

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of February 6, 2019

*Public Hearing on School Budget FY2020 Meeting*

Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School

600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 8:51 p.m.

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

Members absent: Alexandria Taylor

Administrators present: Jeffrey Szymaniak, Superintendent of Schools  
George M. Ferro, Jr., Assistant Superintendent of Schools

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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.

The Chair recognized state representatives Allyson Sullivan (W) and Josh Cutler (H), Senator Michael Brady, Town Administrators, Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee members from Whitman and Hanson, Central Office Administrators, School Principals, WHEA Representatives, and several parents and community members in the audience.

Chair Hayes took the agenda out of order.

**Old Business**

*Cell Tower at Hanson Middle School*

Hanson Town Administrator, Michael McCue, provided a copy of the Memorandum of Land Lease Agreement (MOL) between the Town of Hanson and the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District, and designated lessors and Cellco Partnership, a Delaware general partnership, d/b/a Verizon Wireless, a ten (10) year lease with an automatic extension for two (2) additional five (5) year terms unless the LESSEE terminates it at the end of the then current term by giving the LESSORS written notice of the intent to terminate at least three (3) months prior to the end of the then current term, to install, maintain and operate communications equipment.

Mr. McCue reported the agreement was voted approved at the last meeting of the Hanson Board of Selectmen. Mr. McCue will provide a supplementary report on the inclusion of a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Program for students, included in the Request for Proposals (RFP), as more information becomes available. Mr. McCue added that once hearings with the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) takes place over the next month or so, the cell tower installation is a fairly quick project and cell phone service to areas of Hanson will be greatly improved by this summer.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to approve the Memorandum of Land Lease Agreement (MOL) between the Town of Hanson and the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District, and designated lessors and Cellco Partnership, a Delaware general partnership, d/b/a Verizon Wireless, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

*Meeting Minutes of January 16, 2019*

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to approve the School Committee meeting minutes of January 16, 2019, as presented. The motion passed 9-0-1, Mr. O'Brien abstained.**

### **New Business**

*Town of Whitman Capital Expenditures Committee Representative*

Chair Hayes reported the Town of Whitman requested a representative from the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District be appointed to the Town of Whitman Facilities and Capital Expenditures Committee. The representative may be a District Administrator or School Committee member. Christopher Scriven and Fred Small volunteered for the appointment. Mr. Frank Lynam indicated that only one representative from the School District may vote but that having two School District representatives was acceptable. Chair Hayes appointed Mr. Scriven and Mr. Small as the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Representatives for the Town of Whitman Facilities and Capital Expenditures Committee effective immediately.

### **Old Business**

*Letter to State legislators regarding State Funding*

At their meeting held on January 16, 2019, the School Committee voted to draft a letter to state legislators to support the formula for per pupil expenditure as a minimal increase by percentage rather than a flat dollar amount, such as 3% as opposed to \$20 increase per pupil. The Superintendent presented a draft letter to be sent to State Representatives Allyson Sullivan and Josh Cutler as well as Senator Michael Brady, on behalf of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee addressing areas of concern to ensure equity for our children. Mr. Szymaniak added he also highlighted the financial impact that unfunded and underfunded mandates impose on the District.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to approve the letter to state legislators to support the formula for per pupil expenditure as a minimal increase by percentage rather than a flat dollar amount, as presented. The motion passed 9-0-0.**

All School Committee members present signed the letter and hand delivered to the state legislators present at the meeting.

*Public Hearing on the FY2020 School District Budget*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to open the Public Hearing meeting on the FY2020 School District Budget.**

**Robert Hayes – Yes**

**Robert Trotta – Yes**

**Fred Small – Yes**

**Robert O'Brien, Jr. – Yes**

**Michael Jones – Yes**

**Daniel Cullity – Yes**

**Christopher Howard – Yes**

**Christopher Scriven – Yes**

**Steve Bois – Yes**

**The motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Hayes announced the state legislators will provide a short presentation on the budget process which will be followed by the Superintendent's Budget proposal presentation.

State Representatives Josh Cutler presented a PowerPoint presentation illustrating the budget process at the state level and Chapter 70 funding history and state comparison for Whitman-Hanson. The State

should have a decision on the budget by July 1. Overall, a moderate growth is expected for FY2020 and consensus revenue was set at 2.7%. The Governor's Budget proposal (House I) show increases to Chapter 70 by 4.2% and sets the minimal aid per pupil at \$20. Also a stand-alone education bill filed to update Chapter 70 formula to meet FBRC goals over seven years, the Promise Act has been filed to seek some adjustments to the foundation budget formula. Representative Cutler noted that only modest increases in Chapter 70 funding for Whitman-Hanson as compared to the state. He also noted that as enrollment decreases, funding will not increase. Increases in funding may be realized in other line items like regional transportation reimbursement, at this time to be level funded at 73-75%. State legislators will look into these factors as the budget process at the state level moves forward. Also there is a big push for the Promise Act and the MA Teacher's Association is involved in supporting the bill and increase per pupil cost from \$20 to \$50.

### **Superintendent's Report**

#### *FY2020 School District Budget*

Mr. Szymaniak reported the school district budget proposal presentation was developed to provide a simplified and easy to understand model of District expenses, anticipated revenue and building the proposed budget.

Mr. Szymaniak began with the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Mission Statement and Vision Statement. Mr. Szymaniak announced he has also instituted a new adage "Semper ad Maiora" meaning "always toward greater things" to enhance school district spirit. Mr. Szymaniak read aloud from the budget presentation. The Leadership Team included the fiscal implications of the three pillars, the strategic objectives, and strategic initiatives when the budget for the upcoming school year was developed.

Pillar I: Every Child, Every Day with healthy minds & healthy bodies

Pillar II: A Cohesive PreK-grade 12 System of Teaching & Learning

Pillar III: Safe and Secure Schools

Most of the funding for the school system comes from the Operating Budget; however, allocation and competitive grants, foundation funds, and our partnerships with area collaboratives provide valuable services and programs. Over 85 positions in the school system are funded outside of the operating budget by federal grants: Title I, Title IIA, and IDEA (special education); revolving funds (full day kindergarten/pre-school/athletics); and the Food Services program.

This proposed budget funds a level services budget which provides students with similar services in the upcoming school year, 2019-2020, as those that are in place this year, 2018-2019. This budget does not add new programs or positions; however, it does adjust for changes in curriculum materials for Math and a continuation of our technology plan initiated last year. It also represents a restructuring of positions and responsibilities to other areas to maximize efficiency and create equity for all students.

The proposed level services budget maintains today's educational services.

The School Budget packet provides factual information about the proposed operating budget for the 2019-2020 school year. A budget of \$53,562,534 is being presented to town officials, the Regional School Committee, and the public this evening.

Mr. Szymaniak went through the entire presentation with the Committee. He reviewed the funding sources available to the District as well as the way a level service budget is developed and presented budget facts.

Level Services Budget - The Operating Budget funds services in 2019-2020 that are similar to the services provided in 2018-2019.

Level Services Budget Increases - Contracts (Personnel, Transportation, Copy Center, Custodial Services), Utilities, Retirement Assessments, & Health Insurance, Underfunded and Unfunded Mandates In addition to the Operating Budget, the District is awarded allocation, competitive, and collaborative grants that total over \$1.65 million. Grants, Revolving Accounts, and E-rate (federal) fund 88 staff positions.

Mr. Szymaniak also illustrated a number of underfunded and unfunded mandates cost the District \$5,067,542.

The Superintendent provided a summary of the proposed FY2020 budget with anticipated revenue and resulting budget deficit based on estimated revenue.

The proposed FY 2020 school budget is \$53,562,534 leaving a budget deficit of \$3,636,348 for level service.

FINAL BUDGET FY 2019	50,523,181
<b>PROPOSED BUDGET FY 2020</b>	<b>53,562,534</b>
INCREASE (\$)	3,039,353
INCREASE (%)	5.6%
ANTICIPATED REVENUES FY2019	50,523,181
<b>ESTIMATED REVENUE FY 2020</b>	<b>49,926,186</b>
DECREASE (\$)	596,995
DECREASE (%)	-1.2%
<b>BUDGET DEFICIT</b>	<b>\$3,636,348</b>

Mr. Szymaniak presented historical and current data on the reduction in grant funding and noted that 88 staff positions are funding by grants.

The Committee was presented an assessment schedule to review and discuss along with supplemental budget handouts with line item detail and other information. The Committee requested historical data on the line item detail. Mr. Szymaniak will prepare the data but cautioned the figures last year versus this school year will be skewed as a result of the Maquan School Closing and the relocation of special education programs, preschool programs, grade level reconfigurations at both the Hanson middle and Indian Head Schools. The Committee members requested a report of expenses LY versus TY to better understand the increases and understand line items will be tilted.

The Athletic budget was also discussed. Chair Hayes provided detailed information of the cost breakout, noting Whitman-Hanson Athletics is the lowest among the eleven schools in the Patriot League at \$401,016 and does not include significant fundraising from gate receipts and user fees for various needs not in the School Budget.

Mr. Szymaniak discussed the growing cost of special education nearly \$1 million increase since last year. The Superintendent is actively pursuing programs/ideas to keep students in district to avoid the

phenomenal costs of out of district placements. Special education cost forecasting remains challenging as students move in and out of district and require placement.

The Committee also discussed full day kindergarten in length. Mr. Szymaniak noted that tuition-free full day kindergarten has been included in all School Improvement Plans (SIPs) for the last few years. It was noted that in 2016, an override vote to implement tuition-free full day kindergarten did not pass at the annual Town Meeting. Start-up costs for the program would now cost around \$631,000. A tuition-free full day kindergarten program is not in the Superintendent's proposed budget for FY2020. Equity for all students entering their education years was discussed. There is much inequity not only in the early education years and kindergarten, but also in the current school start times, foreign language programs at middle schools, and social and emotional needs at all levels. Mr. Szymaniak noted that many districts in the south shore area are now open to School Choice, including kindergarten, which may keep students from attending Whitman-Hanson Regional School District after attending Kindergarten in another district.

Chair Hayes continued discussion on the proposed budget and reported there is \$961,237 in the Excess and Deficiency (E&D) account. He also noted that a one percentage increase on the assessment schedule is equal to \$221,835 in additional funds from the towns. The figures in the proposed budget are also subject to change as Chapter 70 funding is processed at the state level. Whitman Town Administrator, Frank Lynam, spoke to the Committee of the challenges the Town of Whitman is facing and that a level funded budget would need an override in Whitman and a level service budget cannot be funded unless the voters are involved and respond to the financial needs. Mr. Trotta spoke to the repetitive nature of funding the school district budget every year and financial issues with the towns and rising cost of unfunded mandates. There was a brief discussion of the impact and implications of the Levy Limit and Proposition 2 ½.

It was the consensus of the Committee to schedule a supplemental budget discussion on Wednesday February 13, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

Scheduling dates and locations for public information days in the form of coffee shop talks was also discussed.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted by roll call to close the Public Hearing meeting on the FY2020 School District Budget.**

**Robert Hayes – Yes**

**Robert Trotta – Yes**

**Fred Small – Yes**

**Robert O'Brien, Jr. – Yes**

**Michael Jones – Yes**

**Daniel Cullity – Yes**

**Christopher Howard – Yes**

**Christopher Scriven – Yes**

**Steve Bois – Yes**

**The motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Hayes announced upcoming important dates.

- February 8, 2019 – Early Release Day PK-12 – Professional Development
- February 12, 2019 – Special Education Parent Advisory Meeting – 6:00 PM – HS Library
- February 18-22, 2019 – Winter Recess – NO SCHOOL
- February 27, 2019 – School Committee Meeting – HS Library 7:00 PM
- February 27 Facilities subcommittee also

*Meeting Adjournment*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to adjourn the School Committee Meeting at 8:51 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 February 6, 2019
- Meeting Minutes of January 16, 2019
- Copy of HMS Cell Tower Lease - Town of Hanson fully reviewed and approved by Town Counsel
- FY2020 School District Budget Presentation
- School Committee Supplemental Budget Documents #1 through #3
- Copies of Budget Hearing Invitations to town and state officials