

***Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes***  
***April 8, 2020***  
***Virtual Meeting***

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

**Also Present:** Matthew Ferron, Thomas Raab, Debbie St. Ives, Keith Guyette, Matthew Paquette, Daniel Birolini, Jane DeGrenier, Michael Oates

**Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 3:00pm by Mrs. Miller

**Public Comment:** None presented

**Approval Minutes:**

Motion by Lynch to approve the March 13, 2020 School Committee General Session minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Lynch to approve the March 19, 2020 School Committee General Session minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Lynch to approve the April 3, 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:**

- **Events and Updates** – Mr. Ferron invited all four building principals to the meeting to give updates on their remote learning plans.
  - Mr. Oates said that Cedar school is doing very well and doing their best to remain positive. They miss their small friends and the remote learning at that age will just never replace the face-to-face interaction. He noted that peer and adult modeling play a huge role at that age and that would surely be missed while out of school. He also noted that the staff is doing a great job collaborating and coming up with great lessons. Mr. Oates thanked the parents as this age group are not independent learners and he realizes that this is a huge commitment for parents.
  - Mrs. DeGrenier noted that each grade level at Center School participates in weekly meetings on Wednesdays and she had spoken to all grade levels today. The learning plans went out last week and she hopes it will offer more structure and routine for the students. She also noted that these plans are evolving each day and that SPED services are something that is still being discussed. Mrs. DeGrenier said they would address the needs of each family as they come up, while also being aware of safety and wellbeing first.
  - Mr. Birolini said that his teachers are collaborating now more than ever because they really want to bring something special to their students during this time. He also noted the parent feedback he has received has been overwhelmingly positive and supportive. He also commented he appreciates the difficulty that parents with multiple students in one school might be having, while navigating multiple teacher communications a day. Mr. Birolini also noted that Zoom classes have been very well received by the students as they are often very excited to see their friends.

- Mr. Paquette began by saying the HHS staff has put together a very extensive remote learning plan. They have planned for 11 weeks of learning, should the closure go longer than planned and he said that this would help establish a routine and common expectations across grade levels and subjects. He noted that plans are sent out Sunday evenings with clear expectations and teachers are checking in daily. Mr. Paquette also noted that they were hoping to have more clear understanding of the SPED and specialist roles soon as well.

Mr. Ferron said that everyone is trying to figure out how to best support people. He understands that academics are important but also acknowledged the balance between moving forward and not overwhelming parents. He understands that parents are also working from home and now trying to teach their children at the same time. He stressed the importance of reaching out to teachers if there are questions, just as before this crisis, as they are the best resource.

Mr. Geary commented that this was a good reminder for the community, just as during traditional teaching times, having a “Communication Roadmap” to send out to the community might be a good idea. Mr. Ferron agreed and noted that he would work with administrators to get that message sent out.

Mrs. Miller commented that as a parent herself, she has been able to experience how much of a great resource the teachers are and should always be the first point of contact for questions. They are not only answering questions, but also taking feedback on the learning plans as well.

Mr. Geary noted that the response time from teachers is actually much faster now as well.

Mr. Ferron addressed a few of the frequently asked questions that have come up in the community as well. When speaking of Graduation, he noted that they will be celebrating graduation, however it may look different and they are exploring options to make it special for the class of 2020. Another frequently asked question is that of payments for Kindergarten. He asked the community to be patient as that is all still being worked out and will very much depend on how long the closure lasts.

Mrs. Corbo questioned the attendance in the Zoom Classes. All principals commented that Zoom sessions have been well attended. Mrs. DeGrenier noted that if there are students not attending, that is a good indicator that they may need to be contacted and offered additional assistance. Mr. Oates commented that a Kindergarten Zoom session is a very entertaining experience.

Mrs. Lynch asked how confident the District is with the Zoom platform as there have been reports of security issues. Mr. Ferron noted that the company is enhancing their security measures and the teachers are learning how to make these sessions more secure. He also said that teachers do not have to use Zoom, and they are certainly able to use another platform that they are more comfortable with. Mr. Ferron stated that they are simply asking everyone to just do the best they can.

Mrs. Lynch questioned students at the High School level being ready to move forward next year. She gave an example of a student being in French 2 this year and asked if they would be ready for French 3 next year through this remote learning plan. Mr. Paquette responded by saying that the teachers are presenting new material and moving the curriculum along. Mr. Ferron also responded by saying he is very confident in our teacher’s ability to move their students forward. Teachers have been collaborating on what the essential elements in

each subject area are. Mr. Ferron also noted that the District would be re-thinking the function of September and look at a period of recovery if needed.

Mr. Geary commented that at the March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, Mrs. Patricia Smith, Director of Health Services, discussed how we would certainly see a spike in positive cases of Covid-19 and that the medical community was expecting that. He asked Mr. Ferron if it would be possible to have Mrs. Smith and her team of nurses send out a message to the community reminding them of these facts. Mr. Ferron replied that this was a great idea and noted that he would work with Mrs. Smith to put a message like that together. Mr. Ferron also commented that he was very proud of the HPS Nursing staff, as they are all now working with the local Board of Health and Dept. of Public Health at the emergency operations center. They are working very hard for our entire community and have been a wonderful resource.

Mrs. Corbo asked if the Committee could receive an update on Food Services and also asked if a family now finds themselves in need, who should they reach out to. Dr. Raab replied by saying that any family can reach out to Mrs. Lynn Pretrowski, Director of Food Services. He noted there is a phone number and an email that he will post on the website.

Mrs. Booker asked if the District has been in touch with SEPAC and if they have any concerns during this closure. Mr. Ferron noted that he had just spoken to Mrs. Michelle Garder earlier today and Mr. Keith Guyette has also been in touch with them as well. Mr. Guyette noted that he had checked in with those parents in SEPAC and they are planning to hold a meeting on April 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Booker asked about the possibility of getting a federal waiver for Special Education. Mr. Guyette noted that it is currently all speculation, but there is another meeting with DESE tomorrow to discuss laws, etc. Mr. Ferron also noted that this is a very complex situation due to the amount of individualization of each student and their IEPs. The message is to “do the best you can” and he said we will always do that for all our students. He also noted that the District will need to also begin looking at Summer school and Extended School year programs and see how they can provide services to the best of their ability.

Mrs. Booker asked about MCAS and if this was part of the plan from the DESE. Mr. Ferron said that a waiver from the Federal Government is needed, which he is confident they will get. He also noted that everyone is waiting for more guidance, which he also expects to get soon.

#### **Report of Finance Department Presented by Dr. Thomas Raab:**

- **FY '20 Budget Update** – Dr. Raab said that they are currently in a very difficult planning phase due to the uncertainty of what the rest of the school year will look like. He said he is working on two parallel plans for different scenarios. He also noted that Chapter 70 Funding as well as the 240 Grants for Special Education are all still available and we are also still paying for out of district placements, to ensure students have a spot whenever school resumes. Dr. Raab also noted that these payments were all eligible for circuit breaker reimbursements.
  - Dr. Raab said that he and Mr. Ferron have reviewed the budget and there are some savings to be had, should we not return to school this year, such as the daily substitute budget. He noted that they would be able to make a better recommendation in a few weeks.
  - Food Service is a program that typically pays for itself, but they are not making money right now.

- Dr. Raab said that the current account for Kindergarten is still OK but it relies on tuition. Dr. Raab said that the next tuition payment is due on May 1, 2020 but he knows that if we do not return to school this year there will be a question as to whether or not we can charge families. Dr. Raab also noted that deposits for next year's class couldn't be spent in case there are issues next year that rely on that fund.
  - Dr. Raab is actively working with Mrs. Kelly Lawrence from FACE. The FACE program is completely dependent on their revenue. Mrs. Lawrence is looking into on-line options for programming and is hopeful that the summer enrichment program can go on as planned.
- **Donations** – Donations totaling \$10,092.25 were received from the Butler Giving Fund to support the Internship program as well as Baystate Textiles.

Motion by Lynch to approve the Donations in the amount of \$10,092.25 as written. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **Report on Teaching and Learning:**

- **2019-2020 School Calendar Updates** Mr. Ferron advised the Committee that we need their approval to change the current School Calendar. Mr. Ferron proposed working through April vacation as to not lose momentum with the new Remote Learning Plans. Mr. Ferron noted that he has not received any push back from the staff or the union. He said if we were to continue to work through April vacation that would change the last day of school to June 19<sup>th</sup>.

Motion by Lynch to approve the change to the 2019-2020 School Calendar that continues learning through April vacation and moves the last day of school to June 19<sup>th</sup>. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Lynch asked if the closures had any affect on the senior class and their ability to solidify their plans for next year. Mr. Paquette replied that he has not seen any delays out of the ordinary, but some schools are extending the deadline on deposits. He noted that all schools have been extremely responsive.

**Public Comment:** None presented

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2020. Time and Location TBD. Expected agenda items will be: HHS Program of Studies, Last day of School vote (if needed), Kahn Academy SAT course update, Lunch Debt. Procedures.

Motion by Lynch to adjourn at 3:53pm. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

*Caitlin Potolicchio*

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Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary

Documents Used:

Donations as of 4/8/20

Appendix A