

Meeting of the Home Education Advisory Council
December 19, 2019
Department of Education, Concord, NH

Chairperson Kitty Michelotti called the meeting to order at 3:37 p.m.

Members present: Kitty Michelotti, Ellie Riel, George D’Orazio, Michael Koski, , Fred Fraser, Michelle Levell, Rep. Glenn Cordelli, Sen. Ruth Ward, Stefanie Marsh. Visitor: Catie McLaughlin from Seacoast Christian Home Educators Assn (SCHEA)

Minutes

Corrections to the Minutes of the meeting September 26, 2019: “Attorney Amanda Phelps” should read “Amanda Phelps, rules administrator.” Motion to accept minutes as amended: George; second Fred; motion carried.

Chairperson’s Report

Kitty said that the HEAC will most likely meet in January, to vote on the rules. She clarified that Amanda Phelps, who has been working on the rules revision is not lawyer, but is the rules administrator. A new lawyer for DoE is expected in January.

George, Jen, and Kitty met with Amanda to go over a new draft of the rules last Friday. The Commissioner and JLCAR (Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules) want to clean up the rules. The rules the HEAC Rules Committee worked on were put aside and the Commissioner and Amanda started from scratch. At the meeting Amanda explained that this is the beginning of a process to take the rules down to a skeleton of what is required in the RSA (home education law) and then flesh it out with our additions.

George commented that JLCAR did not suggest that we cut things out. The rules as the Committee submitted them do not constrict freedom of homeschoolers. George felt that it’s been implied that we need to pare the rules down in order to protect homeschoolers’ freedom. As an example of the need for details in the rules he cited issues in Pelham where more is being asked of homeschooling families than is required by law. The rules clarify the law, so there is no doubt that a certain thing is or is not required. The rules include specific examples, for example, of evaluation methods that a PA could agree upon with a parent.

Kitty reported that Latitude Learning Resource Center in Manchester is doing very well. Yule ball (Mosaic Explore) and Prom coming up too. She felt that there were more high school-aged students homeschooling now. (Kitty is on the Board of LL.)

Member Reports

Stef reported that the **NHHC** received a question about a student who needed to enroll with their local high school (Keene) so that they could get into the Tech Program at Fall River. Amy Gall (NHHC Board,

former HEAC Chair) replied to the NHHHC Board that she found that she needed to notify the school the year before her child wanted to enroll in a tech program. Mike reported that the tech centers are very popular and are over-enrolled. It would be helpful to announce to homeschoolers that they should talk to people at their local high school as soon as possible in the new year and get on the list of interested students. The Technical Centers recruit from the sending districts with which they have agreements. There is an application process. Usually there is a day when reps from the technical center come and speak to students at a high school. Students should be aware that some programs take several years to complete and are competitive to get into-- welding, for example.

Rep. Cordelli and Sen. Ward met with a person from Brentwood regarding child benefits services. Districts and towns can send money to non-public schools (even religious schools) for child benefit services, which can include physician services, nurse services, guidance and psychologist, educational testing, transportation, textbooks, and more, according to RSA 189-49; grants are covered in 198:22. She has a son with a disability going to Sacred Heart. Hampton sends money to Sacred Heart for books etc. She is asking why can't this apply to all private schools or to homeschoolers? She is thinking of bringing this to the legislature and is filing complaint with US Department of Education.

Michelle Levell announced that School Choice Week is coming 27-31. An Event is planned for Thursday, Jan. 30 at the Doubletree in Manchester from 4:00-7:00. Charter school, private school, and homeschool groups will be there to showcase and celebrate school choice with informational tables and performances. Coming Tuesday, April 7, 5:30 Andrew Campanella, will speak on how to find the right educational fit for your child at the Nackey Loeb School in Manchester.

Rep. Cordelli told us that The Powerful Parent Network is possibly coming to New Hampshire. These are supporters of school choice who recently confronted Sen. Elizabeth Warren on education issues.

Catie McLaughlin talked about an upcoming Economics Summit for homeschoolers with two professors slated to speak. Over 100 students have signed up. She has been teaching a very popular weekly economics class.

