



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Minutes of June 17, 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, Michael Jones, Daniel Cullity, Christopher Howard, Steve Bois, Dawn Byers and Alexandria Taylor  
Members absent: Robert O'Brien, Jr.  
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. Mr. O'Brien was not in attendance.

Chair Hayes announced dates to remember.

Town elections in both Whitman and Hanson will be held on Saturday, June 27, 2020.

Chair Hayes announced Mr. Robert O'Brien's term as a School Committee member expires at the end of June and did not seek re-election. The Chair thanked Mr. O'Brien for nine years of dedicated service as a School Committee member to Whitman-Hanson Regional School District.

The next School Committee meeting will be held on June 29, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. for reorganization.

The Annual Town Meeting in Hanson will be held on July 20, 2020.

The Annual Town Meeting in Whitman will be held on July 27, 2020.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

*May 27, 2020 School Committee meeting minutes*

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to accept the meeting minutes of May 27, 2020, as presented.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**

**Ms. Byers – Yes**

**Mr. Cullity – Yes**

**Mr. Howard – Yes**

**Mr. Jones – Yes**

**Mr. Scriven – Yes**

**Mr. Small – Yes**

**Ms. Taylor – Yes**

**Mr. Hayes – Yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

*May 18, 2020 School Committee meeting minutes*

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

**Mr. Bois – Yes**

**Ms. Byers – Yes**

**Mr. Cullity – Yes**

**Mr. Howard – Yes**

**Mr. Jones – Yes**

**Mr. Scriven – Yes**

**Mr. Small – Yes**

**Ms. Taylor – Yes**

**Mr. Hayes – Yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

#### Superintendent's Report

##### *Year-end Closing*

Mr. Szymaniak reported the official last day of school was Monday, June 15, 2020. Report cards have been issued. In grades K-8 a pass/fail grade was applied due to the school closure for three months. The High School grades 9-12 applied a credit/no credit as grading and could earn an extra 10 points for online learning. Another date to return Chromebooks is necessary and is scheduled for the week of June 22. Mr. Szymaniak recognized the work of the Technology and Operations Departments throughout the lending of Chromebooks. Lastly, teachers have cleaned out classrooms in preparation of summer cleaning.

##### *Class of 2020 Graduation*

Mr. Szymaniak reported he met with the high school principal to discuss options for graduation and a potential date of July 31, to be held outside on the high school JV baseball/softball/soccer fields. Social distancing practices will be followed. Four tickets per graduate will be available. The principal and class speakers will be part of the ceremony on stage. School Committee will be invited. The ceremony will begin at 6:00 p.m. Power for the audio system may be a challenge. More details will follow.

##### *Summer Programs*

Mr. Szymaniak reported that after lengthy discussion with leadership team, it was decided to gradually reopen a number of school sponsored summer camp programs only. These include youth sports clinics, youth summer camps, science camp, 3D printer camp, the YMCA at Duval and the North River Collaborative classroom; all following strict CDC guidelines and under the management of lead nurse Lisa Tobin. Mr. Szymaniak added the leadership team considered the importance of offering summer camps and making sure kids are involved and re-acclimated socially with peers, since many other outside/private camps have closed for the summer.

### *Building Use*

Mr. Szymaniak discussed challenges in building use under COVID-19 guidelines for certain group events. He recommended allowing school-sponsored summer camps and clinics but did not recommend allowing outside vendors building use rentals until after Labor Day in September. He cited the inability to control who is coming in and out of the building, policing social distancing rules, and staffing concerns as issues. The Committee also discussed the unknowns for tracing information and added costs for disinfecting as additional challenges. The Superintendent added that the risk of opening to the public and other conceivable liabilities outweigh any potential building use revenue.

Mr. Szymaniak reported he spoke to both Town Administrators to hold the annual town meetings at the high school (PAC, Gym or outside) and will consider weather and other logistics, but is able to accommodate both meeting dates for Whitman and Hanson town meetings in July.

The Superintendent sought the approval of the Committee to limit building use to school-sponsored events only through the summer and open up to public event rentals after Labor Day on September 7.

**VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to limit building use rentals to outside parties/vendors until after September 7, 2020 as recommended by the Superintendent.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**

**Ms. Byers – Yes**

**Mr. Cullity – Yes**

**Mr. Howard – Yes**

**Mr. Jones – Yes**

**Mr. Scriven – Yes**

**Mr. Small – Yes**

**Ms. Taylor – Yes**

**Mr. Hayes – Yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

### *Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Re-opening Guidance*

The Superintendent summarized information provided in a conference call with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Riley on June 12. The Commissioner is working with his re-opening team to introduce a color-coded model of re-entry. The red, yellow and green model is dependent on any surge of COVID-19 in certain communities. The Commissioner also discussed grading and content but said little about student attendance. Personal protection equipment (PPE) was discussed in length and supply costs for sanitation masks, etc., are roughly \$460 per pupil. Guidance from DESE has not been officially released and it remains uncertain which model will be followed; whether remote learning will continue, a hybrid of remote and in person, or full in person re-entry. Additional information from DESE is expected at the end of June.

The school district is coordinating a survey to parents on remote learning and questions for re-opening schools in order to improve re-entry and remote learning as needed, and determine if parents are comfortable with bus transportation and student re-entry. A survey will also be sent to staff for similar input. The Superintendent reported he continues to work with the teacher union representatives (Whitman Hanson Education Association-WHEA) on a weekly basis and plan to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for re-opening.

### *Appointment of Director of Business & Finance for FY2021*

Superintendent Szymaniak recommended the Committee appoint Mr. John Tuffy to the Director of Business and Finance for the upcoming school year on a part-time basis, three days per week. Mr. Szymaniak stated Mr. Tuffy has brought consistency, a wealth of information on budget and other related issues to the Business Office. Mr. Szymaniak added supplemental assistance and support for the position through the year may occur through interns and District will continue its search for a full time candidate for the following school year.

**VOTE: Ms. Taylor motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to appoint Mr. John Tuffy as the Director of Business & Finance, as recommended by the Superintendent.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**  
**Ms. Byers – Yes**  
**Mr. Cullity – Yes**  
**Mr. Howard – Yes**  
**Mr. Jones – Yes**  
**Mr. Scriven – Yes**  
**Mr. Small – Yes**  
**Ms. Taylor – Yes**  
**Mr. Hayes – Yes**  
**The motion passed unanimously.**

*Transportation Update*

Mr. Tuffy reported he has spent some time talking about transportation vendors and making cost adjustments because they have not provided 12 months of contractual service. He considered what is our obligation and the need to be prepared to come back and work. After an impartial amount of conversation with surrounding south shore schools including Abington Public Schools (co-contracted with First Student), and working out a fair arrangement for both sides, keeping in mind storage and maintenance costs still exist, Mr. Tuffy requested permission for a contract amendment with First Student to authorize a settlement at a rate of 30% of expenses as a contract amendment. Mr. Small requested a comparison cost audit should the District consider building its own bus fleet.

**VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded; voted by roll call to authorize a settlement with First Student at a rate of 30% of expenses as a contract amendment, as discussed.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**  
**Ms. Byers – Yes**  
**Mr. Cullity – Yes**  
**Mr. Howard – Yes**  
**Mr. Jones – Yes**  
**Mr. Scriven – Yes**  
**Mr. Small – Yes**  
**Ms. Taylor – Yes**  
**Mr. Hayes – Yes**  
**The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Tuffy further requested a contract amendment with Foxx Transportation, a van transportation company handling a majority of the special education transportation services, for a settlement of 34% of the regular cost as a contract amendment.

**VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Ms. Taylor seconded; voted by roll call to authorize a settlement with Foxx Transportation at a rate of 34% of expenses as a contract amendment, as discussed.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**  
**Ms. Byers – Yes**  
**Mr. Cullity – Yes**  
**Mr. Howard – Yes**  
**Mr. Jones – Yes**  
**Mr. Scriven – Yes**  
**Mr. Small – Yes**  
**Ms. Taylor – Yes**  
**Mr. Hayes – Yes**  
**The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Szymaniak reported the savings realized by the settlements adjusts the anticipated cost savings in bus transportation from 50% to 30%. Mr. Szymaniak reported he will be bringing a recommendation to School Committee to use these savings to purchase the ELA Curriculum before the end of the fiscal year to avoid the funds rolling over into E&D in the next fiscal year and inaccessible until October. Mr. Szymaniak reported that

the ELA curriculum was part of the proposed FY2021 budget at \$145,000 under a six year license contractual agreement. In a brief discussion of financing the purchase over an extended period of time, Mr. Tuffy did not believe textbook materials could be financed by borrowing. Mr. Szymaniak stated the curriculum purchase needs to be approved by the School Committee and will be included as a business item on the June 29 re-organization meeting.

#### *School Committee Q&A on Budget*

Mr. Szymaniak reported he and School Committee developed a list of questions and answers to explain the school budget, assessments and other related questions, as talking points and information.

Mr. Szymaniak reported he will attend a Whitman Finance Committee meeting to discuss non-mandated transportation. It is still unclear how students will get to school next year safely and cost efficiently. Mr. Szymaniak stated per a conference call with the DESE Commissioner and CFO Bill Bell, legislative efforts to relieve regional district transportation mandates are being discussed. The Superintendent reported he has also been invited to attend the Hanson Board of Selectmen's meeting on Tuesday, June 23 to discuss the FY2021 budget and moving to a one-twelfth budget. Mr. Szymaniak reported he provided both towns with extensive materials and information to clarify the one-twelfth budget to be imposed on July 1. Mr. Szymaniak reiterated how the Commissioner moves a district to a one-twelfth budget based on the previous fiscal years' budget if no budget is voted by July 1. Whitman-Hanson Regional School District is one of over 100 districts moving to one-twelfth budget on July 1 as town meetings dates have been pushed until after July 1.

The Superintendent's Q&A on budget will be posted on the district website in an effort to provide reference materials and information to the public.

Mr. Szymaniak discussed the recently issued reduction in force letters to staff in anticipation of moving to a one-twelfth budget on July 1, which would mean a reduction to the proposed FY21 budget of \$2.5 million. By law, all non PTS (non-professional status) teachers must be notified of a reduction in force no later than June 15. The Superintendent sent 117 notifications to staff due to the lack of an approved budget and in anticipation of a 20% reduction of Chapter 70 funding on July 1. Budget cuts and reduction in force are pending the approval of the school budget at town meetings at the end of July. Mr. Szymaniak reported some staff has already resigned. Another challenge is bearing cost of unemployment after July 1. The Superintendent discussed the impact of having no approved budget, oversight of the DESE Commissioner under a one-twelfth budget and reduced chapter 70 funding.

Chair Hayes read a sample from the Q&A and urged the community to visit the district website for additional information.

#### Question #18

If the proposed FY2021 budget doesn't pass, what will be cut?

**If a budget is not passed at both town meetings, the Commissioner will establish a 1/12th budget based upon fiscal 2020 figures. This will be a reduction of between 35-40 positions.**

The local assessments under a one-twelfth budget were briefly discussed. Under an interim one-twelfth budget based on FY2020, the one-twelfth interim budget is \$52,425,738. Mr. Howard noted the local assessment to the Town of Hanson would be \$11.4 million under a one-twelfth budget. He added the local assessment to the Town of Hanson under the proposed FY21 budget including, the proposed amendment to the Regional Agreement, is \$11.75 million, a variance of only \$350,000. He urged the community to understand the numbers and look the whole picture for maintaining services not only for the school district but also for Town of Hanson. If trying to save \$350,000, which could decimate the District, and concurrently, Hanson Finance Committee, states a \$800,000 override is needed, \$450,000 is still needed in Hanson and could result in potential cuts in town departments if the override doesn't pass. Mr. Howard also spoke to DESE regulations that drive the local assessment under the statutory method of assessment. Chair Hayes announced he will be hosting a local cable

talk show with fellow School Committee members Chris Howard and Chris Scriven to discuss the school budget.

Ms. Byers suggested contacting the MA Association of School Committees (MASC) to set up a series of workshops to develop goal setting for improving student achievement and create a clear vision of where the District wants to be in 2023. Committee members referenced the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District's Strategic Plan developed by the Superintendent already establishes such a tool for planning.

**VOTE: Ms. Byer motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to contact the MA Association of School Committees (MASC) to set up a series of workshops to develop goal setting for improving student achievement.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**

**Ms. Byers – Yes**

**Mr. Cullity – No**

**Mr. Howard – No**

**Mr. Jones – No**

**Mr. Scriven – No**

**Mr. Small – No**

**Ms. Taylor – No**

**Mr. Hayes – No**

**The motion failed 2-7-0.**

#### Unfinished Business

##### *Proposed Regional Agreement Amendment*

Superintendent Szymaniak reported Whitman Town Administrator, Frank Lynam, submitted a revision to the proposed amended Regional Agreement, warrant article for the annual town meeting. A copy of the revision and explanation were provided for the Committee's review. Mr. Szymaniak informed the Committee the proposed revision has been reviewed by the school districts' legal counsel. Mr. Lynam added the explanation of changes as prepared by Whitman legal counsel, Nancy Company, of Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, clarify the position of what Hanson's responsibility would be under the statutory method and insures the per pupil assessment for the balance of the agreement is followed that way. The explanation also addressed the document formatting and grammatical fluency. Mr. Szymaniak and Mr. Lynam sent the revision with a recommendation to adopt the changes to Hanson Town Administrator, John Stanbrook and reported Mr. Stanbrook has yet to respond. It was determined that the next School Committee meeting date of June 29 is ample time to review and vote to adopt the changes once the Town of Hanson responds to the proposed revision. Mr. Szymaniak will contact Mr. Stanbrook for follow up prior to the June 29 meeting.

#### New Business

##### *Proposal for Resolution: COVID 19 State Funding*

Chair Hayes presented the Proposal for Resolution: COVID 19 State Funding as developed by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) across the state. The Resolution that there can be no unfunded mandates for COVID-19, may be voted and signed by all School Committee members and submitted to the Governor, Secretary of Education and Senate President as follows:

### **WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE RESOLUTION: COVID-19 STATE FUNDING**

**DATE:** July 17, 2020

**TO:** MA Governor Charlie Baker  
MA Secretary of Education James Peyser, MA Commissioner of Education Jeffrey Riley,  
MA Senate President Karen Spilka, MA House Speaker Robert DeLeo

**CC:** Senator Michael Brady, State Representatives Josh Cutler and Allyson Sullivan  
Frank Lynam, Whitman Town Administrator, John Stanbrook, Hanson Town Administrator



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WHEREAS, if schools are to re-open this fall in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the responsibility of each school district to do so safely and responsibly; and  
WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that each school district is able to pay for the enormous additional staffing, transportation and material expenses required to do this; and  
WHEREAS, the state cannot expect mandatory COVID-19 safety guidelines to be followed without also ensuring that each school district has the funds required to implement these guidelines; therefore, let it be  
RESOLVED: that the state must guarantee every school district full reimbursement for whatever COVID-19 expenses are required to follow state mandates.  
We must ensure a statewide school re-opening that is safe, responsible and equitable.

**THERE CAN BE NO UNFUNDED MANDATES FOR COVID-19.**

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Respectfully, Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee

**VOTE: Mr. Scriven motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to approve the Resolution: COVID -19 State Funding that there can be no unfunded mandates for COVID-19, as presented.**

**Mr. Bois – Yes**

**Ms. Byers – Yes**

**Mr. Cullity – Yes**

**Mr. Howard – Yes**

**Mr. Jones – Yes**

**Mr. Scriven – Yes**

**Mr. Small – Yes**

**Ms. Taylor – Yes**

**Mr. Hayes – Yes**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

*2020-21 SY School Calendar*

The Superintendent asked the Committee to consider potential changes to the 2020-21 academic school calendar. There may be forthcoming discussion to re-evaluate the first day of school should additional time be needed to prepare for re-entry, in terms of PPE and other related necessities for opening school for 2020-21. Moving the first day of school until after Labor Day (September 7) may provide an additional two weeks of preparedness. The Superintendent discussed working with DESE Commissioner regarding remote learning tools that could also be used to cover snow/inclement weather days. There was some discussion of adjusting the winter and spring recess weeks.

Chair Hayes reported two public comments were received this evening for the meeting. The comments will be shared with the Committee and may be responded to at the next meeting.

*Adjournment*

**VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call 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. 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 June 17, 2020
- Meeting minutes of May 27, 2020 and May 18, 2020 (revised with requested changes)
- Considerations to the proposed RA amendment from Town of Whitman
- WHRSD School Committee Resolution: Covid-19 state funding
- WHRSD 2020-21 SY Academic Calendar
- Q&A pertaining to the Budget
- Proposed changes to the RA Amendment from town of Whitman (clean copy)