

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of December 11, 2019
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 9:12 p.m.

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

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.

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of School Committee Meeting Minutes

November 5, 2019

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to approve the meeting minutes of November 5, 2019 as presented. The motioned passed 9-0-1. Mr. O'Brien abstained.

November 13, 2019

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to approve the meeting minutes of November 13, 2019 as presented. The motioned passed unanimously.

Student Advisory Report

Student Council Advisory Representative, Tori Long, was not present to report. The Superintendent reported he did meet his Superintendent's Council and Miss Long on Friday, December 6. He will report out on under Superintendent's Council agenda item.

Superintendent's Report

Food Pantry Donation – NHS Advisor Kelly Tanis

National Honor Society Class Advisor , Kelly Tanis along with Chloe Wilson, President of the National Honor Society, presented donations to the local food pantry representatives Christine Cameron of the Hanson Food Pantry and Bruce Perry and Lauren Kelley of the Whitman Food Pantry. On September 28, the National Honor Society held their annual 5k Road Race to benefit the local pantries. Thanks to the generous donations, a total of \$1,817 was raised. The NHS donated \$908.50 to each food pantry.

Brockton Area Prevention Collaborative Student Survey Request

Gabrielle Peruccio, Coalition Coordinator for the Brockton Area Prevention Collaborative, discussed two new federal grants that will benefit middle and high school students from Whitman and Hanson. Ms.

Peruccio was accompanied by Sean Varano who is part of the evaluation team from Kelley Research Associates. Ms. Peruccio reported that the grants were awarded to High Point Treatment Center, but their staff will be working with Whitman-Hanson WILL around initiatives geared towards preventing youth use of alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs over the course of the next five years. Both of these grants provide the opportunity to survey students each year on their past 30 day use, perception of harm and perception of peer/parental disapproval. In past, BAPC has administered these surveys to Whitman-Hanson students in grades 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 with prior approval of the School Committee. This year, they wish to have the opportunity to survey grades 6 and 7 and are seeking the approval of the School Committee, once again. A copy of the Drug Free Communities Grant & SAMSHA Strategic Prevention Framework Grant Student Survey was provided to the Committee for review.

Ms. Peruccio indicated that the survey will address patterns in student behavior. She discussed how education programs are developed using the data in the needs assessment to provide training and awareness. In addition, BAPC will track current trends, student demographics, and detect the perception of harm from the survey results. The survey is anonymous and there is an opt-out option. The middle school survey will include alcohol, marijuana and vaping use, which is prevalent at the lower grades as well, as indicated by Mr. Ferro. Ms. Peruccio will be available to report the results back to the Committee in the fall.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to approve administering the Drug Free Communities Grant & SAMSHA Strategic Prevention Framework Grant Student Survey to Grades 6 and 7, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Business Services Consultant

Superintendent Szymaniak reported he posted for an Interim Business Manager as there is no business manager actively in place in Central Office. Currently, Mr. John Tuffy, retired and former Business Manager and Superintendent of the Silver Lake Regional School District has been brought in as a consultant in this area. Mr. Szymaniak would like to fill the position stating Mr. Tuffy's school finance experience and expertise is vital to the district. Mr. Szymaniak reported that Mr. Tuffy also has experience in towns pulling out of a regional district (Pembroke left Silver Lake Regional). Mr. Tuffy addressed the Committee commenting that de-regionalization is a long and somewhat difficult process. He will also be attending upcoming School Committee meetings.

Superintendent's Council

Superintendent Szymaniak reported on his Superintendent's Council meeting held on December 6 with high school principal, Dr. Jones and eight students from various clubs. The Council was comprised of two students from the National Honor Society, two students from the Key Club, two students from Student Council and two AP students. This is an opportunity for students to share ideas and thoughts with the Superintendent. The Superintendent also suggesting setting up a council meeting with the School Committee prior to an upcoming School Committee meeting so that students could share thoughts and ideas with the Committee as well. Chair Hayes recommended this for every other meeting. At this time, the Council will be high school level students. Dawn Byers indicated she learned about a Superintendent's Council at the MASC/MASS Joint Conference, attended the seminar and found it very interesting. The Committee recommended having a mix of different students participate at each council meeting to develop a more diverse group of student input.

Program of Studies Proposal

High school principal, Dr. Christopher Jones, presented information on recent grant opportunities. Business Teacher, Julie Giglia, applied and was awarded a grant for \$10,000 under the Next Generation Gold Standard. A requirement of the grant application is to include Financial Literacy in the Program of Studies offerings. To support the grant, the School Committee must vote to approve Financial Literacy as a graduation requirement. Dr. Jones indicated this new endeavor will not require any additional personnel as

Financial Literacy has been part of recent curriculum at the high school for a few years. Dr. Jones highlighted features of the curriculum stating checkbook packets will also be included and, even beyond the requirements, students talk and learn about purchasing homes, renting, credit scores, interest rates, debt, etc. The first year of the graduation requirement will be the Class of 2024. Dr. Jones also announced that business teacher, Julie Giglia, was selected by Fidelity Investments to attend the Jump\$tart National Financial Literacy conference in Washington, DC for integrated financial lessons that will be worked into the financial and investor education curriculum.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to approve adding Financial Literacy as a graduation requirement for high school graduates in 2024. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Jones briefly discussed other changes to the Program of Studies to be presented to the Committee in January, included Advanced Algebra with Financial Applications. He is finding a disparity for juniors and seniors in the same class and plans to create separate classes based on student year and prior level of completion in Algebra.

Dr. Jones discussed student vaping offenses and piloting diversion plans to help students through education and awareness strategies. He has been researching not just consequences as a deterrent, but also providing educational opportunities and mandated programs (through watching videos, meeting with the school resource officer, talking with counselors, on off school hours and possibly on Saturday mornings) to assist in the deterrence and reduction of offenses. Many of the School Committee members commented they support an initiative using educational strategies. Assistant Superintendent, George Ferro, reported that Massachusetts is developing curriculum on vaping education resources in grades 3-12. The Superintendent commented that vaping is so harmful and unhealthy; Governor Baker has temporarily banned the sale of all vaping products in Massachusetts. Whitman resident, Shawn Kain, spoke to vaping as being an addiction and asked the Committee to consider manifestation determinations for substance use disorder and to see if they can be treated like emotional disabilities. Dr. Jones will provide more details to the Committee on the programs and options being piloted, as the ground work unfolds.

Unfinished Business

Regional Agreement Amendment Committee and Assessment Method Report on December 4, 2019 meeting

Chair Hayes reported on the new Regional Agreement Amendment (RAA) Committee meeting held on December 4, 2019. The new committee was comprised of Chair Robert Hayes and Vice Chair Christopher Scriven representing the School Committee, Carl Kowalski and Randy LaMattina representing the Whitman Board of Selectmen and Jim Hickey and Laura Kemmett representing the Hanson Board of Selectmen. Superintendent Szymaniak was in attendance as non-voting member of the School District. Also, Whitman Town Administrator Frank Lynam and Hanson Town Administrator Merry Marini were in attendance. Mr. Hayes stated there was a lively discussion with regard to the assessment methodology issue. The group deliberated over the purpose of the new committee and whether amending the agreement was appropriate at this time. There were no votes taken except to adjourn the meeting.

Recommendation for new Regional Agreement Amendment Committee

Mr. Scriven reported that there was positive dialogue during the meeting. The towns discussed working with each other on funding the local assessment independently, and then, work with the School Committee to amend the Regional Agreement. Town officials at the meeting suggested the School Committee vote to determine the assessment methodology and then present the budget proposal to the towns.

It was the consensus of the new Regional Agreement Amendment Committee to disband until there is a more appropriate time to formalize a board and amend the Regional Agreement.

Mr. Szymaniak added that once the School Committee determines the method of assessment, then the towns can vote on the proposed budget. Mr. Szymaniak added that the group discussed their concerns that the statutory method will prevail if the budget is not voted approved by the towns by June 30. Mr. Ferro noted that after additional group discussion, it was the consensus of the new RAA Committee to agree to the statutory method for FY2021, then work to amend the agreement in the future. Mr. Scriven added that the towns specifically requested to disband the new RAA Committee so that they can work out funding the local assessment independently.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to disband the new regional agreement amendment committee until such time as the towns are ready to work on all amending all aspects of the regional agreement with the School Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

Determine assessment methodology for FY2021 budget

It was noted that the School Committee has been discussing the assessment methodology at each School Committee meeting held this year. Mr. Szymaniak, again, explained the assessment methodologies, use of minimum local contribution in statutory and alternate method and that a two-thirds majority vote is required to approve a budget. He noted both towns must vote to approve the budget in a two town regional school district in order to pass. Mr. Szymaniak re-iterated the consequences if the budget is not voted approved by both towns by June 30. Mr. Szymaniak reported the state releases their funding and local minimum contribution figures at the end of January. Committee members Dawn Byers and Steve Bois, spoke to ensuring budgetary needs for all students are fulfilled. The state dictates the minimum local contribution for each town. Mr. Howard commented that the Committee can use either methodology, and added regardless of the methodology, it does not satisfy the budget issues. Chair Hayes remarked on the lack of state funding through unfunded and underfunded mandates. Mr. Cullity asked to move to the vote on the assessment method.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to utilize the statutory methodology for the local assessment for the FY2021 school district budget. The motion passed by majority vote 6-4-0. Mr. Hayes, Mr. Howard, Mr. Jones and Mr. O'Brien opposed.

Budget Proposal Projections FY 2021

Superintendent Szymaniak reported he has compiled a large number of reports for both towns as requested, with regard to budget. The FY2021 School Budget Proposal Presentation will take place in February. The state figures are released at the end of January. Mr. Szymaniak reported he is meeting with the Whitman Finance Committee on January 7, 2020 for a budget discussion.

The Superintendent discussed comments throughout the towns with regard to conducting an audit of the school budget. He has been informed that people are contacting the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) directly about audits. Mr. Szymaniak commented that he and the administration team are committed to doing what is best for students and preparing at he best budget. He added he was frankly offended that some people are questioning the integrity of the Administration and School Committee and to indicate the administration is not fiscally responsible is offensive. This is even after cutting the proposed budget last year by \$1 million. It seems senseless for the towns to spend \$40,000 to conduct an audit of the school budget, while the school district is reducing staffing of teachers, paraprofessionals and technology positions. Whitman-Hanson is 17th from the bottom state-wide in per pupil expenditures and spends only \$12,700 per student, which is very low compared to other districts.

FY2021 Budget Overview

The Superintendent prefaced the budget overview as a reflection of requests made by the School Committee, parents and the community for a budget suited to satisfy all of the educational in the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District has been prepared.

The Superintendent presented an overview of the FY2021 Budget prepared in layers as “Required” items, “Restored” items and “Recommended” items.

The current FY2020 budget is \$52,425,738. If, fulfilling all layers of the overview with required, restored and recommended budget items, the total is \$57,492,938 which represents an overall increase of 9.66%. The draft budget represents everything the Committee and community has talked about over the last few years, and would move students forward with an equitable education.

Mr. Szymaniak presented the Required items for the FY2021 Budget representing a \$2,291,200 increase. The Superintendent reported on each line item. He noted that English Language Learner (ELL) students population has increased to 79, consisting of thirteen different language speaking students. Once enrollment is at 100, the District must establish its own ELL program.

REQUIRED:

Increase Salary Lines (2.58% average all employees)	\$1,352,200
PCEA Pension	\$107,000
Health Insurance (4%)	\$200,000
First Student Transportation Contract	\$42,000
SJ Custodial Services	\$29,000
Gas/Electric	\$83,000
Water	\$30,000
Trash	\$8,000
Special Education Transportation	\$275,000
Special Education Tuition	\$110,000
Facilities – (specialization certs)	\$25,000
ELL - (0.50 FTE) Tutor; Supplies, and Translation	\$30,000
Required Total:	\$2,291,200

The Superintendent presented an overview of Restored items for recent budget reductions in staff and math and ELA curriculum needs, representing totally \$301,000.

