

Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2020
Virtual Meeting

Present: Mrs. Leah Miller, Mrs. Ruth Lynch, Mrs. Kimberly Booker, Mr. John Geary and Mrs. Libby Corbo

Also Present: Matthew Ferron, Deborah St. Ives, Thomas Raab and Keith Guyette,

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 3:07pm by Mrs. Miller

Public Comment: Mrs. Miller noted that since this was virtual meeting, all public comment would be moved to the end of the meeting.

Approval Minutes:

Motion by Geary to approve the February 26, 2020 School Committee General Session minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

Report of the Superintendent presented by Mr. Ferron:

- **FAQs for COVID-19** – Mr. Ferron opened the meeting by answering some of the most frequently asked questions regarding the current Covid-19 situation. Below are the questions and Mr. Ferron's answers:
 - Is the rest of the school year being cancelled?
 - It is too premature for this question to be answered, but Mr. Ferron note that he is hopeful that it would not be cancelled.
 - Will there still be a summer break and an April vacation?
 - Mr. Ferron said he was confident in saying there would still be a summer vacation. He said he was less certain about April vacation at that point. He said it would depend on the state of the community during this crisis.
 - Why isn't schoolwork mandatory and why aren't assignments being graded?
 - Mr. Ferron answered this by reiterating that the DESE has given specific guidelines to not move forward with new instruction at this time. He noted that this was an equity issue as not all students in all districts have the same access to online learning. At this point, virtual learning is not feasible because everything has happened so quickly and there are still several more questions that need to be answered going forward.
 - Will the MCAS and SATs still take place?
 - Mr. Ferron said that this was currently all on hold.
 - What is the best way to communicate with teachers?
 - Mr. Ferron said email is the best form of communication at this point.
 - Sports, Prom and other Events?
 - Mr. Ferron said that the MIAA has postponed their start of the spring season until at least April 27th. Proms and special events are all on hold for right now. He noted that we would all need to be flexible, as we don't want our senior class to miss out on these special traditions. All field trips have been cancelled at this point and Camp Squanto is still TBD.

- If this closure goes on longer than three weeks, how do we prepare students for next year?
 - Mr. Ferron said this would be determined once we know the length of the closure. He said the entire HPS Administration team is constantly reassessing how things can be pushed out and if there are other platforms to be used.
- Will next year's curriculum be adjusted?
 - Mr. Ferron said yes, but it will be determined later how much it will need to be adjusted.

Mr. Ferron said that if parents or students had questions, they should reach out to their teachers and if someone needed access to a school, they should reach out to the building administrators.

Food Services during School Closure: Dr. Raab said that he is working closely with the Director of Food Services, Lynn Petrowski and her team to ensure that all perishable items are sent to the Food Pantry and they would continue that relationship throughout this situation. He also mentioned that the families in our system who receive the food benefit had been contacted and Mrs. Petrowski and her team would be putting together care packages for those who are in need. He noted that the process will be monitored and adjusted if needed.

Mrs. Corbo asked if there was anything that prevents us from requiring that assignment be completed, but not graded? Mr. Ferron said that all districts had received very specific directives from DESE stating that they were not to collect assignments or assess work. He noted that make up work from quarter three had been discussed, but that is the only thing being discussed at this point as far as assignments being turned in.

Mrs. Corbo again questioned if turning in an assignment considered an assessment? Mr. Ferron replied yes. At this time we are unable to require or ask that. He noted that he knows the HPS staff would love to be innovative and creative with learning at this time but we all have to play by the same rules that all districts are being asked to play by.

Mrs. Corbo commended all the Hanover Public Schools teachers for doing such a great job at getting resources out to students. She also commended the Food Service team consisting of Mrs. Lynn Petrowski, Mrs. Janet Vlassakis, Mrs. Ann Judge and Dr. Raab for all their donations to the food pantry.

Mrs. Booker commented that she knows that not all families are able to take time off to be home with their families and appreciates that school work is optional, as it's not always possible for parents to assist their children with their school work.

Mrs. Lynch commented that we need to look very carefully at the inequity issue and recognized that each family has their own set of abilities and resources. She appreciates DESE and Mr. Ferron for taking and following those directives.

Report of Finance Department Presented by Dr. Thomas Raab:

- **Budget Update** – This document can be found in its entirety on the Hanover Public Schools website. Dr. Raab noted there have been no changes to the budget since it was initially presented on January 22, 2020. The power point presentation as well as the line item budget is online for review.

Motion by Geary to approve the FY '21 Budget as written. The motion was seconded by Lynch. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Ferron mentioned that the meeting with the Advisory Committee that was scheduled for Wednesday, March 18th had been postponed. The Chair of the Committee asked that this meeting be pushed off for a week or two and Mr. Ferron wanted to thank the Advisory Committee for their flexibility during this time.

Mr. Geary commented that he believes it would be best to hold that meeting in person, not virtually if at all possible. Mr. Ferron replied that he would look into options for this.

Annual Town Meeting Warrants – Dr. Raab reviewed the warrants that the School Committee is being asked to endorse. Articles 37, 38 and 39, which are listed in detail in the memo found on the Hanover Public Schools website. He noted that for record keeping purposes, three separate votes are requested.

Mrs. Corbo questioned if it was necessary to vote on these articles today, as given the community's current situation, changes in the budget might be necessary and that would likely change the way she would vote on these articles. Dr. Raab noted that these requests had come in long before this crisis happened and this is all different funding. Mr. Ferron also stated that we can take another vote in the future to withdraw if needed, but it is important that we go on record with this vote today.

Dr. Raab noted the urgency is that the Town Warrants go to press and we may not have another meeting before that happens, as he is unsure of that printing deadline.

Mrs. Lynch confirmed that if we do change our minds down the line, we could hold another vote? Mr. Ferron replied yes.

Mrs. Miller said she feels comfortable going to vote, but asked the committee to let her know now if they do not feel comfortable. There were no comments.

Motion by Lynch to approve Town Article 37 as written. The motion was seconded by Geary. Corbo abstained. The motion carried.

Motion by Lynch to approve Town Article 38 as written. The motion was seconded by Geary. Corbo abstained. The motion carried.

Motion by Lynch to approve Town Article 39 as written. The motion was seconded by Gear. The motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Raab asked the Committee if there were any objections to eliminating the local education fund and instead directing that funding to veterans services. There were no objections. No vote was required.

Mrs. Lynch mentioned that perhaps the Committee should also look at Town Article 24 as it appropriates funds for playground shades at Cedar School. Mrs. Corbo noted that certain sections of the Cedar School playground are very sunny. The shades would be placed near the new equipment. Mrs. Lynch thanked Mrs. Corbo stating she remembered that from the playground dedication.

Report on Teaching and Learning:

- **2020-2021 School Calendar** – Mr. Ferron said he realizes that revisiting the school calendar seems quite uncertain at this point. He noted that nothing has changed on the calendar since the last draft was presented. He realizes that as things continue to change this year, there may be a need to shuffle things next year, but believes that the start and end dates will remain the same and that is what we are voting on.

Mrs. Corbo asked if we are confident that we won't need to make adjustments to days like half-day Tuesdays? She also asked if it could be posted as Tentative? Mr. Ferron replied that approving the calendar is a local option. The vote simply sets parameters for next year. He noted that if we do need to adjust vacations or half days, it won't affect the over all calendar as the only things that are locked in are the start and end dates due to contracts. He noted that by voting today it allows us to remove it from our agenda for the time being.

Motion by Lynch to approve the 2020-2021 School Calendar as written. The motion was seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Lynch commented that the *HHS Program of Studies* would be discussed once school gets back to session. She has looked it over and has been in touch with Principal Matthew Paquette.

Action Items:

- **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan** - Mr. Ferron explained that they are asking for a vote simply because changes were made to our policy in 2014 to reflect changes in the law. These changes have been in place in our Handbooks for a number of years, but we need to update them on our website and before we can do that, he would like to get the endorsement of the Committee so they can let DESE know that the policy is being updated.

Mrs. Booker questioned IEPs and Special Education in regards to this plan and asked that the Director of Student Services, Mr. Keith Guyette, look into these things to be revisited in the future. Mr. Ferron replied that we will certainly evaluate that and discuss that in the future, but a vote today is important to close out this issue with the State. Mrs. Booker agreed that a vote makes sense, but wanted it recorded that she believes these issues should be considered in the future.

Mrs. Lynch commented that there is very clear language in the Student Handbook with regards to IEPs and discipline.

Mrs. Booker said there should be specific language about students with Autism, but it can certainly be discussed at another meeting. She noted she referred to other local towns such as Hingham and Norwell and they both have that language included.

Motion by Lynch to approve the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as written. The motion was seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Miller mentioned that the timeline for the Superintendent's evaluation would need to be reviewed. She will work with the Superintendent's administrative assistant to get new dates and will send to the committee next week. Documents and items will be sent out and the Committee can work out some adjusted dates.

Public Comment: None presented

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for April 9, 2020. Expected agenda items:
TBD

Mr. Ferron said he hopes that we can get back to normal soon and looks forward to being able to see people in person again. He thanked all those that continue to go to work during this crisis.

Mrs. Miller thanked the Administration team again. She noted that they are working around the clock on this problem and they are doing a great job. Mr. Ferron commented that if families were so inclined, sending a kind word or compliment to teachers would be greatly appreciated. They could certainly use the boost as they work through this new process.

Motion by Booker to adjourn at 4:04pm. The motion was seconded by Lynch. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Caitlin Potolicchio

Caitlin Potolicchio
Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary

Documents Used:

FY '21 Final Budget Proposal
School Committee Endorsement of Capital Items FY 2021
2020-2021 School Calendar
HPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Appendix A
Appendix B
Appendix C
Appendix D