

***Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes***  
***September 1, 2021***  
***Virtual Meeting***  
***4:00 PM***

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

**Also Present:** Matthew Ferron, Debbie St. Ives, Tom Raab, Patricia Smith, Michael Oates, Daniel Birolini, Jane DeGrenier, Matthew Mattos, Kelly Lawrence

**Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 4:01 PM by Mrs. Miller.

**No Public Comment**

Mrs. Lynch and Mrs. Miller would like to personally thank Mr. Ferron for bringing in guest speaker Pamela Garramone to Convocation today. Mrs. Lynch and Mrs. Miller “left the meeting with new strategies for their own happiness as well as adding happiness and well-being to others. It was great to hear a reminder of the impact the teachers have on a child’s life.” Mrs. Miller also noted that Dr. Raab “nailed it!” Dr. Raab’s words of wisdom “to the senior staff to support and influence new teachers and always remember to have each other’s back. Dr. Raab is a treasure and will truly be missed!”

**Report of the Superintendent presented by Mr. Ferron:**

**Mask Policy presented by Mrs. Miller:**

- Mrs. Miller reminded everyone that today’s meeting is to discuss the *Mask Policy* that was tabled at the last meeting. Public comments were all made at the previous meeting as well. All emails and community feedback comments are still being read and reviewed. One of the questions that continue to come up is; “What if we do not follow the mask mandate?” The School Committee was told that the Hanover School District could lose funding and administrators could have their licenses pulled. Mrs. Miller stated she was not comfortable with not following the mask mandate at this point. The committee did send a letter to DESE and the Governor asking for local control. The committee will continue to advocate. Mrs. Lynch agreed that the mask mandate should be followed with the hopes that on October 1st there will be some changes.
- Mrs. Miller shared her screen and read the [Face Covering Policy 9/1/21](#) which is posted on the Hanover Public Website under the School Committee documents. *As mandated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) mask requirement, effective August 25, 2021, all persons age 5 and older, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks while indoors in schools, and on school busses, except when eating, drinking, during mask breaks or when necessary to participate in elective classes, such as the use of wind instruments in band. Students who cannot wear a mask for medical or behavioral reasons are exempted from the requirement. In this case, a letter from a licensed medical provider is required and must be approved by the school nurse who will limit notification to the principal and necessary teachers/staff. Students, staff, and guests who arrive at school without a mask will be provided with one. If a person does not comply with this requirement, they will not be admitted into the building. If the refusal to wear a mask involves a staff member or visitor, they will be asked to leave the premises. If the refusal involves a student, the student and parent will be asked to meet with the building principal to discuss the situation and pursue a remedy. Unexcused, deliberate non-compliance may result in progressive disciplinary action. The Hanover School Committee recognizes the importance of mask breaks for students. Regular mask breaks will be scheduled and provided by teachers and administration. In addition, no student will be refused reasonable mask break requests. This policy will*

*remain in place until rescinded by the School Committee or until the mandate is lifted or modified by DESE, whichever occurs first.*

#### **Questions/Comments:**

Mrs. Hall made the following statement; “I would have supported the decision for parent choice if the decision had remained local. I have seen the harm it has caused in my own kids and the effect it is having on their mental health and academic setbacks including my daughter. She has a language-based learning disability entering 1st grade and trying to learn to read. As a teacher, I have experienced how masks impact communication and connections with my students. However, we are under a State mandate that can have significant consequences for non-compliance. I want to be sure that parents are clear that the policy states; the Hanover School Committee recognizes the importance of mask breaks for students and that regular mask breaks will be scheduled and provided by teachers and administration. In addition, no student will be refused a reasonable mask break request. Please understand that the committee and administration fully understand that all students are different. We are working together to make sure that they are given a break to breathe whenever a student feels they need it. I would ask parents to continue to raise their voices and concerns with the State. I will do the same. Unfortunately, the decisions that can ultimately change this mandate are theirs. We were told that if we chose not to comply, we could lose our state funding and licenses could be pulled, therefore preventing us from being able to operate our schools in the future. This would be irresponsible. I am hopeful that the COVID numbers will remain low, that we continue to show no spread in our schools, and move quickly towards less restricted mask rules no later than October 1st.”

Mrs. Corbo added that she will continue to be engaged at the State level on masking requirements and that local control is returned depending on local numbers and spread. The priority has to be keeping the schools open, healthy, and in-person. It would be irresponsible not to enforce this mandate as we cannot jeopardize our funding which would cripple our district. It is unfair to the work of our administrators to put their licensures and certifications in jeopardy. It is not the same policy that was proposed a week ago. It does have some important edits and that is why I am going to vote to support this policy. Mrs. Corbo would also like to remind the community that these teachers and administrators are the same ones that help your children with broken backpacks, give high fives to your kids in the hallway, and find your children a place to sit in a crowded lunchroom. These are teachers and administrators who care deeply for your children. We have received emails that have been unkind and make accusations of children being abused. Please be kind. Children take from us our positivity and attitude. No matter how we feel as parents, we need to send our children off to school tomorrow wearing their masks feeling positive and as supported as they can be.

Mr. Miraglia expressed that it would be helpful for people to understand there is another side to this, and there are people who need to enforce it. These people may not even agree with the mandate. These are the same people who take care of our kids every day. He also commented that going after the School Committee, the superintendent, and the administration is not going to be able to solve the problem or change it. This policy gives authority to the administration to carry out this mandate. It touches on consequences and the School Committee supporting the superintendent and administration.

Mrs. Miller entertained a motion to approve the Mask Policy as written. Motion was moved by Miraglia and seconded by Lynch. Roll Call Vote: Libby Corbo – Aye, Ryan Hall – Aye, Ruth Lynch – Aye, Pete Miraglia – Aye, and Leah Miller – Aye. The vote carried unanimously.

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2021, at Hanover High School. Expected agenda items will be: FY '22 Budget Updates, Home School Approvals, FACE Field Trip

#### **Questions and Comments:**

Mrs. Lynch: Is it our process that if we would like a change or edit to any document that we need to email Matt and if he agrees that will show up on what is presented to us?

Mrs. Miller: If it is just edits and grammar then that can be quickly edited. If it changes the meaning or spirit of the document, then it would have to be deliberated between committee members.

Mrs. Corbo wanted to remind parents that the COVID dashboard is updated daily. The parents can check it to see how many cases are in Hanover.

Mr. Ferron Thanked everyone for the support and we are ready to go tomorrow. We are going to have a great start to the school year.

Motion by Miraglia to adjourn the open session at 4:20 PM. The motion was seconded by Lynch. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

*Tahnee Warner*

Tahnee Warner  
Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary