

***Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes***  
***July 29, 2020***  
***Virtual Meeting***  
***Public Hearing on Hanover Public School Mascot***

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

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

Mrs. Miller began the meeting by explaining the reason for this public hearing. She noted that there had been a call to change the mascot for Hanover Public Schools and after a community survey and hearing tonight's feedback, the School Committee will take a vote as to whether to change the mascot at the next meeting on Wednesday, August 5, 2020.

The School Committee members introduced themselves to the guest speakers and Mr. Ferron thanked everyone for taking time out of their busy lives to participate in the meeting.

The Committee heard from several members of the Native American community, as well as HPS Staff members, students and community members regarding this issue and below is a summary of the comments.

- Ms. Shawna Newcomb was the first speaker. Ms. Newcomb is a teacher at Hanover Middle School and also a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe. She stated that the mascot does not honor indigenous people and instead mocks them. She also shared a video of a senior tribal member who also expressed that he did not feel that any race should be a mascot. She noted that the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe believes that Hanover can make a mascot change and still be proud of their athletic teams.
- Ms. Melissa Ferreti is a member of the Herring Pond tribe in Plymouth and stated that she has lived on her tribe's homelands her whole life. She noted that native people feel invisible and diminished by these mascots and they also do not encourage people to educate themselves about these tribes and their history.
- Ms. Elizabeth Solomon is a member of the Massachusetts tribe at Ponkapoag, whose homeland is the land that Hanover sits on. She thanked everyone for their willingness to listen and learn. Ms. Solomon stated that mascots show Native people are a people of the past and not contemporaries, but at the same time, also do not honor the Native communities of the past either. She noted that if you want to honor Native people, you should enter into relationships with them, learn their history, their values and perspectives in order to honor their communities.
- Mr. Faries Gray is the War Chief of the Massachusetts Tribe. He thanked the School Committee and all the other Native speakers for taking time to have this meeting. He urges people to learn what happened to indigenous people in this country because the native community feel as though they were invaded and assimilated as well as murdered and forbidden to speak their own language. He noted that he understands that mascots are tied to schools and sports, but memories will not change even if your mascot does. Mr. Gray finished by saying that it would mean a lot to his children if the mascots were changed, so that they do not have to continue to have this conversation when they get older.
- Brittney Walley is a Mitmaq Tribal Anti-Mascot representative. She noted that her father and grandfather are both Pow Wows or Medicine Men in their tribe. She currently works at Plimouth Plantation to teach children in hopes of bridging the gap in education and

- information. She noted that using Native American mascots is dehumanizing and she is hopeful that their message will not be ignored this time. She hopes that non-Natives will take the time to listen and learn.
- Ms. Rhonda Anderson introduced herself in her native language. She is the Western Massachusetts Chair of Indian Affairs. She showed her Native American ID card and stated that it is the apex of colonization and oppression as Native Americans are the only race that have to carry an identification card with their number and pedigree on it. Ms. Anderson noted that no matter what mascot you are cheering for you, you will still be proud of your kids. Native Americans are the only race that are used as mascots and that everyone must work to end systemic racism. Ms. Anderson humbly asked that Hanover vote to remove their Indian mascot and be on the right side of history.
  - Mr. Jamie Morrison is an Eastern Band Cherokee member. He noted that he is a graduate of Winchester High School, which has a Native American mascot and shared how difficult that was for him during his high school years. He noted that when he was moving back to MA, he purposely looked at the cities and town's mascots before deciding where to live, so that his children would not be subject to the same difficulties.
  - Ms. Laurel Delano-Davis is a non-Native American. She is a professor at Springfield College and has been studying mascot issues since 1990. She has formed a communication network of other scholars who study these issues. She noted that there is a direct effect on Native Americans from these mascots, which include lower self-esteem, depression, stress and anger.
  - Mr. Andrew McLean was present as a representative from the Hanover Teacher's Association and he read a statement prepared by the HTA. On a personal note, he stated that he would not coach in Hanover again until the mascot is changed. He thanked everyone for their time and the education on these issues.
  - Ms. Sarah Kelser is a school psychologist in Hanover and a member of the Hanover Anti-Bias group also read a statement from the group.
  - Mr. Jim Pierotti and Mr. Chris Landolfi are both parents and Mr. Landolfi is also the HHS Varsity Football coach. They had spoken at a previous school committee meeting and began this conversation about changing the mascot. They both stated that they are very supportive of a change and know that Hanover is not honoring Native people in any way. Mr. Landolfi noted that he is not proud to lead a team with this name.
  - Miss Callie Hoadley is a former HPS Student and a graduate of the class of 2017. She shared her experiences outside of Hanover and how she very quickly learned how offensive the Indian mascot can be. She noted that she was never educated on the mascot or Native people and she felt unprepared as she went to college by being so uneducated on the topic.
  - Miss Caroline Jackson is a rising senior at HHS and stated that she feels it is important for everyone to listen to the Native American voices and take their voices into consideration more than any other. She noted that Native American traditions and history are not taught and has learned more on this call than she has in school. She noted that it is time for Hanover to live up to its mission statement.
  - Mackenzie Shula is a rising senior at HHS and a 2 sport athlete. She is Indian, but from the subcontinent of Asia and has realized that many people do not understand the difference and often associate her with the mascot. She noted that as an athlete she takes pride in being from Hanover, but not in having an Indian mascot.

**Public Comment:** Mr. Matthew Plummer facilitated the public comment. Below is summary of comments and questions.

- Ms. Lauren Gelly is a member of the class of 2018. She noted that her Hanover pride runs deep, but she has never been proud of her mascot. She also noted that pride will not go away if the mascot changes. She urged the Committee to listen to the Native voices above any others.
- Katie Owens is a member of the class of 1993. She thanked the speakers who shared their experience and noted that this issue should have been corrected a long time ago. She stated that her high school mascot does not effect her memories and its time to look at the big picture so that no students or community members ever feel marginalized.
- Mr. Chuck Wilson is an HPS parent and read a statement that he had previously sent to Mr. Ferron. He noted that he teaches his daughter to treat everyone with respect, but it is difficult to instill that lesson when the mascot is an Indian.
- Ms. Rosalind Davis is a school nurse with HPS and a member of the Anti-bias team. She stated that as a black woman, she believes it is time to change the mascot and that what hurts one, hurts all.
- Mr. Tom Hogan is a Teacher with HPS. He stated that he was very impressed by all of the speakers and thanked them for their passion. He also noted that listening takes courage and he is proud of the forum that Mr. Ferron and the School Committee provided

Mrs. Miller thanked everyone for sharing their stories and reminded everyone that the School Committee will be voting on this change at the next meeting on August 5<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Corbo stated that she was grateful for the voices she has heard tonight, and while it was a long meeting, it was a worthwhile discussion and a great education.

Mrs. Lynch stated that she was overwhelmed by the information that was received. She thanked Ms. Newcomb for the great gift she has given to so many staff members. She noted that Ms. Newcomb had a great deal of courage for speaking out on this issue.

Mr. Mirgalia thanked everyone for their time and understands that many of the speakers tonight have also participated in similar meetings in different districts several other times this week. He thanked them for their ability to continue the conversation. He also thanked them for educating everyone on how they can truly honor Native people.

Respectfully Submitted by:

*Caitlin Potolicchio*

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Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary