

Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes
April 21, 2020
Hanover High School

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 and Michael Oates.

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 3:01pm by Mrs. Miller

Public Comment: None presented

Approval Minutes:

Motion by Lynch to approve the April 3, 2020 School Committee Executive Session minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Lynch to approve the April 8, 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 addressed the update just received today about the extended school closure. He noted that guidelines from the DESE will be presented in the next few days and the Administration team will be working through them and communicating with staff and families any changes that will come from DESE. The DESE Commissioner mentioned “Power Standards” in his message, which will be included in the guidelines, and will outline what needs to be covered in each grade level in order to move forward. Mr. Ferron noted there are still several questions that need to be addressed, such as Graduation. He noted that they are working hard to find a way to make graduation special for the class of 2020, but they don’t have anything concrete yet. Mr. Ferron also said that each of the principals would be reaching out to families with a schedule for students to come in and get personal items from lockers and desks since they will not be returning to school. He also noted that if any one is still in need of technology support or food, regardless of their circumstances, they should reach out. Mr. Ferron also addressed this years U.S. News and World Report School Ranking Report. He noted that after last year’s ranking, lots of time and effort was put into improving Hanover’s position on this list, despite the metrics being slightly flawed. He is happy to report that Hanover has moved from 185 to 116 on the list. He knows that all the hard work during this past year will certainly pay off in the long run when our students are back to taking standardized tests again.

Mrs. Miller thanked everyone for their hard work through all of this uncertainty. This decision to close schools for the remainder of the year was not what anyone wanted, although it was expected. She thanked the staff for remaining positive and thanked Mr. Michael Oates, Principal of the Cedar School, for hosting a dance video for students, it was a lot of fun.

Mr. Ferron also noted that he knows another question many families have is that of grading. He noted that each principal would address this when they have their time to speak later in the meeting.

Report of Finance Department Presented by Dr. Thomas Raab:

- **FY '20 Budget Update** – Dr. Raab started his presentation by stating that since a decision has been made about the remainder of the school year, he was now in a better position to begin planning to close the books for this year. He noted that all salaried employees have been paid since the closure began in March. It is now necessary to think about accounts where there is no revenue, such as Food Services. He noted there is some federal help, but it doesn't cover all expenses. Dr. Raab said that he and Mr. Ferron are looking into furloughing Food Service employees for the remainder of the year to cover the \$85,000-\$90,000 cost; thus the money would not have to be taken from the current operating budget. He noted there is some federal help, but it does not cover all expenses. There is also discussion about furloughing Paraprofessionals and ABA Tutors. Dr. Raab noted that this is an extremely difficult decision and not one that he and Mr. Ferron have arrived at easily. Dr. Raab asked the Committee to vote to allow Dr. Raab and Mr. Ferron to make decisions on employment actions and furloughs for the rest of the current school year. Dr. Raab also noted the FACE program has already stopped paying their hourly workers and they are also not generating any revenue right now. Mr. Ferron noted that this is not a move to bank money for next year, but rather to put money aside for the unknown at this time. Dr. Raab also addressed the question of Kindergarten Tuition. He said that all families of kindergarten students would either receive a refund if they had paid in full. Those who have not yet made the final payment would not be required to pay.

Mrs. Lynch asked if the Para's and the Tutors knew that furloughs were possible? Dr. Raab said he has spoken to union leaders but not with the staff directly. Mr. Ferron added that he would have preferred to have these conversations with those staff members first, but that they needed to get permission from the Committee before discussing it with them. Dr. Raab added that this would not affect this current week's payroll.

Mrs. Lynch asked if we can help these staff members file unemployment? Dr. Raab replied that the HR team would be able to answer questions for them, but ultimately they are required to file themselves.

Mrs. Corbo asked if furloughed employees would get their positions back? Dr. Raab replied yes, a furlough guarantees they would get their position back.

A motion by Lynch to authorize Dr. Raab and Mr. Ferron to make decisions on employment actions and furloughs for the remainder of the school year. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

- **FY '21 Budget Update** –Dr. Raab told the Committee that he has been asked to look at next years budget again as there is a lot of variability and we still do not know how that will effect us. A \$400,000.00 reduction of the budget is requested by the Town Manager. Dr. Raab said he is looking at ways to make modest expense cuts across the board and anticipates being able to do this without impacting class size or increasing any fees. This will adjust the budget down to a 2.8% increase instead of the previously approved 4% increase. Dr. Raab stated that this would require a vote from the School Committee.

Mrs. Lynch stated it is great to hear that it will not impact class size and also asked if there will still be money for Professional Development? Dr. Raab said yes, those programs would remain fully funded.

Mr. Ferron said that he and Dr. Raab have worked very closely with the Town Manager and CFO to get to a number that would work for all. He stated that Dr. Raab is doing a great job keeping this all at a very macro level until we know more. Mr. Ferron also noted that we need more info from the State and Federal government before we can move forward. Mr. Ferron said there are certainly lots of little cuts that could be made across the board but he does not want to take away from the school experience. The budget as it stands now should not have an impact that is felt by students and parents.

Mrs. Corbo asked when the Committee could expect to see a line item budget? Mr. Ferron said that it could be in the next couple of weeks, especially as we get closer to town meeting. He noted that there are still several variables that need to be explored first.

Mrs. Miller commented that she knows none of this is fun to discuss, but knows how hard Mr. Ferron and Dr. Raab have worked in collaboration with the Town and the great relationship they have with the Town Manager and CFO has shown throughout this process.

Motion by Lynch to approve the new budget of \$30,045,776.00. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

Report on Teaching and Learning:

- **Remote Learning Update** Each of the building principals were present to discuss their schools remote learning plans.
 - **Cedar School:** Mr. Michael Oates stated that things are going very well, but said everyone is very sad about the announcement today regarding the extended closure. He noted that his teachers continue to connect with students and are working very collaboratively to provide the best service to the kids. They are all maintaining regular communication with their students as well. Mr. Oates said that at this grade level, they are not grading but instead are engaging in meaningful work that will prepare them for September while also keeping the workload manageable for parents at home.
 - **Center School:** Mrs. DeGrenier said that the Center School is rolling along and each week gets a little better. She noted that the support of the parents has been greatly appreciated. The staff meets once a week with the principals and specialists and there has been a lot of great collaboration happening. Mrs. DeGrenier also recognizes that the students will be missing the traditional end of year activities and they are working on ways to bring those things to the students virtually. Mrs. DeGrenier also noted that IEPs were sent out today and those services are coming together, so her team feels they are in a good place with those things as well.
 - **Hanover Middle School:** Mr. Birolini said that feedback from families has been very positive. He noted that some parents are starting to ask about grading and expects those questions to become more frequent as we go on. Mr. Birolini noted that he has met virtually with small groups from each grade to gauge the workload they have been given. He said the students all felt the work load was adequate and they are very much enjoying that they can go into Google classroom and break down their lessons as needed to accommodate their schedules. Mr. Birolini noted he was particularly impressed with how much the students were looking out for one another and working together. Grading for the Middle school level will be done on a “Completed Work” basis and assigning either an *Exceeds, Meets or Does Not Meet*

- Expectations.* Mr. Birolini also discussed the Washington D.C. trip and said that the travel company has agreed to refund all students all payments except for \$130.00. He said that the Six Flags field trip is also in the process of being refunded. Finally, he said that the candy fundraiser that the students participated in is on hold. The candy is at the factory and once it can be safely shipped, it will be shipped to student's home for them to distribute to those who purchased it.
- **Hanover High School:** Mr. Paquette stated that the High School staff has been prepared for this extended closure since we first started remote learning. They had planned for 11 weeks of remote learning plans and they are in good shape for the remainder of the year. He noted that expectations will be set for each student as clearly as possible by each teacher and will receive a weekly assessment. Mr. Paquette noted that he is saddened by the news of the closure, particularly for the senior class, now that it is official. He sent a video message of support to the senior class over the weekend. Mr. Paquette said that he was very surprised by the level of engagement from students, noting close to an 85% participation rate. As far as grading, he noted that he would be holding the original dates for term 1 and 2 as they are closed. Term 3 will not have a lot of bearing on their GPA due to the closure, as he doesn't want students grades to be adversely affected. Once term 3 closes out, it will count as 20% of their GPA if it benefits them. If it will not benefit them, it will not count. Term 4 will be graded on a *Credit/No Credit* basis. Mr. Paquette closed by noting that he would like the ability to pick a date during the summer for a potential graduation ceremony for the senior class.

Mrs. St. Ives noted that the finality of the Governors decision today took everyone back a step, but after listening to the DESE Commissioner she was reassured because Hanover is already in a really good place with their remote learning plans, and have already drilled down to many of those "power standards" the Commissioner mentioned. She said that whatever guidance is offered should only strengthen the work Hanover has already done.

Mrs. Miller thanked everyone for this work. She said she knows it has been a tough day, but the teachers are still working to make those connections and it certainly shows.

Mrs. Lynch noted she was glad that we are still trying to hold the graduation ceremony and hopes we can find a way to do it. She commented that students at graduation feel special and the community recognizes them.

Mr. Ferron expressed appreciation for all the student athletes that are missing their spring seasons and all musicians that are missing their performances. He asked that everyone continue to do what they can by staying home and staying safe, but he is truly sorry for all that is being missed.

Public Comment: None presented

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2020 - Time TBD: Remote Learning Update, Budget Update, Kahn Academy Program Update.

Motion by Lynch to adjourn at 4:21pm. The motion was seconded by Booker. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Caitlin Potolicchio
Caitlin Potolicchio

Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary