

Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes
September 30, 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, Matthew Plummer and Patricia Smith.

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 4:00 by Mrs. Miller

Public Comment: None

Approval of Minutes:

September 14, 2020: Mrs. Lynch requested the minutes to be tabled until the next meeting as the edited version wasn't sent out for approval yet. Mr. Ferron apologized for that. Introduction of the new Executive Assistant.

Report of the Superintendent presented by Mr. Ferron:

Health Services/COVID-19 Testing Updates:

Mrs. Smith. We have had a great first couple of weeks back to school. A number of students have come through the health office with a variety of illnesses. A lot of it is allergy related or maybe a cold. Whenever a student falls in the category of symptoms of COVID-19 like illness, the State is requiring us to have the student either get tested for COVID-19 or have a physician provide an alternative diagnosis that explains the symptoms.

We are very fortunate to have an incredible Fire Department. They have done a lot of groundwork over the past couple of years in the area of mobile integrated health. They were able to quickly mobilize and provide in-home health care services for elderly residents that expanded into the entire community which included health assessment at home and in-home COVID-19 testing. Thank you, Chief Jeff Blanchard, Deputy Chief Jason Cavallaro, and Captain Fred Freeman, for your work and collaboration with the Hanover Public Schools. We worked all summer getting ready to return to school and we wanted to do baseline testing for staff. We were able to do two baseline tests two weeks apart. We tested 900 people and they were all negative. We have been back to school for a couple of weeks and we have had students coming through with potential COVID like illness, we have been able to take that same system and test our students and staff who present with symptoms. As of today, we have tested 38 different people, and all have come back negative. We have 5 pending results at this time. We expect to get those results in the morning. Testing is done during the school day; the Fire Department brings the swabs to Cambridge in the afternoon and we get the results by 5am the next day. If we did have a positive test, we would be able to take the morning to contract trace and determine who should stay home and who they may have been in close contact with so that we can contact those people to stay home. We feel this system enables us to stay in school and keep our population healthy.

Communication was sent to families yesterday with instructions on how to access the mobile integrated health testing system. The primary contact is the school nurse who will help you walk through the symptoms to determine if testing is warranted, give general advice and to order the test and contact the Fire Department to conduct the test. On a regular school day after 3pm, leave a message and the nurse will contact you in the morning. The weekend or holiday, you can reach out to the Fire Department communication line. This information is available on our website.

The test that they run is a PCR test. This is the test required to return to school. We ask that anyone being tested reach out to their primary care physician for follow-up.

Questions:

Mrs. Lynch questioned the results being back at 5am. If the student is ill the day before and being tested, what happens to the other students in contact with the ill student? Mrs. Smith stated the process for a student that is positive is to make sure they understand they are positive, and they need to stay home. Then we would start the contact tracing process by calling the parent and inquire about activities for the last couple of days to determine who needs to be quarantined.

Mrs. Miller is asking if anytime a child has a fever, cough or sore throat, is the protocol to be COVID tested? Mrs. Smith responds the protocol is to reach out to your primary care provider and determine the cause of the symptoms. This virus is so wide ranging, it is hard for us to know when a student has a sore throat whether it is from allergies or from COVID. We look at their history. Do they have a history of seasonal allergies? Are we in a season where they typically have allergy symptoms? If it is already documented, then we can make that decision.

Mrs. Miller states potentially your other kid(s) could be quarantined for 24 days when a child tests positive. Is this correct? Mrs. Smith says that is true. It is easier when they are teen or college age student, but it is harder to isolate young kids. If you can't isolate them, you start counting from the last day of your positive child isolation so could be up a maximum of 24 days.

Mrs. Miller asks if those kids can still access remote learning for both cohorts. Mr. Ferron says yes but would need it to be worked out with the administration, school and teachers.

Mrs. Miller wants to know what is the rationale of even with a negative result the siblings can't come back? Mrs. Smith reiterates that the virus could come out anytime within the 14 days incubation period. If you test negative on day 5, you can become positive on day 6, 7, 8 up to day 14.

Mr. Miraglia asks if you have a suspected case that one child has COVID waiting on the test results, do we keep siblings at home and do our test results get reported to the State and show up on the state dashboard? Mrs. Smith says the guidance from the State is that no students who are siblings of someone who is being tested do not need to be excluded from school. Some pediatricians are suggesting keeping all the kids' home and we understand that and support that decision. If there is known exposure or they have a fever, persistent cough, loss of taste or smell, then we may suggest the siblings stay home pending testing. Follow-up with the physician is always recommended, but always call the school nurse and together we can make a final decision. All numbers get reported to the Hanover Board of Health but there may be a little lag time with the State.

Phased Reopening Update:

Zoom update from Mr. Plummer:

In general, you don't need a zoom account, to participate only if you want to host a meeting. If someone has a link to an open meeting that is not secure, then others can get in. We found that some of the younger kids can share the link to a meeting, so a couple of people you don't know are now in the meeting. We want to prevent that. There are some natural tools that we will be using such as the waiting room, making sure student's cameras are on and their stated name is their actual name. Not allowing them to change their name is a practice in place. In addition, there is a new feature called authenticate users. Set-up so that only users within a certain domain, can get into meetings that you host for example: hanoverstudents.org or hanoverschools.org. In

order to do that, students will need Zoom accounts. An email went out asking students to verify their student email address in our Zoom umbrella. Thousands of e-mails went out. We still have about 500 students that haven't clicked verify. Once this process is complete, teachers can actually close the door.

What's it going to take to reopen at some point. Does the committee want to discuss that?

Ms. Miller:

Yes, our goal is to get opened as possible and safely. We know this hybrid model is hard on EVERYONE!

Questions:

Mrs. Corbo: How many students are still experiencing connectivity issues? Having trouble logging in to Zoom or the morning meetings?

Mr. Birolini stated yesterday there were four or five that reached out to him. Today there were six or seven, but weather could have been a factor.

Mr. Paquette: I know of two and that is being handled right now. HHS has been zooming for at least 14 straight days and the students pretty much have it mastered.

Mr. Oates: Connectivity hasn't been an issue at Cedar. One or two families have reached out and Cedar has been able to support them.

Mr. Plummer: Very few have had trouble. Trying to figure out if it's a home Wi-Fi or hardware issue. It is still in the single digits.

Mrs. DeGrenier: We have had a few issues, but they have been isolated. We have worked with those families to see if it was the chrome book or connection issue in the home. Also, we are working with one of our virtual academies to improve the connection there.

Mrs. Corbo: If they are having trouble with Zoom, what is the proper procedure? Who do we tell? Is the procedure the same for each school?

Mrs. DeGrenier: Tell the teacher first. If the teacher cannot fix the issue, then the teacher can let the administration know.

Mrs. St. Ives: Trying to align the same for each school would be the best procedure.

Mr. Geary: Once the door closes and it becomes hanoverpublicschools.org access only, some of the "work arounds" I have experienced in my own home, is we default to using parent devices and letting my child log in using parent account. Once the door closes, does that become a non-option and how do we handle that work around?

Mr. Plummer: Brian Converse is working on that and he believes that parents are going to be able to request access to add to their own devices. Don't have an exact answer on that yet. Mr. Geary-Assume based on the reporting that you are showing single digits of connectivity issues or that you are showing reports of who is accessing Zoom, those reports might have a micro filter where you are seeing additional log ins that are not associated with Hanover Schools. We just need to validate them. Is that the correct process?

Mr. Plummer: That is correct. Trying to see how manageable that is.

Mr. Geary: We need to consider some sort of alternative, so kids and parents do not go into panic mode. If it is not feasible, we just need to be able to provide peace of mind for that family.

Mr. Miraglia: Notion that there are no more snow days but there are wind days. Appreciated all of the communications the schools put out that stated we are going to make the best of this. Wind issues are not going away. At what point do we say, this isn't going to work today? Is there a protocol?

Mr. Ferron: The Board is going to have to help make some decisions. The teachers and staff are going to have to be adaptable and we will have to figure it out when it comes.

Report of Finance Department presented by Dr. Raab:

FY '21 Update:

FY 21 Budget

- Hired the last of the paraprofessionals and ABA tutors at the HMS
- Few open positions
- Stayed within the budget that was presented to the School Committee of \$833,000 of the CARE's Act Funding back in July. \$221,000 is salary and the rest of it is expenses that we have talked about.
- The problem is what happens on January 1st? Assuming we are in the same place as we are now, the additional staff will still be needed from January 1st through June 30th. That's an additional \$246,000. Those are the funds we are really going to have to look at any source of funding available and we are still figuring that out. The State is trying to level funds Chapter 70 and if the State level funds Chapter 70 then the town will get additional revenue. All grant opportunities will be looked at. Will they extend the CARE's Act beyond December 31st?

Additional Expenses beyond what was voted at the Town Meeting

- COVID-19 expenses \$221,000 between September 1st through December 31st.
 - a. CARE's Act Funding expires on December 31st. We have to spend the money that has been allotted to us.
 - b. Opening up Cedar School for K-1 at a 6' distance. Utilizing every space possible.
 - c. Virtual Academy, remote learning and all spaces running smoothly.
 - d. Hired the following at Cedar:
 - i. 3 Grade 1 LTS teachers
 - ii. 1.6 LTS Kindergarten teachers
 - iii. LTS Nurse paraprofessional
 - iv. 2 expansion paraprofessionals
 - e. Reinstated the Guidance position at the HHS **using the CARE's Act Funding
 - f. Hired the following at HMS
 - i. LTS Nurse
 - ii. 3 remote learning paraprofessionals
- Unanticipated Special Education expenses-typically incorporated into the budget changes that occurred during the summer. This year we are going to be relying on the Special Education Reserve Fund.
 - a. Additional expenses on move ins and around behaviors for students for a total of \$193,000. Of the \$460,000 in the Special Education reserve, we will need the \$193,000 which will take a vote down the road of the school committee and the Board of Selectman. The vote wouldn't take place until May or June.

This is funding beyond the \$28.8 million that was approved. There are still unknowns that are the problems. Typically, by now transfers would have already been presented and settle the FY '21 budget and start talking about the FY '22 budget. We need to give it more time to see if anything else changes and to make sure we do the transfers once that happens.

Mr. Ferron noted that we are slowly getting all the transfers and all the lines rebalanced. It is because things are changing every single day. As the year moves forward things are going to come up that weren't an issue in the past like a simple illness, family issues, etc. In the past, we could manage it. Right now, we don't have any depth on the bench. We don't have many substitutes. Teachers are scheduled to the max. We anticipate that we will have a lot more expenses through the school year. How much? When? Who? We don't know that, but we do know it is going to happen. We are preparing for that!

Questions:

Mrs. Miller: Originally the CARE's Act stated we couldn't use the funds to staff, did that change?

Dr. Raab: They were discouraging it because of the December 31st deadline. Typically, you hire staff for the whole year. As of January 1st, we'll have to find an alternate source of funding. We are allowed to use it for staff.

Mr. Miraglia: Any word from the State if Chapter 70 is continuously throughout the whole school year?

Dr. Raab: We don't know for sure. The State's intent is for the year, but they are still evaluating it.

Mrs. Corbo: Have we exhausted our CARE's Funds that have been allotted to our schools and are we surveying any of the teachers now that we are a few weeks in the remote learning to see if there is anything they need, any equipment or tools that they need?

Dr. Raab: We have been doing a lot of improvements with HVAC at the HMS and Cedar so the DPW has a piece of the CARE's funds. The school department piece of the CARE's Funds is the \$833,000 but doesn't include the DPW so those are above and beyond that. When we look at the total amount of money, that has been allotted for the CARE's act it is also going to include some of the DPW money.

Dr. Raab is getting daily request for technology from the principals. He has been very open about trying to get those items. Doing the best that we can but leaving it in the principals' hands to communicate those needs.

Dr. Raab's Update on Transportation.

A huge shout out to Ruth!! Thank you for working as a bus monitor. We needed a 6th bus monitor and Ruth stepped up! Mrs. Lynch stated it was great to watch the whole operation. Watching the way Cedar and Center operated, it was like a fine oiled machine. Dr. Raab will be phasing out the bus monitors this week. Seems to be going very well. We are working on last requests. Because we are doing so well, had a lot of requests to get on the bus. Also had to change some routes and maximize the seats that we have.

Five Year Capital Plan Update:

Report on Teaching and Learning presented by Principals:

Update on the Opening of Schools:

Cedar School Mr. Oates

- Great things to share! Thank you to everyone for supporting in-person learning!
- Back to School-Students are interacting with one another and the teachers. Back to teaching and learning. Getting into a good routine.
- Learning platform "Seesaw" gives us the ability to connect with students and parents on a different and whole new level. Plug in to our workshop next week called "Tech Talk series Seesaw". Hope to get a great turnout! Feedback has been very positive.
- Benchmark assessments and how important it is to know where our students are at early in the school year.
- Lunch has been outside every day since the start of school instead of the classroom. Exciting and new!
- Picture day went off without a hitch! LOVED the natural background.
- Arrival and dismissal procedures have drastically improved.
- Room to grow are connecting students with each other. It's not what or when we teach it but how we teach it. Teachers are committed to an environment of cooperative learning and it is a little different in a fixed location and you are 6' feet apart. We are adapting as we go.

- Challenging building students' stamina this year. Dealing with things like separation anxiety. Students were out of school for a long time. Our students are tired. How do we build in breaks and how we get students up and moving is a little different this year? Continue to work on it.
- A few weeks in and now students don't want to leave Mom or Dad or get out of the car. We support our students in understanding the novelty of the first few weeks of school has worn off.

Center School Mrs. DeGrenier

- Fabulous having the kids back. Everyone is working hard making this hybrid model work.
- Teachers spend the first week getting to know the kids. Providing mindful activities and other culture building things for the students to be doing. Worked on new routines and what being a "star student" looks like. Social distancing, hand washing & wearing masks.
- The second week focused on academics.
- Kids are working on google classroom. A little bit of a learning curve for our 2nd and 3rd graders but our 4th graders are well underway.
- Returning to school was an adjustment with social distancing, hand washing & wearing masks but the kids have been amazing.
- The weather has been great for the students and has helped by getting the kids outside twice a day. They definitely need those breaks.
- Staff and students are feeling extremely safe and remaining healthy.
- Assessments begin next week.
- Parent orientation evenings are coming up. 4th and 2nd grade will be next week. 3rd grade will start right after the long weekend.
- Students have met with their specialist teachers at least once.
- Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Gordon meet with their students every other week.
- Second step are really enjoying being in the classroom and outside on the opposite week.
- Learned the new rock paper scissors game
- Fire Drill for each cohort and went well.
- 1st power outage today and we dealt with that well.
- FACE program began on September 21st. It was nice to see students arriving before and after school. Mrs. Lawrence said the program is going great and enrollment has increased.
- Kudos to our food service staff
- Remote meal pickup is extremely busy
- Transportation going really well.
- Hired a school psychologist that is starting October 5th.
- Seeing a finalize candidate for an ABA position.

Mr. Miraglia noticed that teachers were doing live streams and that is working out well. Accountability is way up compared to the Spring.

Hanover Middle School Mr. Birolini

- Thank you to everyone on this panel! Thank you to all our teachers and nurses! Great to have the kids back.
- Plan in place to return to school full-time except for the buses.
- Plan to go remote if needed.
- Students are getting into their routines. Aware of their expectations and what is expected of them.
- Traffic for pick-up was a challenge in the first week. Created a plan with the HPD.

- Zoom issues with etiquette and explained expectations with the poor choices that were made.
- Staff trying to maintain positive environment.
- Staff connecting with students making sure they know we care.
- Kids are happy and excited to be there
- Google classroom is going extremely well.
- Teachers working hard on best practices.
- Next week ELA & Math testing will be done by individual teams and in person.
- In the process to having individual meetings with each teacher.
- A simple statement: glad to have the kids back. It feels like school again.

Mrs. Lynch it is great to hear talk about assessments and trying to identify where the kids are now. This is one of the major concerns from parents. How are we going to make up what they missed? How much did they lose? Great to see you are addressing that. Hope that this is passed on to parents and this is our top priority and have plans to address this. Need to give that reassurance to the parents.

Mrs. Corbo: One of the major changes was the reformatting of advance math and moving it into those “win periods”. Wondering how is the “win period” going at the middle school and are we envisioning maybe starting next month implementing some advance math into the win period.

Mr. Birolini: We are talking about 12 standards. We will start identifying students for advance math.

HHS Mr. Paquette

- Reassuring watching the school evolve and adapt.
- Sports 240 students participate in 5 sports teams (volleyball, golf, soccer, cross country, field hockey). As of this Friday, all of them will have played 1 game with a Patriot league opponent. High risk sports aren’t allowed to be played but are practicing (cheer & football).
- Brian Converse has done wonders and set-up a machine so the students can just scan the card. It goes right into Aspen. No pens, no paper & no sharing of items. We wouldn’t have gotten here as quickly if we weren’t required to get there. Must know where every student is every single day. Used to sign papers or lanyards. Hope the kids got where they are going. QR code and immediately goes to a google doc.
- Google classroom very close to mirroring to Aspen so don’t have to move it from one into the other.
- Watching the interaction with the teachers being responsible for their remote students as well as those students in front of them. Creative and innovative. Teachers need to be commended!

Action Items

No items at this time.

Mrs. St. Ives wants to remind everyone of the 1st Tech Talk series tonight with Ann Coates @ 6:30pm.

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for October 14, 2020 at 4:00pm. Expected agenda items will be: Introduction of the new HPTA Board, FY '21 budget transfers and potential Capital Plan update.

Motion by Lynch to adjourn at 5:47pm. The motion was seconded by Corbo. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Tahnee Warner

Tahnee Warner

Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary