



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Meeting Minutes of November 4, 2020
Regular School Committee Meeting
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 10:26 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

Chair Hayes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was being recorded and broadcast live. All votes will be by roll call vote. Mr. Small was participating remotely.

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Hayes took the meeting agenda out of order.

Notice of State Investigation

Chair Hayes announced that Hanson Town Administrator, Mr. John Stanbrook, was participating remotely to discuss the notice of the state investigation. Lisa Green, Whitman Interim Town Administrator, was in attendance to discuss the notice of the state investigation.

Superintendent Szymaniak reported that on Friday, October 30, 2020, he received an email from School Committee member, David Forth, notifying him, the School Committee Chair and Vice Chair, of an ongoing state investigation into the school district and, that the state is also actively investigating both towns of Whitman and Hanson. The Superintendent reported he notified the school district's legal counsel, Attorney Andy Waugh. Neither the school district nor Attorney Waugh has yet to receive any notification or communication from the state related to an investigation. The Superintendent notified member town administrators, John Stanbrook (H) and Lisa Green (W) of the email notification and both confirmed they had not received any communication from the state related to an ongoing investigation. The Superintendent reported he responded to Mr. Forth's email and requested additional information, although had yet to receive anything to date. The Superintendent also informed the full School Committee of the email notification from Mr. Forth.

Whitman Interim Town Administrator, Lisa Green, reported the town of Whitman has not received any communicating from any state agency regarding an investigation. Ms. Green notified Whitman town counsel and they had not received any notice from any state agency regarding an investigation, and wanted to know which state agency was investigating. Hanson Town Administrator, John Stanbrook, reported the town of Hanson has not received any communicating from any state agency regarding an investigation.

Mr. Forth stated at a School Committee meeting held in August, he informed the Committee he contacted the Office of the Attorney General and Office of the Inspector General to determine the process of a School Committee needing to look into requesting an investigation or having the state get involved. Mr. Forth reported, at that time, he was referred to the Office of the Inspector General and received a follow up call from the IG's office. Mr. Forth reported a second follow up call from the Office of the Inspector General was received a couple of weeks later requesting documentation from Mr. Forth. Mr. Forth reported a subsequent call a couple of weeks later from the Office of the Inspector General, informing Mr. Forth that his probe was referred to the Department of Revenue (DOR) who is now investigating the towns of Whitman and Hanson and the School District. Mr. Forth was uncertain of the exact date the Office of the Inspector General notified him that the Department of Revenue or Division of Local Services (DLS) was conducting an investigation. Mr. Forth stated he provided documentation to the state but was uncertain if he was allowed to discuss the contents or provide copies of what was sent.

Interim Town Administrator, Lisa Green, speaking on behalf of the Town of Whitman, requested Mr. Forth provide copies of all related documentation he has given to the state. Mr. Forth confirmed nearly 40 pages of documentation were provided to the state. Mr. Forth stated he would reach out to the state to see if he can provide copies to the Committee and towns. Mr. Forth will also review past phone logs for contact names and numbers to share with the Committee and towns. Mr. Forth confirmed he only spoke to the Office of Inspector General and that Office informed him the investigation was now at the DOR/DLS.

The Superintendent spoke to the challenge of not having contact information for someone to reach out to at the state level or which agency to contact, and without knowing what the investigation pertains; whether it is budgetary, MCAS related or education related. Mr. Forth responded the investigation is most likely budgetary related. Mr. Forth reported there is a main phone number to the Office of the Inspector General; however, he does not recall the name of the individual he spoke with. Mr. Szymaniak asked Mr. Forth if his recent public records request received on Monday, November 2, 2020 for Whitman-Hanson Regional School District documents 1991-1994 and 2006-2008 from was related to this investigation. Mr. Forth stated his recent public records request was unrelated to the state investigation.

Mr. Forth reported when he contacted the Office of the Inspector General to determine what the process would be, he was acting on behalf of himself as an individual private citizen, not as a School Committee member. Mr. Forth denied he reported a complaint to the state. Mr. Forth reported the Office of the Inspector General contacted him a few weeks after his inquiry and requested documentation from him and, subsequently, informed him an investigation was being conducted by the DOR/DLS.

VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Ms. Kniffen seconded; voted by roll call that Mr. David Forth provide the Committee with any and all communications provided to any state agencies pertaining to the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – No

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes - Yes

The motion carried 9-1-0.

In continued discussion, Mr. Forth referred to state funding and use of the statutory method of assessment and wanted to inform the Committee this is what is being questioned by the state. Mr. Forth reported he does not have

a case number from the DOR but will provide the name of the person he spoke with at the Office of the Inspector General. Mr. Forth reaffirmed he was acting as private citizen and not as a School Committee official when he contacted the Office of the Inspector General in August.

For the record, and to determine if any School Committee members have been contacted by any state agencies with questions pertaining to the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District, all members, with the exception of Mr. Forth, responded that they have not been contacted by any state agencies.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2020 School Committee meeting minutes (Joint meeting with town Select Boards)

The Committee considered proposed amendments to the September 15, 2020 meeting minutes presented. The Committee briefly deliberated what should and should not be included in meeting minutes. The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Policy BEDG –Minutes, was cited.

VOTE: Ms. Byers motioned; Mr. Forth seconded; voted by roll call to amend the September 15, 2020 meeting minutes with amendments submitted by Ms. Byers.

Mr. Bois – No

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – No

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – No

Mr. Jones – No

Ms. Kniffen – No

Mr. Small – No

Mr. Scriven – No

Mr. Hayes - No

The motion did not carry 2-8-0.

VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to accept the meeting minutes of September 15, 2020, as presented.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – No

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – No

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes - Yes

The motion carried 8-2-0.

September 30, 2020 School Committee meeting minutes

VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to approve the meeting minutes of September 30, 2020, as presented.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes
Mr. Hayes - Abstained
The motion carried 9-0-1.

Unfinished Business

Structure of Public Comment

The Superintendent discussed the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and mandates on the public comment portion of school committee meetings. A motion to table public comment was made and withdrawn by Mr. Cullity. The Committee deliberated on how to include public comment in upcoming school committee business meetings. The Superintendent offered to facilitate public comment at the next School Committee meeting via remote technology. The public would be provided with the structure of public comment segment. It was recommended to allow fifteen minutes for public comment at the start of the school committee meeting. Each individual would be allowed up to three minutes for comment. It was the consensus of the Committee to permit the Superintendent to facilitate public comment at the next meeting.

Community Engagement (follow up items)

The Superintendent reported a number of community engagement items discussed at the September 30, 2020 School Committee meeting will be included as action items of Pillar 5, Community Engagement, of the Strategic Plan.

New Business

Donations/Gift Acceptance

Chair Hayes announced the high school received an HP 14” Touch Chromebook donation from Brooke and Joel Whitman valued at \$279.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to accept the donation of an HP 14” Touch Chromebook donation from Brooke and Joel Whitman, as presented.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes - Yes

The motion carried unanimously.

Whitman Middle School Feasibility Study Building Committee Report

Mr. Small reported next meeting is on December 7, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

Report of the MA Association of School Committees (MASC) Resolutions

Chair Hayes affirmed that Dawn Byers is the 2020 MASC/MASS Joint Conference voting delegate for the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District. The Report of the MASC Resolutions, to be voted at the upcoming MASC/MASS Joint Conference Delegate Assembly on November 7, 2020, was presented. The Committee reviewed the list of resolutions and determined its support for each as listed below.

RESOLUTION 1: MCAS AND HIGH STAKES TESTING – Support

RESOLUTION 2: COVID-19 STATE FUNDING – Committee previously voted to Support

RESOLUTION 3: SCHOOL COMMITTEE ANTI-RACISM RESOLUTION – Support

RESOLUTION 4: LOWERING THE VOTING AGE FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS – Did Not Support

RESOLUTION 5: SUPPORTING INCREASED FEDERAL SUPPORT AND STIMULUS FUNDING FOR PUBLIC K-12 EDUCATION – Support
RESOLUTION 6: RETENTION OF MEDICAID REVENUE – Support
RESOLUTION 7: ATTEMPTS BY US DOE TO DIRECT FUNDING TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS – Support
RESOLUTION 8: MEMBERSHIP OF A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ON THE BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION – Support
RESOLUTION 9: PROVIDING EQUITY FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION - LGBTQ+ STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND STAFF – Support
RESOLUTION 10: RELATIVE TO THE MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE OF STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC – Support

DESE District Review Report January 2014

Chair Hayes presented the Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) District Review Report dated January 2014 per the request of Committee member David Forth. Mr. Forth cited several recommendations in the DESE report the Committee may wish to consider implementing to be more effective and transparent. Mr. Forth suggested convening a budget subcommittee. The Committee discussed areas of ineffectiveness of previous budget subcommittees due to limited budget information, lack of figures from the towns early in the budget season and ongoing revenue issues. In addition, the Superintendent reported the full Committee wanted to be involved in all budget discussions. The Superintendent added that this year, an effective change has been made and currently, Kathleen Ottina is the budget liaison for the Town of Whitman. Chair Hayes reported he is in contact with the town of Hanson to appoint a budget liaison from the Town of Hanson. The Committee discussed other recommendations in the 2014 DESE Annual Review, noting the report is over six years old. The Committee continued discussion regarding fiscal communication with the towns, a conceivable role of a budget subcommittee, and time constraints of an additional subcommittee.

VOTE: Mr. Forth motioned; Ms. Byers seconded; voted by roll call to establish a budget subcommittee.

Mr. Bois – No

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – No

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – No

Mr. Jones – No

Ms. Kniffen – No

Mr. Small – No

Mr. Scriven – No

Mr. Hayes - No

The motion did not carry 2-8-0.

The Superintendent reported he anticipates budget discussions with the towns will commence after the Thanksgiving recess.

Subcommittee Reports

Pilgrim Area Collaborative Report

Mr. Bois reported the Pilgrim Area Collaborative (PAC) will have their second meeting of the new school year on Thursday, November 5. Mr. Bois was appointed the secretary and to the PAC budget subcommittee. The budget subcommittee meets twice a year with collaborative administrators.

Facilities Subcommittee

Mr. Szymaniak reported on the Facilities Subcommittee meeting held on October 21, 2020. The Subcommittee discussed funding encumbered by the Town of Whitman for generators for Duval and Conley; however, there are issues with the wetlands behind Duval for generator placement. The District needs to meet with Conservation Commission on placement. The elevator at the high school was finally repaired after issues with delays in obtaining a replacement part. The Subcommittee reviewed the capital matrices. The matrices will now include project status reports for current status and/or work completed. Mr. Small added the monies currently

encumbered by the town of Whitman for the Duval and Conley generators are not sufficient to cover the cost of two generators. The District will need to provide an estimate for the remaining cost for the May town meeting warrant article.

Policy Subcommittee

Dawn Byers reported the Policy Subcommittee recently met on two occasions to review policy updates and recommendations from MASC. The Policy Subcommittee recommended a number of updates to amend existing policy, adopt new policy and delete redundant and or unnecessary policy. Below is a summary of the recommendations provided for the Committee's consideration.

Policy Subcommittee Recommendations 11-04-2020

Policy Subcommittee meetings were held on September 28 and October 21, 2020.

The Policy Subcommittee proposed and voted the below recommendations to the full Committee.

Amend Existing Policy:

BEDH - Public Comment at School Committee Meetings - Updated language for DESE compliance

ID - School Day-Updated language

IE - Organization of Instruction -Updated language

IGA- Curriculum Development- Updated language

IGB - Support Services Programs – (Updated language) – Insert “Director of Student Services”

IGD - Curriculum Adoption- Updated language

IHAM - Health Education – (Update language) – K-8 only for WHRSD

IHB - Special Instructional Programs and Accommodations -Updated language

IHBEA- English Language Learners -Updated language and title (English Learner Education)

JB - Equal Educational Opportunities - Updated language

JC - Attendance Areas - Updated language

JCA - Assignment of Students to School -Updated language

JF - School Admissions -Updated language

JFABD - Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services - Updated language for DESE compliance

JFBB-1 - School Choice (Districts choosing not to participate) - Updated language

JH - Student Absences and Excuses - Updated language

JHD - Exclusions and Exemptions from School - Updated language

JICFA - Prohibition of Hazing -Updated language

JICH - Alcohol Drugs and Tobacco - Updated language

JIH - Searches and Interrogations - Updated language

JII - Student Complaints and Grievances - Updated language

JJA - Student Organizations-Updated language

JJH-R - Travel Regulations - Updated websites

JLCB - Inoculation of Students - Updated title to “Immunization” of Students

JLCC - Communicable Diseases - Updated language

JRA - Student Records - Updated language

JRD - Student Photographs - Added Legal Reference

EFC Free and Reduced Price Food Services (Updated language)

EFD Meal Charge Policy (Updated language)

EFDA Payment and Collection for School Breakfast and Lunch (Updated language)

IC/ICA - School Year/School Calendar – (Updated language)

JEB -Entrance Age – (Updated language)

JIH - Searches and Interrogations – (Updated language)

Adopt New Policy:

JFABE - Educational Opportunities for Military Children -Updated language for DESE compliance. This would be a new policy for WHRSD.

JFABF - Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care -Updated language for DESE compliance. This would be a new policy for WHRSD.

Delete Policy as redundant or unnecessary:

IHA- Basic Instructional Program
JP -Student Gifts and Solicitations

*MASC recommended deleting policy JLD Guidance Program - Whitman-Hanson does not have a policy JLD Guidance Program.

**MASC recommended deleting policy JLA-Student Insurance Program – The Subcommittee voted to recommend keeping Policy JLA Student Insurance Program as a policy.

VOTE: Mr. Forth motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded: voted by roll call to accept the recommendations of the Policy Subcommittee to amend existing policies, adopt new policies and delete redundant and or unnecessary policies, as presented.

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 – Abstained

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion carried 9-0-1.

Insurance Subcommittee

It was determined that the Director of Business and Finance, Mr. John Tuffy, will prepare current policy rates and coverage information for the Insurance Subcommittee's initial meeting. Mr. Tuffy will then arrange for a presentation from Mayflower Municipal Health Group (MMHG) and the state Group Insurance Commission (GIC).

Negotiations Subcommittee

The Committee deliberated the makeup of the Negotiations Subcommittee in anticipation of Collective Bargaining with the Whitman Hanson Education Association (WHEA). The mechanics of a negotiations subcommittee was discussed. It was noted that the subcommittee would report on progress from time to time in executive session to the full Committee. It was the consensus of the Committee to have a three-member negotiations subcommittee. The initial meeting will be to establish ground rules. Chair Hayes appointed Mike Jones, Dan Cullity and Fred Small to the Negotiations Subcommittee for the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District and Whitman Hanson Education Association (WHEA) collective bargaining negotiations for Unit A (Teachers). Chair Hayes appointed Mr. Jones as chair of the subcommittee.

Regional Agreement Subcommittee

The Committee discussed establishing a new Regional Agreement Subcommittee. The Committee deliberated the makeup of the Regional Agreement Subcommittee, recommending a reduction in the number of participants to begin deliberations and purpose. Chair Hayes appointed Christopher Howard and Christopher Scriven to the Regional Agreement Subcommittee. The Regional Agreement Subcommittee will be included on the next School Committee Agenda.

Executive Session

To comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements to review executive session meeting minutes and the chair so declares.

The Chair stated the only vote to be taken coming out of Executive Session will be to adjourn.

VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded: voted by roll call to enter into Executive Session to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements to review executive session meeting minutes and the chair so declares at 10:13 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 carried unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded: voted by roll call to come out of Executive Session at 10:26 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 carried unanimously.

Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Bois motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted by roll call to adjourn the meeting at 10:26 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 carried unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Signature of School Committee Secretary

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda and memo for November 4, 2020
- Meeting minutes of September 30, 2020
- Meeting minutes of September 15, 2020 with requested amendments
- WHRSD Policy BEDH on Public Comment

- Memo from High School Principal to accept donation of Chromebook
- Report of the MASC Resolutions June 2020
- Proposed policy updates from MASC January 2020 and Policy Subcommittee recommendations