



Dear Friends of Hope,

The start of a new year often feels like it opens doors to new possibilities. We are excited about what's ahead for Hope Community this year and want to take this opportunity to update you on one of our key priorities: Hope's leadership transition. You will be hearing from us about other aspects of our strategic initiatives in the weeks and months ahead.

When Shannon Smith Jones left for a new role in August, we let you know that we would be taking time to reflect on leadership at Hope and what the organization needs to continue to embody its mission. Over the past several months we have entered deeply into that reflection process with Hope staff and board chairs. This reflection process, guided by the Hope director team, raised new possibilities for a leadership model that merit further exploration and discussion.

What we have heard in the expansive conversations so far is the priority and value that Hope Community places on shared leadership and leadership development. While the conversations held so far have been thought provoking and have pushed us to consider new directions, not all staff and board members at Hope were able to participate. To test our understanding of what we heard and allow opportunity for more staff and board members to share their perspectives, we will be sending a survey to these groups by the end of the month. That is the immediate next step in our leadership transition assessment.

In addition, a leadership design committee including board members, Rachel Martinez (Director of Human Resources and Organizational Culture), Betsy Sohn (Director of Development and Impact), and other Hope staff is forming to continue the process of documenting how Hope has practiced collaborative leadership over the last number of years and how that informs future leadership frameworks. We believe that the work we are doing now to understand shared and collaborative leadership models is deeply connected to who Hope is as an organization and our place in community. We are not alone in this exploration. Key organizational funders such as the McKnight Foundation and the Minneapolis Foundation have recently shared their own steps into shared and collaborative leadership and are among many who are encouraging Hope on this front.

Indeed, one of the legacies of Shannon's tenure was cultivating a system of leadership at Hope built to function with collective leadership and accountability. The strength of this foundation continues to prove itself during this interim period. And while the Board and Staff have not made any decisions on whether to pursue a collective leadership approach past the interim period, we do believe that taking the time to vet that as an option alongside a traditional Executive Director model reflects what we've heard and is worth taking time to do.

As Hope board co-chair LaCora Bradford Kesti recently shared with us, “Hope’s work has continued with focus and excellence guided by the director team over the last several months. From pulling together the Grand Opening of 628 Franklin – a keystone example of Hope’s community ownership work – to the work of the Parks and Power team to advocate for and win funding to support residents burdened by the Park Board’s practices around Emerald Ash Borer tree removals, to a new mural celebrating longtime Hope staff Bunny Ruiz, as well as negotiating and ratifying a second union contract, this interim period has been testament to the power of Hope’s organization-wide leadership. I am confident in the Hope team’s ability to engage in community-centered, mission fulfilling work, and I am curious, and excited to be part of this leadership framework exploration to understand what is possible through shared and distributed leadership.”

The time we are taking in this process now will serve Hope well into the future regardless of the leadership model we pursue. It will enrich our understanding and approach to shared, collaborative, collective and distributed leadership and it honors our values of organization-wide leadership and participation. We will provide an update on our insights, direction, and next steps by the end of March.

Thank you for your trust, support, and commitment to Hope Community.

In gratitude for your continued support,



Chaka Mkali



Will Delaney

