



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Minutes of May 27, 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: 8:55 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

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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. 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/](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, 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 also participating in the meeting.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

*May 13, 2020*

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded; voted by roll call to accept the meeting minutes of May 13, 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.**

*May 18, 2020*

The Committee discussed tabling the minutes until further clarification regarding contingencies for the proposed amendment to the Regional Agreement and operating budget on page 4 is clarified.

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded; voted by roll call to table the meeting minutes of May 18, 2020, 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.**

#### Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Szymaniak provided a brief year end process update. The last day of school is June 15, 2020. All buildings have teachers coming to school on a staggered schedule for cleaning out their classrooms. High School senior class cap and gown pick up was successful. A drive-through senior parade is scheduled for Friday, May 29 at 1:30 p.m. Underclassmen belongings pick up is scheduled for the week of June 8. Elementary and middle school student belongings pick up is scheduled for the week of June 1. Both middle schools have scheduled an end of year drive-through parade for eighth graders on June 12. Chromebooks returns are scheduled for June 11 and 12.

The Operations/Maintenance Department is currently managing custodial services around the District. At this time, S.J. Services is on sabbatical until July 1 in an effort to save on expenses. Mr. Szymaniak reported during his weekly update this week, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Riley indicated that guidance on Extended School Year Programs (ESY special education summer programs) will be conveyed next week.

#### *Hanson Town Meeting Date – July 20, 2020*

The Superintendent reported the Town of Hanson postponed their annual town meeting date to July 20, 2020. Due to the impact of social distancing guidelines of Coronavirus and postponement of many town meetings, most regional school districts will not have an approved budget by June 1. Regional school districts are required to submit a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget to the Commissioner if a budget has not approved by June 1. If a budget is not voted by member towns by July 1, DESE Commissioner implements an interim or 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget. Part of the submission includes a letter from the Superintendent explaining the development of the budget and assessment methodology. The Commissioner will determine the FY2021 budget based on FY2020 budget and information from the Superintendent. The Superintendent will provide the Committee with the 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget submission once complete. Mr. Szymaniak stated that the only way the Commissioner can approve a budget using the proposed Regional Agreement (RA) amendment method is if both member towns pass the proposed RA amendment at town meetings. If the RA amendment passes and the budget fails at member town meetings, the Commissioner may decide to implement a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget using the agreement method of assessment rather than statutory. If both the proposed RA amendment and operating budget fail, a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget using statutory assessment method will be utilized. Mr. Szymaniak indicated he has a conference call with DESE Associate Commissioner, School Finance and District Support Center, Jay Sullivan on Friday, May 29 to discuss further. Ms. Byers requested to submit a comment letter along with the Superintendent's 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget submission.

Mr. Szymaniak reported reduction in force (RIF) letters to staff must be provided by May 31. In anticipation of RIF notifications, the Superintendent sent a video to all district staff concerning current budget situation and

implication of going to a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget, which involves cutting the proposed FY2021 budget of \$50,040,238 by \$2.6 million to meet a FY2020 budget figure of \$52,425,738.

Getting us to a 1/12 budget based upon 2020 numbers

Mr. Szymaniak provided the following information in preparation of a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget.

FY 2021 proposed \$55,040,238

FY 2020 \$52,425,738

Strictly operational costs, utilities, contract services - \$582,000

Budget Reduction Total: \$2,614,500 as follows:

Using \$65,000 as average teacher salary:

1. 8 reading specialists- \$550,000
2. 5 teachers at HMS- \$325,000
3. 3 teachers at Conley-\$195,000
4. 3 teachers at Indian Head- \$195,000
5. 2 teachers at Duval- \$130,000
6. 2 facilities position- \$120,000
7. 5 curriculum directors \$90,000
8. 1 high school (HS) administrative assistant - \$60,000 – removed after speaking with Dr. Jones
9. 2 librarians-\$130,000
10. 4 library paraprofessionals- \$80,000
11. HS afterschool program- \$65,000
12. HS athletics no freshman sports- \$70,000 not sure about fall sports at this time
13. 5 HS positions- \$320,000 – added one to cover deletion of HS admin assistant
14. Other administrators and supplies \$344,500 - non-union based

Mr. Szymaniak reported in discussions with the Whitman Hanson Education Association (WHEA) and principals, all non-PTS (non-professional status) teachers will receive a RIF notification. In addition, professional status teachers hired three years post non-PTS will also receive RIF notifications; however may exercise bumping rights in accordance with the teacher's contract. Mr. Szymaniak spoke to challenges of providing the contractual reduction in force notices to staff under the pending timelines in which member towns will vote on the budget.

The impact of nearly 40 positions and unemployment costs was also discussed. Mr. Szymaniak added the additional cost of the required personal protection equipment (PPE) for students and staff due to the COVID-19 pandemic is an added challenge. The Superintendent reported a portion of costs may be reimbursed under the CARES Act. The District is working with the Town of Hanson to submit reimbursement requests through Plymouth County. There was additional discussion of what the upcoming school year may look like: whether schools continue in a remote learning environment, if there is an adjustment in school start times, obtaining difficult to find PPE and, what bus transportation may look like under social distancing. It was reported DESE Commissioner recommended surveying parents to determine bus transportation utilization. Mr. Szymaniak reported potential cuts in regional transportation reimbursement and circuit breaker is anticipated due to state revenue loss.

Social distancing rules/guidance around the school district was also discussed. In addition, the infrastructure issues continue to impact the district. Mr. Ferro described a number of current technology issues.

- Lack of onsite Email storage capacity
- Home directories capacities have reached maximum levels
- Aging phone system (trying to restore)
- Sacrifice personal protection equipment (PPE) in order to deliver a platform needed for remote learning?
- Considerations for bargaining impact with unions, principals need to offer a meaningful environment for staff
- Need to move to the new Windows 10 environment

- Funds used to have a sustainable remote learning plan – Commissioner Riley indicated decision-based will be at the local level

The Superintendent spoke to the absence of a student’s school experience over the last three months and potential regression both emotionally and academically, which is also of major concern under servicing students’ needs. The Superintendent indicated supplementing the budget with an additional Circuit Breaker or E&D funding would be short-sighted. There was a brief discussion regarding establishing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the WHEA as social distancing guidelines are developed for the opening of school and employees return to work. Mr. Szymaniak confirmed students must attend 180 days of school and that the Committee can change the start date of school, if needed.

The Committee discussed ensuring communications to the public that is clear in explaining the process of approving the proposed amended regional agreement and operating budget in both member towns. Consistent information should also include the subsequent processes if not voted approved and the DESE Commissioner’s involvement to move to an interim or 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget. A motion to take the May 18, 2020 meeting minutes off the table was made and withdrawn by Mr. Cullity (as seconded by Mr. Small). The Committee again voted to table the acceptance of the May 18, 2020 meeting minutes until the next meeting in order to explicate a section of the meeting minutes pertaining to legalities of the proposed amendment, and the language presented by Christine Lynch, to correctly represent that information.

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded; voted by roll call to table the meeting minutes of May 18, 2020.**

**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.**

*Regional Agreement Amendment Committee*

Mr. Scriven described intent to reconvene the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee (RAAC) in order to continue efforts to bring the outdated Regional Agreement into full compliance. The proposed amended portion brought forward to the full Committee at the last meeting pertained to moving forward with a one year solution to adopt a FY2021 budget.

*Whitman Middle School Feasibility Study Update*

The Superintendent reviewed the MA School Building Authority (MSBA) Schedule of Deliverables and for the Whitman Middle School Feasibility Study. The Compliance Certification (the “ICC”), which must be executed by the District and returned to the MSBA to demonstrate the District’s understanding of the MSBA’s grant program rules. The ICC is due to the MSBA no later than July 1, 2020. The School Building Committee (the “SBC”) form, which must be filled out by the District and reviewed/approved by the MSBA is due to the MSBA no later than July 31, 2020. School Committee members Dan Cullity, Fred Small and Chris Scriven indicated their interest in being appointed to the Building Committee.

*Public Comment*

Chair Hayes reported that due to current restrictions under COVID-19 and suspension of certain provisions under Open Meeting Law (OML), School Committee meetings are held virtually with an opportunity for the public to listen via live audio access. Public comment is accepted via email during virtual meetings. Chair Hayes shared

public comment received during the virtual School Committee meeting held on May 18, 2020. Committee members had an opportunity to comment on each of the four submissions.

1. *“Question on the Budget and Assessment: Why are you recommending a budget, which will result in over a 12% increase to the member Towns Assessment, and I understand you are even recommending adding additional personnel ( 4 teachers), on top of the Level Services Budget.) when the Student enrollment is continuing to decline. At a time when many, many people have lost their jobs and with many taxpayers having trouble paying for the basics, and even having trouble paying their taxes, why would you not be looking for every possible way imaginable to hold the line, and even make sacrifices and cuts?. Especially for Hanson Taxpayers who could be forced into an override vote, do to the move to The Statutory Method?”*

*Respectfully,*

*Paul Benenato*

*72 Brookside Drive, Hanson “*

Committee discussed challenges in developing and adopting a fiscally responsible budget within the appropriate and legal timelines for the member towns approval, while providing a proper education to all students while recognizing program and position eliminations applied in the last fiscal year.

2. *“I was wondering if all of the proposals have been discussed that the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee members came up with , Since if I understand properly that is why this committee was formed. I would think you would want their input before making a decision? If this new amendment is voted on & again as I understand it is only for one year, would the RAAC still be working on a compromise for between the towns ? I was also wondering , at the last meeting it was mentioned that other committee's try & get together or be invited to join tonight's meeting. has either of these taken place ?” Robin Bousquet*

Committee noted that compromise discussions and options have been ongoing since December between the towns and with guidance from Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) constituents. The chosen option was best suited under the time constraints to adopt a budget to bring forth to member towns for a vote.

3. *“On the Assessment Method that is being recommended by the Superintendent of Schools. Why did the Superintendent make a recommendation that would take the Two Towns to the Statutory Method completely in Fiscal 2022? Shouldn't there be a more gradual phase in of at least 5 to 6 years as recommended recently by the Representatives for the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools ? or even just a 50/50 split permanently, each and every year between the Two Methods. Since we are suppose to be an Equal Partnership ? It does seem very unfair to just adhere to Whitman's demands and take us completely to the Statutory Method”. Donna Frehill , 6 Great Cedar Drive, Hanson*

Committee noted the conception of a compromise was the chosen mechanism to help move the school district budget forward to provide for both member towns to vote for FY2021.

4. *On the proposed School Assessment. Since Whitman is operating 3 k thru 8 Elementary Schools as opposed only two being operated by Hanson, and from what I understand, Whitman Students make up the bulk of the amount of over 2 million dollars for Special needs outside placement, should not those two important facts be taken into consideration, to lessen the financial blow on the Town of Hanson, as you get set to impose the Statutory Method on the District Assessment process? Thank you. Benjamin Fletcher*

Special education regulations are developed at the state level.

#### *South Shore Educational Collaborative Tuition Rates FY2021*

The Superintendent presented the FY2021 South Shore Educational Collaborative (SSEC) tuition rates.

Effective July 1, 2020, Whitman-Hanson Regional School District will become members of SSEC with beneficial financial membership rates. Superintendent Szymaniak will report back if the SSEC Board is a superintendent-based board or otherwise.

*School Physician Appointment for 2020-21 SY*

The Committee discussed approving the re-appointment Dr. David Belcher as the School Physician for the upcoming 2020-21 school year.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded; voted by roll call to re-appoint Dr. David Belcher as the School Physician for the 2020-21 school year.**

**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.**

*Adjournment*

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted by roll call to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 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

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*Signature of School Committee Secretary*

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda and memo for May 27, 2020
- Meeting minutes of May 13, 2020 and May 18, 2020
- Budget worksheets; a) Statutory one-twelfth budget worksheet; b) Getting to one-twelfth budget; and previous documents: original draft assessments required and required w/4 teachers; draft assessment modified statutory dated 5-18-2020 and proposed Regional Agreement amendment
- WMS Feasibility Study documents – a) Schedule of Deliverables; b) Initial Compliance Certification (the “ICC”), which must be executed by the District and returned to the MSBA to demonstrate the District’s understanding of the MSBA’s grant program rules. The ICC is due to the MSBA no later than July 1, 2020; and c) the School Building Committee (the “SBC”) form, which must be filled out by the District and reviewed/approved by the MSBA (please mail an original on District letterhead). Please note: no changes should be made to the existing designations on the SBC form though designations may be added at the discretion of the District. The SBC is due to the MSBA no later than July 31, 2020;
- Copy of public comments from May 18, 2020 meeting
- South Shore Educational Collaborative member tuition rates for FY2021