

Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes
March 24, 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, Matthew Paquette, Daniel Birolini, Jane DeGrenier, Michael Oates, Matthew Plummer, Kelly Lawrence, Kelly Stukenborg, Carol Krall, Scott Lebbossiere

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

Public Comment: None

Approval of Minutes:

March 10, 2021: Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the March 10, 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:

COVID Health Update-Mrs. Carol Krall: Over the past week, we have seen a moderate increase in cases after a low period at the end of February/early March. We continue to see household spread and little evidence of school spread. Over the past week, 1 out of the 8 new school cases was an asymptomatic case picked up from pooled testing. As a result of these positive cases, and 3-foot distancing, we have seen an increase in the numbers of students under quarantine. We are working closely with the Board of Health and the State Epidemiologists to ensure that all quarantines are appropriate and necessary. Fortunately, most of the individuals under quarantine, outside of household members, test negative and are released from quarantine on day 8. We would like to thank our community for their continued support and understanding. We are very much still in this pandemic, and we need to remain vigilant and cautious as the government continues to roll out the vaccine. We are very hopeful that as more individuals in our community become vaccinated, we will see a significant drop in cases. We encourage everyone to check the [Hanover Public Schools COVID-19 Dashboard](#) regularly to view new cases and trends.

Our pooled testing program is up and running and in the past four weeks, we have sent over 775 pools containing over 5,000 individual samples. Approximately 47% of our in-person students are currently participating in the program. From those tests, we have identified 10 positive, asymptomatic cases using the BinaxID Now rapid antigen test. These cases were quickly contact-traced, and close contacts were quarantined and provided a COVID-19 PCR test through the Hanover MIH program. We encourage all families to consent to pooled testing. We believe that when we identify an asymptomatic person who is infected with COVID-19, we have the potential to stop further outbreak that could have a serious impact on our schools and community. If you haven't already done so, please log onto Aspen and consent using the link that can be found on the home page. Just a reminder that opting out of the program does not prevent your student from being a close contact and or quarantining.

We are very happy to report that many of our school staff have been able to schedule at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and we hope that many more of our staff will be able to secure an appointment on one of the dedicated days in March and April. Those dates are Saturday, March 27, Saturday, April 3, Saturday, April 10, and Sunday, April 1. School staff can register online by going onto the mass.gov COVID Vaccine website.

Questions:

Mr. Miraglia: Quarantines are very painful for families and our hands are tied. We are trying to do the right thing and doing this by the book. Wish there was a way to cut the quarantine time down.

Mrs. Krall: We agree! The State has said we can come back at 3'. We would like to not have to quarantine at 6' and we have put this forth to the State. We are hoping for some guidance to relax some of those regulations.

Mr. Ferron: We have taken this to the highest levels of State Government. This issue has been communicated personally with the Commissioner of Education. The State needs to give us some guidance. We should be able to adjust our quarantine requirements accordingly. We have spoken with the Epidemiologist to work with DESE. This is going to require the State DPH to give us some relief. Anyone within the border of Hanover that has any decision-making authority agrees that if kids can be back at 3' then we should be able to adjust our quarantine requirements accordingly. When talking about the pool testing program, we have done 5000 tests with only a handful of positives. Yesterday, we did 1100 tests with one positive. With that, came four quarantines and one isolation for the one positive case. It is in the community and when there is a household spread, the activities of those kids and the families is how we get the bigger number of quarantines. Even the number of students quarantined this week, the vast majority were related to outside activities. We are glad our pool testing numbers are low and that is a pretty good indicator that school is pretty safe. Youth sports have nothing to do with the school system. The State says if someone on the hockey tests positive, everyone on the ice must quarantine for the appropriate number of days and they test negative. Our voice has been heard at the State level. Hanover's reputation is of the districts that are first back, leading the way on pool testing, and testing in general. They know who we are and it has been a good relationship. Until we get a green light from the medical professions, we are status quo for now.

2021-2022 School Calendar 1.0-Mr. Ferron: At the last meeting, we rolled out a draft of the school calendar. There were no big changes. The key dates on the draft version we are asking you to vote on tonight are still the same. Students will start September 2nd, Holiday break will begin on December 24th, February and April are in their usual spots, and if all goes well the last day of school will be mid to late June. All those dates are detailed on the document for people planning vacations. We will post the calendar on the website tomorrow. The list of details will be developed over the next couple of months. The important dates are all set.

Questions: None

Motion by Lynch to approve the 2021-2022 School Calendar as presented. The motion was seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Report of Finance Department presented by Dr. Raab:

FY '22 Budget Approval: Dr. Raab presented the FY 2022 School Department Budget Proposal for your review, consideration, and vote this evening. The proposed FY 2022 budget is \$31,521,915 for an increase of 5.72% over FY 2021. As presented in January, the proposed FY 2022 budget is a level services budget that supports pandemic recovery to include known special education needs, maintaining appropriate class sizes, and returning to pre-pandemic staffing levels. On the expense side, it restores the cuts from FY 2021 in professional development and building expenses and also supports Town and School Technology needs strengthening our ongoing consolidation of technology. As mentioned at our meeting on February 24, small updates were made to K-8 building text/supply lines to include the needed renewal of our math curriculum. The bottom-line building expense budgets didn't change, just some minor edits within the detail of these lines.

Questions:

Mr. Ferron: It is important to note that as we are wrapping up our current fiscal year budget and move towards next year, we are trying to navigate the ESSER funds that are coming in. The town is also slated to receive 1.4 million from the Federal Relief Act. What that means for Hanover Public Schools, for now, is any money we get from any Federal Relief, we need to square up FY '21 first and wrap up this year. A big challenge for us but also exciting. Everyone is back in school.

Mrs. Miller: The reason we need to square up our budget for this year is that we did make the decision to keep Pre-k and grade 1 at Cedar School and we pre-spent that money in good faith that we were going to get some relief money. We never go into the arrears normally but this was a special year.

Mr. Ferron: We took a calculated risk to get the young students into school right away and now getting all of the students back in school as soon as possible. There was a price for that and we gambled that Federal Relief would help us with that and that is exactly how it looks like it is going to play out.

Mr. Miraglia: Where do we stand now for the budget gap for FY '21 and would the ESSER 3 could cover some of this year and cross the fiscal boundary?

Dr. Raab:

We are at \$190,000 that we will need in a special town meeting article. The Town Manager has been working with the Board of Selectman to gather a special town meeting article to cover any expenses for both town and school that exceed the FY '21 budget COVID-related issues. We have been working closely with him to make sure those funds are available. Over the next several weeks, we will hone that done to the exact amount. On the school side, we are about \$190,000 to \$200,000 which we whittled down from \$550,000 with the ESSER 2 money that we just received. For ESSER 3, we are hoping to be able to split it between the two years but we have not received guidance yet on how much it will be and how we can use it.

May I entertain a motion to approve the FY 2022 School Department operating budget in the amount of \$31,521,915.00? Motion by Lynch to approve the FY '22 Budget as written. The motion was seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Report of Teaching and Learning:

HHS Program of Studies-Presented by Principal Matthew Paquette and STEM Director Matthew Plummer: Every year at this time, we have the privilege of introducing the *High School's Program of Studies* with a definitive document with course changes and the specific rationales for these changes. This year we will be presenting you with the *HHS Program of Studies* document which can be viewed [here](#) that has more influx than definitive for obvious reasons. The key changes are as follows:

- Removed Freshman Communication course. (pg. 32)
- Edits to English course descriptions to reflect changes in pieces of literature covered in said course. (pg. 32-35)
- Removed History through Art. (pg. 39)
- Removed Peer Leadership Seminar and School Student Mentor. (pg. 40)
- Add Leadership Course to replace Peer Leadership Seminar and School Student Mentor courses. (pg. 41)
- Edits to Foreign Language course descriptions to reflect changes in course curriculum. (pg. 56-59)
- Removed Greek and Italian course, no longer being offered. (pg. 59)
- Remove Computer Science through Game Design, material being moved to other courses. (pg. 62)
- Add Introduction to Computer Science, Web Design, and Web Application Development, to better organize the pathway of Computer Science course. (pg. 62)

- Added Instrument Band Lab 1 for students wanting to explore instrumental music for the first time or with another instrument. (pg.67)
- Added Physical Education 11/12 as a general physical education course for juniors and seniors. (pg. 72)
- Removed PE: Strength and Conditioning, PE Lifetime Fitness, and PE: Fundamentals of Team Sports and Fitness as the topics will be covered in the PE 11/12 course. (pg. 72)

Questions:

Mrs. Lynch: What do you see regarding community service? Do you see some adjustments and requirements? Have students been doing community service during this past year? Are you going to reduce the number of hours required?

Mr. Paquette: For the upcoming year, we would love community service to come back full force but we are prepared to not require them to the extent of that. We did wave the community service requirement at the end of last year so we are not requiring the 40 hours. There are individual organizations that are still requiring community service but it is in a very controlled and deliberate manner such as the National Honor Society.

Mrs. Corbo: Some sports have been limited due to COVID rules and regulations. Have those impacted our physical education program?

Mr. Paquette: In terms of what we can do, it has impacted our physical education as for the physicality and interaction of it. What it has done and beneficially is opened up the opportunity to bring in a strong health and wellness component. The adjustment counseling program at the high school has expanded. We just purchased a new social and emotional curriculum which will be in full effect in September.

Mr. Miraglia: An additional music class was mentioned that is not exactly band, can you explain that more?

Mr. Paquette: Mr. Plummer, Mr. Harden, and myself have been talking about the music program weekly. Mr. Harden has wanted to do this for quite some time. Some kids are just intimidated by the larger band experience. Some kids find it like home, a place to grow, and find themselves. Some want to play music with others but do not want to do it individually or at the magnitude of what the band is. This class allows them to learn and play an instrument alongside others. Mr. Plummer added that they saw a little drop off in the participation in the band in grades 5 through 12 because of COVID. If the 5th through 9th graders stops playing an instrument, then they are less likely to join the marching band or orchestra. This is why we created this 2.5 credit class instead of 5 credits. It will allow them to pick up their instrument and get accustomed to it then possibly join the band again. We also created another 2.5 credit elective called Jazz Lab for students who just want to play and jam out and not be in the marching band.

Action Items:

Annual District School Choice Vote: Mr. Ferron advised the Committee that they must vote on this, as it is an annual vote. He recommended that Hanover Public Schools not participate in the District School Choice program due to high enrollment and class size limitations.

Questions: None

May I entertain a motion, pursuant to MGL Ch. 76 Section 12B, for the Hanover School Committee to choose not to participate in the School Choice program for the 2021-2022 school year, due to high enrollment and class size limitations. This was moved by Lynch and seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Extension of contract for Assistant Superintendent-Mrs. Miller: We are going to negotiation an extension for the next four year. We are grateful to have Mrs. St. Ives and have her accept our contract extension. Thankful to have you and keep you for another four years.

Mrs. St. Ives is thrilled and loves all the work we do in Hanover.

Questions: None

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve a contract extension for Mrs. St. Ives' to be worked out with the superintendent and chair.

The motion was moved by Lynch and seconded by Geary. The vote carried unanimously.

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for April 14, 2021. Expected agenda items will be COVID Health Update, Fiscal FY '22 budget.

Mr. Ferron would like to respond to the community regarding a couple of questions that came up around naming the mascot. We are attempting to name the Hawk. The mascot needs a name. You can vote until tomorrow.

This is the contest we are doing now. Perhaps, there will be a Mascot rooming the sidelines at special events and sports games soon. By tomorrow night, we will have some names to submit out for the final vote for the public for the mascot. Then next week, we will be rolling out the name and logos. This process has been going on for several months. FACE and Athletics have been working very hard with the designer based on the feedback we had received. The designer is a Hanover Alumni who is a graphic designer out in California. He has donated his time. We will thank him publicly once the mascot is revealed. This past week, the signage was installed on the field house at the football field. It is now "Home of the Hawks"!! Change is happening.

Mrs. Miller: When will the first apparel be available to order?

Mrs. Lawrence: Apparel will be ready within the next couple of weeks. Once the logo is public, there will be an opportunity for people to order online.

Motion by Lynch to adjourn the open session at 7:44 PM. The motion was seconded by Geary. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Tahnee Warner

Tahnee Warner
Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary