

***Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes***  
***March 10, 2021***  
***Virtual Meeting***  
***7:00 PM***

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

**Also Present:** Matthew Ferron, Thomas Raab, Debbie St. Ives, Keith Guyette, Patricia Smith, Matthew Paquette, Daniel Birolini, Jane DeGrenier, Michael Oates, Matthew Plummer, Kelly Lawrence, Kelly Stukenborg, Jill Gagnon, Carol Krall

**Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM by Mrs. Miller.

**Public Comment:** None

**Approval of Minutes:**

February 3, 2021: Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the February 3, 2021 School Committee Minutes as written. The motion was moved by Mrs. Lynch and seconded by Mr. Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

February 24, 2021: Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the February 24, 2021 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:**

Hanover Hero

Mrs. DeGrenier: Center School ABA Tutor Jill Gagnon used her life-saving actions last week. On Friday Center School student Aaron Johnson began choking at lunch. Aaron bravely sought out the adult in the room and gave the proper signal to indicate that he was choking. Jill immediately recognized what was happening and jumped into action and successfully performed the Heimlich Maneuver. We are very proud of both of them for not panicking and doing what they needed to do. Aaron and his mom were very grateful for Jill's quick thinking and presented her with some flowers and some treats as a token of their appreciation. Jill was very humble about this and we know she doesn't like the spotlight, but she very much deserves it. Jill commented that this was a result of Aaron's brave actions and the commitment to the school district's training with public safety. Jill is a true hero. It takes a person with courage, confidence, and compassion to jump into action like Jill did and we are incredibly grateful for her heroism and humility.

COVID Health Update

Mrs. Smith: First, on behalf of the entire Health Services Department, I'd like to thank Ms. Gagnon for her life-saving actions last week. We are all very proud and grateful.

**COVID-19 Cases and Trends:** We are pleased to report that our community COVID-19 cases continue to decline steadily. These numbers are especially encouraging as we continue to return all of our students to full-time learning over the next week. We have had an isolated uptick in the past two days, and we will watch to see if this becomes a trend, especially considering that we are in the third week after February vacation. We encourage everyone to check the [Hanover Public Schools COVID-19 Dashboard](#) regularly to view new cases and trends.

**Pooled Testing Program:** Our pooled testing program is up and running and in the past three weeks we have sent 450 pools containing over 3,000 individual samples. From those tests, we identified only 5 positive, asymptomatic cases. These cases were quickly contact-traced, and close contacts were quarantined and provided a COVID-19

PCR test through the Hanover MIH program. Over the past weeks, we have seen a substantial increase in the number of students and staff who have consented to pooled testing - currently 46% of students are in-person. We have been able to get all of the pooled testing completed on Tuesdays, so we will no longer test on Fridays. We have also added rapid antigen testing for individual tests of positive pools to minimize any disruptions for those who are negative. The State is extending our pooled testing funding through April 18th - so we will have 8 funded weeks instead of the original 6 funded weeks. We encourage all families to consent to pooled testing and we hope that the addition of rapid testing and Tuesday-only testing will encourage more families to participate. Consents may be found on the home page of Aspen.

**Vaccination:** Many of you are aware that the Governor has announced that PK - 12 staff will be able to register for vaccines beginning tomorrow, March 11. You may also know that CVS has made vaccines available to school staff through a federal pharmacy program. We are very happy to hear that many of our staff have been able to access vaccines through that program. The governor also announced 4 dedicated vaccination dates: Saturday, March 27, Saturday, April 3, Saturday, April 10, and Sunday, April 11 for school staff and we encourage all staff to register for vaccines by going onto the [mass.gov covid vaccine website](https://mass.gov/covid/vaccine). If any of our staff have questions or would like assistance in accessing a vaccine, especially if they have personal risk factors or high-risk household members, please reach out to your school nurse. We've been able to work with our local and regional clinics to access extra doses when they become available and we will continue to advocate for our staff to the best of our ability.

### **Questions:**

Mr. Miraglia: It has been a while since we were green on the COVID dashboard. What are the criteria for that in this community?

Mrs. Smith: For green, we are there for the percent positivity rate.

We are less than 5% but to get to green we need to be less than 10 per 100,000 average over two weeks. Right now, we are at 15%. We have been steadily declining and the past couple of days we are stuck at 15%. I don't anticipate being in green for a while.

Mr. Ferron: We would love to be able to provide vaccinations to all of our staff. We have been able to provide vaccines for our more at-risk staff members. Also, we have provided guidance to help staff get appointments. Many of our staff are making appointments at CVS and working on that system. Thank you to those who have made their appointments and trying to work around their school schedule. If you can get an appointment, do it. Ideally, we will do a larger vaccination effort.

Mr. Miraglia: Is the small uptick in cases coming from the pool testing or people self-reporting?

Mrs. Smith: We had two cases that came out of pool testing this week and had a couple of cases that came out of previously quarantined people that were a result of external exposure that we knew about.

### Planning for 2021-2022 School Calendar

Mr. Ferron: The process has been started for the planning of the School Calendar. A couple of things for the remainder of this year; first, the last day of school will be Friday, June 18, 2021, absent any additional snow days. We banked five days but only used one day. Second, the Commissioner wants schools back five full days in-person. The District recommendation to the School Committee is that we return all of our students five full days in-person by adding Wednesdays by the first week of April. This coincides with the Commissioners order for elementary K-5 but we have the infrastructure in place to just do it. Also, spoke to the Union spokesperson Mrs. Coates, letting her know the District's recommendation to the School Committee. Beginning the week of April 5th, all grades will be in-person for five full-days (including Wednesday) for the remainder of this year. Each school will be scheduling a limited number of early release days over the remaining months to accommodate parent conferences, teacher planning time, and other necessary events. Most of these early release days will be planned for Wednesdays; however, there may be a few exceptions. There will be a lot of preparation and

recovery for next year. We do not have all the details for the 2021-2022 calendar as there is too much to work out but as we plan, the School Committee will need to vote on some of them in the next meeting. Term dates, open houses, and conferences will be worked out over the next couple of months. The dates that people need and want to know are when school is going to start and winter break. Contractually school cannot start before September 1st, however, Labor Day is late this year. Teachers will report Wednesday, September 1, 2021, and students will report Thursday, September 2, 2021. We will have students in the school before Labor Day weekend. There could be a little fluctuation to that. The holiday break will be from Friday, December 24, 2021, through Sunday, January 02, 2022. The last day of school is tentatively June 22, 2022, with five snow days. These dates will be voted on at our next School Committee meeting. The other big change that is being recommended is Tuesdays at the elementary schools will no longer be early release days every week. Our district-wide plan is that we will have half-days on the first Tuesday of every month. There is too much recovery that needs to be done. We need instructional time. This will be brought forward to the School Committee to vote on the calendar.

### **Questions:**

Mr. Miraglia: It looks like April 7<sup>th</sup> would be the first Wednesday. Is this correct?

Mr. Ferron: Yes, all schools will be in on Wednesday, but the first couple of Wednesdays may need to be an early release day as one or two of the schools already have Parent/Teacher conferences planned. Mrs. Lawrence will have more information about FACE for families that may need it once we are back for five days. Mrs. Lawrence and her team will be publishing their summer programs on Monday of next week.

### **Report of Finance Department presented by Dr. Raab:**

FY '22 Budget Update: There have been no changes to our proposed budget for FY '22. We stand firm at \$31,521,915.00 for a \$1.7 million-dollar increase. The School Committee will be voting on the budget at our next School Committee meeting on March 24, 2021. A short version of the budget presentation that was given on January 20th will be given and then will take any final questions from the School Committee then a vote will take place at that time. The meeting with the Advisory Board has been rescheduled to April 7, 2021, and at that time we will hear the school department budget presentation as well as the technology budget presentation which is embedded into the school department budget. Today there was an announcement that the President is going to sign the \$1.9 trillion-dollar federal stimulus package. Within that package is embedded money for the States to be distributed into the schools similar to the ESSER 1 and ESSER II grants. It is possible that the funding could be around four to five hundred thousand dollars for Hanover. As more information comes in, Dr. Raab will share it.

### **Questions:**

Mrs. Miller: Do you know how they determine the amount for each town? Is it off Title 1?

Dr. Raab: It is off of Title 1 but it would just be a larger amount. It is all a fraction or multiple of Title 1. Right now, they are saying it is two to three times the ESSER amount. That is how we got the estimated amount.

Mr. Ferron: Hopefully this will allow us to close our FY '21 budget gap. Dr. Raab is working hard to close that gap and has brought it from 350 to below 200 thousand dollars.

Mr. Miraglia: Is the Chapter 7 money level funded or is there any new information on that?

Dr. Raab: The latest information has its level plus the \$25 per student. It will probably be up about 70 to 75 thousand dollars. It is not threatened and possibly we will get a little bit more.

## **Report of Teaching and Learning:**

### Reopening/Return to School Update by Building:

Mrs. St. Ives: It is the first time in a very long time that all the students are on the same schedule and the cohorts have met and are together. We have planned it on paper, we have talked about it, we have over-planned it and we have modified it, but to see it happening is emotional.

Cedar School-Mr. Oates: Though we do not have a Reopening/Return to School Update at Cedar, there are lots of exciting things going on. Using our new Registration Express (Our New Virtual Registration System), we have enrolled 223 new students into the Hanover Public Schools for fall 2021. Included in that count are 154 kindergarten students and 69 preschool students. We are reaching our peer capacity in preschool, but we are anticipating quite a few more kindergarten students to register over the next 5-6 months. We are so happy to welcome these Super Friends to the Hanover Public Schools. Next up, we have officially kicked off our One Book, One School project. This month the students, families, and teachers are all enjoying a school community read together. We are reading the chapters at home and then we are discussing the story during our virtual morning announcements. We have met with the students to discuss ways they can include their family in the experience and we are planning for a big event at the end of the month—including a Zoom visit from the author. We are thrilled to be enjoying a story together as a school community. The One Book, One School project is on the heels of the annual Snowball Slam reading challenge that just wrapped up. The Cedar Super Friends read thousands of books last month and were able to slam paper snowballs on their classroom doors to celebrate. The four classes that averaged the most books read at home enjoyed a snow cone and a story with Officer John, Mrs. McLaughlin, Ellen Burns, Anastasia Frank, and myself. In years past we have celebrated with a cotton snowball fight in the cafeteria, but to be safe this year we opted for snow cones. There were no complaints. Last week, in addition to the Read Across America week-long celebration of literature, and the 100th day of school fun, over 70 Cedar families participated in the 20th annual Cedar School Screen Time Out, Physical Activity, and Play Week. This means no recreational screen time for a week. We are so proud of the Cedar families who participated and stuck it out. I also want to take a moment to thank the Hanover PD, Dr. Raab, and the principals at the other three buildings. The recent changes going on at the other buildings have had minimal impact on the Cedar pick up/ drop off. In addition, things continue to go great on the busses – streets getting busy, but the routes remain on time and the students are enjoying the ride with their friends! Thank you!

Center School-Mrs. DeGrenier: We are thrilled to have all of our 3rd and 4th-grade students back every day. We entered full in-person on February 25th. It has been 8 days of in-person with two Wednesdays thrown in so we are 10 days in. It feels like we have been back together forever. There was so much support and effort that went into getting us back. All the nerves dissipated and all the smiles came out from the adults and the kids that morning when kids crossed the threshold. Our safety protocols were already in place from bringing our 2nd graders back; so, it seemed seamless because of all of the staff working together. Students are getting outside at least once a day and sometimes twice a day. Read Across America is happening during March and our theme is diversity. Thanks to the HPTA, every grade purchased four titles that they are reading as a grade with a different title each week. Winter assessments have wrapped up and we have moved into intervention small groups instruction for our students. The data we have gathered and the information we have is really helpful in where our students are at and what our students need from us. Transportation was our biggest hurdle for this last group coming in. Thank you to Ingle's Bus and Mrs. Prandato for working with the families. Well over 325 students are riding the bus out of 580 students. Thanks to the Hanover Police Department drop off and pick up has come together and been very safe. We dismiss the entire school in about sixteen minutes. We are thrilled to have everyone back!

Middle School-Mr. Birolini: HMS is back and it is amazing! Safety has been the priority from the beginning. To have almost an entire class of in-person learning back all at one time is a big deal. Getting the students to and from school safely has been a safety priority. In regards to drop-off and pick-ups, we have one entrance in and one entrance out. We started with over 600 cars coming in and we are down to about 500 now. The first couple of days were challenging. We have worked with Steve Ingle, Officer John, Sargent Kane, Mr. Barrett, and our HMS staff to fine-tune and continue making progress with the traffic. The first week of school we started between 7:50 and 7:53 AM and yesterday we started on time. We will continue to assess and improve on. Thank you to

everyone for their patience and understanding. Another change that has been made is when you drop off in the morning, pull all the way up in the back. The school will be opened at 6:45 AM. Lunches were another major hurdle. We did all lunches in our cafeteria. This means we can have four lunches of entire grades. Thank you to Mr. Barrett for making lunches so fun for the students. A health update went out today as we had 2 people who have COVID. For a short period, it made the staff and families worry. Predictably, these happen moving forward. We had five asymptomatic people who could have spread more infection to others but because of what we are doing that did not happen. There will be a few people quarantining but that is part of what we knew going forward. What we are doing is working. For our next steps as a school, we are looking to create experiences and opportunities for kids to be middle schoolers safely and socially distanced. In discussing with the teachers, let's see how it goes for some time and watch the data but how do we get kids moving to their classrooms. Parent/Teacher Conferences will be from March 24th through March 26th. More information to come. Thank you to our nurses, fire, and police who govern the COVID process. Thanks to our parents for their understanding, flexibility, and continuous support. Thank you for your recommendations on what you think will help. In Hanover, we are doing it right. It has been a team approach from the administration, the School Committee, and the amazing staff. Most of all thank you to the kids! They are amazing and have been polite and respectful. We have teachers teaching and kids learning in-person and it feels right because it is right!

High School-Mr. Paquette: Most notable change was the talking, energy, interaction, and vibrancy. The teachers noted that it was great to see the September energy in March. The increase in the volume level was so welcoming. In stepping back, how did this work so well? There are two groups of people behind the scene. The Custodian and Food Service staff. The Custodians were handed a long list of notes with lots of instruction and they would get it done. Preparing for lunch, we are making sure the cafeteria is populated perfectly. We are using both bleachers in the gym and the courtyard in case the lines are long. In the past few days, the seating is working and the lines are moving. That is the Food Services team!! Both Custodian and Food Services are doing their jobs and doing it incredibly well! Parking is another area we had to look and control. We assigned 170 seniors parking spots out of about 220 spots plus some spots over in the maintenance department. We knew there would be spots available to the Juniors but we wanted to monitor it through the first week to see what was true about it. There are a lot of different variables. If we have to access the maintenance lot, we first have to how many faculty members will be able to fit in the faculty parking lot which may spill over into maintenance. If that happens, then the number of spots available for the Juniors is less. Also been monitoring maintenance vehicles coming in and going out so I know how many spots they need. Virtual Academy numbers have changed as well which could affect parking. Friday into Monday we will open it up to Juniors and assign them spots. Permitting Seniors to leave 1st or 7th-period study hall with parent permission. Dismal for the Seniors at 2:25 PM has worked beautifully and before the bell rings the student parking lot is empty. The rest of the school is dismissed in under 10 minutes. When the bell rings to change classes, a system was put into place where they get dismissed systematically into the hallways. They are following the directional arrows and using the correct stairways. All of these details could not have happened without staff, student, custodial, and food services support. Kudos all around!

Mrs. Miller: I have heard from other Districts as to why they cannot bring students back and it's primarily because of logistics like lunches, buses, parking, drop off, pick up, and moving classes around. The response given is that never stopped our leaders in each building. They did not take logistics as a way to stop what was best for our kids. The custodial staff, cafeteria workers, and the bus company play a huge part in the logistics that fall on your shoulders. We are extremely grateful for all the hard work and for not making those challenges a stop.

### **Questions:**

Mrs. Corbo: How are bathroom breaks being handled at the High School? How do you control who is in the bathroom at any given time?

Mr. Paquette: We changed our teacher duties to have supervision around the bathrooms. We shut down three out of four bathrooms and were able to accommodate all student needs with supervision. The bathroom opens in the cafeteria and is supervised during the study hall. We have kept it at one right now but will phase in the others. We will start but opening up two bathrooms. One right on top of the other so if we do not have enough staff to

supervise each of them, one person can go between the two. We are also looking to double up on coverage in the study halls in the cafeteria and the primary responsibility will be to monitor the bathroom. If any issues after that, the faculty will meet and brainstorm as a group.

Mrs. Corbo: Do we still have a waitlist for the busses?

All Principals: Not at this time but if anyone calls up today, you are technically on a waitlist until Mr. Ingle can place them which has been very quick thus far.

Mrs. Lynch: At our February 3rd meeting, several high school students expressed their concern about returning to school. Tonight, I am hearing about the outstanding planning that took place and the incredible staff and that things are going well. Have you been able to have conversations, or are you hearing from students that this isn't as bad as they thought it was going to be?

Mr. Paquette: Talking with the students was the first safeguard we put into place to provide some certainty. Over these past two days, I have done nothing but talk to students. A lot of them have approached me saying this is ok and I feel good about this. The teachers have also said; "We've got this and it is working." The anxiety has dissipated dramatically.

Mrs. Lynch: Is it going to be possible between now and the end of the year to do activities that involve parents coming into the building?

Mr. Ferron: We need to wait and see. There are activities that parents can participate in now. There are spectator limits at sporting events. The District-wide music department met yesterday to talk about some opportunities for performances later in the year. It may be outside and there is always the opportunity for something virtual. We want awards ceremonies for the students. Guidance for proms should be coming out soon. Fall 2 athletics starts this week. Hopefully, we do some things that bring parents into the school community. We are not going to jeopardize what we have going on.

Mr. Miraglia: Commented how grateful he is for everyone behind the scenes who made the logistic nightmares look easy. Thankful to the teachers as they are getting back to the business of teaching.

**Public Comment:** Mrs. Miller monitored the zoom call and allowed community members access and the ability to address the Committee. Below is a summary of public comment:

- Michelle Johnson: Expressed the utmost gratitude and thankfulness for everything that has been done for my son including saving his life. I couldn't thank you enough!!

**Action Items:** None at this time

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2021. Expected agenda items will be: Reopening Report, COVID Health Update, Voting on the FY 22 budget, Vote on the skeleton dates of the calendar (start date, end date, and PD date).

Motion by Lynch to adjourn the open session at 8:16 PM. The motion was seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

*Tahnee Warner*

Tahnee Warner  
Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary