



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Minutes of April 1, 2020  
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School  
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA  
The meeting was held remotely via teleconference

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 8:08 p.m.

Members present: Robert Hayes, Christopher Scriven, Frederick Small, Jr., Robert O'Brien, Jr., Michael Jones, Daniel Cullity, Christopher Howard, Steve Bois, Dawn Byers and Alexandria Taylor (arrived at 7:58 p.m.)

Members absent: None

Administrators present: Jeffrey Szymaniak, Superintendent of Schools  
George M. Ferro, Jr., Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
John Tuffy, Interim Business Manager

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*The virtual meeting was being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 20. Members of the Public were able to access the meeting via live stream audio at [www.whca.tv/watch/](http://www.whca.tv/watch/) and on WHCA's Educational Access Channel 98.*

Chair Hayes opened the meeting and announced the School Committee was meeting in a virtual setting, remotely via teleconferencing, in accordance with the Governor's suspension of certain open meeting laws. The meeting was being recorded and broadcast live on WHCA's Educational Access Channel 98.

*Moment of Silence*

*Pledge of Allegiance*

**Meeting Minutes Approval**

*Meeting minutes of March 25, 2020*

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. O'Brien seconded; voted by roll call to approve the meeting minutes of March 25, 2020 as presented.**

**By Vote Roll Call**

**Michael Jones – Yes**

**Fred Small – Yes**

**Steve Bois – Yes**

**Dawn Byers - Yes**

**Christopher Scriven – Yes**

**Dan Cullity – Yes**

**Robert O'Brien, Jr. – Yes**

**Christopher Howard – Yes**

**Robert Hayes -Yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

## **Superintendent's Report**

### *Response to Corona Virus Crisis/Impact on WHRSD*

Superintendent Szymaniak reported principals will roll out each school's Remote Learning Plan on Thursday, April 2 and will begin on Monday, April 6, 2020 for all students. The Superintendent reported Governor Baker has extended the school closures through May 4, 2020. Mr. Szymaniak reported there are a number of unanswered questions if the District will be observing Good Friday and if remote learning will continue through the week of April spring recess. Good Friday will be observed as a holiday. At this time, the Superintendent is waiting on guidance from Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Jeff Riley.

The Superintendent reported the Food Services Department is implementing a new procedure for meal pick up beginning Monday, April 6, 2020. The Superintendent reported over 400 Chromebooks have been loaned to date. The last distribution date will be Tuesday, April 7, 2020 at the high school. The Superintendent described the Remote Learning Plan and how students will be engaged. For the remainder of the year, a credit/no credit assessment will be given.

### *Director of Business and Finance Update*

Mr. Szymaniak reported one of the three certified candidates has taken a position elsewhere. The remaining two certified candidates will be interviewed next Thursday on April 9, 2020.

### *FY2021 Budget and Local Assessment*

Chair Hayes reported he participated in a DESE conference call with Jay Sullivan, DESE Associate Commissioner, School Finance and District Support Center and Dr. Maureen Marshall, Executive Director of MA Association of Regional Schools (MARS). The discussion focused the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and mandatory school closures to both FY2020 and FY2021 school budgets, town meeting delays, and state revenue projections. Chair Hayes added the situation remains fluid as districts await fiscal information and direction from state legislation. Mr. Szymaniak, Mr. Ferro, Mr. Tuffy and Mr. Small were also reported to have participated in the call. Mr. Szymaniak reported Christine Lynch, DESE Governance and Facilities Program Manager, was also on the conference call and discussed fiscal anguish many regional school districts are experiencing with determining a budget, assessment methodology issues, using Excess and Deficiency (E&D) and transportation costs. Mr. Szymaniak reported the methodology of statutory is also being discussed between state and DESE officials. Mr. Small reported Jay Sullivan implored school committee's to provide a budget no more than thirty days before town meeting date and mentioned 45 days is statute.

Mr. Szymaniak stated the budget should be submitted to the towns no more than thirty days before town meeting; however, the assessment must be submitted by April 30.

Chair Hayes read an excerpt from the DESE August 27, 2010 memo on the regional school district budget process as follows:

#### ***Timing of the Budget***

*The School Committee must adopt a budget 45 days before the first annual member town meeting but not later than March 31 and not earlier than February 1. With the approval of the majority of the member communities, the superintendent may submit the budget following the notification of the annual local aid distribution.*

#### ***Calculating Member Assessments***

*The amounts so apportioned for each municipality shall be certified by the regional school district treasurer to the treasurers of the member municipalities within thirty days from the date on which the annual budget is adopted by the regional district school committee but not later than April thirtieth.*

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*Two methodologies are available to regional school districts for calculating assessments to member municipalities. The methodologies are defined in CMR 41.01 and in [Guidance for Regional School Districts: Statutory Assessment methodology/Alternative \(Agreement\) Assessment methodology](#)*

Mr. Szymaniak recommended the Committee submit the FY2021 budget within thirty days of town meeting and the local assessments may be submitted no later than April 30. There was a discussion of the validity of the the dates confirmed by legal and what was presented for deadlines. Mr. Howard suggested legal confirm current recommendation of the Superintendent regarding local assessment versus budget deadline dates. Chair Hayes reminded the Committee the budget may be amended up until town meeting date.

The Committee discussed the economic unknowns in the midst of the impact of the Coronavirus crisis and fiscal challenges facing town budgets. Again, the Committee heavily deliberated on providing a budget so the towns have a school budget figure to work with. Mr. Szymaniak reported that he contacted both Town Administrators to discuss their budget compromise. He reported Mr. Stanbrook was unable to participate in the scheduled conference call meeting due to illness. Mr. Szymaniak and Mr. Lynam determined they would not meet without Mr. Stanbrook and rescheduled the conference call meeting to April 6.

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Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to set the FY2021 Operating Budget at \$55,040,238.

Mrs. Byers reported the Whitman Finance Committee met and has a placeholder for a school budget of \$55,320,338 that includes four additional teachers.

Mrs. Byers motioned to amend the FY2021 Operating budget to \$55,320,338. The motion was not seconded. The motion failed.

Mr. Cullity moved to the vote of the main motion.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to set the FY2021 Operating Budget at \$55,040,238.**

**By Vote Roll Call**

**Michael Jones - No**

**Fred Small – Yes**

**Steve Bois – Yes**

**Dawn Byers – No**

**Christopher Scriven – Yes**

**Dan Cullity - Yes**

**Robert O'Brien, Jr. – No**

**Christopher Howard - No**

**Robert Hayes – Yes**

**The motion required a two-thirds majority and did not carry 4-5-0.**

**VOTE: Mr. Small made a motion to reconsider the vote to set the budget at \$55,040,238; Mr. Cullity seconded:**

Discussion

Chair Hayes stated his understanding in order to reconsider a vote; it must be moved by a member in the affirmative on the same night of the vote. The Committee continued budget deliberations. A number of the Hanson school committee members spoke to the risk of an override the budget may trigger in the Town of Hanson

that would likely not pass and discussed seeing the towns develop a compromise or changing the assessment method. Mr. Szymaniak confirmed a level funded budget would result in 48 positions cut next school year. Alexandria Taylor joined the meeting at 7:58 p.m. Chair Hayes provided a brief synopsis of the discussion and motion on the floor.

**By Roll Call Vote**

**Fred Small - Yes**

**Michael Jones - No**

**Steve Bois - Yes**

**Dawn Byers - Yes**

**Alexandria Taylor - Yes**

**Christopher Scriven - Yes**

**Dan Cullity - Yes**

**Robert O'Brien, Jr. - No**

**Christopher Howard - No**

**Robert Hayes - Yes**

**The motion passed by two-thirds majority vote 7-3-0.**

Chair Hayes stated local assessments will be voted a later date.

Chair Hayes announced the next meeting will be held on April 8, 2020.

*Adjournment*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted by roll call to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m.**

**By Vote Roll Call**

**Robert Hayes – Yes**

**Christopher Howard – Yes**

**Robert O'Brien, Jr. - Yes**

**Dan Cullity – Yes**

**Christopher Scriven – Yes**

**Alexandria Taylor – Yes**

**Dawn Byers – Yes**

**Steve Bois – Yes**

**Fred Small – Yes**

**Michael Jones – Yes**

**The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

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*Signature of School Committee Secretary*

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda for April 1, 2020
- Meeting minutes of March 25, 2020
- Operating Budget and Assessment worksheet (updated w/Hanson HVAC assessment)
- Voting language – 3 Votes (one each on local assessment and one to certify budget)