



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Meeting Minutes of August 6, 2020
School Committee Meeting
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 6:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 10:11 p.m.

Members present: Robert Hayes, Christopher Scriven, Frederick Small, Michael Jones, Daniel Cullity, Christopher Howard, Steve Bois, Dawn Byers, Hillary Kniffen and David Forth, Jr.

Members absent: None

Administrators present: Jeffrey Szymaniak, Superintendent of Schools
George M. Ferro, Jr., Assistant Superintendent of Schools
John Tuffy, Director of Business and Finance

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 was a live broadcast on WHCA TV and online. School Committee members and Central Office Administration were allowed to attend in person. The public will not be allowed to physically access this School Committee meeting. Members of the public can access a live broadcast of the meeting via live stream <http://whca.tv/watch/live-hanson/>; <http://whca.tv/watch/live-whitman/> and on WHCA's Educational Access Channel 98 EDU-98 (Comcast). PUBLIC COMMENTS were welcome via emails received after 6:10 pm to Joshua.torrey@whrsd.org Questions/Comments may be read in the order they are submitted and answered by the School Committee via live stream or at a later date.

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence

Roll Call Vote for Attendance

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

July 15, 2020 School Committee meeting minutes

Chair Hayes noted that at the July 15, 2020 School Committee meeting, it was the intent and vote of the School Committee to approve the revised changes to the Amended Regional Agreement as proposed made by the Town of Whitman. Due to the clerical error, Chair had read aloud the original language rather than the revised language at the meeting. The draft meeting minutes of July 15, 2020 for the Committee's approval contain the correct revised Amended Regional Agreement language as proposed by the Town of Whitman.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to accept the meeting minutes of July 15, 2020, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent announced public may email comments or questions to Joshua.torrey@whrsd.org

Town Meeting Results

The Superintendent thanked both communities for their overwhelming support of education in passing both the school district FY2021 budget and the amended Regional Agreement at the annual town meetings. Mr. Szymaniak reported he submitted the approved member town votes to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for the Commissioner's final approval of the amended Regional Agreement.

DESE Re-opening Guidance

The Superintendent provided a detailed overview of the Whitman-Hanson School District's re-entry plans for fall. District-wide and site-based COVID Teams were established and led by Assistant Superintendent, George Ferro.

WHRSD COVID-19 District Team

1. George Ferro, Assistant Superintendent and Point Person
2. Jeffrey Szymaniak, Superintendent
3. Lauren Mathison, Director of Student Services
4. Ernie Sandland, Director of Facilities
5. Lisa Tobin, Lead Nurse and Health
6. Kevin Kavka, Teacher's Union (WHEA)
7. Cindi McGann, Teacher's Union (WHEA)
8. John Tuffy, Director of Business and Finance
9. Karen Villanueva, Director of Transportation
10. Bob Rodgers, Athletic Director
11. Jane Cox, Curriculum Director/ Teaching and Learning
12. Nadine Doucette, Director of Food Services
13. Steve Burke, Technology Consultant
14. Kim Barnard, Systems Database Administrator (SIMS)
15. Koren Myette, Communications/Surveys
16. Hillary Kniffen, School Committee Representative
17. Michelle Lindberg, Human Resources, Policy
18. Chrissy Thorton, Social Emotional exSel member
19. Kerri Doherty, Social Emotional exSel member
20. Karen Downey Elementary Principal Representative
20. William Tranter, Secondary Principal Representative

Each school established site-based COVID teams consisting of teachers, administrators, nurses, parents, community members and, in some cases students, to ensure whichever plan was approved by the School Committee, would be successfully implemented at the building level. Efforts to provide additional technology resources for students are in progress; however, Mr. Szymaniak reported that currently, there is a major shortage of Chromebooks nation-wide.

The Superintendent reported the re-entry plan places the physical and social emotional health of students in the forefront for returning to school. If parents are apprehensive with in-person return, they may switch the student to a remote learning option. Superintendent Szymaniak presented the reentry information through a "Re-opening Schools in a COVID World" PowerPoint presentation.