George said that **CUHE** switched to groups.io for their email group.

Rules Update from Amanda Phelps

Amanda explained to us that she is the Administrative Rules Coordinator, the person who takes the rules changes through the process, using the rules procedure manual and RSA 541A. She took over from Richard Sala and had to learn about this process—the rules for writing rules. She felt the reworked rules we had presented did not flow. So she, under the direction of the Commissioner, chose to start from scratch; the rules are pared down, meet the requirements of the statute, and, it should be noted, this is only an initial proposal. Rules next go to the State Board of Education to OLS (Office of Legislative Services), and back to Amanda as a clean version. Then there will be a public hearing and final proposal. We have a three month window to add to or to take away from the rules. Pared down rules would be accompanied by a guidance document, a technical advisory.

Kitty— Is the intention is to submit the proposal we were given as the proposal to State Board? –There can be additions.

Michelle—What exactly is guidance document?—It’s a technical advisory

Stef—In the past, technical advisories have not carried weight of the law and rules, when speaking with school districts who are not complying with the law. Will districts respond as well to references to a technical advisory?

Fred-- How soon do we want to move ahead? Is sooner better? In general, we do need to start by 2022, so we don’t end up with expired rules (rules exp. in 2024).

Kitty –asked Mike about his wording for teachers making sure that fees were not charged by a district for assistance with the notification or with mutually agreed upon evaluation methods. In the conversation, it was also noted that parents need to notify the local school quite early, at the very beginning of the school year, to sign up for AP testing through the College Board. The deadline was moved to much earlier. Families are having a hard time signing up for Aps.

Glenn—What if we have questions about the rules changes?--Amanda is happy to take them. Make sure to cc Kitty too, so that she can keep track of the discussion.

Hopefully we can vote in January to move rules forward. Then they can go to the State Board in February. If on that track, there would be public hearing in April.

Kitty—Should we have a meeting of rules committee or collect comments from HEAC members?

George—A meeting is better because of face-to-face discussion.

Ruth—Is this too bare bones? Is there a lot that we want to add back in?

Perhaps have a meeting of Rules Committee and anyone interested, for about an hour and meet with Amanda immediately afterward. Fred thinks this should be voted on sooner, rather than later. We need to know when the Rules Committee will meet so that HEAC members know the deadline by which they should submit their comments.

Commissioner’s Report

Commissioner Edelblut discussed the rules changes. He said that we’ve been patchworking the rules for years. He wanted to start with the law and then add on to that from what was needed. He is reticent to add in much more than the law. He says that he is happy to send technical advisories to provide clarity. He doesn’t want too much in the rules because they take up the force of law. Kitty asked about the “weight” of a TA with a district that is not obeying the law or the rules. The Commissioner would like to talk with those districts to correct their mistakes. (Here there was a brief discussion about how families hesitate to come forward to have someone go to school district for them because they don’t want to be identified by district personnel as having complained.) The Commissioner said that the TA is the way these details are handled now; they are the next step in the regulatory scheme to make things happen.

George said concerned parents could get a letter from him or from the Commissioner. We would need to have the TA ready to hand to people instead of the rules. George is also concerned that the technical advisory will not carry the weight of the rules because TAs can be changed by subsequent commissioners.

The Commissioner would like to see applications from homescholars for the Youth Senate program. He felt that this year's applications were weak on civics knowledge. In January, the Department will be announcing the New Hampshire Career Academy open to students who are seniors in high school. They would be a student of the North Country Charter Academy (don't have to physically go there) and enrolled in community college; different programs are at different colleges. Funding goes to CC; there is access to curricular or co-curricular activities at the community college. Students could complete an associates degree in a "super senior" year.

Mike—reminded everyone of the Teen Pact government leadership program in April.

Kitty is still looking into the difference between Massachusetts VLACS (no wait) and the NH system.

Please send Kitty any and all concerns about the rules changes. Reference the current rules document handed out today.

Motion to adjourn by George; Michelle second; motion carried. Adjourned at 5:31.

Minutes recorded by Stefanie Marsh