

WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of February 5, 2020

Public Hearing on School Budget FY2021 Meeting

Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School

600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 8:13 p.m.

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

Members absent: Alexandria Taylor

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.

Public Hearing on the FY2021 School District Budget

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to open the Public Hearing meeting on the FY2021 School District Budget.

Robert Hayes – Yes

Fred Small – Yes

Robert O'Brien, Jr. – Yes

Michael Jones – Yes

Daniel Cullity – Yes

Christopher Howard – Yes

Christopher Scriven – Yes

Steve Bois – Yes

Dawn Byers – Yes

The motion carried unanimously.

FY 2021 Budget Overview /Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent thanked everyone involved in budget process, which actually started in August 2019 when planning and budgeting for the next budget cycle begins. There has been much conversation about the school budget and method of assessment. Many people worked publicly and behind the scenes to put this presentation together using the statutory method. The Superintendent understands that all stake holders, including town officials, have already had dialog how to make this budget work. The Superintendent added he still holds true to the student of Whitman and Hanson.

Mr. Szymaniak presented two handouts; the FY2021 Budget Overview and the Local Assessment Worksheet. In addition, Mr. John Tuffy, part-time Interim Business Manager, is preparing a line item budget history which will be available at the next meeting. The Superintendent reported the Governor's Budget (House I) was released two weeks ago on January 24 and administration has prepared the budget overview using the Governor's Budget figures.

Mr. Szymaniak presented the FY2021 budget overview in two sections; Required and Recommended Overviews. The Required Overview illustrates the budget increase equivalent to a level service budget. The Recommended Overview illustrates items the school committee has discussed as fulfilling the educational and operational needs as well as budget cuts from last year.

Mr. Szymaniak reported the FY2021 Required Budget Overview for level service is a 4.9% increase over the current FY2020 budget or increase of \$2,592,200. Mr. Szymaniak reported the FY2021 Recommended Budget Overview for level service is a 4.72% increase over the current FY2020 budget or increase of \$2,475,000. The Superintendent will provide the anticipated local assessments to the towns using statutory method for both budget overviews later in the meeting. These budget overviews represent a total 9.66% budget increase or \$5,067,000.

In discussing items under the Required Budget Overview, the Superintendent reported that the school district is responsible to pay utility bills and other maintenance expenses, unlike other town departments. The below increases would maintain current service levels.

<u>Required:</u>	Increase Salary Lines (2.58% average all employees)	\$1,352,200
	PCEA Pension	\$107,000
	Health Insurance (4%)	\$200,000
	Regular Day Transportation	\$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
	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
	<i>Required Total:</i>	<i>\$2,592,200</i>

Mr. Szymaniak reported the special education line is currently over budget. The Superintendent is also working on ensuring the Facilities Department staff attains the necessary certifications to complete repair work on site rather than outsourcing mechanical and other facility/infrastructure repairs. In addition, the English Language Learner (ELL) student population continues to grow and the district is mandated to provide services. Other factors under the Required budget overview is ELA curriculum and the middle school iReady math diagnostic. These additional required services total \$300,000 in the entire \$2,595,300 required budget overview.

Mr. Szymaniak then reviewed the Recommended Budget Overview which is a compilation of input from School Committee, students, community, staff and leadership.

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 explained the recommendations for a robotics program, a BRYT room the middle school level and special education professional development and supply needs. In addition, tuition-free full day kindergarten has been in the School Committee sights for many, many years, but never funded. Other items include adjusting the school start times for the high schools to a later time, restoring foreign language at the middle schools (a budget reduction last year) and reducing class size by restoring four elementary teacher positions (four teachers laid off for budget reduction last year).

Mr. Szymaniak provided a summary of the budget increase under the Recommended budget as follows:

FY-2020	
Current Budget	\$ 52,425,738
FY-2021	
<u>Preliminary Budget</u>	<u>\$ 57,492,938</u>
Increase: 9.66%	\$ 5,067,200

The Superintendent reviewed snapshots of district expenses and enrollment. The Superintendent cautioned the state may reduce local funding as a result of decreasing student enrollment and resident students leaving Whitman-Hanson Regional School District to enroll in charter schools, school choice options and free full day kindergarten elsewhere.

The Superintendent discussed the reductions made by the District reviewed the number of staff reductions in last year’s budget and initial \$292,000 in budget reductions.

Staff Reductions in FY 2020

Teachers	9.2
Paraprofessionals	6
Sp. Ed. (ODC)	1
Duty Aides	3
Central Office	1
Technology Director	1
<u>Facilities/Building Use</u>	<u>1</u>
	22.2
<u>Added 3 elem. counselors</u>	<u>-3</u>

FY2020 Net of 19.2 FTE’s in staff reductions

In addition, the School Committee voted to transfer \$561,237 from the Excess and Deficiency (E&D) Account to the Operating budget to reduce last year’s budget deficit, a total of nearly \$1 million dollars.

Mr. Szymaniak added that another funding source the district is dependent on is grants, which is 2.37% of the projected budget revenue sources. Outstanding matters in this area include many unknowns when projecting budgets. These include, but are not limited to, the number of retirees and changes to employee individual and family medical insurance programs, transportation and utilities costs, and Plymouth County Retirement costs. In addition special education needs and transportation continues to be an expense in continual motion both up and down. Mr. Szymaniak reported a self-imposed audit was recently conducted on special education transportation and found to be efficient. Other considerations to the budget include declining enrollment and building maintenance needs.

In reviewing October 1 Enrollment history and Per Pupil Cost for surrounding towns and the state average, Mr. Szymaniak reported the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District enrollment continues to decline and per pupil cost remains in the lower district profiles under DESE reports. According to the FY2018 report, Whitman-Hanson is spending \$12,740 per pupil and whereas the state average is \$15,952.

The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District assessments are heavily influenced by three factors: Budget, Revenue and Minimum Contribution by Town. State Aid is about half of Whitman-Hanson’s revenue. The preliminary Department of Revenue Cherry Sheet, based on the Governor’s budget calls for “Net State Aid” (Education Aid plus Offset Receipts less Estimated Charges) of \$25,200,534. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s preliminary minimum contribution amount of \$20,445,256 is based on the Governor’s budget. **IF** the school committee voted the preliminary budget with no changes and **IF** the legislature voted for the Governor’s proposed Chapter 70 State Aid amount the FY 2021 Whitman Hanson Assessments would be:

Required Budget Overview

HANSON - ASSESSMENT		WHITMAN - ASSESSMENT	
Operating	\$11,903,983	Operating	\$14,974,512
Non-Mandated Busing	\$200,345	Non-Mandated Busing	\$300,016
Capital-Technology/HVAC	\$141,080		
Capital – High School	\$292,252	Capital – High School	\$437,648

Recommended Budget Overview

HANSON - ASSESSMENT		WHITMAN - ASSESSMENT	
Operating	\$12,894,973	Operating	\$16,458,522
Non-Mandated Busing	\$200,345	Non-Mandated Busing	\$300,016
Capital-Technology/HVAC	\$141,080		
Capital – High School	\$292,252	Capital – High School	\$437,648

An assessment worksheet overview was presented by Mr. Tuffy outlining the assessment figure calculations. The worksheet defined the step by step process and resources that present the figures shown on the calculation sheet. Mr. Tuffy reported on the assessment for capital or debt service. He then reviewed the figures under state aid and how the amounts are provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and Department of Revenue (DOR), Division of Local Services and explained the foundation budget. Currently, foundation budget is \$40,000,000 and minimum local contribution is \$20,000,000. Because Chapter 70 is at \$24,000,000, and the towns receive more aid than minimum contribution, it is unlikely that state aid will increase over time. Mr. Tuffy also clarified the enrollment figures being used in the calculations. The total enrollment for the FY2021 budget is 3,644. Of that, Hanson enrollment is at 1,467 or 40.04% and Whitman is at 2,197 or 59.96%.

Mr. Tuffy reviewed the FY21 Chapter 70 summary sheet. It was noted the overall state local aid increase is only \$90,000 and further explained the ‘foundation aid’ is the state’s determination of each town’s ability to pay. Mr. Tuffy then reviewed the enrollment by town from the state report. Mr. Tuffy also explained the state’s process of building a budget, which starts with the Governor’s Budget (House I), then the Senate (House II) and finally an agreed upon state budget which may not be determined until late June. Mr. Tuffy explained how the figures in the assessment were used under the statutory method, outlined in the Ed Reform Law and issued some time ago. The state sent out guidance on how to prepare budgets. He explained once the calculations for the assessments are done, the remaining costs for transportation, high school debt service and capital projects are split based on student populations. Mr. Tuffy stated he would be happy to review the figures with anyone by calling Central Office. It was reported that transportation assessment calculation assessment is \$426,409. Frank Lynam, Whitman Town Administrator, reported the town of Whitman has elected to support additional non-mandated transportation but needs to be assigned based on commitment of the two towns. Last year, the split was 80/20. Mr. Tuffy indicated that is probably something that needs to be adjusted. Mr. Tuffy continued discussing how the total assessment is calculated. The high school debt (capital cost) is based on 60/40 split and Hanson capital is 100%. The total operational assessment (Hanson \$12,537,659 and Whitman \$15,712,177) plus the capital assessment equals \$28,249,837 based on the current budget proposal.

Mr. Tuffy will work on providing detailed description notes for the figures in the assessment overview at the request of Mr. Bois. Mr. Jones asked for a breakdown of assessment percentage increases based on the current budget and proposed budget. The Superintendent clarified the presentation is a figures-based overview working with whole numbers to illustrate the budget increase over last years’ budget. He clarified the difference between an assessment increase versus a budget increase.

Mr. Szymaniak stated the Committee will continue discussing budget at every meeting. The Superintendent would like both towns’ Finance Committees to share their budget information as well. He reported that each town has requested a five-year budget projection as well as being sustainable. This public hearing and budget overview is an opportunity for the public and school committee to understand and comment on the proposed budget figures. At the February 26 meeting, detailed budget discussion will continue. Mr. Szymaniak announced all of the information disseminated at the School Committee meeting will be available on the District website School Committee/Budget.

The Superintendent again indicated the Required budget overview is basically Level Service. A number of important items cut last year have been added due to the needs of the district.

The Recommended budget overview is a list of current discussion points and costs, which reflect recommendations to begin fusing back into the overall budget.

Mr. Szymaniak cautioned there are challenges in implementing tuition-free full day kindergarten and adjusting school day start and end times. There will be impact to collective bargaining and child care needs for parents to re-arrange schedules. There are other budget recommendations that may be implemented without issue. Mr. Szymaniak stated one end of life technology item that is in desperate need of replacement is the phone system, which may fall under capital expenditures.

Mr. Szymaniak stated that this public hearing meeting is also an opportunity to determine how these types of needs will be funded. Mr. Howard stated he continues to advocate for students but as a point of reference, was interested in seeing assessment increase figures last year versus this year in terms of how much new funding is going to be received and what the impact on the local assessment will be. Mrs. Byers stated “To be careful when we talk about the two towns and what they can afford. It also comes down to priorities, so be careful not to confuse the two things: what they can afford depends on what choices are made in order to fund and prioritize different things.” There was a brief discussion on how the cost of providing tuition free full day kindergarten has increased since the Committee first discussed its implementation years ago. The Committee spoke to the inequities with students who attend full day kindergarten versus those who do not have that opportunity and may be behind.

The Superintendent also clarified staffing issues in technology services and the need to restore positions in that department that were cut last year. Curriculum needs were also clarified for math and English along with the current ELA pilots being implemented. Mr. Small suggested placing “curriculum needs” as an agenda item on an upcoming agenda to determine if it meets criteria for capital item. Mr. Szymaniak referred to other student services needs that included BRYT room for middle schools and language based programs at the elementary schools. There is also a need for training staff (teachers and paraprofessionals) to handle behavioral needs at the elementary level. Mr. Howard talked about providing a better experience in district and investing now, to help in the future. Mrs. Byers commented on restoring class size. Mr. Szymaniak stated enrollment changes are reviewed. Again, changing school start and end times involves contractual negotiation which will begin next fall, and community engagement to determine the impact to parents using before and after school child care or older siblings to babysit while parents are working.

In discussing the assessment percentage increase, Mr. Szymaniak asked Committee to change their mindset to understand the actual budget figures rather than just working with local assessment increases and decreases when discussing a proposed budget. Mr. Szymaniak re-iterated the process to vote to approve the school budget at town meetings and the consequence of state fiscal control, should the towns not vote to approve the budget by June 30. This concluded the Report of the Superintendent.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to close the Public Hearing on the FY2021 School District Budget.

Robert Hayes – Yes

Fred Small – Yes

Robert O’Brien, Jr. – Yes

Michael Jones – Yes

Daniel Cullity – Yes

Christopher Howard – Yes

Christopher Scriven – Yes

Steve Bois – Yes

Dawn Byers – Yes

The motion carried unanimously.

Warrants signed at the meeting were as follows:

Warrant #020520AP \$1,035,157.91

Warrants posted on 1/30/2020 closed on 2/5/2020 as follows:

Warrant #013020AP \$389,136.74

Warrant #P13020 \$1,216,738.64

Warrant #V12920 \$-35.46

Warrant #M12920 \$35.46

Meeting Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to adjourn the School Committee Meeting at 8:13 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Signature of School Committee Secretary

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting Agenda for February 5, 2020
- Budget FY2021
- Supplemental Budget Information