

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Minutes of January 15, 2020  
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School  
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 9:35 p.m.

Members present: Robert Hayes, Christopher Scriven, Frederick Small, Robert O'Brien, Jr., Daniel Cullity, Christopher Howard, Michael Jones, Steve Bois (arrived at 7:08 p.m.) and Dawn Byers

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.

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

**Approval of School Committee Meeting Minutes**

December 11, 2019

**VOTE: Mr. Scriven motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted to approve the meeting minutes of December 11, 2019 as presented. The motioned passed unanimously.**

**Student Advisory Report**

Superintendent Szymaniak reported that Student Council Advisory Representative, Tori Long is unable to attend School Committee meetings due to schedule conflicts. Caitlin Veneto, Vice President of Student Council will report in her place. Student Council Advisory Representative, Ms. Caitlin Veneto, reported on current student events. On January 18 at 2:00 p.m., Whitman-Hanson Regional High School is hosting the Tri-County Choral Music Festival. Six high schools from Southeastern MA will be performing and forty Whitman-Hanson students will be participating. The combined Honor Society Inductions will be held on January 23 in the Dr. John F. McEwan Performing Arts Center.

**Superintendent's Report**

The Superintendent reported on his Superintendent's Council group meeting. Attendees included grade 12 senior students Caitlin Veneto, Chloe Wilson, Joran Pelissier, Marissa Connell and Anika Floeck who were also present at the School Committee meeting. Mr. Szymaniak reported he will continue to meet with the core group of students and bring other students in to ensure an eclectic student voice is heard. The students will bring their concerns and ideas to the Superintendent and then have an opportunity to discuss with the School Committee. Chair Hayes commented he looks forward to the opportunity to hear from students directly and opened up the first topic of earlier school start times. Three of the five students commented on their support for the current start times as more beneficial for them. The students spoke in favor of the earlier time, allowing them to get up early, out of school early to get to their job, participate in sports or use the time for additional studying. They added they are going to bed earlier than they would with later school

start and end times. The students discussed a number of suggested changes to the current mentor program. They included extending the program through the full school year, learning more about the high school club and extra-curricular offerings and how to apply for college from their graduating peers. In addition, it was suggested to begin the mentor programs before the start of school in August. The students also discussed the upcoming presidential election year and what is being done at the high school through the History Honor Society to assist with voter information and registration. The students shared their interests and club sports and activities with the Committee.

#### *North River Collaborative Report*

The Superintendent presented the North River Collaborative 2019 Annual Report for approval.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to accept the 2019 North River Collaborative Annual Report, as presented. The motion passed 8-0-1. Mr. Jones left the meeting for a short time and was not present to vote.**

#### *Special Education Updates*

The Director of Student Services, Mrs. Lauren Mathisen, provided a detailed report on Special Education at Whitman-Hanson. The Coordinated Program Review (CPR) with DESE in the areas of special education, civil rights and English Learner Education was completed. The school district was commended for documentation, processes and overall organization and compliance. The English Language Learner's handbook was updated as a result of the report. DESE also conducted an audit of the 2019 Circuit Breaker claim. The auditors indicated the district continues to have precise and thorough record keeping and submitted accurate claims. DESE rated Whitman-Hanson in the top 5% of districts in the state that they have audited. On January 30, 2020, the district conducted an independent transportation audit. Information has been submitted for review and the Massachusetts Association of Pupil Transportation will visit Whitman-Hanson for an onsite review. The goal for the audit is to ensure our vendors and transportation services are being used to its greatest efficiency.

Whitman Hanson Regional School District will move forward as a member of the South Shore Educational Collaborative effective July 1, 2020 once the DESE Commission approves the district as a voting member. Mrs. Mathisen commented on the accomplishments and support of the Special Education Advisory Council (SEPAC) lead by Tina Stidstone. The group has successfully hosted presentations by district experts, shared information regarding the district's ExSEL curriculum and hosted presentations on anxiety. This spring Whitman-Hanson behavior specialists, occupational and speech and language therapists will be attending a meeting. SEPAC typically meets every second Tuesday of the month in the high school library at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Mathisen updated the Committee on the current and projected special education budget. Transportation continues to be a heavy financial burden at about \$1.1 million this year. Through the Student Opportunity Act that was signed into law in November, there is a proposal for reimbursement of 25% of eligible costs but is subject to appropriation. Mrs. Mathisen announced goals for district programming to ensure smooth transitions for students as they progress through their education. There need for an autism program at the high school, BRYT middle school programs and a language based program at the elementary level. As the district develops programs to keep student in district, out-of-district costs savings could be realized. In additions, this may be an opportunity to tuition in non-resident students.

Superintendent Szymaniak confirmed the special education transportation line is over budget by just under \$300,000. The Director of Student Services is balancing costs and tuitions with the key piece to bring students back in district where possible. Mr. Szymaniak stated at this time, he does not believe a budget freeze is necessary. The high cost of special education transportation and tuitions were discussed. Mrs. Mathisen explained that North River Collaborative transports out of district students to schools that are growing and can provide services that Whitman-Hanson cannot. Mr. Szymaniak added this is one reason the special education transportation audit was conducted. Mr. Szymaniak confirmed transportation can cost

between \$150 and \$400 per day, depending on the destination. Mrs. Mathisen discussed the need for autism related services and BRYT programs (Bridge for Resilient Youth and Transition) district-wide to keep students in district.

### *WHRSD Strategic Plan 2020-2023*

Superintendent Szymaniak reported the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) requires School Committees to be active in the plan and approve its district Strategic Plan by April 1. Mr. Szymaniak reported a process is in place with the leadership team to build a three-year district plans that the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) requires. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is developing a strategic plan template and guidance for districts. Mr. Ferro added the new strategic plan will be a living document for the next three years. He has met with an eclectic group of staff and developed a tool for input from all stakeholders. The final updated plan will be presented to School Committee in March for a vote. The plan is then submitted to the DESE Commissioner for final approval. The new three-year plan will focus primarily on the evidence-based programs the district elects to implement and how new funding will be spent to reduce disparities in performance among student subgroups; English language learners and other diverse groups. Although some districts are to receive funding to spend on dedicated items Whitman-Hanson may receive little to none. If Whitman-Hanson does not receive funding, Mr. Ferro stated professional development funds will be used for this purpose.

Mr. Szymaniak confirmed the Annual School Budget Public Hearing will be held on Wednesday, February 5 in the high school library at 7:00 p.m. There was some consideration to re-schedule due to the DESE workshop on SOA on February 3 and 4; however, the public hearing will remain scheduled for February 5 as the only agenda item. The next meeting after the public hearing will be on February 26. Mr. Szymaniak discussed the format of the public hearing presentation providing a snapshot of the projected FY2021 Budget.

### **Unfinished Business**

#### *Budget Discussion*

Mr. John Tuffy, Interim Business Manager, presented the YTD expenditures and revenue reports. He reported the district has received 49% of its budge revenue and there is no concern on any particular line item. He added districts have not received their transportation reimbursement yet and the state may be in the process of distributing the funding. In reviewing expenses, Mr. Tuffy reported 63.8% of the budget is spent or encumbered. Last year at this time, 59.8% was encumbered. Mr. Tuffy anticipates presenting line item transfers at the February meeting.

Mr. Szymaniak briefed the Committee on his meeting with the Whitman Finance Committee on January 7. The same preliminary budget projections provided to School Committee at the December meeting were presented. He reported positive dialogue at the meeting. The Finance Committee requested additional student enrollment data. He looks forward to meeting with the Hanson Finance Committee in the near future.

Whitman resident, Shawn Kain, commented on the assessment methodology and concerns with Hanson's ability to fund its portion. He suggested a compromise be established to avoid state budget takeover if a budget is not passed at town meeting. Mr. Howard and Mr. O'Brien agreed the Committee should be aware of the impact the statutory method has on the town of Hanson and that all Hanson School Committee members vote against the statutory method. There was a brief discussion of the consequences of the state taking fiscal control when a district does not have an approved budget by June 30. Mr. Szymaniak indicated seven votes out of ten are necessary to pass the school budget by the Committee.

**New Business**

*Athletic User Fees/Revolving Accounts/Scoreboard*

Athletic Director, Bob Rodgers, presented information on how the Athletic Program at Whitman-Hanson is funded through the School budget, Athletic revolving account and student activities. He reported cuts have also been made to this program as well over the years. Twenty years ago, Whitman-Hanson Regional School District did not have user fees. The District funded transportation, equipment needs, game officials, etc. The district funds athletic salaries, some supplies and equipment maintenance at around \$400,000. Mr. Rodgers reported that the program continues to run efficiently under its revolving account via user fees and gate receipts at over \$250,000. Fundraisers are another, very effective resource that provides uniforms, practice gear, additional equipment, scrimmages, team trips, banquets/awards, leadership and wellness programs, coaching education/programs.

***Whitman Hanson Athletics***

**What is funded in the school budget?**

Athletic Salaries:	\$393,000
Supplies:	\$10,214
Equipment Maintenance:	\$8,000

**What is funded from User Fees/Gate Receipts (Athletic Revolving Account)?**

All transportation:	\$50,000-65,000
All game officials:	\$50,000
Athletic Trainer:	\$31,000
Athletic Training Supplies:	\$4,500
MIAA Dues and fees:	\$4,500
Patriot League Dues and Fees:	\$9,500
NIAAA Fees and dues:	\$750
Entry Fees and dues for tournaments and invitationals:	\$5,000
Supplies/equipment:	\$15,000-\$20,000
Boys Ice Hockey Ice/Expenses:	\$20,000 (excludes coaching salaries)
Girls Ice Hockey/Expenses:	\$14,500 (Silver Lake pays the other half)

Mr. Rodgers reported Whitman-Hanson is losing its partnership with Middleboro and the 2020-2021 Swim Team will need to raise approximately \$14,000 to run the program without the other districts, and will not be looking to Whitman-Hanson to assume this cost.

Mrs. Byers noted that out of a \$52 million budget, the district only funds \$410,000 towards the athletics program. The remainder is funded through revolving and student activities accounts.

Mr. Rodgers also explained how student athletes who cannot afford the user fees are allowed to be able to work off the fees by helping in various areas of athletics. Mr. Rodgers stated he is not in favor of raising user fees at this time. There was a brief discussion on transportation options. Mr. Rodgers reported 15 passenger van rentals through Verc are no longer available. Mrs. Byers suggested looking into grant opportunities through Volkswagen for electric busses.

Mr. Rodgers reported he anticipates the remaining \$15,000 left on the scoreboard being paid in full. Suggestions for additional advertising on the board were discussed.

*High School Program of Studies Proposal*

High School Principal, Dr. Christopher Jones presented changes to the high school Program of Studies for the 2020-21 school year. Dr. Jones stated courses of less interest would be removed for courses of more interest. Dr. Jones also explained how world language courses will be taught with less focus on grammar and more on conversation use.

The following requested changes with explanations were presented:

- 1) Course #1500 ANALYZING FILM has been updated to include students in Grades 10.
- 2) Course #1501 ANALYZING FLIM II has been added.
- 3) Removed Course #1540 GOTHIC AND HORROR LITERATURE.
- 4) Course #2290 PAINTING MODERN ART will run during 2020-2021 (course runs every other year).
- 5) Course #2310 ART WORKSHOP will run during 2021-2022 (course runs every other year).
- 6) Add Course #2440 ART OF MINDFULLNESS (course runs every other year).
- 7) Foreign Languages has been renamed to World Languages. This has been updated throughout World Languages section.
- 8) Course #3200 FRENCH IV Honors has been updated.

**Remove:** This course will accommodate students from both French III A and French III H. Its purpose is to introduce advanced grammatical forms and more advanced and idiomatic vocabulary. Oral work is supplemented with written materials to reinforce newly-acquired vocabulary and grammar. In addition to the text(s), students will use authentic audiovisual materials to study the French contribution to history, literature and the arts. This course addresses Whitman-Hanson Student Learning Expectations 1, 2 & 5.

**Update:** This course will accommodate students from both French III A and French III H. This course endeavors to develop fluency and flexibility in both written and spoken French. Listening skills continue to develop in the language through a variety of audio materials. Self-expression in speaking is emphasized through class discussions and responses to literary selections. Writing skills are further developed through the writing of journals, reflections, reports and critical essays based on course readings. This course addresses Whitman-Hanson Student Learning Expectations 1, 2 & 5. \*The honors course is differentiated from the academic by the amount and difficulty of reading, writing, and oral assignments. Honors students will be expected to master material at a faster pace.

- 9) Course #3610 SPANISH IV Academic has been updated.

**Remove:** This course is designed for students who have demonstrated a keen interest in the Spanish language. Students continue to develop the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Emphasis is placed on oral communication, writing, and culture. Students are exposed to more advanced grammatical structures and to authentic literature, music, and films from the Spanish-speaking world. This course addresses Whitman-Hanson Student Learning Expectations 1, 2 & 5.

**Update:** This course endeavors to develop fluency and flexibility in both written and spoken Spanish. Listening skills continue to develop in the language through a variety of audio materials. Self-expression in speaking is emphasized through class discussions and responses to literary selections. Writing skills are further developed through the writing of journals, reflections, reports and critical essays based on course readings. This course addresses Whitman-Hanson Student Learning Expectations 1, 2 & 5. *Prerequisite: Successful completion of Spanish III Academic or teacher recommendation.*

- 10) Course #3450 SPANISH IV Honors has been updated.

**Remove:** This course will accommodate students from both Spanish III A and Spanish III H and will focus on more advanced Spanish structures. In addition, students will read authentic Spanish/Hispanic literature, study Spanish/Hispanic culture by means of internet activities and other audiovisual media and improve their writing skills in the target language. This course

addresses Whitman-Hanson Student Learning Expectations 1, 2 & 5.

Update: This course endeavors to develop fluency and flexibility in both written and spoken Spanish. Listening skills continue to develop in the language through a variety of audio materials. Self-expression in speaking is emphasized through class discussions and responses to literary selections. Writing skills are further developed through the writing of journals, reflections, reports and critical essays based on course readings. This course addresses Whitman-Hanson Student Learning Expectations 1, 2 & 5. \*The honors course is differentiated from the academic by the amount and difficulty of reading, writing, and oral assignments. Honors students will be expected to master material at a faster pace. *Prerequisite: It is strongly recommended that students earn a grade of B+ in Spanish III Honors or World Languages Curriculum Chair recommendation.*

- 11) Course #4400 PRE-CALCULUS Honors has been changed to Course #4350 PRE-CALCULUS Academic.
- 12) Course #4601 STATISTICS Honors has been changed to Course #4600 STATISTICS Academic
- 13) Course #4573 ADVANCED ALGEBRA WITH FINANCIAL APPLICATIONS has been changed to a Grade 11 course.
- 14) Added Course #4574 APPLICATIONS OF ADVANCED ALGEBRA
- 15) Removed Course #4572 FOUNDATIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL MATH
- 16) Course #5600 FINANCIAL LITERACY has been updated.  
Update: Financial Literacy is a graduation requirement and should be used to fulfill 2.0 or a student's technology requirements.
- 17) Course #5810 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING & LEADERSHIP has been renamed to INTERSHIP and will also include students in Grade 11.
- 18) Removed Course #6870 MODERN CHINA: THE FALL AND RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM.
- 19) Course #6750 THE VIETNAM CONFLICT: A CRISIS IN CONSCIENCE will run during 2021-2022 (course runs every other year).
- 20) Course #6800 WORLD WAR I: IMPACT ON THE CENTURY will run during 2021-2022 (course runs every other year).

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to approve the changes to the 2020-21 SY High School Program of Studies, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### *Academic School Calendar 2020-21*

##### *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 developing the new 2020-21 school year academic calendar as well as the late Labor Day date of September 7. The Superintendent shared a preliminary calendar proposal with teachers returning on August 24 and students on August 28. No school for students on September 1; however, teachers may be reporting. Other dates discussed as no school in session were September 4 and November 3. Discussions are ongoing and the Superintendent is seeking feedback.

#### *Donation I*

Chair Hayes announced North Easton Savings Bank donated \$14,000 to the Conley elementary School to purchase Chrome Books. Chair Hayes read aloud the thank you letter written by Principal Karen Downey.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; vote to accept the \$14,000 donation from North Eaton Savings Bank in North Easton, to be used to purchase for Chrome Books for the Conley Elementary School. The motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Hayes announced Mr. Shane Schraut of Boy Scout Troop 22 in Whitman, will be earning his Eagle Scout award on January 19, 2020. Chair Hayes read aloud a letter of commendation on behalf of the School Committee. Mr. Schraut created a meditation garden at the St. John's Episcopal Church in Holbrook.

#### *Field Trip Requests*

DECA State Conference, overnight at Boston Copley Marriott February 27-29, 2020.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to waive the nurse requirement and approve the overnight DECA State Conference field trip at Boston Copley Marriott February 27-29, 2020, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Szymaniak reported the high school field trip to Sydney, Australia is coming up during the February winter recess break. High School principal, Dr. Christopher Jones advised the current conditions in Australia are being carefully monitored. The area of the wild fires is a distance away from Sydney, however air quality and social emotional impact is under review. There is an informational tour meeting scheduled for January 16 for parent and students.

#### *Donations II*

##### *Indian Head Elementary School PTO Donation*

Chair Hayes announced the Hanson PTO donated a sum of money to the Indian Head School to cover the costs 10 air conditioning units and 30 Chrome Books. Chair Hayes read aloud the letter of thanks written by interim principal, Garry Pelletier.

"...Through the active involvement of families and fundraising activities this year, our PTO has raised funds to support not only many cultural events for our students, but also some very important items that will help to enhance the environment of our school and student learning.

At our last meeting, PTO generously approved to gift the Indian Head School with the following items:

10 Air Conditioning units to be installed in classrooms at the cost of \$9,326.50

30 Chromebooks at the cost of \$7,080.00

On behalf of the Indian Head School, we would like to accept these gifts and acknowledge the generosity of the PTO and all the support that they give our school community. Through the leadership of Melissa Valachovic and Kate DeLue and all the board members, Indian Head School continues to be a successful school community!"

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to accept the donation of \$9,326.50 for ten air conditioning units and \$7,080 for thirty Chrome Books for the Indian Head Elementary School. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### Subcommittee Reports

##### *Warrant Subcommittee*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to approve the Warrant Subcommittee minutes of December 18, 2019, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to approve the Warrant Subcommittee minutes of January 2, 2020, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

##### *Facilities Subcommittee*

Mr. Szymaniak reported the Facilities Subcommittee met prior to the School Committee on January 15, 2020. He reported that Mr. Sandland has been advised by the Massachusetts School Building Authority

(MSBA) that the claw back time for projects has changed from 20 years to 27 years. This has an immediate impact on the anticipated Duval School roof repair project. Previously, a Statement of Interest (SOI) submitted in 2015-16 school year did not satisfy the claw back and required a twenty year lapse in time prior to MSBA supporting another roof project for Duval School. There is ongoing discussion and interest of the situation with State Representative Alyson Sullivan, to determine if there could be an exception to the claw back date. The town of Whitman has set aside \$500,000 to fund the roof repair based on an SOI. It was stated the ruling to increase the number of years for claw back due to the number of requests for projects being received by MSBA.

#### *Legislative Update*

Mr. Small commented that the Student Opportunity Act transportation reimbursement and other funding is all subject to appropriation per the document language.

#### *Pilgrim Area Collaborative*

There was nothing new to report.

#### *Chair Hayes announced upcoming Important Dates*

- Wednesday, January 15, 2020 – School Committee meeting – 7:00 PM – High School Library
- Monday, January 20, 2020 – No School – Martin Luther King Day Observed – Central Offices Closed
- Friday, January 24, 2020 – PK-12 Early Release – Grading Day
- Sunday, January 26, 2020 – Hanson PTO Polar Plunge - Camp Kiwanee 8:30am-11:00am

#### **Executive Session**

Chair Hayes announced the Committee will enter 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.

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded: voted to go into Executive Session at 8:57 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.**

#### **Roll Call**

**Mr. Howard - Yes**

**Mr. Jones – Yes**

**Mr. Cullity – Yes**

**Mr. Small – Yes**

**Mr. Bois - Yes**

**Mr. Hayes - Yes**

**Mr. Scriven - Yes**

**Mrs. Byers - Yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded: voted to come out of Executive Session at 9:35 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. Byers - Yes**



**The motion passed unanimously.**

*Meeting Adjournment*

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded: voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

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*Signature of School Committee Secretary*

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda for January 15, 2020
- Meeting Minutes of December 11, 2019
- North River Collaborative Annual Report
- 2020-21 High School Program of Studies
- Budget Overview Draft
- High School Field Trip Requests:
- DECA State Conference, overnight at Boston Copley Marriott from 2/27-2/29/2020.
- Indian Head School request to accept PTO donation
- Warrant Subcommittee meeting minutes of 12/18/2019 and 01/02/2020
- YTD Budget Expenditures and Revenue
- 2020-21 Program of Studies (electronic) and memo outlining changes
- Conley School Donation from North Easton Savings Bank
- Commendation letter to Eagle Scout recipient Shane Schraut
- Athletics budget overview - from Athletic Director