

***Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes***  
***August 7, 2020***  
***Virtual Meeting***

**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, Keith Guyette, Matthew Paquette, Daniel Birolini, Jane DeGrenier, Michael Oates and Matthew Plummer.

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

Mrs. Miller began the meeting by thanking everyone for doing their part by making safe choices that allow us to have the conversation about opening our schools. She noted that this process will take all of us working together to get our kids back to school safely. Mrs. Miller stated that Hanover went about this process a little differently than other communities as they were able to work with the HTA before putting forward a plan to ensure it was collaborative. She noted the Committee is proud of this plan that will be put forward today. The Committee has read hours of information through this process and it is their goal to get students and staff back to school as safely as possible. Mrs. Miller stated that this meeting will reveal just the tip of the iceberg and there will still be many details and questions that will remain unanswered, but this is the starting point and it will be constantly monitored as it moves forward. She reviewed the process of the meeting.

**Public Comment:**

**Report of the Superintendent presented by Mr. Ferron:**

Discussion and vote on the preferred model for school re-opening for September 2020: Mr. Ferron noted that the presentation he will be going through will be available on the Hanover Public Schools website today after 5:00 pm. He noted that there is still a long way to go. He discussed the process of negotiating with the HTA before coming up with the plan to make sure it is a collaborative and agreed upon plan so that nothing has to be rolled back. He introduced the hybrid model that had been agreed upon and discussed all the planning and collaboration that enabled them to come to that decision. Dr. Raab discussed the operational factors that were used in this decision-making process, including building capacity, transportation, cleaning and budgeting. Mr. Ferron discussed the recommended model saying that is not very different from the other districts on the South Shore as it is a split model where students in grades 2-12 will go to school 2 days and remotely for 3 days. Mr. Ferron stated that the current plan is to have students at Cedar School go to school every day (except Wednesdays), in person, along with the high needs' students. He stated there will also be a "virtual academy" for the 10% of students who indicated they would choose remote only learning. Mr. Ferron discussed the remote learning expectations because he knows the feedback received was that the remote learning in the spring was not working. He assured everyone that the remote program that will be offered will be excellent and discussed how they would plan to do that. Mr. Ferron introduced Mrs. Anne Coates, President of the HTA. She shared her statement from the HTA and shared an example of the Patriots Superbowl game in 2017 against the Atlanta Falcons, reminding everyone "to stay invested in the team and to never give up." Mrs. Coates said the HTA is done having COVID call the game and are looking to the community to do their part. She noted they met last week with the district leadership and worked together to work through their differences and feelings to ensure the students success. She discussed

what the year will look like, the training and their plan to engage students as much as possible to build those relationships that are so important. “Please join me in supporting our teachers who are proud to teach the children of Hanover every day”.

Mrs. Miller and Mr. Ferron thanked Mrs. Coates. Mr. Ferron noted that it was a difficult process, but it has been a collaborative effort and we all want to put the students first. He noted that we won’t get it right every time and there will be work to do, but we will work to improve as needed.

Mr. Birolini discussed the remote learning expectations. He noted it is important work and we want the kids back in school as much as possible. He stated “it was clear that parents wanted set schedules and expectations. We heard that and will make sure those expectations are met.”

Mr. Ferron thanked Mr. Birolini and noted they have discussed with other districts how they are developing their cohort groups and how Hanover will break down their cohorts. Mr. Ferron noted as these options have been discussed, he realizes parents will all have many questions. He stated that families will be kept together and class sizes will be balanced at each grade level and deliberate placements will be kept intact. Mr. Ferron stated that planning for transportation will begin soon and these cohorts will determine how that will work as well as support services for each cohort. Placements will be done by Monday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, if not sooner. They do plan to offer both full day and half day kindergarten and are working very hard to make sure that can happen. Mr. Ferron discussed the high needs cohort and who would qualify for this, noting they will be meeting with SEPAC leadership to discuss this with that team. He asked parents to refer individual question to building principals for the time being. He also noted that students with C Grid services will be offered services as close to normal as possible. Mr. Ferron also discussed the virtual academy for Cohort D, which is a self-selected model that suits family’s needs and will not have the interruption of swapping back and forth between hybrid and remote. Mr. Ferron stated there will be a formal enrollment the week of August 17<sup>th</sup> but if families enroll and then decide that it is not the right fit, there will be an opportunity to swap out and more details about that will be put out soon. He also discussed issues of closure and quarantine during the school year noting that the virus is unpredictable and it will require collaboration with the local Board of Health, State officials and the DESE. Mr. Ferron stated he is hopeful that statewide guidance will be given for trigger points for closure or pivoting to remote learning. They are working closely with Board of Health and the Fire Dept. to perhaps get testing equipment and be able to test people in real time and are working on protocols and procedure in the event someone does have a positive test. “We need to all do our part to keep each other safe.”

Mr. Ferron then went on to discuss some of the “Hot Topics”. Below is a summary of those topics and his responses:

- HVAC and Air Systems: Mr. Ferron stated they worked with the HTA to ensure the HVAC systems are working and cleaning the air as they should be and will make sure they are working well before people are in the buildings.
- How were the days for the cohorts chosen? Mr. Ferron stated it seemed to make the most sense to have a day in the middle of the week for cleaning and there are not many Monday holidays in the first part of fall. He noted that adjustments will be able to be made and balance things if needed.

- Outdoor classes: Mr. Ferron said they are working to get students outside as much as possible during the day, especially at the younger levels. He noted they are looking to rent tents for outdoor classes, but they are currently hard to come by.
- Sports: Mr. Ferron said they expect the MIAA to release guidance in the next couple of weeks. He noted they are hoping for the best as he knows people are anxious about this, but pragmatism is needed at this point.
- Allergies: Mr. Ferron stated that the current information states that students should eat lunch in their classrooms, but understands this is problematic for students with life threatening allergies. He noted to parents that if you have a child with allergies it would be best to reach out to your building principal and make sure you discuss that with them. He also noted that lunch would be provided every day, even though it might look different and everyone who needs it, will get lunch.
- ½ day Tuesdays: Mr. Ferron stated that for the time being, these are on hold.
- Counseling: Mr. Ferron stated they are looking into various ways to support students for a variety of different issues.
- Masks: Mr. Ferron stated that all students grade 2-12 will be required to wear masks and masks will be strongly encouraged for the younger students too.

Mr. Ferron moved on to summarize the next steps. He noted they are in the process of finalizing their agreement with the HTA and then they will submit their final plan to the state next week. He reminded everyone that there would be a Town Hall meeting on Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup> and that will be an opportunity to give more information and gather more feedback. Mr. Ferron reminded everyone of other important dates such as August 21<sup>st</sup> which is the deadline for the Virtual Academy and Transportation selection and assured everyone that cohorts would be decided no later than August 31<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Ferron shared a newly created email address that the community can utilize to submit questions before the Town Hall meeting: [ReopenHPS@hanoverschools.org](mailto:ReopenHPS@hanoverschools.org).

Mrs. Miller again reminded people of the Town Hall meeting on Monday August 17<sup>th</sup> and stated there will be more people on the call, experts in many fields, that can assist in answering questions.

Mrs. Corbo thanked everyone for all the work done on this issue and noted it has been a team effort. She reminded the community that all the behind the scenes work is not visible to parents, but she feels that due diligence has been done and she is in favor of the hybrid model because she wants our students and staff back in school. Mrs. Corbo noted that this plan may not be what the community envisioned, but we need to be open minded as everyone has different priorities and unfortunately, they can't all be addressed in one plan. She noted this plan hits as many priorities as possible, including safety and facetime with teachers to build relationships. It respects what we do not yet know about the virus. She stated the goal is to be slow, cautious and successful, and this is a reopening plan, not a school year plan, that will constantly be reevaluated with the primary goal of getting everyone back to school safely. She thanked the community for all their support – and reminded everyone that we have to prioritize the health of our students and staff over everything else, noting that if they are sick and can't go to school, then none of this will work.

Mr. Miraglia stated he is in favor of this plan because of the low prevalence of the virus in the community, and it also allows us to continue to keep everyone safe. He noted it is a balanced plan that is flexible and can handle all the circumstance anyone could think of. Mr. Miraglia stated this plan serves all students and all levels and needs. He noted that the community is all in this together and the

Committee and Administration care about the safety of everyone and that is why it took so much time to put this plan together. He noted that we all have a role to play and there is a great leadership team that are all doing a great job, but also that feedback from the community is needed and he hopes people will participate in the Town Hall. Mr. Miraglia reminded the community that some families are more effected by this situation than others and that teachers will be doing everything they can do help and support students. He thanked everyone for watching the meeting as well as everyone who has been involved in this process.

Mrs. Miller stated she is proud of this plan and feels that having the ability to set our youngest learners apart is very important and she is grateful they are able to do that. She noted that we can all work together to make this the best we can.

Motion by Lynch to approve the fall reopening overview as presented with the understanding that the situation is fluid and changes to the plan are likely to change. The motion was seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Miller stated the importance of the vote being unanimous, as she felt that should hopefully give the community confidence in this process and the plan.

Mrs. Lynch invited Mr. Geary to speak, as he has four children in the Hanover Schools and is interested in hearing his feedback on this plan.

Mr. Geary stated he fully endorses this plan. He noted the Committee worked collaboratively with the HTA and they were thoughtful and considerate. He noted that with four children in schools, he is confident the staff can execute this plan efficiently and effectively. He noted the word pivot has been used 1,000 times. We all need to be flexible over the next several months. Mr. Geary stated that if we can do that, then it the plan will work. He also reminded everyone the foundation of this plan was front-loading everything to get as much done as early as possible in case the virus derails us.

Mr. Ferron stated there had been several questions in the chat that are being answered by members of the team during the meeting and that just shows how collaborative this team is.

**Public Comment:** Mr. Plummer monitored the call and allowed community members access and the ability to address the Committee. Below is a summary of their questions:

- Heather DeLauro asked if the same ratios utilized during the summer ESY program would be utilized during the school year for in-person learning? She also asked who would be teaching the students on the three days they would be learning remotely. Mr. Michael Oates, Principal at Cedar school answered the questions regarding ratios by saying that this is something that will continue to be discussed, but typically ratios in the summer program tend to look different than the school year. Mrs. St. Ives discussed what remote learning would look like. It is their hope to have students assigned to a homeroom and that teacher be responsible for those students whether they are in person or remote.
- Tina O'Connor questioned remote learning and what that would look like. She asked if there would be live cameras in the classrooms or will it be recorded videos? Mrs. St. Ives stated if they are in the Hybrid model and going to school two days, there will be opportunities for the

two cohorts to collaborate and zoom together. If students are in the Virtual Academy, it will be totally separate and they are still waiting on guidance for that program.

- Mrs. O'Leary expressed gratitude to everyone involved in the development of this program, especially Mr. Miraglia for reminding the community to think about others who are in more need during this pandemic. Mrs. O'Leary urged the community to seek to bring out the best. We moved to this community because my husband taught here and we have always been treated so well. Mrs. O'Leary asked for someone to expand on the Virtual Academy and if they might not be taught by a member of the HPS staff? Mrs. St. Ives stated that in an ideal situation, HPS teachers will be teaching in the Virtual Academy. She noted they will match teachers with students and grade levels that they have taught or are currently teaching, but unfortunately, they just don't know how many teachers will be needing to be solely remote. She noted they might be able to reach out to staff to do remote teaching only if we have enough students interested.
- Elaine Stokes noted that she really likes the hybrid model put forth but asked if there would be a difference in the offerings and choices available? She also asked if students at the High School would be changing classes or stay in a room with a group on their track? Mr. Matthew Paquette noted that they will work to offer everything they can based on safety guidelines. He noted that as far as how often students will be moving, they don't know that just yet, but that this whole process is to ensure that everyone is safe. He noted the hope is to move them less than they normally would and perhaps they may look to split the 7 periods of a school day over their two in-person days in school to allow for longer periods and less movement. The remote learning portion will be very, very different than the spring, noting they have had time to plan for this remote learning and they have less mandates to adhere to. Mr. Paquette said the remote learning will be as good as it can be and they hope to match it as closely as possible to an in-person instruction. There will be a schedule, a structure to their day and Wednesdays will allow the teachers to connect with all students. Mrs. Stokes thanked everyone for their hard work and reminded parent that this will all depend on the attitude of the parents going into this.
- Maria Courtney noted she did not have a question, but instead just wanted to thank everyone for all their hard work and communicating as well as they have been to keep everyone informed.

Mr. Geary reminded everyone that the Committee has thoughtfully planned out how to share info with the community. He noted that we all tend to go to social media to get answers, but to remember the most accurate info about any of this will be shared at the Town Hall Meeting on August 17<sup>th</sup>. He cautioned people to be leery of information not coming from the HPS or the Committee, as it likely isn't accurate

Mr. Ferron stated there were lots of excellent questions in the chat and those questions will be taken and added into the Town Hall Meeting presentation.

Mrs. Miller thanked everyone again for their hard work and reminded the community of the email address for them to submit questions before the meeting on Monday August 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Corbo stated the Committee and Administration will continue to reassess this plan moving forward with the goal always being to get everyone back in the classroom fulltime and asked everyone to be patient.

Motion by Lynch to adjourn at 4:55pm. The motion was seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

*Caitlin Potolicchio*

Caitlin Potolicchio

Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary