

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of April 23, 2018
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 7:21 p.m.

Members present: Robert Hayes participated remotely, Frederick Small, Michael Jones, Daniel Cullity, Christopher Howard, Robert Trotta, Robert O'Brien, Jr., Alexandria Taylor, and Steve Bois

Members absent: Kevin Lynam

Administrators present: Dr. Ruth Gilbert-Whitner, Superintendent of Schools
Kyle Riley, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
Chad Peters, Director of Technology Services

Vice Chairperson, Frederick Small, brought the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and announced the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live. Mr. Small announced that Robert Hayes was participating remotely. All votes will be by Roll Call.

The purpose of the meeting was to review and vote on the Amended Regional Agreement dated April 19, 2018 as presented by the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee (RAAC) and continue discussing the FY2019 budget and local assessment.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting Minutes of April 11, 2018

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; roll call voted to accept the meeting minutes of April 11, 2018 as presented. Robert Hayes - Yes, Frederick Small - Yes, Michael Jones - Yes, Daniel Cullity - Yes, Robert Trotta - Yes, Christopher Howard - Yes, Alexandria Taylor – Yes, Steven Bois – Abstained, and Robert O'Brien, Jr. - Yes. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Amended Regional Agreement

A copy of the final draft of the Amended Regional Agreement dated 04/19/2018 was presented to the School Committee. Mr. Small confirmed the School Committee members had an opportunity to review the final document. Dr. Whitner reviewed the process and sequence of events for a regional agreement amendment and reported Steve Hemman, Assistant Director of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS), was present to field questions. In addition, Christine Lynch, Governance and Facilities Program Manager at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), reported to the Superintendent that she confirmed she heard from Legal at DESE and they have no further issue with the language of the amended agreement. Once the amended agreement is voted approved, the District will submit the final clean copy of the Amended Agreement with a line for the Commissioner's signature, along with the certified town meeting votes. Mr. Small added the Amended Agreement was also reviewed by the School Committee's legal counsel.

Dr. Whitner stated the next step is for the School Committee to vote on the Agreement. A majority vote is required to pass. The Agreement is then presented as a warrant article at the town's annual town meetings for a vote, as presented.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mrs. Bois seconded; roll call voted to approve the Amended Regional Agreement dated April 19, 2018, as presented. Robert Hayes - Yes, Frederick Small - Yes, Michael Jones - Yes, Daniel Cullity - Yes, Robert Trotta - Yes, Christopher Howard - Yes, Alexandria Taylor – Yes, Steven Bois – Yes, and Robert O’Brien, Jr. - Yes. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hayes and Superintendent Whitner thanked all members of the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee (RAAC), the Boards of Selectmen in each town, as well as the representatives from MARS, Mac Reid, Steve Donovan and Steve Hemman, on the tremendous amount of work, time and thought to successfully move forward with project to create a document that is acceptable and appropriate.

2018-19 Budget Discussion

Mr. Small continued discussion on the FY2019 budget.

Dr. Whitner reported she received an email from Mike McCue, Hanson Town Administrator, notifying her he could not attend the meeting, but can support a local assessment increase of 9.5%. Mr. Small read Mr. McCue’s email into the record.

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael McCue [mailto:mmccue@HANSON-MA.gov]

Sent: Monday, April 23, 2018 4:11 PM

To: Whitner.Ruth

Cc: External Robert W. Hayes; Suckow.Christine; jcmcgahan@comcast.net; Michael Dugan

Subject: RE: tonight

Ruth,

I have discussed tonight with the Chairman and Accountant. I will not be able to return for the meeting tonight and the Chairman has another commitment. After conversing with Chairman Hayes as well, we feel that the comments I made at the previous meeting remain current. The Town of Hanson will do its best to meet an overall assessment of 9.5%. Anything in excess of this amount cannot be support via our FY19 budget. Additional reductions in the assessment are also obvious helpful

Looking forward, increases similar to this as soon as FY20 cannot be supported without a long term strategy in collaboration between the Towns and the District. I repeat my commitment to engage in that effort.

A motion to set the local assessment to 9.5% made by Mr. Cullity was seconded by Mr. Howard. The Committee proceeded to discuss the implications to the district in terms of staff and programs for students in lowering the local assessment. The Committee commented on understanding the budget constraints the towns face as well. However, recognizing the school district as a department with the same necessity, similar to other departments in the towns, is the position of the School Committee. They discussed advocating for the best and most appropriate education for the children in the two towns. The Committee also considered beginning budget discussions earlier in the upcoming school year, and that all stakeholders provide budget projections in a more timely fashion. Mr. Trotta commented that some of the underfunded mandates are made by lawmakers who do not involve the citizens that are impacted by those decisions. Several members were concerned a reduction in the local assessment to level services is not a step forward for the students, but understand the ramifications and budgetary concerns in the towns. Dr. Whitner provided information about the budgetary impact at level services. The proposed positions of family liaison and two special education teachers at the middle schools are not included in a level services budget. Dr. Whitner also discussed the importance of no cost, full day kindergarten program and noted that the foreign language programs are understaffed. Mr. Small noted that state funding is not increasing at the rate of budgetary increases and the schools are dependent on the town assessment as a sustainable source of revenue.

The Committee deliberated the capability of the towns to support a 9.5% local assessment increase. There was discussion that the Town of Whitman may only support a 5% local assessment increase. The Committee

deliberated override options to support the school budget. Dr. Whitner itemized the budget reductions should the taxpayers support a local assessment increase of 5%, which translates to a loss of 19 positions in the district. Most likely, reductions would be made in non-core academic areas such as art, music, and wellness programs. User fees and class size could increase. At a 9.5% assessment increase, the district can provide level services. Chair Hayes commented on the great community offerings that the towns of Whitman and Hanson offer and understand their budget issues, but believe they are supportive of the schools. He also supports a local assessment increase of 9.5%.

Mr. Small recounted the local assessment figures for a 9.5% local assessment increase. The local assessment increase to the proposed budget would be \$1,924,598. The local assessment increase share to the Town of Whitman would be \$1,151,295 and the local assessment increase share to the Town of Hanson \$773,304.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Howard seconded; roll call voted to amend the local assessment to 9.5% increase, and approve the operating assessment to the Town of Whitman at \$13,270,185 and the operating assessment to the Town of Hanson at \$8,913,341 for the FY2018 budget in accordance with the PK-12 Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Agreement, Section IV, Para. D and E and M.G.L. c.71, § 16B. The total operating assessment of \$22,183,526 as discussed. Robert Hayes - Yes, Frederick Small - Yes, Michael Jones - Yes, Daniel Cullity - Yes, Robert Trotta - Yes, Christopher Howard - Yes, Alexandria Taylor – Yes, Steven Bois – Yes, and Robert O’Brien, Jr. - Yes. The motion passed unanimously.

Accounts Payable:

Warrant 041918AP in the amount of \$322,027.33 was presented and signed at School Committee meeting.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; roll call voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:21 p.m. Robert Hayes - Yes, Frederick Small - Yes, Daniel Cullity - Yes, Kevin Lynam - Yes, Robert Trotta - Yes, Christopher Howard - Yes, and Robert O’Brien, Jr. - Yes. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Meeting Materials and Handouts:

April 23, 2018 School Committee Meeting agenda

April 11, 2018 School Committee minutes

Amended Regional Agreement dated 4/19/2018

DESE 7000 series account codes for Acquisitions, Improvement and Replacement of Fixed Assets

Accounts Payable warrant 041918AP