

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of January 11, 2017
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School

Meeting convened: 7:04 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 9:11 p.m.

Members present: Robert Hayes, Daniel Cullity, Robert Trotta, Michael Jones, Alexandria Taylor, Frederick Small, Kevin Lynam, Steve Bois

Members absent: Christopher Howard, Robert O'Brien, Jr.

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
Christine Suckow, Director of Business Services
Chad Peters, Director of Technology Services

Chair Hayes brought the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and announced the meeting was being broadcast live and recorded.

Chair Hayes announced the Committee will commence preliminary budget discussions and will be taking the meeting agenda out of order.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

December 14, 2016 School Committee meeting minutes

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to approve the December 14, 2016 School Committee meeting minutes, as presented. The motion passed 7-0-1. Mr. Small abstained.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Whitner stated that the superintendent's report is comprised of two parts; the Superintendent's Goals Update and Budget Report.

Budget Report FY2016

Christine Suckow, Director of Business Services, introduced Dan Sullivan, CPA, Principal of CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP, auditors for the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District. Mrs. Suckow added that CliftonLarsonAllen, has been performing the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District annual audit for the last three years. Mr. Sullivan provided the Committee with copies of the FY16 audit cover letter, financial statements, and GAO and OMB reports for the ended June 30, 2016. Chair Hayes stated the District must be audited annually by an accredited audit firm, as well as by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education because the school system receives federal and state funding.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the financial statements and federal GAO and OMB report for federal financial assistance that the district receives. Preliminary audit work began in April 2016, when a portion of the testing was performed with primary field work beginning in November 2016, which is done after the WHRSD financial books have been closed and all entries completed. Mr. Sullivan reported that management and staff were responsive as in prior year audits, there were no disagreements, and the end result was a smooth audit process. CliftonLarsonAllen is responsible to provide an opinion of the financial statements. Mr. Sullivan

reported that the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District audit is unmodified, which is the best opinion possible.

Mr. Sullivan discussed the groups in the financial statements: government wide statements, and fund basis or cash basis from current sources. Mr. Sullivan reported the key components of the statements and the net position of the District. The 2016 net position is \$30,335,240. He discussed the components which also include assets, liabilities and the net investments of capital assets, restricted, and unrestricted assets (unfunded pension and Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liabilities) which was discussed in more detail. Mr. Sullivan reported on the fund financial statements covering the general fund and how it related to the financial statement. The General Fund Balance totaled \$2,736,542, consistent with last year's figures. This included \$950,000 as committed, slightly higher than last year. The unassigned fund balance was \$1.4 million.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed several footnotes in the report. The long term debt was reduced due to debt refinancing in 2015 and reduced debt service by \$929,000. Mr. Sullivan discussed Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) is slightly increased unfunded liability at \$22,243,255. Mr. Sullivan added that GASB Statement #75 will require the district to report on the whole liability in 2018 and will impact a further decrease in the net position. Net Pension liability was also briefly discussed at \$10.9 million at an 8% interest rate. Mr. Sullivan reported no findings after reviewing the key components of the financial statements. Mr. Sullivan then reviewed the GAO and OMB Reports of internal control over financial reporting and on compliance and other matters. There were no findings in the GAO and OMB reports. \$2.3 million in federal awards in FY16, major grants were part of special education cluster. No management letter was processed due to "No Findings" during the FY2016 audit. Mr. Sullivan commended the District on a successful audit with no findings and consistent improvement and communication with management. Dr. Whitner added having no findings in an audit is a major accomplishment for a district and the work of Director of Business Services, Christine Suckow, and her department is greatly respected.

Vote to Rescind Bond authorization

District Treasurer, David Leary, presented a housekeeping item as recommended by the auditors. The recommendation was to rescind two bond authorizations by vote of the School Committee. The first being the bond authorizing the Regional High School building which has \$218 remaining debt and the second being the Maquan Feasibility Study which has \$281,300 remaining debt. Both need to be rescinded. Chair Hayes read the following anticipated vote language aloud.

"The following amounts of debt of the District, authorized on the dates and for the purposes listed below, are hereby rescinded:

<u>Amount</u>	<u>Date of Vote of Committee</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
\$281,300	9/15/2010	Maquan Feasibility Study
\$218	3/27/2002	High School"

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted that the following amounts of debt of the District, authorized on the dates and for the purposes listed below, are hereby rescinded:

<u>Amount</u>	<u>Date of Vote of Committee</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
\$281,300	9/15/2010	Maquan Feasibility Study
\$218	3/27/2002	High School

The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Leary highlighted additional financial conditions of the District, noting a very strong debt position. The only remaining debt is the Regional High School Building which is slightly over \$6,000,000 and a short term note for Technology Department in the amount of \$504,000. The District also has an AA bond rating with a stable outlook by Standard & Poor's and should be commended on its financial situation. Mr. Leary added the District received a steady cash flow from the state and has been for the last three years (rather than quarterly)

which has eliminated the need to borrow money in June to meet payroll obligations for teachers. Mr. Leary reported he will be researching investment options as the custodial care for scholarships. Currently there is \$400,000 in a small account for scholarships and he plans to seek options in interest earnings greater than .1 percent.

FY2017 Report

Christine Suckow reviewed the YTD expenditure and revenue reports illustrating original appropriations, transfers and/or adjustments and year to date expenditures, encumbrances and available budget used to date. Mrs. Suckow noted charter school reimbursement is reduced by \$140,000. The Committee has approved one line item transfer to date, to move funds between accounts with no impact to the budget bottom line.

Superintendent's Mid-year Goals Update

The Superintendent presented a mid-year report on the Superintendent's 2016-2017 goals. The presentation included the status of each pillar of the Strategic Plan, given by Dr. John Queally and Maureen MacKenzie for Pillar I, the Curriculum Directors for Pillar II, and Dr. Pat Dillon for Pillar III. The Superintendent reported meetings were held regularly during the fall to link goals to the strategic plan. In December, the leadership team met with Lori Likis, Principal Consultant of Creative Coaching for School Improvement, to assess benchmarks, review financial implications, and identify the key items to reach goals under the following pillars.

1. Pillar I – Social Emotional Learning
2. Pillar II – Curriculum & Instruction
3. Pillar III – Safe & Secure Schools

The Superintendent presented the updated SMART Goals and provided details in handouts.

SMART Goal 1: To monitor and evaluate the Action Plans of the District Plan – Pillar #2: A Cohesive PreK-12 System of Teaching and Learning.

SMART Goal 2: The Administrative Team will embed the District Plan, its pillars, and action steps in site-based and district-wide communications.

SMART Goal 3: Throughout the school year, I will monitor and evaluate the accomplishments of the Action Plans of Pillar #1- Every Child, Every Day with healthy minds and healthy bodies.

SMART Goal 4: Throughout the school year, I will monitor and evaluate the accomplishments of the Action Plans of Pillar #3 Safe and Secure Schools.

In order to provide evidence of progress for each pillar, the Superintendent asked members of the leadership team to introduce action plans and progress, beginning with Pillar One and link to the Superintendent's SMART Goal 3.

Dr. John Queally, Administrator of Special Education, and Maureen MacKenzie, Director of Food Services, provided evidence for Social Emotional Learning in Pillar I, to develop a learning environment to foster social, emotional, and academic growth for all students. The Wellness Committee group meets monthly to discuss initiatives, programs, and possible events that will best support students. An example that was shared was an upcoming spring Wellness Fair event hosted by the North River Collaborative and Whitman Will. Participating in the fair will be various resources for students including mental health vendors, social services/support, nutritional support such as WIC and activities such as karate and yoga. The Wellness Committee is also seeking additional presenters similar to Trudy Ludwig, the children's author, who presented social and emotional issues in child development last fall to students and staff. Furthermore, two teams of staff representing every level in the district (elementary, middle, high school) will begin work on the Safe/Supportive Schools grant discussed last month. The grant is a self-assessment in areas such as behavioral supports, social supports, leadership, and school safety/climate. Dr. Queally noted that the number of hospitalizations has grown at the middle school level and are now on par with the high school.

Other aspects of Pillar One deal specifically with nutrition and the food service program. Maureen Mackenzie, Director of Food Services, presented additional evidence. Among the initiatives, two monthly healthy publications: Food and Fitness and Nutrition Nuggets, are being distributed and available online. Also, the introduction of new menu items and pilots are ongoing. Most recently, a “wings and things food bar” is a new offering at both middle schools. The Whitman Hanson Food Twitter account is also busy tweeting to students and families.

Curriculum directors, Brian Selig, Robert Davidson, Mark Stephansky and Amy Hill presented evidence for Pillar 2, to develop a cohesive PreK-12 System of teaching and learning and link to Superintendent’s Goal SMART Goal 1. Brian Selig, Math Curriculum Director, reported that beyond monthly reports to the Superintendent, there is much work being done to align curriculum PreK-12 both vertically and horizontally as well as deliver high quality curriculum, improve students’ thinking skills, develop best practices, succeed on standardized assessments and insure every student is college and career ready. The directors constantly review current state standards and areas of improvement. Bob Davidson, History/Social Studies Curriculum Director, reported on the status of curriculum work at the elementary level. Currently the directors have begun an audit of the current curriculum and resources beginning with two grade levels. Mr. Davidson discussed the Know Atom science program and the need to align curriculum in English Language Arts and Social Studies in all schools. Mr. Davidson added that because teaching four academic subjects is challenging, professional development is vital at the elementary level. Each year, a new grade level will be introduced to the audit to work towards common assessments and curriculum. Mark Stephansky, Science Curriculum Director, reported on the work being accomplished at the middle school level. He talked about students transitioning from grade 5 to grade 6 and how the specific teacher discipline changes, working toward coherent and cohesive offerings and common assessments at those levels. The directors meet with all teachers at the middle school level. Mr. Stephansky also discussed students transitioning from middle to high school level, increased academic rigor, and using more complex text and resources. Amy Hill, English Language Arts Curriculum Director, reported that the high school level continues college career ready student curriculum despite demands for state assessment, graduation requirements, Advanced Placement courses, college board, and other changes. Ms. Hill stated it is imperative for teachers to have time to collaborate at the high school level and reported she has found this to be highly productive through the new late starts on selected mornings at the high school. Teachers have been provided one hour to collaborate and hold departmental meetings. Other initiatives at the high school level include professional development course-a-like teacher meetings, common assessments, and researching new resources. Mr. Selig closed by remarking the work of the directors is gradual, ambitious, and essential.

Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Patrick Dillon, and Director of Facilities, Ernest Sandland, presented evidence for Pillar 3, Safe and Secure Schools as it links to SMART Goal 4 to establish a safe and secure learning environment. Dr. Dillon reported on two primary outputs in Pillar 3: a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) as discussed with the Committee in previous meetings to enhance practices and protocols, and site specific facilities and maintenance plans and working with the principals at each school. Dr. Dillon reported a district safety and security committee has been established and is comprised of key personnel, multiple stake holders across the district who discuss preventative maintenance-type perspective and focus on the Continuity of Operations Plan or COOP. The COOP considers how the district plans to sustain critical infrastructure and key personnel and prepare for unanticipated events. Dr. Dillon commented on the partnership with the local first responders in both Whitman and Hanson. Mr. Sandland discussed the solidification of maintenance plans, prioritizing capital projects, and addressing safety and security concerns with access to buildings.

OLD BUSINESS

FY2018 Budget Forecast

Christine Suckow reported not much has changed since her last report. Fixed cost expenses are up just over \$1.5 million. These include contractual obligations, health insurance, transportation, custodial services, etc. Health insurance rates have not yet been set by the Mayflower Municipal Health Group (MMHG). A Steering Committee meeting is scheduled in two weeks. The assessment for Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System MTRS is up over \$200,000. Plymouth County Retirement is up \$20,000. Furthermore, revenues are down by about \$950,000 at this time. At a level service budget, the budget for next school year is currently at a \$2.5 million deficit. The Governor's budget will be released on January 25 and more information may be available at that time. The current deficit does not include increases to local revenue sources, increases to Chapter 70 funding, or transfers from the Excess and Deficiency account. Mrs. Suckow provided the local assessment percentages for each town at the current assessment based on October 1, 2016 enrollment figures. For the Town of Whitman at 59.55% enrollment, there is an increase of \$162,000. For the Town of Hanson at 40.45% enrollment, there is a decrease of \$162,000.

Dr. Whitner reported the administrative team is reviewing the action plans as they relate to the proposed budget. There are several items of importance to improve teaching and learning for the students of Whitman and Hanson. Dr. Whitner stated that no cost full day kindergarten is not included in a level service budget and reported that recent calculations for start-up costs for tuition-free full day kindergarten is about \$400,000. Other items of consideration and budget priorities beyond the deficit gap include updating student devices as textbooks become outdated, need for improved math and science at the middle schools, foreign language offerings, and very little expansion in art and music. Dr. Whitner reviewed the revenue sources the district receives. These include state aid funding under Chapter 70 and 71 regional transportation, circuit breaker as well as local town assessments and transfers from Excess & Deficiency (E&D). Dr. Whitner added last year, \$950,000 was transferred from E&D to help reduce the budget deficit. On January 10, Dr. Whitner met with the Hanson Finance Committee and a meeting is scheduled to meet with the Whitman Finance Committee on January 17. A public hearing on the FY2018 District Budget Presentation will be held on February 1 at 7:00 p.m. in the high school library.

Maquan Roof Update

Chair Hayes reported the bid opening for the Maquan Roof repair project is scheduled for January 25, 2017. It is anticipated the repairs will take place during the April school vacation week.

MSBA Maquan Statement of Interest Submission

Chair Hayes read the response letter from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) notifying the Superintendent that the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District has not been invited to participate in a school building construction, renovation, and repair grant through the Statement of Interest (SOI) process. A

copy of the letter has been inserted here.



Massachusetts School Building Authority

Deborah B. Goldberg
Chairman, State Treasurer

Maureen G. Valente
Chief Executive Officer

John K. McCarthy
Executive Director / Deputy CEO

December 22, 2016

Dr. Ruth C. Gilbert-Whitner, Superintendent
Whitman-Hanson Regional School District
610 Franklin Street
Whitman, MA 02382

Re: Whitman-Hanson Regional School District 2016 SOI Status

Dear Dr. Gilbert-Whitner:

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (the "MSBA") would like to thank the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District (the "District") for expressing an interest in the MSBA's program for school building construction, renovation, and repair grants through the 2016 Statement of Interest (the "SOI") process.

Overall, the MSBA received 89 SOIs from 58 different school districts for consideration in 2016. In reviewing SOIs, the MSBA identifies the school facilities that have the greatest and most urgent need based on an assessment of the entire cohort of SOIs that are received for consideration each year.

Through the MSBA's due diligence process and review of the 89 SOIs that were received for consideration in 2016, the MSBA has determined that the Hanson Middle School and the Maquan Elementary School SOIs will not be invited into the MSBA's Eligibility Period at this time.

If the District would like these schools to be considered for future collaboration with the MSBA, the District should file an SOI in an upcoming year. The MSBA will begin accepting SOIs for consideration in 2017 starting on January 6, 2017. Please see the detailed information about the process below and on the MSBA's website. If the District is planning to submit an SOI in 2017, consider notifying local governing boards of your intentions, as local governing bodies will have to vote to approve submission of an SOI prior to the following closing dates:

- The SOI closing date for Districts submitting under the Accelerated Repair Program, which is primarily for the repair and/or replacement of windows, roofs, and/or boilers in an otherwise structurally sound facility, will be Friday February 17, 2017.
- The SOI closing date for Districts submitting under the Core Program, which is primarily for projects beyond the scope of Accelerated Repair, including extensive repairs,

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2016 Statement of Interest Status Letter

renovations, addition/renovations, and new school construction will be Friday April 7, 2017.

The MSBA remains committed to collaborating and partnering with the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District to better understand school facility issues within the District, and will be sending more detailed information regarding the 2017 SOI process in the coming weeks.

Please feel free to contact Diane Sullivan, Director of Program Management at (617) 720-4466 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



John K. McCarthy
Executive Director/Deputy CEO

Cc: Legislative Delegation
Robert W. Hayes, Chair, Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee

Dr. Whitner reported on a recent conversation with Diane Sullivan, Director of Program Management for the MSBA. They discussed MSBA submissions. Ms. Sullivan informed Dr. Whitner that Maquan was eligible for application to a Core project, but not an Accelerated Repair project due to the extensive facility issues at Maquan. Dr. Whitner indicated that portions of the Maquan Feasibility Study could still have value. There was a short discussion of the repair needs of the Maquan School and significant issues with the heating system. It was noted that a CORE program submission including the Hanson Middle School would not meet the 20 year threshold of building projects which would initiate a claw back.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to submit a CORE Program Statement of Interest for the Maquan Elementary School to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) as discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hayes will request the Hanson Board of Selectmen add the Maquan Elementary School Statement of Interest for discussion to their next agenda.

North River Collaborative Annual Report

Copies of the North River Collaborative Annual Report were distributed for the Committee's review. Mr. Bois reported the annual report was approved by Board of Trustees.

NEW BUSINESS

Field Trip Requests

DECA State Conference March 2017

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to waive the nurse requirement and approve the overnight high school field trip request for DECA to attend the State Conference at the Marriott Copley Hotel in Boston from March 9 to March 11, 2017 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Donation Acceptance

Maquan Elementary School

The Hanson Cultural Council approved \$1,400 in funding to support "Authentic Writing: Authors" for the Maquan Elementary School. Dr. Beth Wilcox submitted a copy of the notification to recommend the School Committee accept the donation. Chair Hayes read the notification aloud.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to approve the donation of \$1,400 to support "Authentic Writing: Authors" for the Maquan Elementary School, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Athletics Department

A memo from Athletic Director, Bob Rodgers, was distributed to accept a brand new lightweight wrestling mat valued at \$12,000. The mat is being donated from the proceeds raised from a golf tournament and other donations to the wrestling program.

Chair Hayes read the memo aloud.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to accept a new, lightweight wrestling mat valued at \$12,000 donated to the wrestling program, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy Subcommittee

There was nothing new to report.

Facilities Subcommittee

Mr. Small reported that the Subcommittee met earlier in the evening. The Subcommittee reviewed and prioritized items listed on the Hanson Capital Projects/Capital Improvement matrix and discussed credible

warrant article submissions to the Town of Hanson for the Annual May Town meeting. The Subcommittee also discussed preparations and contingency plans for unanticipated events. For example, should the Maquan School boiler breakdown, what the contingency plan would be for heating that building. Mr. Sandland also provided a monthly report to the Subcommittee.

Legislative Update

Mike Jones reported that state legislators elected in November 2016 have been sworn into office. Dr. Whitner reported the local and state representatives have been invited to the February 1 Annual School District Budget Presentation for FY2018.

North River Collaborative Update

Mr. Bois reported the North River Collaborative FY2018 Budget was approved. There are also ongoing discussions regarding changes to the Board from school committee representatives to member superintendents.

Pilgrim Area Collaborative

There was nothing new to report.

Regional Agreement Update

Christine Suckow reported a meeting has been scheduled for January 17 with the Assistant Director of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS), Stephen Hemman, for a preliminary discussion on amending the regional agreement. Dr. Whitner added subsequently, a committee will be formed following the meeting with MARS representatives.

Chair Hayes announced the School Committee will enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing complaints brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or an individual.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; roll call voted to go into Executive Session at 8:40 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; roll call voted to come out of Executive Session at 9:11p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted Michelle Kelley

Handouts:

- 1) Meeting Agenda January 11, 2017
- 2) Meeting Minutes of December 14, 2016
- 3) Superintendent's Goals: Mid-Year Update 2016-17
- 4) Whitman-Hanson Action Plan 2016-17
- 5) MSBA Maquan School SOI Status letter and SOI COR Program Process
- 6) Town of Hanson Capital Planning Matrix Updated
- 7) Field Trip Request – High School DECA State Conference, Quincy, March 9-11, 2017
- 8) Acceptance of Gifts – Copy grant approval from Hanson Cultural Council \$1,400
- 9) Copy of letter to P. Fresinger, Gelfand Family Charitable Trust
- 10) North River Collaborative Annual Report will be provided at the SC meeting

- 11) Auditors Report year ending June 30, 2016
- 12) Letter of invitation to the Budget Presentation on February 1, 2017
- 13) FY2016 Audit materials from CliftonLarsenAllen