Initial Guidance

The District used guidance from state and federal agencies to assist in making decisions on how to return to school, and with DESE wanting to give more local control. The Re-entry Plan Submission (Comprehensive Plan) due date was extended to August 10.

DESE is providing initial guidance for school reopening this fall that prioritizes getting students back to school in person safely, following a comprehensive set of health and safety requirements. At the same time, DESE is requiring each district and school to also plan for remote learning and a hybrid school model, a combination of in-person and remote learning, should local conditions change this fall or winter.

All districts/schools must create a plan for a hybrid model in the event they are unable to bring all students back to school under the health and safety requirements despite their best efforts, or in case of COVID-19 related circumstances. A hybrid model means that students would alternate between in-person and remote learning. For instance, students could switch between in-person and remote learning on alternating weeks or days of the week.

Models that Whitman-Hanson developed are as follows; needed to come up with

- Return without restrictions
- In-person learning with new safety requirements
- Hybrid
- Remote

The Superintendent reviewed each of the above models. Mr. Szymaniak noted that the remote learning model will not resemble the remote learning during the closing of schools in March, but that academic work will be designed to state standards.

Return without Restrictions

Students return in person and restrictions are lifted.

In-person learning with new safety requirements

In this model, all students return in person to school settings that are appropriately modified to accommodate the health and safety requirements outlined above. Examples of modifications could include altered classroom configurations, setting up additional learning spaces, and schedule changes

Hybrid Model

A hybrid model means that students would alternate between in-person and remote learning. For instance, students could switch between in-person and remote learning on alternating weeks or days of the week.

Remote Learning Model

All remote learning models to meet the following standards:

- Procedures for all students to participate in remote learning, including a system for tracking attendance and participation;
- Remote academic work is aligned to state standards; and
- A policy for issuing grades for students' remote academic work.
- Teachers and administrators shall regularly communicate with students' parents and guardians, including providing interpretation and translation services to limited English proficient parents and guardians.

This model must be available for individual students who cannot yet return in-person, and for all students in the event of future classroom or school closures due to COVID-19.

Lauren Mathisen, Director of Student Services, will discuss the plan for special populations later in the meeting. Across each of these models, all districts and schools will plan for how special populations, including students with disabilities and English learners, will receive necessary services and accommodations.

Health and Safety Practices

The Superintendent presented health and safety practices and what a day in the life of student is going to look like at the return to school.

- Mask/face coverings - The Superintendent may bring a face covering policy to the Committee for approval.
- Physical Distancing – Recommending six feet of distancing
- Student Groups or Cohorts will be established
- Hand hygiene –hand washing and hand sanitizing protocols will be in place
- COVID-19 related isolation space - Schools are required to designate a COVID-19 related isolation space

that is separate from the nurse's office or other space where routine medical care is provided.

- Health and safety/PPE supplies will be available
- Additional health and safety protocols, including mask breaks, structured lavatory breaks and bus monitoring will be considered

The Superintendent reported that DESE Commissioner Riley has allowed for ten days of teacher training, reducing the school year from 180 to 170 days. The Superintendent will request the first day of school for all students be moved from September 8 to September 15 to accommodate the faculty training. Commissioner reduced time on learning structures to 850 and 935 hours.

There was a short break at 6:24 p.m. Due to a significant number of internet log-ins to the meeting being broadcast on WHCA-TV on line, there was a slight issue with the cable live stream feed. Chair Hayes noted that due to current state and CDC guidelines, there can be no more than 25 persons gathered. Once the mandate is lifted by the Governor's office, the public will be invited to attend public meetings in person. The meeting reconvened at 6:29 p.m.

Key Points

Mr. Szymaniak noted that even if a student is prioritized for in-person learning, parents/caregivers have the option to choose a district's remote learning program for their child's instruction if they prefer – with the understanding that the remote learning program may not replace the full benefits of learning in person.

Whitman-Hanson will utilize a Learning Management System (LMS) for this model based on DESE guidance if numbers are low. A quarterly window for re-entrance to In-Person will be established with a two week lead time.

The Superintendent presented the Hybrid Cohort model schedule with Cohort A reporting in person on Monday and Tuesday and Cohort B reporting on Thursday and Friday. The model reduces the student population in the building to accommodate the safety and social distancing standards.

All hybrid models will be virtual on Wednesdays with staff reporting to work. This provides virtual learning with teacher and cohort, prep/grade and subject specific planning an additional time for Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) and faculty team meetings (subject to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Whitman Hanson Education Association (WHEA).

WHRSD Option – HYBRID*

Staff works 7 (hours daily per contract) (full day sessions)(in building all days)

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|--|
| <u>Monday-Tuesday</u> | <u>Cohort A</u> | Full Day / In Person / Half # students |
| <u>Thursday-Friday</u> | <u>Cohort B</u> | Full Day / In Person / Half # students |

Virtual Wednesday Staff Report to buildings

Staff Responsibilities to include:
virtual learning with Cohorts (teacher)
Prep/Grade Level/Subject specific planning
additional time for PLC/Faculty/Team etc (*Subject to MOU with WHEA*)

*preK and K daily all week

*Special Populations will report daily, with a half day Wednesday–Self Contained Special Ed, ELL by Level of need etc.

WHY HYBRID?

- Health and Safety of Students and Staff
- Ability to better transport students with bussing situation of WHRSD
- Resource Issue
- Lack of Space, Staff and Funding
- Internal Pressure Test as Described by State - class sizes too large at 6 feet and not safe at 3 feet (focusing on half class for proper safety and learning)

- Wednesday allows for a fully robust virtual plan to be utilized by staff and students in real time in event we need to close and go virtually, fully remote (separate from parent choice remote plan which will utilize an LMS)

Full, In-Person Plan (with modifications)

Over the last month, members of the WHRSD facilities staff assessed each classroom using a “3-foot” distance between the student chairs, which was deemed appropriate by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The square footage of classrooms was calculated and graphs and charts were generated that showed how many desks could fit, based strictly on space into each available classroom and area. This “pressure test” was completed across the District. Using the DESE “3 foot” model, the number of student desks varied greatly when openings egress for doorways and storage were taken into account. Although the number was in the twenties on average, it was deemed not feasible in many areas due to class size projections for students. When using the Center for Disease Control (CDC) “6-foot” distance between student chairs, average class size across the District would allow for at least 15 desks per room with the proper egress calculated into that.

The administration, in concert with the District COVID Team, the WHEA and the school based COVID Teams, decided that for a number of reasons, the District should move toward a 6 foot distance as best as the room configuration would allow. While many classrooms will be arranged at 6 feet to begin with, the goal is to get as close to 6 feet as possible and move away from 3 feet.

The health and safety of students and staff was paramount in the decision. The 6 foot model allows for the typical classroom movement that happens daily in all classrooms while maintaining at least the DESE recommended three foot space during such movement. Using a six foot model, The District does not have the resources in the form of space and personnel to accomplish this goal daily for the entire student population. In conjunction with health and safety and resource scarcity, the WHRSD has transportation implications that hinder a full return. The WHRSD is obligated, by current legislation, to transport a large percentage of students to school. The recent COVID restrictions for bussing do not allow the District to accomplish this daily. The District does not have the busses, drivers or time during the day to accomplish all of the additional bus runs that would need to take place for the whole District’s student population daily. With the cap on busses at 24 for a 72 passenger bus, transportation presents an ongoing challenge.

In conclusion, after careful consideration, a full in-person return for the school community is not our recommendation, under the current conditions, for the WHRSD. The District does not have enough resources in the form of physical space, human capital and fiscal holdings to accomplish this in a safe and efficient manner.

