



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of May 13, 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: 9:02 p.m.
Members present: Robert Hayes, Christopher Scriven, Frederick Small, Robert O'Brien, Jr., Michael Jones, Daniel Cullity, Christopher Howard, Steve Bois, Dawn Byers and Alexandria Taylor
Members absent: None
Administrators present: Jeffrey Szymaniak, Superintendent of Schools
George M. Ferro, Jr., Assistant Superintendent of Schools
John Tuffy, Interim Business Manager

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. The meeting will be recorded and members of the public are able to access the meeting via live stream audio at 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, and was being recorded and broadcast live on WHCA's Educational Access Channel 98.

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call for Attendance

Roll call was taken, all members in attendance. Chair Hayes announced that Whitman Hanson Education Association (WHEA) Representatives, Kevin Kavka and Cindy McGann, were in attendance.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

April 29, 2020

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Scriven seconded; voted by roll call to accept the meeting minutes of April 29, 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.

Superintendent's Report

Updates on Remote Learning, School Closure and Graduating Senior Class of 2020

Superintendent Szymaniak reported last week, DESE Commissioner sent out new standards for remote learning for districts to implement next week called Power Standards. The Standards resemble what Whitman-Hanson is already doing and dig deeper into curriculum. Teachers are beginning to work on report cards as credit/no credit at high school level and pass / no pass at elementary and middle levels. Mr. Szymaniak described the plan for the end of year processes for students picking up their belongings left at schools and teachers organizing/cleaning out classrooms through schedules determined by principals, starting with the high school. The 700 Chromebooks loaned out are scheduled to be returned to school on June 11 and 12.

Mr. Szymaniak noted the graduating senior class will be handled first. A senior parade is being scheduled for May 29 at 1:30 p.m. at the high school. Students would drive through the high school and be able see their teachers. On June 30, a virtual ceremony for scholarships is being scheduled. Student scholarship award recipient's names will be read aloud and streamed live. On July 31, the high school principal is planning a graduation ceremony to be held outdoors, pending CDC and government guidelines. At this time, it is not clear what this will look like. Mr. Szymaniak noted similar end of year event scheduling is in discussion for eighth grade middle school students. The Committee will be updated as these options progress. Mr. Szymaniak reported high school administration, escorted by local police and fire, delivered graduate lawn signs to graduating senior students.

Hanson HVAC Project

John Tuffy reported on May 28, the district will roll over debt that exists for the A/C project in Hanson. This is a routine Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) rollover and already accounted for next year.

Unfinished Business

Whitman Middle School Feasibility Study Warrant Article

Chair Hayes reported the Committee will need to rescind its vote of February 26, 2020 in order to re-vote amended language, provided by Bond Counsel which will provide flexibility of funding whether using available funds (free cash) or borrowing funds for the Whitman Middle School Feasibility Study. Mr. Tuffy explained that the Town of Whitman has changed their funding source on how to fund the study and are researching a three year BAN. There was a discussion of the impact of the project if using free cash or borrowing and further if a two-third's vote is needed to borrow, or a simple majority. Mr. Tuffy will confirm if the member town vote is a majority under Chapter 71; Section 16(d). Mr. Small indicated a majority vote at the town level would be needed, based on past his experience with building projects in the school district.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded; by roll call vote to rescind the vote to approve the warrant article for the Whitman Middle School Feasibility Study as voted on February 26, 2020 to re-vote with updated Article language, 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.

The Committee further voted the amended language for the Whitman Middle School Feasibility Study as presented:

VOTE: Mr. Small Motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded; by roll call vote: That the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District hereby appropriates the amount of Eight Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$850,000) for the purpose of paying costs of a feasibility study to understand the best solution to the physical and educational deficiencies of the Whitman Middle School, located at 100 Corthell Avenue, Whitman, Massachusetts, including all costs incidental and related thereto (the “Study”) said amount to be expended under the direction of the Whitman Middle School Building Committee. To meet this appropriation the District is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 16(d), and the District Agreement, as amended, or pursuant to any other enabling authority. The District acknowledges that the Massachusetts School Building Authority’s (“MSBA’s”) grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District; provided further, that the amount of borrowing authorized pursuant to this vote shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Feasibility Study Agreement that may be executed between the District and the MSBA.

VOTED: The borrowing authorized by this vote to meet the appropriation described above shall be rescinded in the event that the Town of Whitman shall vote to appropriate a like amount to pay costs of the Study from available funds.

