

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of March 7, 2018

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

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 8:34 p.m.

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

Members absent: Robert O'Brien, Jr., and Kevin Lynam

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

Chair Hayes brought the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and announced the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting Minutes of February 28, 2018

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to amend the meeting minutes of February 28, 2018 to indicate the School Committee members who motioned and seconded to come out of Executive Session, as discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to approve the meeting minutes of February 28, 2018, as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Student Advisory Report

Student Council Representative, Marah Burt, was not present to report. Miss Burt was attending the Annual Student Council Conference in Hyannis.

Superintendent's Report

Project 351 Recognition

The Committee recognized the 2018 Project 351 Ambassadors, Alexandria Ayers (Whitman Middle School) and Timothy "TJ" Woodward (Hanson Middle School) and the Project 351 Alums. Project 351 is a youth service nonprofit organization that develops a rising generation of 'community-first' citizen leaders. Selected grade 8 students from each school in 351 cities and towns across the Commonwealth become ambassadors based on their potential to demonstrate the values of compassion, kindness, humility, and gratitude. The students participate in team-based public service in January and May each year to address and raise awareness of hunger, homelessness, and poverty. Ambassadors also receive comprehensive training and support throughout the year. Grade 8 Ambassadors, Alexandria Ayers and TJ Woodward, spoke of the inspiration and activities on launch day and eagerness to begin spring public service. Alums Christopher Blackman, Gabrielle Trongone, Annika Putur, Emma Rogers, and Courtney Woodward shared their experiences with Project 351 since their ambassadorship in middle school and continued participation with Project 351 through high school. All are looking forward to the spring service and plans to begin efforts for the annual clotting drive for cradles to crayon in the schools and local community organizations. The Superintendent and School Committee members thanked the students for their impressive presentation and continued hope that this generation will have a positive influence in

world matters. Steve Bois personally invited the students to tour the John F. Kennedy Library for a tour of the exhibits, where he is employed.

Safety and Security Update

The Superintendent provided information regarding safety and security in the school system. On Tuesday evening, an informational program about School Safety was held at 6:00 p.m. in the Lecture Hall at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School to discuss measures in place to improve safety and security throughout the school district and listen to parent concerns. High School Principal, Jeff Szymaniak, reported nearly 35 parents were in attendance. Mr. Szymaniak, along with other school administrators and School Resource Officers, Kevin Harrington (W) and Bill Frazier (H), were instrumental in fielding questions from the community. Mr. Szymaniak added that additional town-meeting style forums will be scheduled. Important feedback from parents was to maintain a universal language and definitions between common terms like lockdown, stay put, and shelter in place.

Search Committees: High School Principal and Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Whitner reported that due to recent personnel movement with the appointment of Jeff Szymaniak to the superintendent position and the resignation of Patrick Dillon as the former assistant superintendent, vacancies for a new high school principal and assistant superintendent have opened up for the 2018-19 school year. Both positions were posted on March 1 and have closing dates of March 16, 2018. The Superintendent is currently working on search committee compositions for both positions.

Old Business

2018-2019 Budget Discussion

Chair Hayes reported on recent meetings with both the Town of Hanson and Town of Whitman Finance Committees the proposed school district budget was discussed. At the next meeting, the Committee will be voting on the assessment to the towns, which must be done within 45 days of the annual town meeting for the warrant. Dr. Whitner explained the proposed budget. As a result of the Maquan School closing, budget line items are undergoing shifts and changes due to staff movement and other related school closing factors. In addition, top priority items have been included as previously presented.

- 1 Family Liaison – Elementary Schools
 - Works with families and school staff for resources and support for social / emotional needs. Also, a school psychologist will remain unassigned for the elementary level to focusing on a number of students.
- One to One Devices (Chromebooks) – Year 1 for a Multi-Year Technology Plan
 - Students must learn to read and write electronically as well as test electronically. \$40,000 has been encumbered to implement the project.
- 2 Special Education Teachers – Middle School Science
 - Currently do not have inclusion for history/social studies and science
 - Science is now tested area and student must be ready for high school high stakes testing
- Instructional Materials – Know Atom: Elementary Science
 - District responsible to maintain the program with the appropriate resources

Chair Hayes reported the overall increase to the propose budget is \$2.7 million. Dr. Whitner added that no additional Chapter 70 funding is anticipated unless there is a per pupil cost increase adjustment at the state level. Final figures for state funding have not yet been determined. It was reported the District estimated \$20 per pupil in the proposed budget. In addition, the current transportation reimbursement is only at 68%.Circuit breaker reimbursement is also unknown at this time.

Dr. Whitner encouraged all to remain active with state legislators on several budget issues for regional school districts. Included are increasing the state per pupil cost to more than \$20 per student, cite

underfunded and unfunded mandates for proper reimbursement (i.e. regional transportation), and special education costs reimbursement (circuit breaker). Any increases to these areas would help close the proposed budget gap.

There was a discussion regarding the advantage of having a family liaison (social worker) position versus a school adjustment counselor position. Dr. Whitner explained the idea derived from the utilization of the recent Behavior Health Initiative Grant through North River Collaborative, and funding the program that Deni Howe is managing with intern social workers. Social workers can bridge the gap between resources that schools can provide to assisting family in finding resources outside of the school's realm. The position would benefit the family and student for counseling services. Conley parent, Lela Donovan, added as a social worker herself, a family liaison position opens up the vastness of the position (beyond adjustment counselor) with the ability to build relationships with schools for internship programs for free services.

Mr. Small questioned if the Committee was in a position, at this point, to sue the state for lack of appropriate funding for state regional transportation reimbursement. He reported that, the state auditor's findings found state regional transportation reimbursement was not fully funded at 100%. Historically, the reimbursement for regional transportation has fluctuated around 60% or, about \$400,000 annually.

Mr. Bois requested the Committee receive a copy of the State Auditor's report.

The Committee continued its discussion on other underfunded mandates including regional transportation reimbursement and special education costs, and initiatives and bills being proposed by local state representatives (per pupil cost increase) and recommended action be taken by the Committee.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to write to local state legislators to quantify the unfunded and underfunded state mandates and associated lost funding. The letter should be copied to the Governor's Office, the Office of the State Auditor and be signed by all members of the School Committee.

At this time, the Committee considered transferring funds from the Excess & Deficiency Account (E&D) to close the \$2,674,821 deficit of the FY2019 Proposed Budget. The current balance in Excess and Deficiency is \$ 936,761. Chair Hayes reported that each assessment point increase (1%) represents a revenue increase of \$202,589. He offered several scenarios of transfers out of E&D to fund the proposed budget.

The Committee discussed historic trends in E&D transfers and returned monies to E&D each following school year. They also discussed the importance of the E&D account for unanticipated or unforeseen costs. Mr. Small and Mr. Cullity were concerned the District is not putting enough back into E&D.

VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Mr. Jones seconded; vote to transfer \$450,000 from the Excess & Deficiency Account (E&D) to the FY2019 LEA budget. The motion passed 6-2-0. Mr. Cullity and Mr. Small opposed.

A motion by Mr. Small to amend the transfer from E&D from \$450,000 to \$400,000 was made, but not seconded. The motion failed.

There was brief discussion of available resources from the state to lighten burdens of extraordinary special education costs. Mr. Riley noted that, currently, Whitman-Hanson does not meet the criteria.

Chair Hayes calculated a transfer of \$450,000 from E&D would bring the remaining deficit to \$2,223,821 or about an 11% assessment increase.

Christine Suckow reported the Mayflower Municipal Health Group (MMHG) Steering Committee met earlier in the day to vote on the new health insurance rates for FY2019. Mrs. Suckow stated the projected costs are subject to change based on employee health insurance needs for the upcoming school year, and are subject to change. Mrs. Suckow reported the health insurance projected increase was budgeted at just under 10% or \$155,000.

The Committee proceeded to discuss their position on no cost full day kindergarten. Several members confirmed it remains a priority for the District. They discussed considerations for a warrant article to put forth an override and funding the annual costs thereafter, once the startup costs are accepted. Dr. Whitner confirmed the startup costs would be around \$600,000 but may be reduced by funding through the kindergarten revolving account.

It was the consensus of the Committee to be provided language for a warrant article for cost-free full day kindergarten to present at the May 2018 Annual Town Meetings.

Maquan School Closing Update

Chair Hayes reported he misspoke at the last school committee meeting when explaining the addition to the high school of a roadway for student drop-off/pickup. A new 450'L x 24'W inner road would be installed in front with a six foot buffer of wide man-made swale and grass for drainage into the existing drains. The Whitman Department of Public Works (DPW) will be assisting with the Director of Facilities, Ernie Sandland, to assist. Estimates for work are also being obtained from T&K Sealing, Century 21 Paving, and CMC Paving. Chair Hayes indicated the current plan for the preschool program student drop-off/pickup is in the front high school road loop. Chair Hayes reported the Town of Whitman will vote on the appropriation of funding for the project (\$110,000) at the Special Town Meeting on March 12, 2018.

New Business

Faculty Handbook Revision

The Superintendent presented a revision to the anti-discrimination section to the 2017-2018 Faculty Handbook to reference the amendment and expansion of Massachusetts' anti-discrimination law, Section Four, Chapter 151B of the Massachusetts General Laws prohibiting pregnancy-related discrimination. This legislation requires Districts to notify all employees in writing of their rights to be free from discrimination based upon pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions by April 1, 2018. The 2017-2018 Faculty Handbook has been revised to include expanded anti-discrimination legislation. This information will be included in the Employee Information that is disseminated at the beginning of each school year.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to approve the revision of the 2017-18 Faculty Handbook to reference the amendment and expansion of Massachusetts' anti-discrimination law, Section Four, Chapter 151B of the Massachusetts General Laws prohibiting pregnancy-related discrimination, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Warrant Articles –Annual Town Meetings

Christine Suckow reported warrant articles for the Town of Hanson Annual Town Meeting will be brought to the Committee on March 14, 2018.

