

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Minutes of December 12, 2018  
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School  
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 8:26 p.m.

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

Members absent: None

Administrators present: Jeffrey Szymaniak, Superintendent of Schools  
George M. Ferro, Jr., Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
Christine Suckow, Director of Business Services

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Chair Hayes brought the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and announced the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live. In attendance, and invited to attend the meeting by Superintendent Jeff Szymaniak, were Hanson and Whitman Town Officials, Hanson and Whitman Police and Fire representation and as well as State Representative Josh Cutler.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

*Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2018*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to approve the School Committee meeting minutes of November 11, 2018, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Student Advisory Report**

Marah Burt, Student Council School Committee Representative, reported on a number of events and student activities across the District. Miss Burt reported the Whitman-Hanson WILL held a parent/community forum on December 4, 2018 at the Regional High School to learn about and address concerns of substance abuse affecting the community. National Honor Society Induction Ceremony was held on December 6. On December 14, the Whitman-Hanson Red Cross Club will host a movie night in the Dr. John F. McEwan Performing Arts Center with a showing of the movie "Elf". Proceeds will go to the victims of the recent California wildfires. The Regional High School yearbooks are now on sale. On December 14, the Whitman Middle School is hosting a Social Night with an admission fee of \$7.00, or \$5.00 with a can donation for the food pantry. Elementary Schools will hold their winter concerts on December 14.

Chair Hayes announced upcoming dates to remember.

- December 18 2018 - Middle School Concert in the High School PAC – 7:00 PM
- December 24, 2018 through January 1, 2019 – Holiday Recess
- January 27, 2018 Polar Plunge at Camp Kiwanee
- January 27, 2018 Pizza Bowl
- January 16, 2018 new date for School Committee meeting

Chair Hayes reported the Administration Team will present preliminary budget information on the FY2020 school district budget. In addition, the budget will be discussed at each School Committee meeting. All stakeholders are encouraged to attend meetings and budget discussions through the Annual Town meetings in May for input.

## Superintendent's Report

### *Budget Discussion*

Superintendent Szymaniak reported that, in early and ongoing conversations with town officials in Whitman and Hanson, nothing formal about the FY2020 School District budget has been announced in regarding the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Budget. In addition, he would be remiss if he did not begin formal budget conversations with the School Committee at their meeting, prior to any presentations to town officials. A meeting with the Whitman Capital Improvement Committee was held to discuss capital projects and a meeting with the Whitman Finance Committee is scheduled for December 19.

The Superintendent presented a preliminary, proposed draft of the FY2020 School District Budget. A number of handouts were available for the Committee to illustrate the components and challenges with preparing the budget. The budget discussion handouts were as follows:

- Proposed Draft FY2020 School District Budget
- Preliminary 2020 School Budget Explanation Key
- WHRSD Areas of Focus
- What is Circuit Breaker?
- State Report Card by School Based on FY17 Expenditures

Mr. Szymaniak stated the projections are based on a level-service budget for the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District FY2019 vs. FY2020. The preliminary proposed budget for FY2020, based on history and anticipated costs, is \$53,457,929. Based on FY2019 budget of 50,523,181 the proposed FY2020 budget represents a budget deficit of \$2,934,748.

Mr. Szymaniak reviewed the line items listed in the proposed draft budget. The proposed budget was broken out by school and departments with the increases are based on expenditure history and anticipated costs. There are more than 674 employees (including substitutes) on the W-H payroll. Current student enrollment is 3,823 ages 3 to 23. Mr. Szymaniak reviewed the explanation key and definition of items.

Mr. Szymaniak noted the DESE Per Pupil Expenditure for Whitman-Hanson is \$11,767.46, whereas the state per pupil average is \$15,449.62. The Superintendent discussed budget challenges facing the District and major concerns with rising costs health care and special education, complying with mandates that are underfunded and even unfunded, and contractual obligations with contracted services. It is projected Out-of-District special education costs will be \$5,000,000. Mr. Szymaniak shared some of the proposed initiatives which include a proposal for a language-based program for middle school students to keep out of district students in district, the proposed re-structuring of a collective bargaining unit to help reduce the cost of contractual obligations and considerations of managing state-mandated homeless transportation. The Superintendent added that W-H salaries are in the median compared to state and surrounding town salaries. Mr. Szymaniak provided an overview of the Circuit Breaker process (special education reimbursement) and how it affects the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District, noting residential placements are extremely costly.

Revenue sources were also discussed. The Superintendent stated a detailed revenue projection has not been fully-developed at this time. Any increases to state funding through Chapter 70 is unknown. The Governor's Budget proposal is not released until June. The House I budget recommendations are proposed at the end of January/beginning of February and then goes through its own series of processes through House II and finally the Governor's proposed recommendations in June. The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District budget receives nearly 50% of funding from the state, higher than most other school districts. Mr. Szymaniak indicated the full proposed FY2020 budget and revenue projections will be presented at the February Annual Budget Presentation. The Superintendent invited any community members to meet with him and the Assistant Superintendent for a discussion. Meeting target share figures developed by the state

was also discussed. The Superintendent expressed his intent is to simplify the community's understanding of the challenges and process in preparing a budget for the size and needs of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District.

Christopher Howard requested the Superintendent provide specific insurance increase costs and to quantify all unfunded and underfunded mandates. Mr. Szymaniak will provide the information at the January meeting. Mr. Small noted that Chapter 70 funding is flat, which is common to regional school districts at this time. Strides are being made to increase reimbursement as other funding sources, for example, Regional Transportation and Homeless Transportation this year. Mr. Szymaniak added the cost of one bus is \$8,111.64 per day. First Student is the sole vendor in the area that can support Whitman-Hanson student transportation.

Mr. Szymaniak announced he will present this budget proposal to the town of Whitman Finance Committee at their meeting scheduled for December 19, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be posted as a joint meeting with the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District School Committee. All are welcome to attend.

Mr. Szymaniak reported that efforts are being made to be fully-efficient utilizing all software programs the District uses for the accounting system, student software, website, messenger communication app, and health program. Administration is reviewing all programs and pairing down to realize the full capabilities of each program.

State Representative, Josh Cutler, was in attendance and distributed a state budget update and process statement written in collaboration with Whitman State Representative, Geoff Diehl and Senator Michael Brady. He acknowledged Whitman-Hanson Student Council Student Representative, Marah Burt, as a current intern at the state house, who helps out in his office. Representative Cutler's memo included the latest developments with state revenue and an overview of the state budget process. He reported on key findings from the Department of Revenue (DOR) and discussed potential revenue growth but to expect some slowdown in growth. Representative Cutler reviewed FY2019 funding noting an increase of 3.8% in overall Chapter 70 funding and other reimbursement area increases in circuit breaker and regional transportation up from 68.9% to 75% and added there is pushback from the state on regional transportation to get to 100%. Mr. Small noted that, although overall Chapter 70 funding was increased by over 3%, the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District only received a 0.5% increase. In addition, the lack of competition for bus transportation vendors is a major concern with contract rates. Representative Cutler stated he will continue to fight annually for increases to per pupil cost to \$50. Other state tax imposed anticipated revenue to consider is gaming, marijuana and Air B&B tax. Mr. Szymaniak thanked Representative Cutler his work involved in the grant to fund technology which went to the purchase of 147 Chromebooks for W-H elementary schools.

A number of town residents/parents also commented at the meeting. Shawn Kain opined on the uncertainty of state aid and establishing a sustainable budget. Lela Donovan commented that she appreciates Mr. Szymaniak's communication methods with parents and the community and encouraged the community to support the school district. Mr. Szymaniak stated he will continue to advocate for students through social media, cable TV shows, you tube, etc. Chair Hayes encouraged the community, parents and town officials to attend School Committee meetings and work together for a solution to support education in the both towns.

### *Authorization to Sign*

The Superintendent indicated that in order to approve and sign off on contractual agreements, the Committee will need to vote to authorize Superintendent Jeffrey Szymaniak to make, execute, and approve contracts on the behalf of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to authorize Superintendent Jeffrey Szymaniak to make, execute, and approve contracts on the behalf of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District. The motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Hayes announced the Massachusetts Association of School Committee will be holding Charting the Course Workshop School Committee Member Orientation for new and veteran school committee members at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School on February 2, 2019. Committee members are encouraged to register.

### *Warrants*

In an effort to streamline the review process of signing warrants, the Superintendent asked Committee members to notify his office of their availability when signing warrants to insure the Director of Business Services is available to answer questions that may arise.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

#### *Warrant Subcommittee*

#### *Warrant Subcommittee minutes of November 20, 2018*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to approve the Warrant Subcommittee minutes of November 20, 2018, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### *Warrant Subcommittee minutes of December 6, 2018*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to approve the Warrant Subcommittee minutes of December 6, 2018, as presented. The motion passed 9-0-1. Mr. Small abstained.**

Warrants signed at the meeting were as follows:

<u>Warrant #</u>	<u>Amount</u>
121218AP	\$669,628.52
121218FS	\$30,733.00

#### *Pilgrim Area Collaborative*

Mr. Bois reported Dr. Dymrna Thomas has officially started in the executive Director position. Board meetings are held at 120 Center Street in Pembroke. The Pilgrim Area Collaborative is a tuition-based educational environment servicing students in the area and delivering programs that include the Seaside Program, PACES, Independence Academy, Specialized Learning Communities and Gaining Adult Proficiencies.

#### *Negotiations Subcommittee*

Chair Hayes reported at a tentative agreement with WHEA Unit B Administrators has been reached. It is anticipated the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and vote to ratify will be on the agenda for the January 16, 2018 School Committee meeting.

Chair Hayes announced the Whitman Finance Committee invited the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District to attend their next Finance Committee meeting scheduled for December 19, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at Whitman Town Hall. All members are encouraged to attend.

### *Meeting Adjournment*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to adjourn the School Committee meeting at 8:26 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

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*Signature of School Committee Secretary*

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting Agenda for, December 12, 2018
- Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2018
- Warrant Subcommittee Minutes for approval: November 20, 2018 & December 6, 2018
- Proposed Draft FY2020 School District Budget
- Preliminary 2020School Budget Explanation Key
- WHRSD Areas of Focus
- What is Circuit Breaker?
- State Report Card by School Based on FY17 Expenditures