FURTHER VOTED: That within seven (7) days from the date on which this vote is adopted the Secretary be and hereby is instructed to notify the Board of Selectmen of each of the member towns of this District as to the amount and general purposes of the debt herein authorized, as required by the District Agreement and by Chapter 71, Section 16(d), of the General Laws.

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.

FY2020 current budget: revenues/losses; potential grant opportunities

Chair Hayes summarized the next steps in trying to adopt a FY2021 operating budget. He reported the Superintendent has prepared documentation that would involve voting a proposed amendment to the Regional Agreement and then adopting a budget based on the proposed amendment.

Mr. Szymaniak began by summarizing the current budget situation and the work being done to identify potential savings as a result of the school closure. The Committee received a summary of the potential anticipated savings. Mr. Szymaniak reported SJ Services, the outsourced cleaning services company, was placed on furlough due to COVID-19 and currently only three SJ Services staff are working in the schools. An invoice for April and May will be adjusted. Mr. Szymaniak anticipates the cleaning services will return in full force on June 1. Another area of potential savings is First Student transportation. Student transportation services have been halted since March 13. Mr. Tuffy is meeting with local business managers and working out negotiation strategies for some sort of settlement for lack of service since March but to support upkeep of buses, storage, etc. North River Collaborative (NRC) agreed to furlough van drivers effective April 22. NRC is still responsible for storage fees, etc. and a rough estimate of savings to the District is around \$60,000. Mr. Tuffy is also working on a modification to the Foxx Transportation contract. Collegiate Press, who oversees the SmartCentre copy center, has re-applied for a grant and anticipates issuing a credit on their contract for next year and the number of clicks (copying) for this year, as the employees remain working. In Student Athletics, due to the cancellation of the spring season, savings of about \$65,000 is anticipated. Head coaches will be paid a minimal stipend for work done with the student athletes over the closure.

Mr. Szymaniak reported these savings would cover a deficit of \$322,000 due to the loss of preschool and kindergarten tuitions. Mr. Szymaniak reported he recently learned the integrated preschool account typically runs in a deficit due to student service’s needs in that program. The preschool and kindergarten teachers are working remotely via Zoom meetings on social and developmental skills. Mr. Szymaniak announced he is researching a plan to develop a policy that will address unanticipated school closures and to address lost revenue from tuition based programs.

Mr. Szymaniak reported there is a misunderstanding in the community regarding Circuit Breaker (special education reimbursement). Mr. Tuffy explained Circuit Breaker is a program to help defray the costs of special education related to a student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) that exceeds four times the foundation budget or about \$45,000. Reimbursement rates have ranged from 28% to maximum of 75%. The money collected in one year goes to fund the next year’s anticipated special education costs (typically transportation and tuition). Mr. Tuffy reviewed the handout illustrating the Circuit Breaker balance; explained how claims work and presented actual carry over of FY19 of \$692,000 through the FY21 year-end balance of \$272,148 figures.

Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Circuit Breaker Balance		
<u>FY 2020</u>		
Actual FY 2019 Carry Forward Balance	\$692.00	
Anticipated FY 2020 Circuit Breaker Reimbursement	\$1,171,456.00	
<u>Total Available Circuit Breaker Funds in FY 2020</u>	<u>\$1,172,148.00</u>	
Anticipated FY 2020 Circuit Breaker Funds Used	(\$450,000.00)	(Included in assessment calculation)
<u>Anticipated FY 2020 Circuit Breaker Year-End-Balance</u>	<u>\$722,148.00</u>	(Assumes no budget deficits)
<u>FY 2021</u>		
Anticipated FY 2020 Carry Forward Balance	\$722,148.00	
Anticipated FY 2021 Circuit Breaker Reimbursement	\$0.00	(To Be Determined)
<u>Total Available Circuit Breaker Funds in FY 2021</u>	<u>\$722,148.00</u>	
Anticipated FY 2021 Circuit Breaker Funds Used	(\$450,000.00)	(Included in assessment calculation)
<u>Anticipated FY 2021 Circuit Breaker Year-End-Balance</u>	<u>\$272,148.00</u>	(Assumes no budget deficits)

Mr. Tuffy stated he believes the CARES Act / Plymouth County/ FEMA will not allow collection of loss tuition or revenue and focuses on emergency services and provide services related to COVID, but there may be other grant opportunities coming. Mr. Ferro reported he participated in a webinar earlier in the day on the ESSER or the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Fund through DESE (under CARES Act). Mr. Ferro reported there are a number of different eligible items (any item related to COVID-19, shutting down school, student engagement, measuring progress, re-opening, technology). ESSER does not provide for salaries in the operating budget. The ESSER program runs along the line of Title I and under the program, Whitman-Hanson is eligible for \$292,273. Mr. Ferro added the application due date is June 15 and will run through June 30, 2021.

Mr. Szymaniak will share more concrete information at the next meeting on the potential FY20 savings of items discussed are roughly \$322,000.

Chair Hayes reported that in order to utilize the fields for any school events during the closure, like the parade and graduation, the District must contact the Town and Board of Health for approval.

Chair Hayes announced that a simple majority vote of the Town of Whitman for the Whitman Middle School Feasibility study is needed because the District is borrowing the funds, not the town.

Regional Agreement, Operating Budgets and Local Assessment

Mr. Szymaniak reported he has been working steadily since last August and has participated in lengthy discussions with legal counsel, DESE Regional Governance Office and town officials on the school budget and possibly amending the Regional Agreement (RA) to address the impasse on voting a budget and local assessment.

After holding a number of regional agreement amendment subcommittee meetings, Mr. Szymaniak reported town officials Justin Evans (Whitman) and Laura Kemmett (Hanson) spoke to a compromise of a 50/50 split of the local assessment to lessen the impact of a million dollar assessment increase to the Town of Hanson.

Mr. Szymaniak did more research on this methodology and provided a budget and assessment worksheet scenario. In additional conversations with Christine Lynch, DESE Office of Regional Governance, ways to move to statutory under an agreement and over time so that one town is not bearing such a large increase have been discussed.

Mr. Szymaniak presented the proposed amended agreement language, developed and reviewed with legal counsel, for the Committee's consideration. The process to amend the RA would include a preliminary approval of DESE legal team, a vote of the School Committee, and sequential vote of the member towns at town meeting on the RA amendment and operating budget. Mr. Szymaniak indicated there would be no impact to the proposed operating budget using this methodology. The Superintendent reported if cuts are needed, he must notify staff by May 31. The Superintendent stated he is trying to avoid being forced into one-twelfth budget.

It was reported in recent discussions and legal guidance with Christine Lynch, that the School Committee could put forth a methodology and provide members towns an opportunity to decide how to move forward. The Superintendent would also consider utilizing Excess & Deficiency (E&D).

Mr. Szymaniak reported Chair Hayes, Chris Scriven, Chris Howard, and Mr. Ferro participated in a recent call with Attorney Waugh to discuss an amendment to the Regional Agreement. It was unclear if one section of the Regional Agreement could be amended or if it would be more conducive to amend the proposed 2018 amended agreement. The Committee deliberated delaying a vote in order to review the newly received information. The Committee considered voting on the operating budget only and to postpone voting the local assessments until the next meeting. Mr. Szymaniak reminded the Committee that reduction in force (RIF) notices must be given by May 31. In addition, the District must notify DESE if a budget has not been adopted by June 1. Mr. Tuffy reported there is \$605,302 in the E&D account.

After further deliberation, it was the consensus of the Committee to re-convene in a meeting on Monday, May 18 to allow for additional time to review the documents presented. Mr. Small withdrew his motion to approve the operating budget and Mr. Bois withdrew his second. The Superintendent will contact Christine Lynch for additional guidance.

New Business

Job Description (Administrative Assistant to High School Student Support Services)

Mr. Szymaniak announced due to a retirement in the high school counseling office, as well as the anticipated modification and merge of the school counseling and student services area, a modified administrative assistant job description is needed.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded; voted by roll call to approve the job description for "Administrative Assistant –High School Student Support Services", 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.

Acceptance of Gifts (Donation from North Easton Savings Bank)

A donation in the amount of \$5,000 from North Easton Savings Bank in Whitman was presented. The funds would be earmarked to cover food services unpaid student balances.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted by roll call to accept the donation of \$5,000 from North Easton Bank to cover unpaid food services student balances.

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.

Account Payable Warrants signed by Chair Hayes.

051320FS	\$9,539.24
051320AP	\$1,002,046.25

The next meeting was scheduled for May 18, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded by roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 p.m.

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.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Signature of School Committee Secretary

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda for May 13, 2020
- Meeting minutes of April 29, 2020
- Job Description - Administrative Assistant to High School Student Support Services
- New language for Whitman Middle School Feasibility Study warrant article

- Circuit Breaker Balance worksheet
- FDK and PK Fund balance dated 4-26-2020
- Draft Assessment worksheet modified statutory
- Clean Amendment Language for RA 5-13-2020
- DESE Questions and Answers on the FY2021 Regional School District Interim or 1/12th Budget Process
May 13, 2020