Chair Hayes presented the warrant article language as proposed by the Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee for the warrant articles for the Whitman and Hanson Town Meeting, to be held on May 7, 2018.

VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to place the Warrant Article S1 on the Whitman Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 7, 2018 as presented:

To see if the Town will vote to raise an appropriate \$35,000 to pay for costs associated with improving security at the Duval Elementary School, including but not limited to installation of card access to interior front entry doors, relocation of interior doors and walls, installation of a counter and reconfiguration of the office area with a security window, and reconfiguring of the clinical area to ensure safety for students and staff, or take any other action relative thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to place the Warrant Article S2 on the Whitman Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 7, 2018 as presented:

To see if the Town will vote to raise an appropriate \$35,000 to pay for costs associated with improving security at the Conley Elementary School, including but not limited to installation of card access to interior front entry doors, relocation of interior doors and walls, installation of a counter and reconfiguration of the office area with a security window, and reconfiguring of the clinical area to ensure safety for students and staff, or take any other action relative thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to place the Warrant Article S3 on the Whitman Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 7, 2018 as presented:

To see if the Town will vote to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$55,000 to pay for costs associated with replacing the fire detection panel and devices in the Conley Elementary School or take any other action relative thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Small explained the issue with the fire panels and anticipated installation.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to place the Warrant Article S4 on the Whitman Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 7, 2018 as presented:

To see if the Town will vote to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$35,000 to fund costs to update existing cameras and add additional cameras to the interior and exterior of the Duval Elementary School, or take any other action relative thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mrs. Taylor motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to place the Warrant Article S5 on the Whitman Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 7, 2018 as presented:

To see if the Town will vote to see if the Town will vote to raise an appropriate \$25,000 to fund the cost for replacement of exterior doors with card access at the Conley Elementary School, Duval Elementary School, and Whitman Middle School, or take any other action relative thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mrs. Taylor motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to place the Warrant Article S6 on the Whitman Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 7, 2018 as presented;

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$15,000 to purchase and install two rooftop units at the Whitman Middle School, or take any other action relative thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to place the Warrant Article S7 on the Whitman Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 7, 2018 as presented:

To see if the Town will vote to raise an appropriate \$5,600 to pay for costs to replace two Univents at the Whitman Middle School or take any other action relative thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to place Warrant Article S8 on the Whitman Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 7, 2018 as presented:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$125,622 to pay Whitman's share of the projected cost for roadway repairs at the Regional High School (estimated to cost \$210,000) or take any other action relative thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hayes noted all expenses for the Regional High School are assessed based on student enrollment; Whitman's enrollment is presently 59.82% of the student body for the region.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to place Warrant Article S9 on the Whitman Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 7, 2018 as presented:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$134,595 to pay Whitman's share of the cost to resurface the outdoor track at the Regional High School (estimated costs \$225,000), or take any other action relative thereto.

Chair Hayes noted all expenses for the Regional High School are assessed based on student enrollment; Whitman's enrollment is presently 59.82% of the student body for the region.

Acceptance of Gifts

There were no gifts or donations presented for approval.

Field Trips

There were no field trips presented for approval.

Subcommittee Reports

Warrant Sub-Committee

There were no warrants presented.

Negotiations Sub-Committee

The next meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. Dr. Whitner reported confirmed the negotiations meeting will be with the School Committee Negotiations sub-committee only. She reported Attorney Waugh has a conflict that day and that Whitman Special Town Meeting is also being held that evening. In addition, new dates for negotiations are being determined with WHEA as well.

Regional Agreement Amendment Committee

The next meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. Christine Suckow confirmed a placeholder warrant article has been sent to the towns.

Policy Sub-Committee

The next meeting is scheduled for March 21, 2018 at 5:00 p.m.

Facilities and Capital Improvements Sub-committee Report

The next meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

It was confirmed the Indian Head Playground Committee will be meeting on Tuesday, March 13 at the Indian Head School at 4:00 p.m.

Legislative Update

The Committee discussed legislative initiatives earlier in the meeting.

Pilgrim Area Collaborative Representative Report

Mr. Bois reported two finalists have been chosen for the position of Executive Director. The two finalists are Jason Frazier and Dymrna Thomas. Interviews will be conducted on April 4, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Meeting Materials and Handouts:

- Meeting Agenda March 7, 2018
- Meeting Minutes February 28, 2018
- Pregnant Workers Fairness Act Information
- Faculty Handbook 2017-18 (electronic copy)
- Appointment letter Jeff Szymaniak to position of Superintendent effective 7-1-2018
- Letters to applicants for Superintendent position
- Proposed Warrant Articles for Town of Whitman