

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of November 13, 2019
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 9:11 p.m.

Members present: Robert Hayes, Christopher Scriven, Frederick Small, Daniel Cullity, Alexandria Taylor, Christopher Howard, Michael Jones, Steve Bois and Dawn Byers

Members absent: Robert O'Brien, Jr.

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.

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

Student Advisory Report

Student Council Advisory Representative, Tori Long, was not present to report.

Approval of School Committee Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes of November 5, 2019 were passed over until the next School Committee meeting.

Superintendent's Report

M.A.S.S. Academic Excellence Awards

- a. Chloe Wilson
- b. Nicholas Femia

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents has designed an award for academic excellence for students who have distinguished themselves in the pursuit of excellence during their high school careers. Chair Hayes and Superintendent Szymaniak presented the awards to high school senior students, Chloe Wilson and Nicholas Femia.

Food Pantry Donation Presentation

The Food Pantry donation will be presented at the December meeting.

Town of Hanson – Cell Tower Placement at Hanson Middle School

The Superintendent presented new plans from the Town of Hanson and a request to re-locate the cell tower installation at the Hanson Middle School 100 feet south of the original site. Mr. Szymaniak reported that on November 12, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) continued the hearing on the Cell Tower at the Hanson Middle School with the abutters. Verizon proposed to move the tower 100 feet south of its original location due to concerns by the abutters. The Hanson Town Administrator requested the School District vote to approve the relocation. It was confirmed in an email from the Town of Hanson that the lease will need to be amended as it references the Plan in Exhibit B. Hanson Town Counsel is aware of the request and will make

the revisions to the lease if approved by the District and ZBA. Chair Hayes defined the area of the new site location. There was a brief discussion on potential educational opportunities that will be worked out with the school district administration and Verizon.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; vote to accept plans to relocate the cell tower at the Hanson Middle School 100 feet south and approve change order as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Curriculum and Assessment Update

Assistant Superintendent, George Ferro announced the elementary, middle and high school principals will provide an overview of the MCAS scores and a review of curriculum materials recently adopted and being reviewed.

Duval Elementary School Principal, Dr. Darlene Foley, reported on the elementary level MCAS assessment scores. Dr. Foley reported that 2019 spring MCAS results in the three areas of ELA, Math and STEM indicated elementary students' steady progress toward improvement. All three areas also demonstrated student growth. Overall, ELA showed a slight dip but remained within state target scores. Math scores also demonstrated in the average range and there was no change in overall performance. STEM results showed no growth score as testing is only given in grades 5, 8 and 10. S/TE results at Duval and Conley indicated no change in performance but were five points above the state average. The district piloted two math programs last year and is currently implementing iReady math this year to work toward improved scores with one program after using other programs like Envision math and Bridges.

Bill Tranter, Hanson Middle reported on middle school MCAS assessment scores. He added that he was in contact with Verizon about the installation of the cell tower and developing a program for middle school students. He will continue the conversation after the first of the year and come back to the Committee in April/May with additional information. The middle school assessment scores are similar to the elementary results. Students are exceeding / meeting or partially meeting standards adding we would like to do better. He reported ELA scores are better than expected, considering current grade 8 student have not had a distinct literacy program. With the new ELA pilot literacy programs, it is anticipated scores will rise. He is working with the ELA Curriculum Director and starting to see evidence of improvement. He noted the weaknesses in writing and is now spending more time in that area as they head toward Spring MCAS 2020. Science scores have improved. In addition, we now have a new math program, which is where we were the weakest in the state average. With the new iReady math curriculum implementation, he anticipates improvement in that area as well.

Dawn Byers requested a copy of the MCAS reports.

Assistant Superintendent, George Ferro, clarified that a diagnostic only would be taken at the middle schools, and the results would inform practice for middle school math.

High School Principal, Dr. Christopher Jones reported high school assessment scores are also in the middle at state average and meeting state standards. To accommodate the Next Gen MCAS computer-based assessment, both teachers and students received training. Dr. Jones reported students performed well and noted that student growth in math indicated growth from 44.7 vs. 49.7. The high school is reviewing how math is delivered in the classroom, currently in a conceptual way. The state test is a more concrete and mechanical based application. ELA results showed the most student growth at 60.2. He reported science assessments will move to computer based application this year.

There was a brief discussion of the administration of the PAARC assessment that the piloting of the on line assessment did help pave the way in administering assessments on line. Mr. Ferro offered to review any of the assessment scores with school committee members at their convenience.

Superintendent Szymaniak commented on the challenge with computer-based testing at the high school providing a sufficient number of Chromebooks on the assessment days as well as accommodating students in other classrooms. This is something he plans to address as the district moves forward. Mr. Ferro reminded the Committee the purchase of chrome books was a budget cut last year and that there are only approximately 250 chrome books available at one time at the high school.

Superintendent's Goals 2019-20 SY

Superintendent Szymaniak presented his goals for the 2019-20 school year. The following four goals were developed keeping in mind the request of the Committee last year for more palpable, measurable goals.

Goal #1

Strategic Planning

- Using the current template, the superintendent will use the leadership team to update the current strategic plan for the years 2020-2023.
- Pillar 1- Social Emotional Learning
- Pillar 2- Curriculum/Instruction
- Pillar 3- Operations
- Pillar 4- Engagement
- Students, parents, staff and school committee will be asked to provide information

Mr. Szymaniak stated that part of his plan will be to solicit feedback from all stakeholders to determine the expectations of both towns and to develop a three year strategic plan.

Goal #2

Regional Agreement/Budgeting

- Working with the School Committee and ad hoc regional agreement committee, modify the current regional agreement.
- Prepare a fiscal year 2021 budget using either the statutory method of assessment or the agreement method of assessment.
- Advocate for a budget that will enhance the learning opportunities of our students while continuing to support students growing social emotional needs.
- The Superintendent discussed cuts in technology last year and the need for additional funding in that area.

Goal #3

Curriculum/Instruction

- Preview and pilot a K-5 Elementary English Language Arts program. Establish a method of paying for the chosen program. Currently we have a Houghton-Mifflin Program (Into Reading) and a Pearson program (My View) as pilots.

The Superintendent discussed students' performance as always being in the middle or median level. He considered this a lack of foundation blocks in programs at the elementary level and the lack of funding and support for an effective curriculum programs early on. Currently, the district is piloting Houghton Mifflin's iReady and Pearson's MyView Pearson ELA programs and has implemented iReady Math this year. Mr. Szymaniak added that the investment is moderate for the needs of the students.

Goal #4

Operations-Facilities/Technology/Safety

- Utilize the technology needs assessment report to make recommendations for improvements with hardware, software, and personnel.
- If accepted by MSBA move forward with creation of a feasibility study for a new Whitman Middle School.

- Provide ALICE training to new staff and year two for other staff; provide information sessions to parents and age-appropriate presentations to students.

Unfinished Business

Regional Agreement Amendment Committee and Assessment Method Discussion

Chair Hayes conferred with the Committee about the original member structure of a new regional agreement committee and recommended a smaller member base meet for the initial meeting. The Committee discussed being involved in the process of working out the assessment methodology with the towns to determine a solution that all can agree on. Mr. Small opined the towns should have a separate dialogue to discern if a method can be agreed upon, and if so, the School Committee should delay forming a new regional agreement amendment committee. Mr. Small added that he is in favor of using the statutory method of assessment.

The Committee also suggested updates to the current regional agreement be focused on the budget or, cost apportionment, section of the agreement in an effort to resolve the matter and bring it to the DESE Commissioner for approval. Chris Howard recommended the new amendment committee impanel two school committee members and two selectmen from each town, allow those six official to deliberate on the matter and avoid the same repeated conversations at school Committee meetings. The approval process for amending an agreement would include a vote of the full School Committee. The Committee reiterated their understanding if the local budget is not approved by June 30, the Commissioner will establish a 1/12th budget based on the statutory method.

Randy LaMattina of the Whitman Board of Selectmen reported he, the Whitman Town Administrator and other Whitman town officials recently had an informal, preliminary meeting with the Hanson Town Administrator, and members of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee on the local assessment methodology matter. They did not come to any conclusions but were cognizant of each other's concerns. Whitman official feel that the statutory method is equitable and fair. The towns want to see the financials of the school district budget to determine what their funding will be so they can formulate their plan of action.

Laura Kemmett of the Hanson Board of Selectmen reported she met with Hanson and Whitman town officials for a discussion on November 12. Mrs. Kemmett stated she understands there is a regional agreement in place and will do what is best for the town of Hanson, knowing it may play out that the state takes fiscal control if the budget is not approved by both towns. Mrs. Kemmett stated she supports student education but requested more transparency and clarity. Mrs. Kemmett reported the town of Hanson has requested financials for the current allocated costs in the school budget so the town of Hanson can determine how to move forward, fiscally. She added in their meeting, the two towns Boards of Selectmen committed to working together on a resolution, with budget facts provided to both Boards, as soon as possible.

Superintendent Szymaniak is aware of the request for financial information and although short-staffed in Central Office, will produce preliminary budget based on contractual obligations, new curriculum, etc., as soon as possible. School Committee member, Alexandria Taylor commented on including full day kindergarten and chrome books in the proposed budget.

Mrs. Kemmett clarified she is seeking the current cost of how money is being spent by school district this school year as outlined in the request. Mr. LaMattina is seeking a different set of figures as Whitman is asking for the current budget and proposed budget for FY2021.

Mr. Small discussed building a sustainable budget, identifying resources and revenues, and if anything will even come of the FY2019 supplemental funding.

Hanson citizen, Jane Durante, supported Hanson in their understanding of the agreement methodology and questioned the rush to resolve the local assessment methodology. Christopher Howard clarified the "rush" is

the value in having the School Committee and town officials meet in transparency to form a regional agreement subcommittee to have the proper discussion about appropriations and the assessment methodology. His concern was that some of the discussion points were selected data points to make individual points.

Mr. Lynam stated the request for detailed district financial reports will allow the Town of Whitman to better inspect the school budget. He agrees the towns want to get deeper into costs and the school budget. He requested separate statements to see what the actual costs are to run each school building individually, mainly looking for operational expenses. He requested the district generate expenditure reports for each school building and for the regional high school, broken out by year to provide a three year picture to include the history (2018-19), the current year (2019-20) and the projection for next year (2020-21). This should be illustrated by each line item and include all costs and show one base salary and detailed information on other compensation, i.e., life insurance, 403B contribution, longevity payments etc.

The Superintendent stated some of the data is already broken out in the previous years' FY2018 and FY2019 budget binders provided to both towns annually. He will deliver the requested reports to the towns and will also have financials available at the next meeting.

Mr. Szymaniak stated he was happy that the towns have discussed the assessment methodology. He stated there is a process to amend an agreement, and form it legally, then submit for the approval of the DESE Commissioner and also have a favorable vote of the towns.

Whitman citizen, Chris George, addressed the Committee and stated much of the outdated language in the regional agreement was revised last year and the main outstanding issues are funding language and withdrawal language. He recommended using the current amended agreement as a starting point for the new regional agreement. He discussed the conflict with today's laws (Ed Reform: minimum local contribution and assessment methodology) and money in local aid from Whitman that could have been reallocated if using the statutory method. Mr. George stated he brought the differences in the methodology of local assessment to the attention of the Administration in 2016.

Hanson parent Amanda Rubin commented on MCAS scores presentation and how well her son is doing in Hanson schools and pleased with his exceptional growth rate. She expressed confusion with the divide in the two towns.

The Committee heard several other comments from the gallery and at times became contentious as a result of the discourse about the impact of both assessment methodologies. The Committee moved to go forward with establishing a new regional agreement amendment committee to meet as soon as possible with a January target date to expedite the amendment process to resolve the assessment methodology language in the regional agreement. Mrs. Kemmett will report back to the full Board of Selectmen in Hanson to appoint two members. Mr. LaMattina will recommend and designate to board members at the next Whitman Board of Selectmen's meeting.

VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to amend the new regional agreement amendment committee to include two WHRSD School Committee members (one from each town) and two members from each Boards of Selectmen, with future members to be determined at a later date. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hayes suggested the Chair and Vice chair to take on the responsibility for an amended agreement.

VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to appoint the School Committee Chair Hayes and Vice Chair Scriven to the new Regional Agreement Amendment Committee. Motion passed 8-1-0. Mr. Small opposed.

New Business

Acceptance of Gifts

KJ10 Foundation donation to Food Services

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to accept the donation of \$500 from the KJ10 Foundation to the supplement payments of negative lunch balances at the end of the school year. The motion passed unanimously.

Field Trips

High School Ski Club

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to approve the Ski Club to Burke Mountain Ski Area, Burke, VT on January 11, 2020, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

DECA District Conference

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to waive the nurse requirement and approve the DECA District Conference, overnight, Falmouth, MA December 12-13, 2019, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Show Choir Festival

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to waive the nurse requirement and approve the Show Choir Festival, out of state Windor Locks, CT February 29, 2020, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Subcommittee Reports

Warrant Subcommittee

- *Approval of Warrant Subcommittee meeting minutes 9/25/2019, 10/10/2019 and 10/24/2019*

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to approve the Warrant Subcommittee minutes of 9/25/2019, 10,10,2019 and 10/24/2019 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy Subcommittee

There was nothing new to report.

Insurance Subcommittee

There was nothing new to report.

Facilities Subcommittee

Mr. Szymaniak reported on the Whitman Middle School Statement of Interest (SOI) senior study meeting with Diane Sullivan and representatives from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). There was a brief tour of the middle school prior to the meeting with MSBA. The meeting involved a review the SOI in depth, walk through of the building and condition of the facility, etc. and had questions related to the assessment methodology. The Superintendent reported the MSBA seemed impressed by the SOI application, discussed the assessment issues related to funding, and commended the facilities team on the maintenance of the building. Mr. Szymaniak thanked Ernie Sandland and his team on the work they do to maintain the buildings and grounds. Mr. Szymaniak reported the next step is affirmation to be added to the cue and funding a feasibility study with an associated cost between \$500-750k.

The next Facilities Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2019.

Legislative Update

Mr. Small reported there is no new news on the FY2019 supplemental budget.

Pilgrim Area Collaborative

Mr. Bois reported the Board met in October and November and have reorganized for the new school year. The annual audit went well, the Board re-organized and the annual report written by the executive director will be available for the Committee soon. Mr. Bois reported due to consolidation of facilities, the Hatch building in Pembroke will close and future meetings will be held at the Academy in Plymouth beginning on January 2, 2020. Mr. Bois reported on the closing of the budget. PAC received \$187,975.72 from Whitman-Hanson and has \$3,796 in the reserves account. He reported Whitman-Hanson makes up 8.5% of the PAC budget.

Negotiations Subcommittee

Mr. Szymaniak confirmed the current WHEA contracts expire June 30, 2021 and negotiation will be initiated next year.

Executive Session

Chair Hayes announced the Committee will go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares; WHEA Bargaining Units.

No votes will be taken after Executive Session except to adjourn.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded: voted to go into Executive Session at 9:04 p.m. to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares; WHEA Bargaining Units.

Roll Call

**Mr. Howard - Yes
Mr. Jones – Yes
Mr. Cullity – Yes
Mr. Small – Yes
Mr. Bois - Yes
Mr. Hayes - Yes
Mr. Scriven - Yes
Mrs. Taylor - Yes
Mrs. Byers - Yes
The motion passed unanimously.**

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded: voted to come out of Executive Session at 9:11 p.m.

Roll Call

**Mr. Howard - Yes
Mr. Jones – Yes
Mr. Cullity – Yes
Mr. Small – Yes
Mr. Bois - Yes
Mr. Hayes - Yes**

Mr. Scriven - Yes

Mrs. Taylor - Yes

Mrs. Byers - Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded: voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Signature of School Committee Secretary

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda for November 13, 2019
- Meeting Minutes of November 5, 2019 (in progress - will send electronically under separate cover)
- Letters to parents of top two students Ms. Chloe Wilson and Mr. Nicholas Femia
- Town of Hanson - plans to relocate cell tower at HMS
- High School Field Trip Requests:
 - DECA District Conference, overnight , Falmouth, MA December 12-13, 2019
 - Show Choir Festival, out of state Windor Locks, CT February 29, 2020
 - Ski Club to Burke Mountain Ski Area, Burke, VT on January 11, 2019
- Donation Request per email – Food Services Director request to accept – Kathleen Joyce donation of \$500 from the KJ10 Foundation to the supplement payments of negative lunch balances at the end of the school year.
- Warrant Subcommittee meeting minutes of 9/25/2019, 10,10,2019 and 10/24/2019
- American Heart Association - Thank you note
- Superintendent’s Goals 2019-20
- Key Information Sheet related to assessment methodology and budget
- Eagle Scout Award Recognition Letter – Liam Keane