), Katy Peternel, new Representative from Carroll District 6.

Introductions: Rebekah Woodman, Home Education Community, has been appointed by the Commissioner of Education to fill the remainder of Tim Carney's term. Brian Voelk is the new EFA Administrator.

Meeting called to order at 2:40pm.

Motion to approve minutes of 1/20/23, Michelle, seconded by Heather, all in favor.

Appointments/resignations

- 8/31/2023 Term Expirations: Isabella Edwards, Michael Koski, Michelle Levell, Jennifer Pereira
- 8/31/2024 Term Expirations: Heather Barker, Althea Barton, Sarah Cheek, Rep. Glenn Cordelli, April Villani, Sen. Ruth Ward, Rebekah Woodman

Sarah Cheek and Tim Carney have resigned.

Discussion ensued about filling vacancies, including the need to communicate with the NH Association of School Principals, Nonpublic School Advisory Council, and NH School Boards Association.

Public comments - none

NHED Office of Home Education Report prepared by Tim Carney, Administrator of Educational Pathways

Mike reviewed the report:

1. Ed 315 Rule Revisions. In progress
2. Vacant HEAC Memberships. Members should verify their email addresses on the HEAC website.
3. Education Freedom Accounts. Refer questions to Brian Voelk.
4. Frequently Asked Questions on NHED website
5. Access to Public School Programs by Nonpublic, Public Charter Schools, or Home Educated Pupils (HB – 1663 – 131:1). Jen recommended addressing all parts of the new law changes in the technical advisory. Rebekah asked if “curricular and co-curricular” includes access to guidance counselors and other services. Heather confirmed that it gives equal access to all programs that public school students get, such as field trips, scholarships, etc. Mike said informing the public is important and encouraging families to request access to public school resources.

Member reports

Rep. Peternel- A couple of bills affecting homeschooling have been retained in the Education committee.

Christian Home Educators – no updates

Catholics United – no concerns

Granite State Home Educators – numbers are growing. Still seeing confusion about EFA program; requests technical advisory and clarity from NHED.

NH Homeschooling Coalition – no issues. Concur with importance of recruiting new members from school administration groups.

NH School Administrators Association – reminded administrators to update policies.

Immediate Business

Ed-315 Rulemaking Update – HEAC’s recommended revisions were incorporated.

Equal access to public school programs by nonpublic, public charter, and home educated pupils – There are still questions statewide about equal access. Heather has suggested to administrators that when a parent states intent to homeschool a child, the administrator could write a letter/email acknowledging the choice, then inform the superintendent’s office; no other action is needed. Jen suggested putting this in a technical advisory.

Best practices review

Michelle circulated a proposed draft Best Practices for discussion. It’s modelled after prior practices, and related research. Guiding principles are for the council to be transparent, accessible, accountable, and responsive.

1. *HEAC meets September through May on the third Friday of every other month, with alternating months as the “placeholder.”* – revise to June for placeholder month.
2. *HEAC meetings will occur at a location provided by the Department of Education.* – Jen noted that legally we can meet elsewhere if properly noticed. Intention is accessible public space. Check if it’s in the rules.
3. *The Chairman prepares a draft annual report for approval by a majority vote by the council prior to presenting it to the state Board of Education. A minority report may be prepared.* - Jen suggested it’s important for the chair to be able to delegate some responsibilities. Change to “Chairman ensures preparation of draft annual report for approval by majority...”
4. *The Chairman may delegate responsibilities to the Vice Chairman and other council members as needed.*
5. *Meetings will be posted on the DOE website and at the DOE meeting location at least 24 hours in advance. Every effort will be made to also publish an agenda and related meeting material prior to meetings.* - This goes beyond the Right To Know requirement. Discussion ensued.
6. *HEAC allows council members and the public to attend remotely.* – Members noted “in keeping with 91-A.”
7. *The public will have an opportunity to address the council at the end of meetings and at the discretion of the Chairman. The individual will identify themselves by name and affiliation, if appropriate.* – Best to keep it at chair’s discretion whether public comment is allowed at beginning or end of meeting. Confirmed council has no requirement to reply to public comment. Discussed having option of capping each person’s time to keep meetings on track.

8. *HEAC posts minutes, meeting materials, annual reports, and recordings of meetings on the DOE website and retains them a minimum of ___ years.* - Currently meeting materials and recordings are not shared, though they are subject to Right To Know. Discussed possible 10 year retention period. Concerns expressed about members' children being on recordings; possible to record audio only? Rebekah said it's best to destroy recordings after minutes are available. Michelle strongly disagreed; sometimes minutes aren't detailed enough or aren't retained or accessible; and recordings would retain valuable testimony/presentations. Jen said in the past members were told it was hard for NHED to post minutes online, and it's not in the HEAC's control if the NHED fails to post things. Heather said recordings are helpful for people who can't attend meetings. Althea asked whether NHED has technical capacity to store extensive video files; Mike asked Shireen to investigate.

Rebekah said NHED attorney Liz Brown suggested keeping procedures simple; suggested asking Liz to review the final draft and getting the support of NHED. Mike will invite Liz to the May meeting if we can get a revised draft out in advance. No vote was taken on Best Practices pending further revision and discussion.

Announcements - none

Informational Items

Annual Report to State Board of Education – Mike will prepare an annual report using meeting minutes, and email a draft for council review before the May 19 meeting, when he will seek approval following discussion.

Motion to adjourn at 4:08 pm, made by Michelle, seconded by Rebekah, all in favor.

Next meeting May 19.

Secretary's note: NHED = NH DOE

Minutes by AB