



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Minutes of April 8, 2020  
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School  
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA  
The meeting was held remotely via teleconference

Meeting convened: 6:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 7:11 p.m.

Members present: Robert Hayes, Christopher Scriven, Frederick Small (left at 6:55 p.m.), Jr., Robert O'Brien, Jr., Michael Jones, Daniel Cullity, Christopher Howard, Steve Bois, Dawn Byers and Alexandria Taylor (left at 6:55 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*

*Roll call for attendance was taken. All members present.*

**MEETING MINUTES**

*Meeting minutes of April 1, 2020*

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to approve the meeting minutes of April 1, 2020 as presented.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**

**Ms. Byers – Yes**

**Mr. Cullity – Yes**

**Mr. Howard – Yes**

**Mr. Jones – Yes**

**Mr. O'Brien – Yes**

**Mr. Scriven – Yes**

**Mr. Small – Yes**

**Ms. Taylor – Yes**

**Mr. Hayes – Yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Hayes took the agenda out of order.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### *FY2021 Budget and Local Assessment*

The Committee continued discussion of the FY2021 operating budget and local assessments.

Chair Hayes reported he received two emails for public comment and read them into the minutes.

*Members of the Whitman-Hanson School Committee,*

*I am writing to you as a Whitman resident and grandmother of four students currently enrolled in the Whitman Public Schools. Having listened to the last School Committee meeting where a motion was made to pass a budget that failed to include funding for four additional teachers to reduce class size, I feel compelled to share my frustration with you.*

*At your March 4 meeting I presented a spreadsheet that compared the current and projected enrollments in the three elementary schools and respectfully requested that funding be added to the FY21 budget to restore four elementary teaching positions that had been cut last year. The \$280,000 cost was subsequently added to the budget at the March 12 meeting. Last Wednesday two versions of the budget were presented by the Superintendent - one with and one without money for these four positions. Unfortunately, a motion was made to support the lower figure. I understand that for technical reasons the vote to set the FY21 school budget at \$55,040,238 failed. I trust another effort will be made to pass a budget so that the two towns will have time to review the budget before their respective town meetings.*

*I once again respectfully request that the School Committee support a budget that includes funding to restore the four elementary positions. I will not belabor the point of how important it is for the youngest students in the system to start off with an equitable opportunity to succeed.*

*However if you truly believe that the projected elementary class sizes are not a priority for the FY21 budget then I have a cost-free solution to this problem. Move two teachers from the Indian Head School to If you are OK with Duval first and second graders learning in average class sizes of 25 and 24.3 respectively while their Indian Head and Conley peers learn in significantly smaller average classes then what's the harm in moving teachers around to give the Duval students the advantage of smaller class sizes this year?*

*Of course I am not advocating this as a solution. The current situation that modifies the Open Meeting Laws and prevents me from speaking directly to you during your meeting has forced me to take this approach. Please take a look at these two sets of numbers. If you cannot live with the projected class sizes in the second scenario, how can you **not** support adding the funds required to give all Whitman-Hanson elementary school children - Indian Head, Conley and Duval - the same opportunity to succeed? Please support the budget containing \$280,000 for these teaching positions.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Kathleen A. Ottina, whitman*

*Superintendent and School Committee Members,*

*I am writing you as a concerned parent. I have a child in Duval elementary school in the first grade. He currently have 25 kids in his class which is outrageous. This is across the board with most classes at Duval. We need every teacher we have! If we lose teachers class size increase. This is not ok. We need to support our schools in Whitman. I know that Hanson doesn't seem to have the same problem. You are all supposed to be fighting for our kids and their education, but it seems like that is not the case. Duval has a higher rate of lower income families and they cannot afford private schools. Why is Duval not treated equally like the others in the district. Please do not say they are because we all know they are not. We need all the teachers we have! Taking teachers away will take away from the children and their educational needs. Do what is best for our children! I hope you this is an easy choice for you all as we chose you all to do what's right. Keep our teachers!!*

*Sincerely,*

*Melissa Moriarty, Whitman*

Chair Hayes clarified that the vote to reconsider at the last meeting held on April 1, 2020 was voted as a Motion to Reconsider (the vote of the FY21 Operating Budget amount of \$55,040,238), not a motion to set the budget. Also, the reconsider motion was made by a member of the non-prevailing side. Only a member of the prevailing side of the original vote can motion to reconsider a vote under Robert's Rules of Order.

A motion was made by Mr. Small and seconded by Mr. Cullity to set the FY2021 Operational budget at \$55,040,238. A discussion ensued.

Chair Hayes reported at their meeting on April 7, the Whitman Board of Selectmen voted to postpone the annual town meeting to a tentative date of June 3, 2020. The town elections were also postponed but no tentative date was provided. Mr. Szymaniak reported according to counsel, a budget does not have to be set at this evening's meeting, but should be set within 45 days of the town meeting date. He also referred to H4616, an *Act to Further Address Challenges Faced by Municipalities and School Districts*.

The Committee discussed the public comments as read by the chair, which focused primarily on adequate and equitable teacher staffing to address class size inequities. The Committee continued deliberations and discussed the uncertainty of commonwealth and municipality revenue resources that may fiscally impact budgets as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. There was discussion to set a budget that evening, with the understanding it is subject to adjustments prior to and on town meeting floor. The Committee discussed options that may address class size, suggesting transfers and relocation of teachers to accommodate larger class sizes in various schools.

A motion was made by Ms. Byers and seconded by Mr. Bois to amend the motion made by Mr. Small and set the budget at \$55,320,328.

Mr. Scriven stated there was no imminent reason to vote a budget this evening and to reconvene the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee as soon as possible. Some members disagreed and challenged the timeline and purpose of amending the Regional Agreement to satisfy the budget issue. Members were conflicted in voting a FY2021 budget amount at this meeting.

The Superintendent spoke to the reduction in force (RIF) requirement notification to teachers by May 1, per the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The Superintendent requested the Committee vote a budget prior to May 1. If no budget is put forth to the towns by July 1, DESE would implement a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget based on the previous years' budget. Mr. Szymaniak indicated a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget based on the previous years' budget would cause a loss of staff in excess of 35 positions.

The Chair moved to the vote to amend the original motion and set the budget at \$55,320,238 made by Ms. Byers, **VOTE: Ms. Byers motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; by roll call vote to amend the motion made by Mr. Small and set the FY2021 District Operational Budget at \$55,320,238.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**

**Ms. Byers – Yes**

**Mr. Cullity – Yes**

**Mr. Howard – No**

**Mr. Jones – No**

**Mr. O'Brien – No**

**Mr. Scriven – No**

**Mr. Small – No**

**Ms. Taylor – Yes**

**Mr. Hayes – No**

**The motion failed 6-4. To pass, the tally must be two-thirds majority.**

Chair Hayes moved to the original motion made by Mr. Small.

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

**Mr. Bois – Yes**

**Ms. Byers – No**

**Mr. Cullity – Yes**

**Mr. Howard – No**

**Mr. Jones – No**

**Mr. O'Brien – No**

**Mr. Scriven – No**

**Mr. Small – Yes**

**Ms. Taylor – No**

**Mr. Hayes – No**

**The motion failed 7-3.**

Mr. Scriven suggested the new Regional Agreement Committee convene as soon as possible to begin discussions to determine if a solution to the budget impasse can be done through amending the Regional Agreement. A meeting date of April 15, 2020 was tentatively set.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

The Superintendent took his report out of order.

*School Calendar - April spring vacation recess 4/20-4/24 (4/20 is a state holiday)*

The Superintendent recommended continuing remote learning during four days of the April school recess from April 21 through April 24, observing April 20 Patriot's Day as a state holiday. He added if the Committee votes to cancel the scheduled April spring vacation, the last day of school will then become June 15, 2020. Mr. Szymaniak reported the DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley, is leaving the decision to cancel the April vacation days as a local decision. Mr. Szymaniak reported he has already had discussions with Whitman Hanson Education Association (WHEA) Union representatives and they are in favor of continuing remote learning through the April recess.

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; roll call voted to amend the 2019-20 SY Academic Calendar and cancel the April 2020 spring vacation in order to continue remote learning, as discussed.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**

**Ms. Byers – Yes**

**Mr. Cullity – Yes**

**Mr. Howard – Yes**

**Mr. Jones – Yes**

**Mr. O'Brien – Yes**

**Mr. Scriven – Yes**

**Mr. Small – Yes**

**Ms. Taylor – Yes**

**Mr. Hayes – Yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

*Remote Learning Plans*

The Superintendent updated the Committee on the District Remote Learning Plan and continued school closure. The use of social media has been helpful to staff and students for remote learning during the closure. Principals are doing well communicating with parents. The schools re-open date remains as May 4.

*Food Services Report*

The Superintendent reported the Food Services Department is continues to provide the students in the community meals via a new online and mobile app. Distribution of meals has been modified to Mondays and Thursdays for the safety of the staff, students and families. The Superintendent commended Nadine Doucette, Food Service Director

*Facilities and Operations Report*

The Superintendent reported custodial services have been reduced due to coronavirus concerns. All buildings will remain closed except for essential staff access.

The Chair commended the teachers and staff for the work they are doing to accommodate remote learning for students during this unprecedented time.

*Warrants signed by Chair Hayes*

A/P Warrant ID & Amount

040820FS \$22,563.73

040820AP \$881,909.79

Payroll Warrant ID & Amount

P40920 \$1,200,142.49

*Executive Session*

Chair Hayes declared the public body will convene in executive session to review and approve executive session minutes. A public body may convene in executive session under the original purpose for the executive session, or it may convene in executive session pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) “[t]o comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements” (“Purpose 7”), citing Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g). The Chair stated the only vote taken coming out of executive session will be to adjourn.

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Bois seconded by roll call vote to enter into Executive Session at 7:03 p.m. to review and approve executive session minutes.**

**Mr. Bois – yes**

**Ms. Byers – yes**

**Mr. Cullity – yes**

**Mr. Howard – yes**

**Mr. Jones – yes**

**Mr. O’Brien – yes**

**Mr. Scriven – yes**

**Mr. Hayes – yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Bois seconded by roll call vote to come out of Executive Session at 7:10 p.m. to review and approve executive session minutes.**

**Mr. Bois – yes**

**Ms. Byers – yes**

**Mr. Cullity – yes**

**Mr. Howard – yes**

**Mr. Jones – yes**

**Mr. O’Brien – yes**

**Mr. Scriven – yes**

**Mr. Hayes – yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

*Adjournment*

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Bois seconded by roll call vote adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m. to review and approve executive session minutes.**

**Mr. Bois – yes**

**Ms. Byers – yes**

**Mr. Cullity – yes**

**Mr. Howard – yes**  
**Mr. Jones – yes**  
**Mr. O’Brien – yes**  
**Mr. Scriven – yes**  
**Mr. Hayes – yes**  
**The motion passed unanimously.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

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*Signature of School Committee Secretary*

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda for April 8, 2020
- Meeting minutes of April 1, 2020
- Proposed Budget Required and Recommended scenarios and assessment calculations worksheet
- Executive Session meeting minutes of 1/15/2020, 11/13/2019, 1/16/2019, 10/10/2018, and 09/12/2018