

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of May 1, 2019

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

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 7:50 p.m.

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

Members absent: None

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

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

Chair Hayes recommended tabling the approval of the minutes until the next meeting.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to table the approval of the April 10, 2019 and April 24, 2019 School Committee meeting minutes until the next meeting. The motioned passed unanimously.

Superintendent's Report

Committee meeting schedule – proposed changes

The Superintendent recommended changes to the upcoming School Committee meetings due to schedule conflicts as follows:

- Reschedule May 8 to May 15
- Reschedule May 22 to Monday, May 20 (post Town Elections on Saturday, May 18)

It was the consensus of the Committee to amend their meeting schedule as discussed and reschedule the May 8, 2019 School Committee meeting to May 15, 2019 and the May 22, 2019 Reorganization meeting to May 20, 2019, as discussed.

FY2020 Budget and Local Assessment

Superintendent Szymaniak provided copies of the current tiered local assessment schedule and the District's Budget Impact Statement based on local funding scenarios. The School Committee last voted on for a 12.5% local assessment increase. Mr. Szymaniak reported any local assessment less than 12.5% will impact people and positions throughout the District.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; to reduce the local assessment increase from 12.5% to 8.5%. The motion carried 9-1-0. Mrs. Taylor opposed.

In the discussion surrounding the motion and second, Mr. Small reported that, at their respective Board of Selectmen's meetings held on April 30, 2019, both the Hanson Board of Selectmen and Whitman Board of Selectmen voted to support an 8.5% local assessment increase for the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District FY2020 Budget.

The Committee members discussed the stated inability of the towns to support an assessment increase of anything higher than 8.5%. The possibility of supporting a Proposition 2 ½ % tax override in the fall of 2019 was also discussed.

Superintendent Szymaniak identified the impact of an 8.5% local assessment increase and the \$1.7 million reduction in level services as nineteen positions/people. In the process of re-structuring, there will be a direct affect to all delivery services to students and parents. Technology Services, Central Office and the Facilities Department positions will be impacted. A part-time elementary music teacher position will be eliminated. The foreign language program at the middle school level will be eliminated. A high school guidance counselor and a number of teachers and paraprofessionals at all levels will also be dismissed. Mr. Szymaniak stated he will insure that Whitman-Hanson students are safe as discussed in previous conversations surrounding SEL (Social Emotional Learning) and noted social/emotional issues have increased nationwide. The Superintendent stated he is open to working with the towns to put a plan in place to satisfy the current needs of the school district if an override in the fall is a possibility and supported. He appreciated the passion of the community, and stated the 8.5% is better than where the towns had started in the budget process (at zero, negative 6%, 4% and then 6.5%), stating the school district can work with that, although sacrifices will be made. The Superintendent alluded to building a budget next year, if an override is imminent, that includes tuition-free full day kindergarten and restoring the foreign language program.

Committee members shared their thoughts on the budget crisis and discussed previously unsuccessful override attempts and less than stellar support of the school district budget. The Committee discussed working together with all town departments to develop and present a comprehensive plan and stand together on a Proposition 2 ½% tax override. Chair Hayes recommended the School Committee meet monthly with town officials to prepare an accumulative override presentation in the fall that will sustain all departments in both towns including the school district.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to meet monthly with town officials to prepare an accumulative override presentation in the fall of 2019. The motion passed unanimously.

Local Assessment Votes

VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Mr. O'Brien seconded: voted to set the local operating assessment for the Town of Whitman at \$14,398,151. The motioned passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. O'Brien motioned; Mr. Small seconded: voted to set the local operating assessment for the Town of Hanson at \$9,670,975. The motioned passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Bois seconded: voted to set the total operating assessment of \$24,069,126 to be shared by the towns based on student enrollment on October 1 of the current school year 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 and certify the FY2020 operating budget at \$52,373,023. The motioned passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

Conley School 180 day waiver Request

Chair Hayes announced a response letter was received from DESE Commissioner Jeffrey Riley regarding the School Committee's request for a 180 day waiver for Conley Elementary School in Whitman when it was forced to close due to a fast-moving stomach illness affecting a large number of students and staff. He read the letter aloud noting Commissioner Riley wrote "State regulations require that each school must be in session for a minimum of 180 days each year. I take this requirement seriously and consider waiver requests in the context of the longstanding policy of the Department of Elementary and Secondary education that all

days lost to health, weather or safety emergencies between the first day of the school year and March 31st must be made up to ensure a 180-day school year. I must decline your request.”

The Superintendent reported the Conley Elementary School will need to make up the March closed day on June 14, 2019 which will be an early release. Students must report to school 180 days. The cost of student transportation the early release to one school is approximately \$2,000.

Insurance Subcommittee

Chair Hayes announced the Committee will be establishing an Insurance Sub-committee to engage in researching insurance costs and plans. Mr. Small, Mr. Cullity, Mrs. Taylor and Mr. Scriven were appointed to the Insurance Subcommittee. The Subcommittee will meet with the Executive Director of Business Services, Christine Suckow, at scheduled and posted Subcommittee meetings.

The following warrant was signed at the meeting.

050119AP \$240,886.02

Meeting Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded: voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Signature of School Committee Secretary

Meeting Handouts:

- School Committee Agenda – May 1, 2019
- Memo from the Superintendent of Schools
- Copy of Budget Implications (from April 24 SC meeting)
- FY2020 Assessment Schedule (from April 24 SC meeting)
- MA DESE 180 Day waiver request (for Conley School) Commissioner’s Response
- Copies of letters to Locke & Lord as part bond counsel documentation for Phase I of HVAC Project at Hanson Middle