Remote Learning WHRSD Plan

(Whole district and different from parent choice LMS remote option)

- *Hours Daily for Remote Learning* *Elementary 8AM – 1PM (8-12 Teaching)*
Middle – 9AM-2PM (9-1 Teaching) HS –
9AM-2PM (10-2 Teaching)
- 5 hours day responsibility (35 hours week) - expectations for staff
 - 20 hours actively engaged teaching with students
 - 5 hours prep
 - 5 hours school meetings PLC/Faculty/Dept./STAT (established schedule)
 - 1 hour parent/caregiver communications
 - 2 hours for IEP/504 or parent meetings as applicable
- Google Classroom and Google Meet/Hangout to be used – required for daily interaction
- Secondary – teach scheduled classes / prep (attendance taken) via IC
- Elementary – teach 4 hours including morning meeting (SEL) and academic time / (may break up classes for small group / subject work) – prep (attendance taken via IC)

- Elementary would be combination of iReady and Into Reading along with the WHRSD Distance Learning site <https://sites.google.com/whrsd.org/distancelearning> and applicable educational software
- Daily expectation for students should not exceed 7 hours (via teacher interaction and extended lesson work)
- Assessments will be given based on a variety of methods with advanced notice; (such as but not limited to: participation, objective inquiry; subjective inquiry; personal reflection and authentic inquiry, MA state mandates, baseline testing)
- To the extent feasible and permitted by governance, staff will report to their buildings
- Specialized Programs will still be in person unless Governor shuts down schools
- Athletics – a percentage of head coaching stipend will be configured based on time spent if sport is not played, partially played due to virus (amount TBD)

Mr. Ferro explained that the district is already using Edgenuity for remote learning, which a W-H staff member would oversee. That model would also be used in cases of quarantine. Time constraints will be implemented if switching from hybrid to remote or the choosing between Learning Management System (LMS) and hybrid in WHRSD with a two week notice and at specific marking periods to provide the ability to plan properly. There is fluidity within every choice

Mr. Ferro discussed the cost for TECCA and Edgenuity for remote students. Staff will oversee the content area and product.

Mr. Szymaniak discussed the challenge of not knowing how many teachers or students plan to return in person and how many may request remote. Once identified, this data will drive class size.

Mr. Szymaniak reported he also spoke to the Association about accommodating staff unable or apprehensive about reporting to work. Considerations will have a process through Central Office and will require proper documentation. Mr. Ferro stated that if teacher cannot come to work, they will be designated to work remote and teach social studies and science on the remote days for when students in the cohorts are not in school. This frees up live in-person education for literacy and mathematics subjects. At the middle school level, the academic extension period can be covered by the paraprofessional and the teacher can connect with the cohort so both cohorts have the same teacher of record. Other options are being worked out at the high school level with either live streaming or reconfiguring the schedule into longer blocks. In addition, Google classroom will now fully integrate with the Infinite Campus student software soon.

The Committee received photos of the classroom desk set up. The Superintendent reported that the administration is endorsing the hybrid model. Through feedback from the spring remote learning during the school closure, he understands there was room for improvement. Again, the expectation of student learning will be different than it was in the spring. Should the District need to move to a full remote setting it will also be different than in the spring.

Lauren Mathisen spoke to the special education population and need to prioritize students with the most complex needs and offer those students full time services. This is also a mandate from DESE. Ms. Mathisen discussed the awareness that students have been disproportionately impacted due to nature of disability, or in being an English Language Learner (ELL) in front of a screen, and will not work.

The following groups will be prioritized for in person model:

- Integrated preschool – will learn with peers around them.
- Students with disabilities in a sub-separate program – groups of 3-6 students with a maximum of 10 will report all week with Wednesdays as a half day.
- ELL English language Learners – will be in two groups and attend on both cohort days

- Economically disadvantaged, homeless or no one to monitor during the school day – understand there no effective progress made in remote setting.

There was a discussion of connectivity issues for remote work. Mr. Ferro stated funding sources through Plymouth County CARES Program and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund).will be allocated to technology and internet. Mr. Ferro reported that additional Chromebooks are on order, but due to the massive shortage, will not arrive until late September or October. Mr. Ferro reported for lunch options, Mealpay Plus has a new app for families to order on line and can also participate in a grab and go option.

It was reported that based on parent survey information, there are less than 3.8% families that do not have internet connections and less than 8% do not have not personal electronic device for remote work. In addition, not all Chromebook were returned from the spring.

The Committee discussed challenges for families with working parents and accommodating the learning model schedules was discussed. The district is working with agencies like the YMCA to provide child care to alleviate households where both parents have to work or no one can stay at home with students. Due to social distancing constraints in most buildings, gyms will need to be used for student dining and would not be available for YMCA program settings.

Lauren Mathisen assured all parents with students who have IEP all services will be provided. The liaison will be in contact prior to school opening and services will be delivered regardless of plan voted this evening. Bill Tranter, Hanson Middle School Principal, spoke to the language based student program and special schedule for that population.

Mr. Szymaniak reported additional cleaning staff and hand sanitizing stations are included in the re-entry plan. DESE also provided guidelines and best practices for facilities and transportation. Air movement in buildings, office space configurations, mask breaks, isolation space are addressed. The district is looking at all Univents to insure proper air flow is drawing air from outdoors through a fresh air intake. It is important to get air and ventilation into the classrooms. Mr. Sandland reported windows at the Indian Head School will be repaired. Cleaning protocols have been established. Staff training will be conducted on August 19. The District is also bringing in a hygienist to produce auto readings in the cleaning process. Storage trailers have been rented for the storage of nonessential furniture after the analysis of spacing and distancing in classrooms was established. Mr. Sandland confirmed air quality testing is being done to confirm proper air flow is in place. In terms of cleaning between class movements, Mr. Ferro reported that high touch areas will be wiped down throughout the school day. The district is also working with First Student on similar protocol between bus runs. Custodial staffing was discussed. The Superintendent reported full time day porters will be in each building and five additional S.J. Services staff will be hired as recommended by the hygienist. Mr. Szymaniak added that additional costs may be covered by grant funding as COVID related needs.

Lead Nurse, Lisa Tobin, spoke to the health protocols in place. Mr. Szymaniak noted that the protocols will be posted on the district website. Ms. Tobin reported on continuous communication with the Department of Pubic Heath (DPH) and area nurses. The district is following all protocols and participating in training. In addition, the construction of medical waiting rooms with facilities, will be adjacent to nurse room in all school clinics has been established and a walk through with the Board of Health was performed today. Ms. Tobin is also working closely with the boards of health and school physician, Dr. David Belcher. Ms. Tobin reviewed the protocols in place if students or staff presents symptoms of COVID-19. The lead nurse will work collaboratively with the boards of health for contact tracing.

Mr. Szymaniak spoke to protocols in transportation. All drivers will also wear face coverings. There is consideration to place monitors on busses at the elementary level and assign seating. Disinfecting and high touch wipe down will be done daily. According to current mandates, 72 passenger bus may now only carry 24

students, which may have an impact on exiting and entering school. At this time, the current school day start and end times will remain the same.

Mr. Szymaniak reported a survey to families and staff will be conducted on August 11 to help determine the number of students that plan to return in person. Developing a parent resource sheet with best practices for students and parents was recommended by the Committee.

Mr. Ferro spoke to the technology availability for students. Classrooms will have 10-14 sets of Chromebooks. Chromebooks will be configured for home use. Unfortunately, the district cannot support 1:1 devices at this time. Parents are asked to only request Chromebooks if there is an essential need.

Mr. Szymaniak announced a significant number of public comments and questions have been received during the meeting. The Superintendent will develop a Frequently Asked Questions document in response to the public comments. Mr. Szymaniak confirmed that full day kindergarten and preschool will attend five days (half day on Wednesdays). If the district needed to go full remote, tuition will not be adjusted.

By August 10, 2020, each school district has to submit the plan chosen for implementation to the Department. Since the plan will require amendments to existing policy as well as budget revisions/reallocations, this plan should be approved/endorsed by the school committee prior to its submission to the Department.

VOTE: Mr. Jones motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to adopt and approve the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Hybrid Model for re-opening schools, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

WHEA representatives added comment. WHEA President, Kevin Kavka, spoke to working with leadership on developing an understanding for the safe return of staff to schools.

WHEA Executive Board Member, Cindy McCann, offered the following statement:

“This is by no means meant to be a formal statement on behalf of the entire WHEA membership. We would be remiss to think that this would speak for everyone, that being said, we feel that many teachers in our district feel the same way based on survey data. The decision you have been asked to make tonight may be a highly unpopular one no matter what the outcome is. It won’t be a fit for every family or household.

After tonight’s vote, no matter the outcome, we need to come together as a community and move forward, supporting each other as best we can to keep the Whitman Hanson students and staff safe and deliver the best possible education we can to our children. Delivering the best possible education means going back to school and being together in a classroom as much as possible while being safe. So much of the success of any given year comes directly from the community the teachers create and the routines we establish together in those first few weeks and months of the school year. Students get to know their teachers and classmates, expectations are reinforced and a family of learners is forged.

Growth comes when students feel connected, comfortable and empowered and this happens best in person. Despite valiant efforts by educators in Whitman-Hanson and educators everywhere, remote learning from March to June was not what we had hoped or wanted it to be so we could deliver the best possible education. We understand that and we did the best job we could with what we were given in an extremely short amount of time. Teachers haven’t been trained in online instruction—it’s a new, very different job and the 10 days we will be given at the beginning of this year will only be a fraction of what we need. But we are grateful for it and will embrace it, and this time we know it will be better, stronger, and more effective.

If we can safely get back into our schools for some face to face time, in person relationship building and instruction, even if it’s only for a few days a week for a few weeks or months, and even if we only have student desks in the room, we believe we will deliver a better learning experience for our students.

Students might not be able to see our mouths or the way our eyes crinkle when we smile at them, but they will hear the love in our voices and will feel our positive energy.

On a final note, we ask that the community be patient and supportive no matter what happens in the fall. Teaching is an unbelievably beautiful, complicated, and emotional dance under normal circumstances. Mastering the steps and delivering a perfect performance takes time. It involves trials, reflection and modification. We have never learned this new dance and you will be asking us to do it in 10 days. Please know that the teachers of Whitman-Hanson LOVE your children and we will do the very best we can. Just like our students thrive on encouragement, patience and grace, so do we as teachers. We will learn this new dance better with your support. Thank you.”

2020-21 Academic School Year Calendar

First Day of School Request to Change to September 15, 2020

Superintendent Szymaniak recommended changing the return to school date for all students PK-12 from September 8, 2020 to September 15, 2020. This is in response to DESE Commissioner’s recommendation to add three professional development days for teachers under the current guidelines for school re-opening in the fall. The last day of school will remain as June 22. Snow days may become remote days.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted by roll call to amend the 2020-21 academic calendar and adjust the first day of school for all students PK-12 from September 8, 2020 to September 15, 2020, as discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

PK/K Tuition Discussion

Mr. Szymaniak recommended the Committee approve continuing applicable tuition charges should students enrolled in preschool and full day kindergarten need to move to a full remote learning setting. The Superintendent confirmed affordable payment plans are available.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to approve continuing applicable tuition charges should students enrolled in preschool and full day kindergarten need to move to full remote learning, as discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

The Committee took a second break at 8:58 p.m.

Policy Updates

Students and Staff Face Mask Wearing

Superintendent Szymaniak discussed an anticipated face mask policy for Whitman-Hanson Regional School district staff and students K-12. The nomination differs slightly from CDC guidelines of children in grade 2 and under not requiring masks whereas the Superintendent will recommend all students, K-12, be required to wear a face covering. The MA Association of School Committees (MASC) developed a policy template for districts on wearing face masks. The Superintendent will share the policy template from MASC with the Committee to discuss at a future meeting. The district will be ordering clear shield face masks for special student populations.

ACAB Harassment Update

On August 3, the School Committee received a policy update in response to Title IX Regulation changes. MASC general counsel created a model to address the changes. Effective August 14, 2020, school committees are required to adopt an evidentiary standard or either preponderance of the evidence or beyond reasonable doubt standard. In addition, A summary of the attached Policy, as adopted, must be sent to parents/guardians, students, employees, unions, and prospective employees of the school district including Title IX Coordinator(s), investigator(s) and the decision-maker. The referenced employees must attend training sessions on the implementation of the Policy.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted to approve policy update for Policy ACAB Harassment, as discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

Creation of a General (Interim) Policy on COVID-Related Issues File: EBC Supplemental

Mr. Szymaniak shared that, as recommended by the MA Association of School Committees (MASC), the School Committee will need to address revisions or waivers to some of the policies they have established, as well as student handbook language, as the new school year approaches. The policy areas to concentrate on were identified in the MASC guidance document.

The Superintendent requested the Committee establish an emergency, interim policy and authorize the Superintendent to suspend, revise or create protocols to facilitate the safe return to school in order to:

- promote public safety and safety of students and faculty,
- maintain to the extent possible the high and efficient level of educational services,
- ensure support for students in general and in particular for those at highest risk educationally as well as those at social and economic risk, and
- comply with the emergency orders of the governor and adhere to the extent possible, to the guidance of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and other agencies of state and federal government, and expedite the safest strategy for returning students to school.

The policy is a supplement to EBC - Emergency Plans. This particular policy would not require each and every policy noted to be changed.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted to approve the creation of a General (Interim) Policy on COVID-Related Issues File: EBC Supplemental, granting the Superintendent authority to create policy, subject to subsequent ratification by School Committee, as discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

Whitman Middle School Feasibility Study and Building Committee

The Superintendent reported the Whitman Middle School Building Committee has been established and will meet in the near future. Mr. Grable is currently in the process of completing the education component for submission to the MA School Building Authority (MSBA).

New Business

Fred Small – Past Regional Assessment Methodology

Mr. Small made a motion that the School Committee empower the Superintendent to collaborate with the Whitman and Hanson Boards of Selectman along with our attorney and their attorneys, if needed, to contact and work with the appropriate investigative authority (Attorney General, Inspector General or District Attorney) in order to determine if there was any impropriety or malfeasance concerning the methodology of the Regional School Assessment over the past several years. Mr. Cullity seconded the motion. Mr. Small stated he is interested in having an unbiased assessment by a third party become involved in reviewing the recent assessment situation. Mr. Small stated he is seeking closure on the issue. Committee questioned what time period an audit/review should encompass. Committee suggested a subsequent meeting be scheduled for further consideration and a more detailed discussion. Committee expressed concerns of limiting the scope of the inquiry to the state level, and rather, suggested to hire an outside law firm to conduct the review. Mr. Forth stated he contacted the Attorney General and was referred to the Inspector General's office. Committee suggested the issue is past history, which has now been rectified, and that the Committee's focus turn to the future and allow for the divisiveness between the towns end. The Committee heavily deliberated the purpose and reasoning of the motion before moving to the vote. They considered consequences of an investigation of the Inspector General's office. A brief outline of events leading to the discovery of an assessment concern was discussed.

VOTE: Mr. Scriven motioned; Mr. Forth seconded; voted to table the motion made by Mr. Small (to empower the Superintendent to collaborate with the Whitman and Hanson Boards of Selectman along with our attorney and their attorneys, if needed, to contact and work with the appropriate investigative authority (Attorney General, Inspector General or District Attorney) in order to determine if there was any impropriety or malfeasance concerning the methodology of the Regional School Assessment over the past

several years). The motion to table carried 7-3-0.

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. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded: by roll call vote to enter into Executive Session to review and approve executive session minutes 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) at 9:55 p.m.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Mr. Howard seconded: by roll call vote to come out of Executive Session at 10:11 p.m.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – 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 10:11 p.m.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Signature of School Committee Secretary

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda and memo for August 6, 2020
- Meeting minutes of July 15, 2020
- WHRSD Reopening Plan
- MASC Pandemic specific policy for back to school informational memo
- MASC Policy file: ACAB Harassment
- Whitman Middle School Building Committee Form
- Warrants signed by Chair through 7/29/2020
- Executive Session meeting minutes July 15, 2020 and July 21, 2020 will be sent confidentially under separate cover
- Full, In-Person Plan (with modifications)
- Photo Gallery of classrooms across the District
- WHRSD Cleaning Protocols
- WHRSD Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios
- Students prioritized for In-person Learning in a Hybrid or Remote Model
- District Transportation
- WHRSD COVID-19 District Team