RESTORED:

Staff (1.0) Technology Specialist	\$80,000
Staff (1.0) Operations Desk Facilitator	\$70,000

ELA Curriculum Program	\$145,000
iReady Middle School math diagnostic	\$6,000
Restore Total:	\$301,000

Mr. Szymaniak presented the Recommended list for restored staff (19 positions were cut just last year), program eliminations (foreign language in middle schools), equipment and other initiatives like adjusting school start times and tuition-free full day kindergarten that are significant in the initiative to move the district forward.

RECOMMENDED:

Robotics and Coding Beginning (K-8)	\$25,000
BRYT Program (2.0 FTE) paras, (2.0 FTE) LICSW middle schools	\$190,000
Spec Ed PD and Supplies	\$40,000
Full Day Kindergarten	\$800,000
Adjusting Start Times	\$440,000
Staffing (10.0 FTE) Foreign Language/Reading Spec.	\$700,000
Staffing (4.0) Teachers – reduce class size	\$280,000
Recommended Total:	\$2,475,000

Mr. Szymaniak reported the Committee voted last year to transfer \$500,000 out of the Excess and Deficiency account to the LEA budget, leaving only \$400,000 for emergencies. The Superintendent affirmed doing the best he can for students and considered all requests made by the Committee, parents and the community. He stated he was discouraged that he was told to tighten his belt during the new Regional Agreement Amendment Committee meeting on December 4 and took the comment personally. He talked about funding the local assessment being the responsibility of the town. He stated he will validate the school budget and continue to support the students of Whitman and Hanson. Although costs continually increase, it is evident that the District “band-aids” many issues in order to save money. Committee members supported the administration and the work done to create a responsible budget.

There was continued discussion about the budget overview and potential increases. Administration stated they would be negligent if the wishes of the community and School Committee were not listed in the budget overview. It was noted that no staff cuts in town departments in recent years, only in the school district. Several Committee members voiced their support of education and responsibilities as elected school officials.

Mr. Szymaniak stated he brought forth the budget overview in this format to be as transparent as possible, and to illustrate all budgetary needs. He implied the overview presented is not the operating budget proposal; it is an overview of a budget to specify what we need to educate the children in our schools. Mr. Small suggested earmarking and prioritizing the ‘recommended’ items for the budget presentation in

February. The Superintendent reported that town committees in both Whitman and Hanson have requested an unusual amount of budget reporting, projections and budget documentation, which he has prepared and forwarded.

Whitman resident, Shawn Kain, stated the budget projection was exorbitant and the divide on the vote for the assessment methodology illustrates the towns' separation. Conversely, Whitman Finance Committee member Kathleen Ottina, stated this school committee meeting was the best meeting she's listened to since the Whitman override failed a few years ago and appreciated the exchange of information and listening to people advocating for children.

New Business

Field Trip Requests

Student Council State Conference

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to waive the nurse requirement and approve the overnight High School Student Council field trip to State Conferences to be held at the Hyannis Conference Center in Hyannis March 3-6, 2020, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Request from Town of Hanson –No school on State Election dates in 2020-21 SY

Chair Hayes reported the town of Hanson has requested the Committee consider no school days on the upcoming state elections dates of 9/1/2020 and 11/3/2020. The Committee will take this into consideration when building the new 2020-21 school year academic calendar.

Subcommittee Reports

Warrant Subcommittee

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mrs. Taylor seconded; voted to approve the Warrant Subcommittee minutes of November 21, 2019, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Facilities Subcommittee

Superintendent Szymaniak announced that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Board of Directors has voted to invite the Statement of Interest (SOI) for the Whitman Middle School in the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District into the MSBA's Eligibility Period. The MSBA's invitation is specific to the deficiencies as identified by the District in the SOI for the Whitman Middle School and includes the study of potential grade reconfiguration for the total Town of Whitman student enrollment of grades 5-8 only.

Mr. Szymaniak continued reading aloud the letter received from MSBA Executive Director, John McCarthy.

“Invitation into the Eligibility Period is not an invitation to Feasibility Study. Moving forward in the MSBA's process required collaboration with the MSBA and an invitation to Feasibility Study will require further vote of the MSBA Board of Directors. Communities that “get ahead” of the MSBA without the MSBA approval will not be eligible for grant funding. Additionally, the Districts vote by the Board of Directors approving potential grants will be no sooner than July 1, 2022. To qualify for any funding from MSBA, local communities must follow the MSBA's statute and regulations, which require MSBA partnership and approval at each step of the process.

The District's Eligibility Period will commence on June 1, 2020 and conclude on February 26, 2021.

During this time, the District must complete the preliminary requirements in accordance with the schedule on page three of this letter. The first item that requires completion by the District is the Initial Compliance

Certification, which will be sent to the District electronically two weeks prior to its commencement date, on May 18, 2020.

The ability of the District to complete the preliminary requirements within the 270 days does not guarantee an invitation into the MSBA Capital Pipeline. Further, if the District cannot complete the preliminary requirements within the 270-day Eligibility Period, the MSBA will require the District to withdraw its SOI, and the District will have to re-file an SOI during the next open SOI filing period and/or when the District has the required financial and community support.”

Mr. Szymaniak reported that the SOI submission was one out of eleven submissions voted invited by MSBA, out of a total of 61 applications. During the senior study held last month at Whitman Middle School with MSBA, they commended the work of the Facilities Department to maintain the school facility in its current state.

Mr. Szymaniak was pleased to share this news with the community. Mr. Szymaniak stated that other requirements for the eligibility period remain necessary and noted that eligibility is not feasibility. The requirements include notification to the Town of Whitman Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee. Mr. Szymaniak reported that Dr. Carl Kowalski, Whitman Board of Selectmen Chairperson, also received a copy of the MSBA notification letter of invitation. Mr. Ferro added that the Whitman Board of Selectmen voted 4-0 in April 2019 to move forward with the Statement of Interest to MSBA. Chair Hayes indicated the entire process takes 5-7 years from the eligibility period to fruition of a completed building project.

Mr. Small reported on the Facilities Subcommittee meeting held prior to the School Committee meeting that evening. The District has received half of the funding for the Safer Schools Grant. The project is to be completed by December 31 and follow up paperwork must be submitted by January 15, 2020 for audit procedures and to receive the balance of the funds. Also, at the meeting, there was a brief discussion regarding the Duval School roof. The subcommittee anticipates submitting a Statement of Interest for an Accelerated Program through MSBA next year, once the claw back period ends on the last roof project. It was noted that the EIFS (exterior insulation and finish system) and flashing issues need repair as wind driven rain continues to cause leaks in the roof.

Legislative Update

Mr. Small reported state house leaders have not been able to agree on the FY2019 supplemental bill items to appropriate \$2.2 million toward regional transportation. He reported that since there has been no action, the Comptroller of MA had threatened to take the money back and place it in the rainy day fund. The Student Opportunity Act was signed into law last month.

Pilgrim Area Collaborative

Mr. Bois reported the Pilgrim Area Collaborative offices are officially moving to Plymouth and the next meeting will be held in February 2020.

Chair Hayes announced upcoming Important Dates

- Wednesday, December 11, 2019 – Facilities Subcommittee meeting – 6:00 PM – High School Library
- Wednesday, December 11, 2019 – School Committee meeting – 7:00 PM – High School Library
- December 23, 2019 – January 1, 2020 - No School - Holiday Recess
- January 2, 2020 – All students PK-12 Return
- January 15, 2020 – School Committee meeting – 7:00 PM – High School Library

Mr. Small added the Whitman Police are hosting their “Stuff a Cruiser” on Sunday, December 15, 2019 at 9:00 a.m.

Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Signature of School Committee Secretary

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda for December 11, 2019
- Meeting Minutes of November 5, and 13, 2019
- SAMSHA Sample Student Survey
- High School Field Trip Requests:
 - Student Council Annual State Conference, overnight , Hyannis, MA March 3-6, 2020
- Warrant Subcommittee meeting minutes of 11/21/2019
- Town of Hanson request to consider for no school on State Elections (9/1/2020 and 11/3/2020)
- FY2021 Budget Overview