

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of December 13, 2017

Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School  
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 7:02 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 10:25 p.m.

Members present: Robert Hayes, Frederick Small, Robert Trotta, Michael Jones, Steve Bois, Christopher Howard, Kevin Lynam, Robert O'Brien, Jr., and Daniel Cullity

Members absent: Alexandria Taylor

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

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Chair Hayes brought the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and announced the Committee would be going into Executive Session and would re-convene in Open Session to conduct the regular School Committee meeting at 7:30 p.m. Chair Hayes announced the purpose of the Executive Session was to discuss strategy with respect to litigation (MCAD Complaint) if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares, and to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Whitman Hanson Education Association because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair has so declared. The Committee will come out of executive session and re-convene in open session and continue the regular School Committee meeting.

**VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; by roll call vote; to enter into Executive Session at 7:04 p.m. for the purpose of, (a) To discuss strategy with respect to litigation (MCAD Complaint) if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. (b) To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Whitman Hanson Education Association because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair has so declared for the following agenda items:**

- A. Attorney John Davis – Report
- B. Negotiations Sub-Committee - Report
- C. Adjourn – Executive Session

**Robert Hayes-Yes**

**Frederick Small-Yes**

**Robert Trotta-Yes**

**Michael Jones-Yes**

**Steve Bois-Yes**

**Christopher Howard-Yes**

**Kevin Lynam-Yes**

**Robert O'Brien, Jr.-Yes**

**Daniel Cullity-Yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; by roll call vote to come out of Executive Session at 7:33 p.m.**

**Robert Hayes-Yes  
Frederick Small-Yes**

**Robert Trotta-Yes**

**Michael Jones-Yes**

**Steve Bois-Yes**

**Christopher Howard-Yes**

**Kevin Lynam-Yes**

**Robert O'Brien, Jr.-Yes**

**Daniel Cullity-Yes;**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

The School Committee reconvened in open session at 7:33 p.m.

### **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

*November 8, 2017 Regular School Committee Meeting*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to approve the meeting minutes of November 8, 2017 School Committee, as presented. The motion passed 8-0-1. Mr. Cullity abstained**

Community member, Peggy Westfield (Hanson), was approved to have the floor. Mrs. Westfield described technological issues in reaching School Committee members via email. She received responses the email addresses for some members were undeliverable. Director of Technology Services, Chad Peters, will follow up with Mrs. Westfield to research and resolve the issue.

### *OPEB/Treasurer Report*

The School Committee Treasurer, David Leary, provided a brief financial state of the district report for the last school year Committee. The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District maintains a strong debt position and AA bond rating. After the payment on January 1, the balance of the high school debt remains at \$5,400,000 in principal. There is also a \$375,000 short term note on technology. Other than those items, the District is debt-free. There is a solid cash flow month to month to meet obligations. With interest rates slightly higher, investment income is up significantly. The District initially anticipated earnings on investment at \$30,000 and has surpassed that by \$1,800 in November, with seven more months to go. On a similar note, the money invested for the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) with Plymouth County began with an investment of \$150,000. With a 14.5% return on investment, the current balance is \$172,000, which is a good return in last year. Last year, the District moved \$400,000 out of very low interest earning in checking accounts (for scholarships and such) into a secure, but more aggressive investment opportunities.

### **STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT**

Student Council School Committee Representative, Mara Burt, reported on current student events.

### *High School*

The Panther Education Trust fund held two successful recent fundraisers. A meat raffle at Damien's Pub on November 13 and a "dine-in" at Panera Bread on November 24. The Panther's Den School Store will be open on December 20 for evening holiday shopping from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Yearbook Club has created a website with links, information, deadlines, examples and contact information. On December 2, the Whitman & Hanson Dollars for Scholars processed orders for gift cards this holiday season as part of its fall fundraising drive.

### *Whitman Middle School*

November 23<sup>rd</sup>: the successful 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Turkey Trot was held on November 23. Over 400 students participated in the event. The winning Turkey Trot design poster went to grade six student, Travis (TJ) Kahaoulii. Madeline Aughe was the top for the girls, and Nathan Tassej was the top for the boys.

Whitman Middle announced the opening of their online apparel store through Jostens. Selections include custom school t-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, jerseys, bags, backpacks, and other accessories. The school receives 12% for each order.

### *Indian Head and Maquan Elementary Schools*

Santa's Secret Workshop will be held at Indian Head School Library for Indian Head and Maquan Elementary Schools on Monday, December 11 through Thursday, December 14. The Maquan School Store is now open on Wednesdays from 8:50 – 9:20 a.m. beginning October 4, 2017. Students may purchase small supplies, such as pencils, erasers, rulers, sharpeners, notebooks, and pocket folders. Prices range from \$.05 to \$.75 cents per item.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

### *MCAS Results*

Curriculum Directors, Amy Floeck, Mark Stephansky, and Brian Selig presented Statewide Student Assessment District Accountability Reports and spring 2017 MCAS Legacy results in a PowerPoint presentation. The following points were presented.

- MCAS Legacy refers to the 20-year-old MCAS assessment.
- The Next Generation MCAS test will replace the Legacy MCAS for English Language Arts and Math (and possibly Science) in grade 10 during the spring of 2019.
- Whitman-Hanson first administered the Next Generation MCAS in spring 2017 in grades 3-8 in English language arts (ELA) and math.
- Grade 10 students achieved at 93% advanced to proficient in ELA and math on the MCAS legacy assessment.

Amy Floeck and Brian Selig presented MCAS results for English Language Arts and Math.

Alterations in Legacy MCAS and the move to Next Gen MCAS were presented. The assessment is moving towards all on-line and more narrative testing, and no longer pencil and paper. Interpreting the new scores was also discussed.

- The new standards for Meeting Expectations are more rigorous than the standards for reaching the Proficient level on the legacy MCAS.
- The results do not mean that students learned less; the next-generation MCAS measures in a different way.
- 2017 is the baseline year — the first year of a new assessment — and scores are expected to change over time, as occurred when the legacy MCAS debuted in 1998.

Mark Stephansky presented grade 5 and grade 8 science, and high school biology MCAS results. The science assessment is currently in a transition stage.

- January 2016 – New Science Standards were adopted.
- Three-four year transition to computer-based Next Gen MCAS

The Curriculum Directors discussed the importance of how critical it is to continue K-12 Curriculum alignment working with directors, teacher leaders, and building staff to increase technology access and training for teachers and students, and to continue to invest in curriculum resources and professional development to meet the changing demands. Additional electronic devices are needed district-wide to

accommodate student populations for test prep and readiness. Teachers are being encouraged to work on line with students; however, there are not enough devices for all students in the classrooms. This will require an investment in technology and in professional development. Balancing curriculum development and professional development were briefly discussed. Rosamond Dorrance, Interim Central Office Administrator for Curriculum, discussed the importance of the role of the curriculum directors who process data analysis and bring reporting to teaching staff. The need for technology is imperative and adds the component of computer expertise for students taking online assessments. Although this will impact budget, the commitment is especially needed with the new generation MCAS. Chad Peters reported on the number of one to one devices (1400 district-wide) with the total number of students at around 4,000. Additional discussion revolved around how to fund the needed technology.

#### *OECD Testing*

Dr. Whitner reported that the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District was invited to participate in OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) testing, an assessment based on international standards, last year by the late Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Mitchell Chester. Last March, a random group of 15-year-old students at WHRHS took the OECD assessments in mathematics, English, and science. During this school year, Curriculum Directors, Director of Counseling, Ruth Carrigan, and the Superintendent have attended OECD sessions with other participating high schools in Massachusetts to discuss and analyze results. Dr. Whitner noted that OECD results provide comprehensive data and information as to how Whitman-Hanson students achieve on a national and international level. An analysis of the data will be presented to the School Committee at a future meeting.

#### *Enrollment Report*

Director of Technology Services, Chad Peters, presented the certified October 1, 2017 Student Enrollment Reports as certified as by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). This report is the basis for Chapter 70 state funding. Low income and low birth rates were highlighted. Enrollment dropped by 51 students in the Duval Elementary School. Some transiency exists in the Town of Whitman. Projected enrollment for FY2019 indicates another decrease of 121 students enrolled.

#### *North River Collaborative Report*

Dr. Whitner reported on grants received through North River Collaborative (NRC). Although the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District is not eligible for federal grant funding for English Language Learners (ELLs) through the collaborative relationship with North River Collaborative, the school system is the beneficiary their grant writing, specifically for the Title III grant to provide ELL students with additional tutoring before and after school. There is also funding for professional development for teachers requiring training in Sheltered English Immersion. Dr. Whitner reported that current rates for NRC specialized programs for students with special needs are lower than similar programs in other collaboratives. North River Collaborative will be seeking to increase their rates accordingly for the 2018-2019 school year. In addition, NRC programs are experiencing a decline in enrollment. The NRC Board is having discussions on several issues, including what type of services they should provide to school districts and current and future space rental. The annual report will be available at the next meeting.

#### *Administration of Narcan*

Dr. Whitner reported she has been working with the leadership team and WHEA as directed by the School Committee per the vote at the last meeting to move forward with Narcan availability and training for school nurses and administrators. It has been concluded that nurses and selected building administrators in each school will be trained in Narcan administration. School nurses will be responsible for storage of Narcan in their respective schools.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to allow the availability of Narcan in each school building as well as training for school nurses and administrators to administer Narcan, as discussed. The motion passed unanimously.**

*Superintendent Retirement*

As previously announced, the Superintendent plans to retire early in 2018-19 school year. Chair Hayes offered several available options for the selection of a new superintendent of schools, which the Committee can decide on. NESDEC (New England School Development Council), MASS (Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents), and MASC (Massachusetts Association School Committees) offer superintendent search programs at costs ranging up to \$20,000. The position can also be posted on School Spring. The Committee briefly deliberated on the options.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to post the position of Superintendent of Schools on the School Spring website for the superintendent search effective July 1, 2018. The motion passed unanimously.**

The Committee discussed whether to have a search or screening committee review the applicant pool. Chair Hayes reported several community and school personnel have expressed interest in participating on a screening committee. Based on the number of applications received, the Committee will determine if a screening committee is appropriate. Chair Hayes stated the position will be posted on December 14, 2017 with a closing date of January 5, 2018, and, may be extended if necessary. He recommended an initial review of the applicant pool be conducted on January 8, 2018 by the Committee.

Dr. Whitner added a vacancy also remains for the assistant superintendent position vacated by Dr. Patrick Dillon last September.

The Committee continued deliberating on how they would interview candidates and if a screening committee would be fitting given the stakeholder interest. Several community members as well as Kevin Kavka, WHEA President, were in attendance and commented on their support for a screening committee with as many stakeholders involved as possible. Mr. Kavka encouraged the School Committee to assemble a screening committee made up of parents, teachers and staff, and even a student. Dr. Whitner supported a screening committee, composed of all stakeholders, who could then recommend finalists to the School Committee.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to hold a School Committee meeting in Executive Session on January 8, 2018 to review the applicant pool and determine the direction of the search for a new superintendent. The motion passed unanimously.**

*Budget FY2017-18*

Christine Suckow reported the budget is under watch with a potential freeze possible in January. Due to recent changes in accounting numbers at the DESE, the District will be required to adjust and mirror those new account numbers in Munis. Mrs. Suckow reported line item transfers to new account numbers may be brought forward in order to conform to DESE account numbers for reporting purposes. Christine Suckow reported that nine teachers have planned to retire at the end of the current school year. Dr. Whitner reported the substitute pool is low, and the District is experiencing a low fill rate for staff absences. The Superintendent suggested reviewing the substitute daily rate after a sub-rate comp was recently performed. The current teacher substitute rate of \$75/day has not been increased since 2005. Dr. Whitner added that the Policy Sub-committee is also reviewing the substitute policy and will report back to the full Committee.

*Budget FY2018-19*

Dr. Whitner reported two preliminary budget meetings have been held with the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee in both towns. She remains concerned that the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District is one of the 15% of Massachusetts school districts who do not offer cost-free, full-day kindergarten. The cost to implement the program is estimated at \$400,000 and resources and options for funding were discussed. Mrs. Suckow reported on other items impacting the FY2018-19 budget. The transportation contract is up 4% or \$65,000. The Plymouth County assessment is up \$59,000. At this time, figures are not available for the increase in Group Insurance Commission (GIC) rates. Based on October 1 Enrollment, the assessment percentage to the Town of Whitman is 59.82% and to the Town of Hanson is 40.18%. Additional information on budget will be presented in January.

*Whitman Food Pantry*

Bruce Berry and Lauren Kelley presented a letter of appreciation from the members of the St. Vincent DePaul Whitman Food Pantry. The letter acknowledged the strong student support of the Food Pantry through fundraising efforts and other charitable programs that benefit the families in the Town of Whitman. The School Committee Chair read the letter aloud.

**OLD BUSINESS**

*Maquan School Closing*

Dr. Whitner reported the Facilities Sub-committee met earlier in the evening and talked at length about the Maquan School closing. The following handouts were provided as related to the Maquan School closing:

- Estimated cost for closing of the school by phase: \$793,460.75 (includes \$44,360 already appropriated by the towns)
- Estimated first year cost savings of the closing: \$220,000
- Capital items to be removed from capital project matrix after the closing: \$4,336,117
- Capital costs to maintain the Maquan School for the last three years: \$554,781.13

Christine Suckow reviewed the four phases of the school closing project and provided estimated cost projections. Chair Hayes itemized the project as follows.

**Maquan Pre-school move to High School**

Retrofit computer labs into classrooms (3)  
Renovate (5) classrooms for PK (doorways, walls, painting, flooring, lighting)  
Install exterior door with card access  
Install interior corridor doors  
PreK Playground  
Turf Kidplay  
Playground Fence  
Install 5 bathrooms (plumbing, electrical, sprinkler, ceilings, tile, ventilation, fire alarm, concrete)  
Remove lockers and install storage cubbies  
Moving company & crate rentals  
Update roadway for traffic flow around the building (widening, drainage, resurface)  
Additional day for staff to move to High School (5)

**Maquan K-2 move to Indian Head**

Moving company & crate rental (23)  
Library and administrative office move  
Retrofitting classrooms for additional space (3)  
Retrofit and new bathrooms (plumbing, electrical, sprinkler, ceilings, tile, ventilation, fire alarm, concrete)  
(1) classroom split for (2) large bathrooms  
Food Service freezer  
Additional day for staff to move to Indian Head (23)  
Technology equipment removal and reinstallation  
Fencing around Indian Head play area  
Pod rental  
Final cleanup

**Indian Head Grade 5 move to Hanson Middle**

Moving company & crate rental (5)  
Additional day for staff to move to Hanson Middle (5)

**Maquan and Indian Head School Special Education Programs to Duval**

Moving company & crate rental  
2 Programs into 4 classrooms (K-5 Cognitive & Autism)  
Renovate classroom for additional space  
Additional day for staff to move to Duval (4)

Dr. Whitner added the development of the roadway around the building is under discussion due to the hill and slope of the surrounding area. The Superintendent reiterated the reasons the high school was determined as the best location for the preschool. Questions were raised concerning the appropriations and funding for the project. The Superintendent indicated the project is not part of the budget but a plan is in place for the move, and some funding has already been appropriated. Kevin Kavka commented that there were plans to move classrooms at the high school. At this time, no classrooms have been relocated although they will need to be moved to accommodate the pre-school.

Beyond the scope of the move, additional considerations associated with the move were presented by Christine Suckow.

**Additional Considerations**

Indian Head Playground  
Surface Indian Head Playground  
Fencing around Indian Head Playground  
Roadway and Parking at Indian Head (parking not expansion) School Street  
Create Parking Spaces at Front Parking Loop Road at Indian Head  
Indian Head Memorial Hall : Refurbish Front Entrance  
Create a space for High School for Language lab  
Turnover of the building - Final Clean-up

The Superintendent noted these considerations were expensive and outside of the project budget. A new playground would cost \$96,000 and fencing could cost up to \$178,000.

Although the towns have supported and appropriated a fraction of the cost of the project, the remaining funding as not yet been voted for appropriation. The total project cost to the Town of Hanson is estimated at \$ 581,631.12 and \$256,189.62 to the Town of Whitman and is contingent on approval at the annual town meetings.

Dr. Whitner reported the cost to repair the Maquan School is over \$4 million and in discussions with the Hanson Capital Improvement Committee, there was no funding available for these repairs. At the same time, capital costs of \$554,000 have been spent to maintain the Maquan School facility over the past three years. Therefore, the decision to close the Maquan School and to return the building to the Town of Hanson was made. Mr. O'Brien recommended continued, open communication with staff at the schools to reduce anxiety. Dr. Wilcox added current steps of the phases are discussed at faculty meetings. Information is shared as it becomes available.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### *Excess & Deficiency Certification*

Christine Suckow reported on the Department of Revenue (DOR) Excess & Deficiency Certification. Based upon the unaudited balance sheet submitted, the certified amount of excess and deficiency (E&D) as of July 1, 2017 for Whitman Hanson is \$936,761.00. This certification is in accordance with the provisions of G. L. Chapter 71, §16B½, as amended. The unencumbered funds certified above in excess of five percent of the operating budget and budgeted capital costs for the succeeding fiscal year must be applied to reduce the current fiscal year's assessment is zero. Mrs. Suckow recommended the Committee not transfer funds out of the E&D account to fund the LEA budget in the upcoming school year.

#### *Request for Old Turf Field*

Mr. Dan Driscoll, President of Whitman Youth Baseball, contacted the school district requesting a small piece of the old field turf for the batting cage located at the Whitman Middle School field. The size of the old turf Mr. Driscoll is seeking is roughly 70' long and 12' wide. Mr. Sandland confirmed old turf field exists and is not being used at this time. A motion to declare the old turf field as surplus was made and withdrawn by Mr. Small after a brief discussion of liability concerns. Chair Hayes recommended tabling the agenda item to research liability if the request were to be honored.

#### *Surplus*

Memo submitted from Director of Science, Mark Stephansky, to declare outdated science materials as surplus.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Trotta seconded; voted to approve the outdated science curriculum materials as surplus. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### *Acceptance of gift*

Memo submitted from Director of Food Services requesting to accept an anonymous donation of \$120 for the Duval Elementary School to be used at the discretion of the principal for students in need.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. O'Brien seconded; voted to w accept an anonymous donation of \$120 for the Duval Elementary School to be used at the discretion of the principal for students in need. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### *Field Trip Requests*

High School – Show Choir Festival in Madison, CT

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to waive the nurse requirement for an out-of-state field trip and approve the High School Show Choir trip to Madison, Ct on March 3, 2018, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### *Warrant Sub-committee*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to approve the Warrant Subcommittee minutes of December 6, 2017, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### *Adjourn*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Meeting materials and handouts:

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- Meeting Minutes of November 8, 2017
- W-H FY2017 E&D calculation form and email from DOR
- Request by Whitman Baseball
- Surplus request for outdated science materials
- Field trip request out-of-state – Show Choir on March 3, 2018
- Warrant Subcommittee minutes 12/06/2017
- WHRSD Enrollment Reports
- Maquan School Closing Summary 12/13/2017
- Request to accept donation \$120 for Duval School
- Letter of appreciation from Members of the St. Vincent DePaul Whitman Food Pantry