



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Meeting Minutes of December 16, 2020
Regular School Committee Meeting
Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

Meeting convened: 6:00 p.m.
Meeting adjourned: 8:58 p.m.
Members present: Robert Hayes, Christopher Scriven - participated remotely, Frederick Small - participated remotely, Michael Jones, Daniel Cullity, Christopher Howard, Steve Bois, Dawn Byers and Hillary Kniffen
Members absent: David Forth, Jr.
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 6:00 p.m. The meeting was being recorded and broadcast live. All votes will be by roll call vote. Mr. Small and Mr. Scriven participated remotely.

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll call vote for attendance was taken.

Public Comment

There was no one for public comment.

Chair Hayes reported he and the Superintendent will be hosting a new cable TV show on WHCA-TV to highlight the goings on in the school district through community engagement. Chair Hayes is seeking segment ideas from teachers, students, and community members. It was also suggested to post articles in the local Express newspapers. Mr. Szymaniak added the Express papers will also carry a weekly Principal's corner and School Committee member may submit a substitute article as well.

Student Advisory Report

Chair Hayes reported Student Council Representative, Skylar Leonard, need to step down due to employment obligations. Anna Flynn will be the new Student Council Representative and will report out at the next School Committee meeting.

Meeting Minutes Approval

November 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes

NOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted by roll call to approve the meeting minutes of November 18, 2020, as presented.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes - Yes

The motion carried unanimously.

Superintendent's Report

M.A.S.S. Academic Excellence Awards Presentation

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents has designed an award for academic excellence for students who have distinguished themselves in the pursuit of excellence during their high school careers. Chair Hayes and Superintendent Szymaniak presented the awards to high school senior students Payton Bourgelas and Abigail Delory.

Miles for Meals Fundraiser and Food Pantry Donations

Dr. Christopher Jones reported this year the National Honor Society (NHS) held its 11th annual Miles for Meals 5K and One Mile Walk on Halloween virtually. Community members were encouraged to get out and walk in their neighborhoods, dress up, and share pictures on social media. NHS received many generous donations through GoFundMe to support this great cause. In the end, NHS raised a total of \$2,190 this year. The Whitman and Hanson Food Pantries will each be receiving a check in the amount of \$1,095. Dr. Jones reported the Key Club held their giving tree club drive and donations were distributed today. Panther gear is available to order on line through "The Den".

North River Collaborative Report

The Superintendent reported \$9,700 was reimbursed to the District in savings as a result of overcharges in transportation costs.

COVID Update

Mr. Szymaniak reported on the number of positive COVID tests and quarantined staff and students since the last School Committee meeting. A number of surrounding towns have already moved to a temporary full remote module due to cases in their districts. Currently, the COVID test results between December 1st through December 16th indicate there are 29 students and 7 staff positive tests and 142 students and 21 staff quarantined as close contacts. Szymaniak explained positive cases as reported by dese as being in the building in the last seven days. Mr. Szymaniak discussed the consistent communication and collaboration with the town Boards of Health. He discussed social distancing recommendations to mitigate the spread over the holidays. The Superintendent will send a reminder to parents about COVID and the available hotline during the holiday recess.

The Superintendent reported he designated December 17, 2020 as an inclement weather school day due to the forecasted approaching snowstorm.

Mr. Ferro reported that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) cleared the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District as one of 68% of districts meeting time on learning standards. Time on Learning standards address student learning times for hybrid and remote learning models. On December 15, 2020, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) adopted emergency regulations governing student learning time that goes into effect on January 19, 2021. The regulations require school districts using a hybrid learning model to provide at least 35 hours of combined in-person and remote synchronous learning over a 10-school day period (live instruction includes a teacher in front of you in class or in a synchronous way).

Athletic Director, Bob Rodgers discussed the impact the pandemic continues to have on athletics. Parents may attend home games only and no other fans are allowed. Winter sports commenced on December 14 and games will begin during the break. The district has six sports and eleven teams participating. All games in the Patriot League will be live streamed.

Proposed School Calendar Changes

The Superintendent reported the district will move to student remote learning days for two days only on December 21 and 22, 2020. The Superintendent proposed moving the Annual Budget Public Hearing presentation date from February 3, 2021 to February 10, 2021.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to approve the academic remote learning days for two days only on December 21 and 22, 2020 and the Annual Budget Public Hearing presentation date change from February 3, 2021 to February 10, as discussed.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes - Yes

The motion carried unanimously.

Report on Joint Meeting with Whitman Finance Committee (12/15/2020)

The Superintendent reported he met with the Whitman Finance Committee for preliminary discussion on budget and non-mandated bussing. Preliminary figures were discussed with the Finance Committee. Mr. Szymaniak spoke to the challenge of projecting costs during the COVID pandemic for FY2022. Fixed costs, like insurance and vendor/merchant related costs are anticipated to increase.

Mr. Szymaniak discussed the Comprehensive Plan to return to school presented to the Committee this past August. The District selected the Hybrid plan and also provided Whitman-Hanson staff for the fully remote learners, rather than using on of DESE's vendors (TECCA). At this time, it has been not determined if the district will be able to offer the same for remote learners or even TECCA, unless either program can be financially supported. Other potential programs the Committee has discussed are in jeopardy due to insufficient funding sources. These include tuition-free full day kindergarten, middle school foreign language and adjusting school start and end times. The Superintendent discussed the need to fund student remediation for those falling behind over the last year. In addition, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), grant reimbursement is unlikely to continue next year. Mr. Szymaniak offered to work with the towns regarding any changes and issues with non-mandated bussing. The Committee discussed supporting the Superintendent's budget scenarios.

Update on a Hanson Finance Committee liaison to Whitman-Hanson RSD

The Superintendent reported the Hanson Finance Committee will meet in January to discuss the appointment of a budget liaison to the School Committee.

Budget Report - John Tuffy

Mr. Tuffy presented November YTD encumbrances and revenue reports. FY2021 preliminary Cherry Sheet estimates were released on December 14, 2020. The district has spent 51% of the budget. Mr. Tuffy noted that some expenses may be covered by grant reimbursement and briefly discussed an additional \$286,000 that will be submitted under the CARES Act on December 18. Mr. Tuffy reported after some discussion between the legislation and DESE, the bill for monies earmarked for technology by Representative Cutler and Senator Brady passed. Mr. Tuffy will provide a report of the outstanding expenses to the Committee. Mr. Tuffy also anticipates having concrete FY2021 Cherry Sheet figures on from the state in January 2021. There was a brief discussion of and extension to receive delayed goods ordered in the fall (Chromebooks). There is guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) related to Chapter 70 funding and applying that to FY2021 school budgets. Mr. Tuffy will need more time to review the information and anticipates reporting back

to the Committee at their January meeting. It was reported the Families First Corona Response Act (FFCRA) eligibility is due to expire on December 31.

Unfinished Business

State Investigation Status

Chair Hayes reported there is no new information on this subject. The Committee considered the matter closed at this time.

New Business

Non-voting Representative to serve as a liaison to the Town of Whitman Buildings, Facilities and Capital Expenditures Committee (BFCEC)

Mr. Small reported he was appointed by the Town Board of Selectmen as a voting member of the Town of Whitman Buildings, Facilities and Capital Expenditures Committee (BFCEC) and suggested Director of Facilities, be appointed as the liaison. After a brief discussion it was determined a liaison was not necessary and Mr. Small would continue in his role on the BFCEC. As information is needed from the school district, Mr. Small would collaborate with the Director of Facilities, Ernie Sandland.

Substitute Pay Rates

The Superintendent recommended to pass over this agenda item.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted by roll call to pass over a discussion on substitute pay rates.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes - Yes

The motion carried unanimously.

Subcommittee Reports

Pilgrim Area Collaborative Report

Mr. Bois reported the 2020 Pilgrim Area Collaborative Annual Report may be found on their website. Mr. Bois presented a new Chromebook as a donation to the school district.

VOTE: Mr. Howard motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted by roll call to accept the donation of a new Chromebook from School Committee member Steven Bois.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes - Yes

The motion carried unanimously.

Facilities Subcommittee

Mr. Small reported the Subcommittee anticipates scheduling a meeting in January. Mr. Small added that additional funds will be needed to cover the cost of two portable generators for Duval and Conley schools. Mr.

Sandland is working with the town of Whitman Interim Town Administrator to secure a funding to cover the cost of the Conley School generator and recommended delay the Duval School purchase until a later date.

Policy Subcommittee

Ms. Byers reported the Subcommittee anticipates scheduling a meeting in January. Ms. Byers contacted MASC Representative, Jim Hardy, to meet with the Committee or Subcommittee to discuss policy implementation and best practices.

Insurance Subcommittee

Mr. Small reported the subcommittee met on December 9, 2020 via zoom. Mr. Tuffy is gathering information for in preparation for the next meeting.

Negotiations Subcommittee

Mr. Jones reported the Committee plans to enter into Executive Session to discuss the collective bargaining status.

Regional Agreement Subcommittee

Mr. Scriven reported the Town of Hanson is seeking a third party to process a feasibility study for de-regionalization.

Executive Session

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; WHEA Collective Bargaining, Superintendent's contract and Whitman water/sewer invoice.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted by roll call 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 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 at 7:27 p.m.; WHEA Collective Bargaining, Superintendent's contract and Whitman water/sewer invoice.

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. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted by roll call to come out of Executive Session at 8:58 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment:

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted by roll call to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – 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 December 16, 2020
- Meeting minutes of November 18, 2020
- YTD Budget Expenditures and Revenue reports
- Current substitute rates
- South Shore Education Collaborative financial update (handout only)
- Invitation
- Cd letters to families of P. Bourgelas and A. Delory
- Additional Handouts
 - Listing of Warrants signed