

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of April 12, 2017
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School

Meeting convened: 7:03 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 9:35 p.m.

Members present: Robert Hayes, Frederick Small, Daniel Cullity, Robert Trotta, Christopher Howard, Michael Jones, Robert O'Brien, Jr. (left at 9:28 p.m.), Alexandria Taylor, Kevin Lynam, and Steve Bois

Members absent: None

Administrators present: Dr. Ruth Gilbert-Whitner, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Patrick Dillon, Asst. Superintendent of Schools
Dr. John Queally, Administrator for Special Education and PPS
Chad Peters, Director of Technology Services

Chair Hayes brought the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and announced the meeting was being broadcast live and recorded.

Chair Hayes took the meeting agenda out of order to accommodate speakers and presentations.

NEW BUSINESS

Kyle Riley - Administrator of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services

Dr. Whitner reported that after a two tier search process, the Search Committee and Superintendent of Schools recommend Mr. Kyle Riley, for the position of Administrator of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services. The position is being vacated by Dr. John Queally who has accepted a similar position with the Walpole Public Schools. Dr. Whitner referred to Mr. Riley's application and credentials and informed the Committee a vote is needed to hire for this position. Dr. Whitner introduced Mr. Riley to the Committee. Mr. Riley discussed his history and current position as Administrator of Special Education in the Haverhill Public Schools. Mr. Riley also commented on maintaining a tight budget and making every effort to keep special education students in district.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to appoint Kyle Riley to the position of Administrator of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services effective July 1, 2017 to replace Dr. John Queally who is resigning effective June 30, 2017. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hayes clarified the position is not a new position and that Mr. Kyle Riley is replacing the current Administrator of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services, Dr. John Queally.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

March 15, 2017 Meeting Minutes

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to approve the meeting minutes of March 15, 2017 School Committee, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

March 29, 2017 Meeting Minutes

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to approve the meeting minutes of March 29, 2017 School Committee, as presented. The motion passed 8-0-2. Mr. Bois and Mr. Howard abstained.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Student Council School Committee Representative, Marah Burt, reported on student activities around the District.

Regional High School

A drug free community's survey was successfully administered to high school students. Parent-teacher conferences were held March 16. A pancake breakfast to benefit Show Choir was held on March 18. MCAS ELA assessment for grade 10 students took place the week of March 20.

The freshmen and sophomore semi-formal dance was held March 24. On March 27, Dollars for Scholars hosted a successful Cut-A-Thon at John Russell Studio Salon & Day Spa in Whitman. John Russell Studio Salon & Day Spa has been in business since 1989, and Whitman & Hanson Dollars for Scholars is the local chapter of Scholarship America established in 1962. Community volunteers raised scholarship funds for graduating high school seniors from the two towns.

The W-H Second Annual Best Buddies Road Race was held Saturday, April 1 at the high school. Junior Prom was held April 7 at the Pembroke Country Club. Dollars for Scholars (DFS) held a meat raffle on Saturday, April 8. All proceeds from the event benefited Dollars for Scholars and graduating high school seniors from Whitman and Hanson who are continuing to college. The Credit for Life Fair for all Grade 12 students will be held on Tuesday, April 25.

Whitman Middle School

Project 351 Leader, Chris Blackman, has collected and sorted over 80 bags of clothing for the Cradles to Crayons drive. The Whitman Middle School dance was held Friday, April 7. Another dance is schedule for May 5.

Hanson Middle School

The Hanson Middle School held a dance on Friday, March 24. Emma Rogers has collected clothes for the Project 351 service project which were donated to Cradles to Crayons.

Elementary Schools

The Duval Elementary School held a basket auction on Thursday, March 23.

The Maquan Elementary School presented the play, Aladdin, on April 11. The Indian Head School will also hold their Grade 5 talent show Thursday, May 4. Field trips for Indian Head include a trip to Patriot's Place and the Heritage Museum.

At the request of Chair Hayes, Director of Technology Services Department, Chad Peters, will explore the addition of a microphone or PA system with Whitman Hanson Cable Access WHCA channel to improve and amplify sound for speakers and presentations during School Committee meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayflower Municipal Health Group Alternate

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to appoint Dr. Patrick Dillon, Assistant Superintendent, as an alternate voting member of the Mayflower Municipal Health Group. The motion passed unanimously.

Open Meeting Law Complaint

Chair Hayes reported that a second Open Meeting Law complaint has been brought to the School Committee by Mr. Philip Andrews. The complaint indicated that when the School Committee met in Executive Session on March 29, the meeting posting indicated that the Committee was entering into Executive Session for Purpose 3 and Purpose 7, rather than Purpose 1, as required under the Open Meeting Law. The School Committee should have entered Executive Session under Purpose 1 and had voted in the Executive Session to have legal counsel respond to the prior complaint. In Open Session, Chair Hayes recommended requesting legal counsel to respond to the complainant and Attorney General.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to authorize Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane, LLP, legal counsel Andrew Waugh, to respond to the Open Meeting Law complaint served by Philip Andrews. The motion passed unanimously.

Acceptance of Gifts -Indian Head School

In a memo from Principal Elaine White, for the Indian Head School, a request to accept books relating to elementary engineering and coding valued at \$1,800 from General Dynamics Mission Systems. The opportunity to purchase the books was through a grant with the community outreach division written with staff and Hanson parent, Amy Johnson.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to accept books relating to elementary engineering and coding valued at \$1,800 from General Dynamics Mission Systems. The motion passed unanimously.

In a memo from Principal Elaine White, for the Indian Head School, a request to accept twelve books relating to lacrosse donated by the Whitman Hanson Youth Lacrosse Board of Directors.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to accept twelve books relating to lacrosse donated by the Whitman Hanson Youth Lacrosse Board of Directors. The motion passed unanimously.

Field Trips

Whitman Middle School Grade 8 Annual Trip

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. O'Brien seconded; voted to approve the overnight, out of state Whitman Middle School annual eighth grade field trip to New York and Pennsylvania, June 6-9, 2017 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

High School – Habitat for Humanity

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to waive the nurse requirement and approve the overnight field trip at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School on May 4-5, 2017 to raise homelessness awareness, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Whitman-Hanson China Exchange Program

Principal Jeffrey Szymaniak announced 46 exchange students from China will visit the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School from May 14 to May 26, 2017. Director of Curriculum

for History, Robert Davidson, is coordinating the program with Stewart Johnson from the Alpha Exchange Program. Host family synchronization was unsuccessful so the visiting students will stay off site at a hotel in Braintree and attend school each day, participating in optional courses and classes. The advantage of an offsite location also provides students access to transportation to explore the South Shore and Boston. Weekend events during the students' stay are also planned and include a cookout at the high school. The goal of the exchange program is to eventually offer additional foreign language opportunities to Whitman-Hanson students, beyond French and Spanish. It is anticipated that beginning next year, Whitman-Hanson students will be able to visit a school in China through the exchange program.

Whitman Hanson Cable Access (WHCA)

Chad Peters updated the Committee on the partnership with Whitman Hanson Cable Access (WHCA). Several meetings with the new executive director, Eric Dresser, were held to discuss the history and plans for moving forward with operations of Channel 98. Historically, the school district's Technology Department maintained the channel content and posting school committee and other public meetings. However, due to lack of finances for equipment and staff, the school district can no longer maintain the channel for WHCA. WHCA has sufficient resources and is capable of supplying and maintaining the proper equipment and channel broadcast needs. A plan to train WHCA staff and become responsible for broadcasting Whitman-Hanson Regional School District content is now underway.

Special Education Services

Dr. John Queally, Administrator of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services (PPS), provided an overview of Whitman-Hanson's special education programs and services. Dr. Queally described the overall mission of special education as being two-fold: To identify students not making effective academic and social-emotional progress due to a disability and to construct an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that will support student progress by creating challenging yet attainable goals, maximizing student independence, and providing support in the most inclusive setting possible. Dr. Queally presented basic facts in special education. Students are eligible for IEP services from 3 to 22 years of age. The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District has approximately 600 students with IEP's. Fifteen percent of the total student population has some type of special education in the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District. The range of IEP services includes academic support, speech and language therapy, occupation and physical therapy, counseling, vision and hearing support, specialized transportation, home consultation and vocational training. The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District attempts to provide services in the general education classroom. Students with greater needs spend a greater portion of their time outside of the general education classroom. Dr. Queally identified the specialized in-district programs throughout each of the elementary, middle and high schools. Dr. Queally discussed out of district programs and the associated costs to the district. Day placements range from \$30,000-\$70,000 and residential placements range from \$70,000-\$200,000 and up. Whitman-Hanson has students attending both settings. Out of district placements are partially reimbursed through state funding known as Circuit Breaker. Once a student's IEP services reach a specific threshold (approximately \$40,000), the district is reimbursed approximately 75% of all costs beyond that threshold. The goal is to deliver needed service in the most inclusive setting possible. Many in-district programs exist to support students who do not meet success in the general education classroom and have a much smaller teacher/student ratio. When needs exceed the level of these programs, out of district programs

are considered. The Committee briefly discussed special education expenses, unanticipated costs which impact budget and benefits of participating in collaboratives. A lack of school adjustment counselors at the elementary level was also discussed. Dr. Queally added there are a number of mental health issues at middle and high school levels and missing adjustment counselors at the elementary level is manifesting in later grades. Mr. Bois identified and commended the work of paraprofessionals throughout the district.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Planning for Success/School Improvement Plans

The Superintendent discussed the WHRSD Strategic Plan and how 2017-18 School Improvement Plan is directly linked to Whitman-Hanson's three Pillars of Success: Pillar I - Every Child, Every Day with healthy minds and healthy bodies, Pillar II - A PreK-Grade 12 a longitudinal system of curriculum and instruction, and Pillar III – Safe and Secure Learning Environments. Maquan School Principal, Dr. Beth Wilcox, presented for the elementary school level, Principal Bill Tranter presented for the middle school level, and Principal Jeff Szymaniak presented for the Regional High School. The presentations identified common goals and cohesive objectives through each school level; elementary, middle and high school.

Linking to Pillar I – Every Child, Every Day, principals discussed common goals to strive to implement a free, full day Kindergarten program for all students across the district to have all students begin their academic career on a level playing field and to support the social-emotional learning and needs of students in our school.

Linking to Pillar II - PreK-Grade 12 a longitudinal system of curriculum and instruction, principals are focused on curriculum alignment through all levels. At the elementary level, work will continue to extend and develop the mathematic curriculum utilizing Envision and revise science standards to reflect the new Massachusetts Frameworks and adopt KnowAtom in grade 1 and kindergarten. Middle Schools will continue work to implement the new math and science curricula. At the high school level, work will continue to support co-teaching opportunities, expand technology through chrome book use, and develop new courses for the 2018-2019 Program of Studies.

Linking to Pillar III – Safe and Secure Schools, all schools will continue to develop and execute effective plans, procedures, routines and operational systems. At all levels where needed, updates and enhancements for front door security will be implemented, education for community stakeholders regarding WHRSD safety programs, professional development for staff, audio and video updates where necessary.

The principals briefly discussed building and grade transition processes for students as they move from elementary to middle to the high school.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. O'Brien seconded; voted to accept all 2017-2018 School Improvement plans, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Line Item Transfers

The Committee reviewed line item transfers for FY2017.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to approve FY2017 Line Item Transfers #2, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

FY2018 Budget Update

The Superintendent reported that many efforts have been made to reduce the budget gap particularly with information that was not available when the budget was presented at the beginning of February. At the state level, amendments have been filed by state representatives to increase regional transportation reimbursement to 72%, to increase Chapter 70 aid from \$20/pupil to \$30/pupil or even \$50/pupil, and to increase funding for the transportation reimbursement of students who are homeless. Increased state aid will improve the District's capacity to provide educational services for our students.

Several conversations with town officials to address concerns to be able to fund the school budget within the levy limit and avoid potential override fails have occurred. Dr. Whitner reported on recent adjustments to potential revenue and anticipated expenditures that have been applied. Dr. Whitner outlined a number of items impacting the proposed budget and reducing the gap. In working with the Whitman Hanson Education Association (WHEA) an agreement to waive notification and offer early retirement has been secured resulting in a resignation and retirement. A maternity leave and teacher retirement will not be filled. Savings on textbook purchases through an agreed payment plan with McGraw Hill has been finalized to reduce costs. Athletic coach salaries have been moved to the athletic revolving account. The number of students leaving Whitman Hanson Regional School District for other school districts has decreased, and a plan to account the Food Services Department for utility services are in place. In addition, the interest rate is higher than expected and anticipated revenue has been adjusted. In addition, due to declining enrolment, one teacher position and assistant superintendent position were reduced.

Chair Hayes confirmed that the current proposed level service budget does not include tuition free full day kindergarten, and the administrator of special education position is not a new position, but a replacement due to a resignation. Chair Hayes reported that the School Committee voted to set the local assessment increase at 11.5% and opened the discussion to reduce the local assessment increase based on the adjusted budget figures as the Superintendent explained.

Mr. Frank Lynam reported that the Whitman Finance Committee voted on April 11, 2017 to support the local assessment at \$12,064,192 or an 8.5% assessment increase. He explained how the Town of Whitman calculates budget and challenges of departmental budget increases. Mr. Lynam opined a proposition 2.5% override would not pass if needed in both towns. Mr. Lynam discussed challenges facing the Committee in regard to adequate funding and recommended communicating real data and solid facts of how budget cuts would impact the school district. Furthermore, how the reduction of basic services will affect student's education. For example, the negative impact to graduation rates, special student services, and security and safety programs. Mr. Lynam clarified the Town of Whitman cannot meet an 11.5% assessment increase without an override and has tentatively scheduled a meeting with town officials should the Committee maintain the current vote of the local assessment increase at 11.5%. Mr. Lynam also referred to the needs of other town departments and a potential override ballot question for the Whitman Fire Department. Mr. Michael Minchello, Chair of the Whitman Finance

Committee, discussed the method of funding this year with the anticipation to request an override next year at this time.

Hanson Board of Selectmen, Mr. Jim McGahan, noted that the Regional School District Budget local assessment increase is on the May 1 Town of Hanson Annual Meeting warrant, at this time. Mr. McGahan reported in discussions with the school district regarding a potential override, the median household quarterly tax increase would be \$25 per household. Although the figures are still being developed, work is continuing to avoid an override situation and fund the local assessment without an override. At a local assessment increase of 8.5% the Superintendent noted that the Town of Hanson's assessment increase over FY2017 would be \$479,670. Mr. Michael Dugan, Hanson Finance Committee Chair, further discussed the town's current budget position and anticipated capital improvement articles for May town meeting. Mr. Dugan suggested communicating real data to demonstrate the impact on the school district.

Dr. Whitner supported amending the local operating assessment increase from 11.5% to 8.5%. The Superintendent reported the House has proposed a 72% transportation reimbursement and additional per pupil cost adjustment will increase anticipated revenue, if approved. Dr. Whitner stated although the towns of Whitman and Hanson will be one of the last communities in the state to be supporting cost free, full day kindergarten, it remains to be something very important that the District needs to be providing. After additional discussion and consensus of the Committee to re-visit the local assessment, Mr. Small motioned to amend the local assessment increase from 11.5% to 8.5%. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bois.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to amend the local assessment to the towns at an increase of 8.5% and approve the operating assessment to the Town of Whitman at \$12,064,192 and the operating assessment to the Town of Hanson at \$8,194,736 for the FY2018 budget in accordance with the PK-12 Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Agreement, The total operating assessment of \$20,258,928 to be shared by the towns is based on student enrollment on October 1 of the current school year. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hayes recommended a joint meeting of both Hanson and Whitman town officials with the WHRSD School Committee to commence discussions on the FY2019 budget. Chair Hayes selected a potential meeting date for June 12, 2017 and will follow up with invitations.

Closing of Maquan Elementary School

The School Committee discussed the possible closing of the Maquan School for the 2018-2019 school year. This issue has been discussed at previous meetings and with the Hanson Board of Selectmen. Many factors have been considered including the cost of the ongoing repairs at Maquan and the reduced enrollment in the school system. Ultimately, the School Committee voted unanimously to recommend returning the Maquan School to the Town of Hanson at a mutually agreed upon time with the understanding that the closing would not take place until the 2018-2019 school year. This allows for smooth transitions as decisions are made regarding the movement of students, staffing, and programs. Following Spring Break, a transition team will begin the thoughtful process of addressing the impact of the closing.

VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to terminate the lease of the Maquan Elementary School and return the Maquan School to the Town of Hanson at a

mutually agreed upon time with the understanding that the closing would not take place until the 2018-2019 school year, as discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy Subcommittee

There was nothing new to report. The Superintendent recommended the Subcommittee meet soon to review policy before the end of the school year.

Facilities and Capital Projects Subcommittee

Mr. Small reported the Facilities and Capital Projects Subcommittee met earlier in the evening and highlighted current projects and amendments to several warrant articles. Dr. Whitner reported that after preliminary meetings with Frank Lynam and the Whitman Finance Committee and in working with Jim McGahan, firmed up the May 1 capital projects warrant articles adjustments. In summary, district-wide capital project warrant articles amendments include removing the high school road work repair at \$125,000, amending the pothole repair work to \$40,000 and delaying replacement of the roof top units and installation of ceiling fans. For the Town of Whitman, based on the current building issues at the Whitman Middle School, various capital projects could be delayed in anticipation of entering into a Statement of Interest for a new school or renovation with the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the near future.

Legislative Update

Mr. Jones reported the state House II budget is less than the Governor's budget. Dr. Whitner added there is an amendment in support of increasing funding for the transportation reimbursement to 72% of students who are homeless. Mr. Small added there is also an amendment to increase Chapter 70 aid from \$20/pupil to \$30/pupil or even \$50/pupil. Mr. Trotta was concerned that government may be heading toward privatization and charter school vouchers rather than maintaining support for regular public school.

Pilgrim Area Collaborative/North River Collaborative

There was nothing new to report.

Regional Agreement Committee

Chair Hayes anticipates setting a meeting date soon.

VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Mr. Small; seconded; voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted Michelle Kelley

Handouts:

- 1) Agenda for April 12, 2017
- 2) Meeting Minutes March 15, 2017 and March 29, 2017
- 3) School Improvement Plans (all schools)
- 4) Application packet – Mr. Kyle Riley

- 5) Indian Head School request to accept books relating to elementary engineering and coding.
- 6) WMS Annual Grade 8 Field trip to NYC and Philadelphia
- 7) Habitat for Humanity Field trip request
- 8) FY2017 Line Item Transfers #2
- 9) FY2018 Assessments Detail and Percentage Increase dated 3/8/2017
- 10) Indian Head School request to accept twelve books related to lacrosse