

***Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes
January 20, 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 6:00 PM by Mrs. Miller.

Public Comment: None

Approval of Minutes:

January 6, 2021: Mrs. Miller requested the minutes to be tabled until the next meeting as the edited version wasn't sent out for approval yet.

Report of the Superintendent presented by Mr. Ferron:

COVID Health Update

Mrs. Smith: We continue to remain in the red highest risk zone for community transmission. Happy to report all of our tracking data continues to trend lower. We did not see the significant spike after the December holiday that we saw after Thanksgiving. We would like to thank our community for helping to limit the spread of COVID by following the guidance of the State. Although our numbers are improving, we are still seeing a steady level of new infection daily. Our tracking data is available on the Hanover Public Schools [COVID-19 dashboard](#). Last week many of our school staff including our school nurses, health office support staff, and some school administrative assistants were involved in administering the 1st dose of COVID-19 Moderna vaccine to the Town of Hanover's First Responders.

We are in the process of exploring a program with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to potentially roll out pooled COVID-19 surveillance testing for all Hanover Public School students and staff. Pool testing involves mixing several test samples of a batch or pool; then, testing the pooled sample with a PCR test. This approach increases the number of people who can be tested using the same number of resources as a single PCR test. If the pooled sample is negative, then all individuals within that pool are considered negative. If the pooled test is positive, then all of the individuals must quarantine and be tested individually. This method is used as a screening tool and would be run weekly for all students and staff with written consent. The State would provide funding for the first six weeks of supplies and testing. If we are selected to participate in the program, this process will help us to identify asymptomatic carriers and will help to decrease the spread of COVID-19 in the community. We are meeting with the State on Friday to discuss the next steps and more information in the coming weeks.

Questions:

Mrs. Miller: How do you pick the pools?

Mrs. Smith: It will be by cohort. There are 10 samples per pool. In a classroom of 22 students, you would have to do 3 pools. There is a maximum of 10 per pool. All the pools will be preestablished. Each vial gets a label with the pool. If you scan that, you will see all of the members of that pool. It would be up to the nurses to unclick the person that was not present for testing that day.

Mr. Miraglia: Is the entire school expected to be tested over a period of time?

Mrs. Smith: The idea is that every person in the school is tested every week. We need to figure out how to roll it out. The pooled testing will be done two to three times a week. The older students (middle and high school) can self-swap under supervision. The young students will need a nurse or paramedic to do the swab for them. After we meet with the State and expectations are given, we will need to work with our Fire Department and our health services staff to determine the best way to roll this program out.

Mr. Miraglia: Any word on what we can expect for teachers or when phase two begins?

Mrs. Smith: There is no concrete timeline for teachers. Phase two to begin on February 1st. That does not mean we will get the vaccine on February 1st. All processes are in place. We are ready to go.

Comments:

Mr. Geary: We just applied for the pool testing. We have not been approved for pool testing yet. Once we are approved and given a timeline from the State, we will then know when the pooled testing will take place in the Town of Hanover. We are preparing for this, but there are no timelines or confirmation from the State at this time.

Dr. Raab wanted to give Mrs. Smith and the team a shout out. There were concerns raised about the air circulation on the buses now that it is getting colder. This morning Mrs. Smith and the team took a ride on the buses with thermometers and a wind speed device. They made decisions as to what was safe and what would allow appropriate airflow. A decision was made that if it is 30 degrees or colder, the windows will open at one click, and the vent in the roof of the bus will be open. That will provide plenty of airflow on a cold day. If it is warmer, then the windows will be open more. Mrs. Smith has been working with Steven Ingle through-out the whole COVID-19 process. Her team went above and beyond!

Re-opening Update

Mr. Ferron: Most re-opening updates depend on the work Mrs. Smith and the Health Services team are doing. Our leadership team meets daily with our Health Services staff. Mrs. Smith consults every day with the town public health officials, DESE, and Mass DPH. We ask them questions and give them updates on what we are doing and how we are progressing. We are closely monitoring our local health conditions. We managed to stay open as we watch other districts around us close after the Holidays in response to cases or as a preventative. We are also in contact with our neighboring school districts and their leadership teams. Our top priority remains to keep our schools open and keeping our students and staff healthy. We continue to work with the Hanover Teachers Association on plans to increase in-person learning. The process is ongoing and the dialogue is productive in moving forward. We continue to have cases daily, there is little evidence of in-school spread. We will stay the course and continue to plan for the future. We have significant challenges like transportation and the logistics around before and after school. To have a successful transition, we need support from the State with the transportation guidelines. This is a huge impediment to moving forward. The bus capacity is not even close to what our needs would be. Space for lunches, passing in the hallway, how virtual academy will lay out, these are ongoing challenges as well. We are being thoughtful and strategic in our approach.

Mrs. Miller: Would like to commend the MIH (Mobile Integrated Health) for opening up more testing slots for residence and students after the long weekend. If you travel outside of Massachusetts, you are supposed to get tested when you return. You can schedule your test through the MIH program. 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](#), Hanover. [Pre-registration is required](#).

Questions:

Mr. Miraglia: We have already done several things to bring back students; for example, we brought back cohort C and grade 2 and changed the high school schedule. How has the adjustment been going with these changes?

Mr. Ferron: Mrs. DeGrenier and her team are working hard in making this transition happen and we are working it all out.

Mrs. DeGrenier: It has been a very smooth transition but we had to work through different challenges to bring the students back. Lunches are going great. The kids were happy and excited to be back. Our biggest challenge was around the parent pick-up and drop off. Overall, very successful.

Public Question: How do we get students back with current existing transportation and space issues? What changes will be made to get the rest of Center School students back and what is the timeline?

Dr. Raab: In regards to transportation, what made it easier is that any 2nd grader, that has a sibling at Cedar, we were allowed to put the sibling next to the 2nd grader on the bus which allowed us more bus seats for grade 2. Having said that, we will not be able to do that for grades 3 and 4 as there are not enough seats available. Per the State, one student is allowed to a seat unless sitting with a sibling. Very difficult to add more students to the bus. Driving the student was an option that many took.

Mr. Ferron: The timeline is to be determined. We have to work with our teachers' association and come to an agreement.

Comments: None

Report of Finance Department presented by Dr. Raab:

FY '21 Budget Update: Included in the FY '22 preliminary budget presentation.

FY '22 Preliminary Budget Presentation

- This document in its entirety can be found on the Hanover Public Schools website as well as line items of salaries and expenses. Dr. Thomas Raab presented the budget and noted that the discussion would act as an overview and he would be happy to discuss anything in detail as requested or answer any questions that might come up. He noted this is a level services budget and Dr. Raab is confident this budget puts the School Dept. in a good place for FY '22. Highlights of the Budget Presentation are below.
 - FY 2022 Budget Approval
 - Variables Impacting Budget Development
 - COVID-19 Variability/Recovery and status of school opening in September 2021
 - Six-months remain in the current school year
 - Town's annual financial capacity to support operating budget (property tax levy limit)
 - Variability of State aid (Chapter 70)
 - Variability of Circuit Breaker (CB) reimbursement rate
 - Variability of State and Federal Grants
 - Unknown obligations: Special Education tuition and long-term absences, equipment failure, and legal costs
 - Community Expectations
 - Excellent schools have been identified as a top priority by Hanover residents
 - High expectations including:
 - Pandemic Recovery efforts in each area
 - Safe schools (innovative security protocols, secure facilities, support from HPD)
 - Strong academics (experienced teachers, quality resources, exceptional college acceptance rate, innovative technology)
 - Student supports (inclusive Special Education, comprehensive counseling/health services, stable class size)
 - Excellence in Athletics, Arts, Enrichment, Clubs, and Activities
 - Level Services Budget Proposal

- Supports pandemic recovery to include special education needs, maintaining appropriate class sizes, staffing returned to pre pandemic levels, and curriculum materials needed
- Supports our educational and operational needs for FY '22
- Supports Town and School Technology needs
- Restores teaching positions cut in FY '21
- Wait and See:
 - Kindergarten Enrollment
 - Pre-School Enrollment
 - Special Education
 - COVID-19
 - Plan to return to In-Person Learning
- Budget History FY 2014 – Present
- Town/School Shared Cost History Review
- Supporting Strategic Objectives
- Current and Projected Enrollment
- Projected Class Sizes K – 8
- Comparisons to Surrounding Towns and DART
 - Per Pupil Expenditure
 - Teacher Student Overall Ratios
 - Special Education
- Grant Summary
- Circuit Breaker Funds Spent
- Circuit Breaker 2012 to present
- FY 2022 Proposed Budget 1.0 Summary

• FY 2022 Budget Approval Schedule

| <u>Meeting Purpose</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Scheduled Budget Discussion and Agenda Items</u> |
|------------------------|-------------|--|
| Board of Selectman | 1/4/21 | Town Manager presents preliminary Town Budget. |
| School Committee | 1/6/21 | FY '22 Preliminary School Department Budget presentation. |
| School Committee | 1/20/21 | FY '22 School Department Budget 1.0 presentation. |
| Board of Selectmen | 2/1/21 | Town manager submits FY '22 budget. |
| School Committee | 2/3-2/24/21 | Budget: Discussion and preparation of School Department Budget 2.0 and possibly 3.0 following Town Manager Submission. |
| School Committee | 3/10/21 | Public Budget Presentation; Review Budget 4.0 and vote. |
| Advisory Board | 3/24/21 | FY '22 Budget Presentation |

Questions:

Mrs. Miller: When we were working with the TLA budget, is it on pause or reflected in next year's budget?

Dr. Raab: It is on a limited basis this year. There is \$60K specific to next year's budget.

Mrs. Corbo: In the enrollment projections did we make any adjustments for student attrition which we typically see at the middle school and some going into high school when leaving us to go to another high school or vo-tech?

Dr. Raab: No adjustments were made for move-outs, move-ins, or student movement.

Mrs. Corbo: It looks like the bulk of increases of expenses are salaries, Special Education, and technology which are not a surprise to anyone. Were there any surprising increases that you saw? We seemed to be in line with our neighboring and DART districts. Even though it is a 5% increase in the budget it seems as though we are looking at any outrageous jumps that would be inconsistent with what we are seeing in neighboring or DART districts.

Dr. Raab: Even though the number seems high at 5.7%, part of it is restoring some of the cuts we endured last year. We also have no retirements this year. Typically, the budget is offset by a couple hundred thousand dollars in retirements but, we can't do that right now.

Mrs. Miller: \$120,000 of the increases to Special Ed is tuition increase. That is a large number.

Dr. Raab: It is tuitions we are paying plus two additional students.

Mr. Miraglia: Easier to understand the budget and the increase by looking at the budget the School Committee and Dr. Raab proposed last February. If you run those numbers, it looks like a small increase and in line with all the other years.

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

Update on Professional Development: We had two incredibly impactful days. Yesterday Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson was the keynote speaker. She opened the day with a keynote titled "Creating Cultures of Belonging in the Face of Inequities." The discussions included issues of equity, cultures of belonging, and understanding how these issues affect our school environment, curriculum, and resources. Dr. Amante-Jackson focused on four areas in discussion created by her foundation. She works on a few different foundations. Two of her own and one through the Harvard School of Education called the RIDES Project. They focus on diversity, belonging, inclusion, equity, and its implications in society but more specifically education. She walked through each element providing several analogies and following up with real-life examples untimely outlining how each of these elements works together to provide equity inclusion for all students, families, and people. The majority of the discussions centered on cultural awareness and equity for students and families. We held two break-out sessions. One for pre-k to grade 6 and one for grades 7 through 12 with Dr. Kimberly Parker. Dr. Parker started the sessions with three goals. To determine your comfort level about discussions of race and preparations for the teaching of future tests, to articulate how diverse tests are for all students and why we need them in our classrooms, and to define next steps with potential partners for advancing our work. Today we had an all-staff including paraprofessionals and ABA tutors, session with Sarah Ward. Ms. Ward is an expert on developmental and acquired brain research with an expertise in the area of executive functioning deficit. Thank you to the Hanover SNAP (Special Needs Athletic Partnership). They are the group that brought this idea to talk about and fund Ms. Wards' time with us today. Thank you to Colleen Jones, Carol McGinnis, Jess Busa, Kerri Moran, Shelly Ireland, Tricia Smith, Roz Davis, Sheryl Wade, Stacey Decotas, Suzanne Clasby, and Shawna Newcomb members of our Anti-Bias Leadership Team for all their work in our district over the past several years and most recently on Tuesday. They have been instrumental in organizing and coming up with new ideas and challenging themselves to bring some of this work here. They are already looking for the next steps as to how to continue these conversations.

Comments:

Mrs. Miller wants to thank SNAP for sponsoring Sarah Ward and the Anti-Bias Leadership Team for helping with the Professional Development. Thank you to all the staff that participated in the Professional Development.

Mrs. Lynch found it important that Mrs. St. Ives shared information with the School Committee and parents watching this evening. I am sure there are questions as to why we take two days for Professional Development instead of in-person learning. Mrs. St. Ives hit it when it was mentioned that the opportunity was given for our staff to take a deep breath to do some reflection about their teaching and they received information that was challenging and inspiring. Learning more about equity, teaching and identifying are the critical components of discussing race, inclusion, and culture. All of these we have been talking about but now we are seeing some concrete work being done in those areas. Also, stressed the importance of having the full staff together to get the same foundation and knowledge. Thank you for taking the time to put this together and the work you do to make Professional Development worthwhile for the teachers.

Action Items: None

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for February 3, 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 update.

Motion by Mrs. Lynch to adjourn at 7:27 PM. The motion was seconded by Mr. Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Tahnee Warner

Tahnee Warner

Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary