



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of October 21, 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: 10:00 p.m.

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

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 for presentation purposes. The Chair announced the Committee will enter into Executive Session at scheduled time of 8:30 p.m.

Superintendent's Report

School Opening updates

The Superintendent welcomed all school principals to discuss the opening of school. In a PowerPoint presentation led by Conley Elementary School Principal, Karen Downey, staff and student photos, quotes and the general climate of opening schools at the elementary level was presented. All social distancing and personal protection protocols are in place. Generally, there is a lot of excitement having students back in school. Assigned seating is in place to facilitate contact tracing. Indian Head Principal Garry Pelletier commended students on their efforts in practicing social distancing. Mr. Pelletier spoke to the advance in curriculum and alignment for all three elementary schools, in all models, integrated with software program Google Classroom and Clever, and the new reading program, Into Reading, in its first year. Remote learners are using the same online resources as Hybrid learners. Dr. Darlene Foley, Duval Elementary School principal, noted challenges expressed by staff of the complexity of social/emotional learners and changes in planning and implementation of curriculum and learning new software platforms.

Hanson Middle School Principal, Bill Tranter, noted the same protocols are in place at the middle school as the elementary schools. There are a few differences at the middle school level. Students remain in one classroom and the teachers rotate. Students have an opportunity to socialize safely in a socially-distanced environment during lunch. The Hanson middle school cafeteria has been transformed to a sensory area for students should they need some time away from the classroom for a break or to move around. Interim Whitman Middle School Principal,

Kerri Sandler, spoke to the enthusiasm of having students back in school. Ms. Sandler highlighted the Wednesday virtual day as an opportunity for teachers working to bring cohorts A and B together. The mechanics of the Edgenuity program was explained. Mr. Szymaniak noted there is a notable reduction in discipline in middle schools.

High School Principal, Dr. Christopher Jones, discussed learning at the high school level and the four principles considered in reopening the high school as; to be flexible in case there is a need to go to remote, to maximize in-person learning, to increase focus SEL and building relationships and to have constant communication. The high school also changed its schedule to a six period day. Teachers are live-streaming with both in-person and remote learners. Logistical and safety precautions are in place. Hallways and stairways are one-way and there is also assigned seating at the high school. Dr. Jones discussed how absences are handled and the ability to log in from home if a student is sick.

Preschool Academy Principal, Patricia Poirier-Collins, reported the recommendation from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) was to have preschool students report in person, although some parents did opt for the remote plan. The preschool is generally self-contained in one wing of the high school.

The principal of remote learning, Mike Grable, reported on the number of K-8 students remote learners and assigned remote staff. There are currently 316 remote students K-8. Mr. Grable discussed the efforts of students, staff, and parents and students facilitating the remote plan. Mr. Szymaniak reported on staffing needs due to the number of families opting for the remote plan. A number of teachers unable to report in person have been assigned to the remote plan, as well as a number of new hires, to cover the volume of students. Mr. Szymaniak reported there are also over one-hundred fully remote high school learners.

Director of Student Services, Lauren Mathisen, reported through its new membership with South Shore Education Collaborative (SSEC) the district has realized significant savings on out-of-district tuition. Those savings provided an opportunity to establish a new Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC) for elementary students in Hanson. Ms. Mathisen discussed how special education services are being supported. Ms. Mathisen announced that officers and members of the Whitman-Hanson Best Buddies program at the high school earned the "Inclusion in Leadership Award" from Best Buddies International.

Student Advisory Report

Student Council Representative, Skylar Leonard, reported on the start of the new school year, the student online learning experience, sports and current events. Student survey responses included; the start of the new school year was challenging to navigate on line school and remain engaged, but appears better apart from initial technology log in issues and learning is difficult without same interaction as in person. Sports are being played and social distancing protocols are in place and being followed by teams. Current events include a trivia game during lunch on Tuesdays and Fridays, and fun activities being developed and students can win prizes. The extra-curricular student clubs are meeting and there is a new 'pre-med' club initiated by a senior class member.

Budget

The Superintendent introduced Kathleen Ottina who was appointed by the Town of Whitman as the Whitman Finance Committee liaison to the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District for the FY2022 budget cycle.

FY2021 Budget Report

Director of Business and Finance, John Tuffy, presented the year to date budget reports. Mr. Tuffy reported that to date, 30.4% of the budget has been expended versus 36.6% last year. Mr. Tuffy talked about typical fixed costs being the similar each year. Mr. Tuffy explained that the thirty percent is slightly inaccurate (on a comp basis), due to starting the year with a 1/12th budget and the district not having the same number of encumbrances at the same time last year. Mr. Tuffy reported to date, 25.4% of projected revenue has been collected. Mr. Tuffy reported salary, substitute and special education accounts will be reconciled to determine if what was projected is what was budgeted. Other accounts that may need to be adjusted include the unemployment line (the district recognizes a deficit early on) and utilities, which have increased due to the air exchanges under COVID. Mr.

Tuffy reported the final state budget is yet to be determined; however, it is known that local aid will be reduced by \$110,000. Mr. Tuffy discussed anticipated grants to cover the COVID related expenses. There was a brief discussion of regarding federal aid stimulus ending in December and uncertainty of a second stimulus program

COVID-19 Update and Plan

The Superintendent reported that currently, thirty-one students and staff are quarantined. The District and lead nurse work closely with the local board of health for disposition and contact tracing. The Superintendent discussed the nature of the state color-coding metric and talked about being prepared if the district had to move to fully remote. If either town is in the 'red' category for three weeks, the district may move to remote. Recent announcements from the DESE Commissioner Riley indicate students should stay in person if the town's COVID cases are not impacting school districts. Challenges with quarantining for both students and staff were discussed. The Superintendent informs the parents and staff of a COVID case through email. Only limited information can be provided under HIPPA privacy. The Superintendent discussed how the district works with the lead nurse and boards of health on contact tracing, following CDC guidelines and DPH standards and parameters (must be within six feet for fifteen minutes).

MASC workshop with Glenn Koocher (October 28)

The Superintendent reported he contacted MASC Executive Director, Glenn Koocher with questions on professional development and trainings for school committee members. The Superintendent announced a workshop for all School Committee members is scheduled for October 28.

Superintendent's Goals 2020-21 SY Presentation

The Superintendent presented his goals for the 2020-21 school year. Performance Standards in Instructional leadership, Management and Operations, Family and Community Engagement and Professional Culture will drive the Superintendent's goals. The Superintendent goals are based upon self-evaluation, end of year evaluation, and the Whitman-Hanson leadership team in the areas of Professional Practice, Student Learning and District Improvement.

Standard II: Management and Operations

Standard III: Family and Community Engagement

Goal: Effectively collaborate with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) through the Feasibility Study to secure funding for a replacement, renovation or modernization of the Whitman Middle School.

Standard I: Instructional Leadership

Goal: Implement interim assessments in grade K-8 three times during the school year in both English Language Arts and Mathematics, utilizing the iReady and the Into Reading program for grades k-5 and the IXL diagnostic program for grade 6-8. This is to understand where our students are at and to help remediate identified weaknesses, or extend core knowledge while they are grade level curriculum.

Standard I: Instructional Leadership

Standard III: Family and Community Engagement

Standard IV: Professional Culture

Goal: Using a Transformative Social Emotional Learning approach in conjunction with the District exSEL team, the Rennie Center and Transforming Education, we will offer professional development in the areas of identity, belonging and agency in order to build strong, respectful, and lasting relationships. The goal is to critically examine root causes of inequity, discover examples where it exists, and to ensure that we promote justice for all individuals.

Standard I: Instructional Leadership

Standard IV: Professional Culture

To close the equity gaps currently in place for our English Learners (EL) population according to the DESE Student Learning Experience Reports. Specific areas of concern are makeup of EL cohorts as to staffing, years of teaching, teacher evaluation and absenteeism.

Standard I: Instructional Leadership

Standard II: Management and Operations

Standard IV: Professional Culture

Goal: Implement, through an evaluation of our technology infrastructure, a sustainable plan for WHRSD to become a one to one Chromebook school district and allow the district to fully transition to Google Essentials and its educational benefit.

Mr. Szymaniak stated the 2020-21 SY goals were prepared based on a self-assessment and the School Committee superintendent's year end summative evaluation results. Mr. Szymaniak noted there is a pilot of rubric and list of indicators for the superintendent's evaluation on the DESE website.

The Superintendent anticipates a formative evaluation being performed in January/February, presenting evidence on goals in May and completing the superintendent's year end summative evaluation in June. This timeline will allow the superintendent to prepare and present the superintendent's 2021-22 SY goals in September.

VOTE: Mr. Scriven motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; roll call voted to accept the 2020-21 SY Superintendent's Goals, as presented.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

The Committee entered into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declared.

VOTE: Mr. Scriven motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; roll call voted to go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares at 8:35 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Mr. Scriven motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; roll call voted to come out of Executive Session at 9:51 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

After a brief discussion regarding the timeline of the MASC/MASS Joint Conference and MASC Resolutions to be voted on November 7, it was the consensus of the Committee to schedule its next meeting on November 4 in order to consider the proposed resolutions. Other items to be included on the November 4 agenda will include the 2014 DESE District Review Report January and the Pilgrim Area Collaborative Report.

Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Forth seconded; roll call voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – 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 October 21, 2020
- Meeting minutes of September 30, 2020
- Meeting minutes of September 15, 2020 with requested amendments by D. Byers and D. Forth
- WHRSD Policy BEDH on Public Comment
- YTD Budget Reports
- Superintendent's Goals 2020-21 School year
- Memo from High School Principal to accept donation of Chromebook
- Report of the MASC Resolutions June 2020
- DESE Annual Report of WHRSD January 2014
- Proposed policy updates from MASC January 2020
- A/P and Payroll warrants signed through 10/13/2020
- Best Buddies MA & RI "Inclusion in Leadership" Award

