

Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes
January 6, 2021
Virtual Meeting
6:00 PM

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, Patricia Smith

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 6:05 PM by Mrs. Miller.

Public Comment: None

Mrs. Miller: I would like to thank the members of our School Committee. “None of us could imagine what our role would look like during a pandemic. Our roles swelled and morphed. We all had to adjust very quickly to meet these new challenges. The decisions that had to be made are well beyond the scope of any of our typical school committee decisions made in the past. It started in the spring with a heartbreaking decision to close our schools. It continued with a difficult and complicated budget season. Summer was spent, working on all the decisions we needed to reopen our schools. On top of that, we decided to change our mascot. Throughout this time, we have had little guidance and support from the State which meant we were left on our own to make these difficult decisions. Thankfully, we have a district that is blessed with a strong administration that has done an exceptional job managing the situation. You have all worked tirelessly to balance the expectations for high-quality education and the emotional well-being of our students as well as the safety and health of our entire school family. I want to acknowledge and thank you for the countless hours of meetings, phone calls, researching, meeting, and zoom calls that you have participated in over the last 9 months. You have all met this challenge with professionalism and grace with a willingness to listen and learn. It takes a strong team to navigate this environment. I am proud of our committee and the role we played in this team.

Mr. Ferron: Thank you for the kind words. Our school community suffered an immemorable loss. I am heartbroken to report that one of our veteran HHS teachers, Pamela Borgeson, passed away this week after a long illness. For the past nine years, Mrs. Borgeson taught engineering and robotics at Hanover High School. She was a strong advocate for her students, a loyal and thoughtful colleague, and a professional that was always forward-thinking, creating new and exciting learning opportunities for her students. She was an exceptional teacher and cared greatly about her students and colleagues. We are heartbroken and sad. We want to recognize her family and colleagues with our deepest condolences. Let’s take a moment of silence before we start the meeting.

Approval of Minutes:

November 18, 2020: Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the November 18, 2020 School Committee Minutes as written. The motion was moved by Mrs. Lynch and seconded by Mr. Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

December 9, 2020: Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the December 9, 2020 School Committee Minutes as written. The motion was moved by Mrs. Lynch and seconded by Mr. Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Report of the Superintendent presented by Mr. Ferron:

Mascot Adoption

Mr. Paquette: The time has finally arrived. Our mascot selection process has officially come to a close. We want to thank everyone who submitted mascot names and logos, and we especially want to thank our Mascot Selection Committee who dedicated their time, their insights, and their genuine investment throughout this process. After receiving over 400 mascot name submissions, collecting over 85 mascot logo suggestions, and tallying over 2000

final votes, we've finally found – our mascot. We are the home of "The Hawks!" Logo images, representations, and any visual renderings of our newly-adopted mascot have yet to be determined and finalized. We'll be starting that process almost immediately, and we look forward to your continued support and participation. Once the logo is in place, we will be implementing a cost sensitive implementation process. The high school was built in 2010-11. Typically, at the 10-year mark that's the time when certain aspects or physical components of the building are scheduled to be redone or remodeled. For example, the gym floor falls into the schedule. This is the perfect opportunity to put the new Hanover Hawks logo in place.

Mrs. Lynch: I would like to personally commend Caroline Jackson. Miss Jackson is a remarkable young woman. I had previously asked her specifically why she wanted to involve the community. I was challenging her to really think about why she wanted to have the committee and community involved. She explained it beautifully. Congratulations for a job very well done with over 2000 votes!!

Mr. Geary: I appreciate that you are thoughtfully considering the cost of this transition. Looking forward to seeing how this transition provides us with additional revenue for our athletics department. This is a huge opportunity to be mindful of the cost of the transition as well as look for strategic opportunities to look for revenue.

Mr. Miraglia: I would like to recognize the small group of people that took a chance and put a lot of effort on taking the Mascot Campaign on. This was a big positive for 2020-2021. Great job!

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to adopt the new Hanover mascot to the Hanover Hawks. The motion was moved by Mrs. Lynch and seconded by Mr. Geary. The vote carried unanimously.

Questions: None

HHS Schedule Change

Mr. Paquette: As we all know, face-to-face time is precious and essential, especially when it comes to teaching-and-learning. To maintain health and safety standards while increasing the frequency with which teachers and students can teach and learn in a face-to-face format, we'll be moving to a seven-period-a-day schedule rather than meeting 4 periods-a-day. Incorporating a Flex Block, all 7 periods will now meet on all in-person days. With a significant decrease in the passing time in the hallways and minor adjustments in lunches, we creatively managed to increase essential class time while also dismissing slightly earlier to address congestion and traffic issues in the afternoon. These changes are excellent modifications, and we'll regularly monitor in-person scheduling as health and safety circumstances continue to evolve.

Questions: None

Mrs. Lynch: I commend you and your staff for working together collaboratively and making the decision to have this change happen.

COVID Health Update

Mrs. Smith: Hanover has been experiencing an increase in COVID-19 cases since the Thanksgiving holiday. Before the holiday break on December, 18th we saw a significant increase in cases that prompted us to pause our in-person learning. We implemented three remote learning days and instituted a week-long pause to high school athletics to evaluate the recent increase of cases in the Town of Hanover. We were able to contact trace, isolate, quarantine, and test all school-related cases. We were able to determine many of these positive cases were related to identifiable clusters and household spread. Since December 26th, we have seen a town-wide decline and over the past week, just over 2 school-related cases on a daily average. Heading in the right direction but keeping in mind that it was the third week after the Thanksgiving Holiday when we saw the biggest spike. Our [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) remains the best source of current information for our community. Our dashboard is updated daily, and we continue to review each reported case in our community.

With the help of our Hanover Fire Department MIH program; our Health Services Department continues to test, contact trace, isolate positive cases, and quarantine close contacts. We continue to find that household spread and identifiable clusters are the primary drivers of the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Although the State reported indicators of community spread are high, there continues to be little evidence of spread in our schools or on our athletic teams.

As part of our recurring health and safety protocols, we requested guidance this week from the Hanover Public Health Nurse, the State Epidemiologist (MDPH), and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education COVID-19 Consultant regarding the level of community spread in the Town of Hanover as it pertains to the operation of our schools. These experts have advised the district to maintain our current (hybrid) level of programming during this time. It is more important than ever that everyone in the community follow the guidelines of the State to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and minimize the impact on our schools.

We will continue to evaluate the data daily and collaborate with our State and local health agencies as needed. Our objective is to keep students in school while minimizing the impact of COVID-19 on our students, staff, and community.

COVID-19 PCR testing is now free of charge to all residents in the community. The Town has been working hard to deliver the best services to its residents. As of December 30, 2020, a change in funding has allowed the Town to provide free drive-thru COVID-19 PCR testing to all residents. Please view the [Town of Hanover Mobile Integrated Health testing criteria](#) before [scheduling a test](#). Drive-thru testing is held at the Hanover Council on Aging, located at [665 Center Street](#), from 12:15 PM to 1:30 PM on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. [Pre-registration is required](#). You must register by 9:00 AM on the day of testing and register up to two weeks in advance. Your Hanover address will be verified upon arrival at the testing site.

Questions:

[Mr. Miraglia](#): Any evidence that the spike was because of the holiday gatherings?

[Mrs. Smith](#): We did see a lot of gatherings over the holiday of people that were exposed or quarantined due to those gatherings. It is hard to know right now what we are going to see next week. We have limited data and this is our first holiday season.

Re-Opening Update

[Mr. Ferron](#): In the next week or two once we know what we can expect long term, we are meeting with the Teachers Association. We had a good meeting today and have another one next week. We will meet with the Board of Health, Epidemiologist and the School Committee on the next steps for reopening more than we have right now. We currently have a hybrid model with K-1 already in school four days a week. Grade 2 and students with high needs will also be returning for four days of in-person learning. We all want our students back with us as soon as possible and will continue to work with this group and our staff on future dates.

Questions: None

Report of Finance Department presented by Dr. Raab:

FY '21 Budget Update

Every year we ask our substitutes from our sub list if they are going to be returning and to commit. Forty-eight substitutes committed to coming back. We hired 24 substitutes since the beginning of September. Of the 72 people, only 36 actually came back on active bases. We know COVID-19 has been a concern. The substitutes were asked to commit to one building this year for contact tracing purposes. Bench substitutes have been added. Those are substitutes that come in regardless of official need and are used at the Principals' discretion for unplanned needs due to COVID. Over the past several weeks, we have hired college students who have come home for the college break and have done a great job. They will all be going back to school at the end of January. Next few weeks, it is going to be even tougher to recruit. Several people in quarantine but are healthier. They want to work from home. We need to provide supervision for the kids in the classroom. Would like the teacher of

record teaching albeit teaching remote then having a substitute teacher covering a lesson. The college kids have done a great job in this challenge. As part of the FY '22 budget presentation that will be given on January 20th, I was going to discuss increasing the sub pay. The minimum wage just increased to \$13.50 per hour. That would bring the sub pay to \$94.50. Currently, our subs make \$85 per day. We were going to wait until July 1st but given the challenges that we are facing, would like to consider an increase to \$95/day immediately. We can do this because the sub lines haven't been overtaxed this year. It would cost an additional \$5K to \$7K from now until June. It would allow us to recruit some more subs. We are still on the low end of the pay spectrum. If this helps with our sub pool great but at least it will acknowledge our current subs and brings the sub pay up closer to the minimum wage increase.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to increase the sub pay for Hanover Public Schools to \$95 effective immediately. The motion was moved by Mrs. Lynch and seconded by Mr. Geary. The vote carried unanimously.

Questions: None

FY '22 Preliminary Budget Presentation

Monday night the Town Manager submitted a preliminary town budget as part of the bylaws. He is required to give the selectman a preview of what the FY '22 budget might look like. On February 1st, he will be presenting his actual FY '22 budget. On Monday night, the town manager presented a budget that increases our school department budget by 5.7% or about \$1.7 million. The [presentation](#) is on the Board of Selectman tab on The Town of Hanover website. The school department is one line on the presentation. The Town Manager allows the departments to give a preliminary number knowing that it will not be our final number. We need to work together as a town. He did indicate in the presentation that if the town was to fund everything the departments requested in the budget, it would present a \$2 to \$2.6 million budget gap. Here are some of the challenges of putting together the FY '22 budget:

- 1) Assuming September 2021 will be back to normal. Big assumption but there is no other way to do the budget.
- 2) Personnel cost this year are variable. We settled with the paraprofessionals, the cafeteria workers, and the administrative assistants. In the spring we will be negotiating with the Hanover Teachers' Association as their contract is up in June. We do not know the numbers. All that can be done is to set aside ranges of funds based on 7 years of experience. Half of the \$1.7 million is toward anticipated personnel increases that are unassigned and the other half is toward recovery.
- 3) At this time, there are no known district retirements this year. Usually this provides a little bit of an investment for the budget.
- 4) When we accepted the \$600K cuts in June at the town meeting for FY '21, we have to consider whether we are going to restore all those cuts. Some we have no choice. We need to consider putting those cuts back and that will get us back to zero before we start adding.

Questions: None

Donations-Donations totally \$8,730.27 were received from Bay State Textiles, Patel Family, and the HPTA.

Motion by Lynch to approve the \$8,730.27 in donations. The motion was seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Report on Teaching and Learning Presented by Mrs. St. Ives:

Update on Structured Learning Time: Back in June as a result of the state of emergency, the board adopted amendments to the current student learning time regulations. The regulation called for districts to create plans for three different models a hybrid, remote, and in-person schedules. Each district was surveyed in early November and asked to identify their current model of instruction, the daily time allotments for all versions of instructional, and noninstructional times and what we were doing for minutes related to instructional in-person, remote synchronous, remote asynchronous, and noninstructional minutes for mask breaks, lunch, and recess. They asked

about factors influencing between in-persons versus remote. There were questions raised about the building compacity to ensure appropriate physical distancing, cleaning capacity, and transportation capacity. After the department collected the information from all districts for grades 1, 4, 7, and 10 the data was tallied and averaged. At the December 15th meeting, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted an additional amendment to the student learning time regulations on an emergency basis. The amendments established minimum levels for live instruction for districts. They are adding a time requirement to the previous amendments. The amendments included the following standards and will be effective on January 19th for all districts. Districts and schools operating in a hybrid model must provide students with access to at least 35 hours of live instruction over a 10-day period of time-averaged across grades 1-12. Within these 35 hours, they are required to have a daily live check-in. They want educators engaged with students every day. Live instruction means the combination of in-person and remote synchronous instruction. Remote synchronous is when teachers are live streaming with students. Districts operating in a remote model, which we are not currently, must provide students with 40 hours of synchronous instruction and live sessions each day. In Hanover, we are operating in a hybrid model of instruction that means we need a minimum of 35 hours of live instruction over a 10-day period of time. We are currently providing our students with an average of 40 hours of live instruction. We have been working hard since September to continually refine programming and experiences for students. Over the past few weeks, Principals have continued to work with the cohorts of teachers and some individual teachers based on the new requirement. The State does plan to survey all districts again on January 25th to ensure the new regulations are being met. We are continually looking at our grade level schedules and although we met this requirement, we are still going back to teachers to see if there are periods of time where if one specific grade level wasn't meeting the requirement daily and maybe one day had more than another. There are still some adjustments that we can make to different schedules and teachers have been open to this work.

Questions:

Mr. Miraglia: We are already exceeding the minimum of 35 hours and we are at 40 hours, are there plans on doing more? Do you have a number or target for how much more?

Mrs. St. Ives: Striving to do better every day but what is developmentally appropriate for students. The average was deliberate so they didn't just mandate students to be in front of a screen for a certain amount of hours. That doesn't talk about the quality of the experience they are receiving. With the average, the lower elementary students are not going to be as effective to continually sit in front of a screen all day. Upper elementary, you can do it more often. Our teachers are doing this without this mandate and are doing it all the time. We asked them to pause for a moment to see if there were those specific times or areas where we could add more. We don't have a specific number. We are using this as a springboard to move forward to see if there is anything we can add.

Mr. Miraglia would like to commend the teachers for constantly upping their game. It is such a challenging time. He has noticed there is more engagement and onscreen time.

Action Items: None

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2021. Time to be determined. Expected agenda items will be: FY '21 Budget Update, FY '22 Budget Update, COVID Health Update, High School achievement testing updates.

Motion by Mrs. Lynch to adjourn at 7:18 PM. The motion was seconded by Mr. Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Tahnee Warner

Tahnee Warner
Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary