

***Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes***  
***September 29, 2021***  
***Hybrid Meeting***  
***Hanover High School, Auditorium***  
***7:00 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, Garry Pelletier, Matthew Mattos, Matthew Plummer, Kelly Lawrence, Kelly Stukenborg

**Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mrs. Miller.

**Report of the Superintendent:**

- **Update on the DESE Guidance from 9/27/21 Presented by Mr. Matthew Ferron:** Mr. Ferron presented the Fall 2021 DPH/DESE Guidance Update. This presentation can be found in its entirety by clicking [here](#) or by going to the Hanover Public Schools Website. Masks/Face Coverings required have been extended to at least November 1, 2021. All students, staff, and guests, ages 5 and older, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks indoors in schools. All of the DESE Updates & Guidance, Medical Mask Waiver Forms, and Pool Testing updates have been posted on the Hanover Public Schools [Fall Opening 2021 page](#).
- **Update on HPS COVID Testing Program Presented by Mrs. Patricia Smith:** Mrs. Smith presented the Fall 2021 COVID-19 Testing. This presentation reviews the testing options which can be found starting on page 8. The presentation can be found in its entirety by clicking [here](#) or by going to the Hanover Public Schools Website.

**Questions/Comments:**

Mrs. Corbo: With the middle school, there is 25% of the student population is not eligible yet. Is it 80% of the entire school population?

Mrs. Smith: Yes, that is correct and it includes students and staff.

Mrs. Corbo: From the information given tonight, it does not seem like we are seeing in-school spread. Is that correct?

Mrs. Smith: Yes, that is what we have observed this year and is consistent with what we have observed last year as well.

Mr. Miraglia: When DESE says school, do they mean each building?

Mr. Ferron: Yes.

Mr. Miraglia: Is it mathematically possible if 100% of 7th and 8th grade get the vaccine, we will hit 80% population of that school?

Mrs. Smith: I do not believe it is.

Mr. Miraglia: When pulling the data from MIIS, there is an option to use the software. Does that mean you can say to the software, “Tell me what the percentage is in this building?” or do we have to look up the names?

Mrs. Smith: The software has the ability and permission from the State to access MIIS as other electronic medical companies do and most of them do. Our software company will match the first name, last name, and DOB in MIIS with our students who are in the software. It will populate their immunization record in our software. The medical staff have access to see the medical record and can see that information. They can also run reports to see the numbers.

Mrs. Lynch: Is it true, that sophomores are usually required to get a booster shot for several of the vaccinations that they have had when they entered school? Is it not our responsibility to inform the parent that the child needs to have a booster to attend? To play sports, you need to have a physical every 12 months. You can be checking that all our students regarding the series of vaccines they must have. We already practice that procedure and we do it confidentially. The process that we currently use for all the other vaccines, would it be the same as the COVID vaccine?

Mrs. Smith: Yes, it is true. There are several mandatory vaccines to attend school. Our protocol is after a certain period after the school year starts, the nurse will begin reaching out to parents. The only difference between the normal process of getting vaccine information is we are trying to collect the data in a shorter period. We can use it to monitor going forward. There is a one-time step-up fee and then an annual fee. We are applying it to the Comprehensive School Grant if we decide to move forward.

Mrs. Lynch: When do you anticipate that you want us to make that decision?

Mrs. Smith: We would like to have this information as soon as possible but I am not sure how quickly the software company can implement this. If it is decided that this is the way the Committee would like to proceed then we would like to know within the next two weeks.

Mrs. Lynch: What do you see as the negative aspect? Why would a school system choose not to do this?

Mrs. Smith: Most people think it is a privacy issue. It is helpful for us to have this information so we can plan and if we are going to want to use the 80% threshold to let some students not wear a mask in school, this is information that we would need to have.

Mrs. Hall: Because this is not a mandatory vaccine as of right now, why would you want to collect data quickly and efficiently? What is our goal for that? Is the goal the 80% to make that determination or are we collecting that information just so we know where we stand?

Mrs. Smith: If we are interested in pursuing the 80% threshold to allow some students to unmask at school, that would be a goal. If we think that we are not even close and we do not want to do it anyway, then we do not need to move forward.

Mrs. Miller: Wasn't DESE going to farm that information for us?

Mrs. Smith: They are not going to farm the information for us. We have to determine for ourselves locally, how we will access that information.

Mr. Ferron commented that the board needs to be prepared that we might not hit it. We need to know if this is something you want us to pursue. We do not want to go down this path if the Committee isn't going to support this work. A vote is not required to go this path but is required to execute it if we get to that number.

Mr. Miraglia explained that the process would be to gather the information on vaccination data then if the information is positive and we exceed 80% then it will be mask optional. Then there is a two-day window, to fill out a form to provide evidence to DESE?

Mr. Ferron: The evidence to DESE is we have proof. We would attest that this is true and accurate to sign off on it and the School Committee approved it. No names would be sent to them. We have until October 15th to do this but we do not want to sit on this for two weeks. Once we get this information, we would inform the board of the percentage we are at, then communicate it to the community. We would all have decisions to make on how we execute this depending on what that percentage is.

Mrs. Lynch discussed that if the Committee has the intention of making the decision that we are going to allow students with and without masks to come to school together here then yes, let's go ahead and gather the data. If we have no intention of stepping over that line, in dealing with this and feeling comfortable with it and having the parents feel comfortable with it, then what is the purpose of doing it? We need to think down the line.

Mrs. Miller wanted to update the parents and the community that the board did send their statement asking for local control and they never heard back from Commission Riley or any board members. If kids are masked or unmasked, it is quite obvious what their vaccination status is. A follow-up question was also sent on "How does DESE expect us to enforce this without violating HIPA?"

Mrs. Smith assured the Committee that vaccination status will not be shared with anyone unless it is for the purpose of safety. The health services staff would not share this information with anyone unless the purpose is safety.

Mrs. Corbo expressed her frustration that the decision and the timed masking breaks seem completely unrelated to school spread. Even if there is no school spread and the community numbers are low, the Commission does not seem interested in the information or if it has anything to do with the mask requirement. Mrs. Corbo is concerned about privacy issues but wants to remind parents that they can google MIIS which has an opt-out form and is very easy to complete.

Mrs. Smith noted that the school nurses also can opt students and staff out of the MIIS system.

Mr. Ferron reminded parents that by doing that, you are keeping that information from your pediatrician as well.

Mr. Miraglia noted that he feels the State is offering up some options. We should pursue them not knowing but do our homework to try and figure this out and as Mr. Ferron has pointed out there will be more guidance and options as time goes on. It seems like a good step in the right direction. He is also concerned about privacy issues but believes we can manage them.

Mr. Ferron: I know we can handle the privacy piece; we do this every day. We have to be able to get to someplace where we can focus on education, sports, music, etc. Every time we get a new set of guidelines, we will try it. We are all concerned about how it will go. If we cannot do it, no one can. It would be great to get the green light to make our own decision. We are ready to go.

Mrs. Hall: Is that part of our advocacy that if we can show a high vaccination rate in our town with continued testing, we would then be able to unmask more students?

Mrs. Smith: Yes, that would be part of our advocacy with the State. It was the town-wide data, that we used to advocate for no masks in our summer program.

Mr. Miraglia: What are we going to do if we have a spread in school and we are not masked?

Mrs. Smith: If more of our school community would participate in pool testing, that is a valuable tool to use. If we can continue to demonstrate no spread in school, that is a solution to many. If we start to see a change, then we will reimplement some mitigation measures.

Mrs. Miller reminded the community that there would never be a mandatory unmasking. Anyone can wear masks if they choose to. Also, Mrs. Miller asked if some are not eligible to pool test?

Mrs. Smith noted that they do not test if they had COVID in the last 90 days but vaccinated are eligible to test as well.

Mrs. Miller asked the Committee if they wanted to consensus on mining this data and asked for discussion.

Mrs. Corbo wants to continue to advocate the State that masks should not be tied to vaccination rate and should be tied to community spread, the averages cases Hanover has, and the information we have on our dashboard. We have done all this work and on top of that here is our vaccination rate.

Mrs. Miller agrees and will be happy to continue to advocate.

Mrs. Lynch hopes that DESE will see what we are doing and allow us to take additional steps. We cannot even get a response in the past two times that we reached out to them.

Mrs. Smith believes that we have a little bit of an advantage as we are part of Mass General Hospital's study in demonstrating the lack of school spread. The hope is because we do have a relationship that we may have a voice but there are no guarantees.

Mr. Ferron stated that step one is to get the vaccination number and if the Committee wants us to move forward. The vendor is queued up but we are not the only ones in the queue.

Mr. Miraglia is in favor of moving forward.

Mrs. Hall agrees to move forward in collecting the data if it drives the conversation forward about what Hanover can do. Mrs. Hall has serious concerns regarding being vaccinated versus unvaccinated. My agreement to collect the data is not connected to the October 15 DESE implementation.

Mr. Ferron confirms what you are asking us to do is objective and we can do this.

**Public Comment:** Mrs. Miller wanted to remind the public that there is a two-minute time limit to make a public comment and that a name and address must be stated before comment is made.

Public Comment was given by residents Ken Murphy-93 Brookwood Road, Julia Leone-106 Dillingham Way, Caitlin Yancey-17 Cornet Stetson Road, Ed Bratz-52 Brook Circle, Tom Costello-236 Spruce Way, Adriana Mason-47 Fair Acres Drive, Lisa Adams-919 Broadway, Karalyn Austin-54 Absalom Way, Henry Adams-919 Broadway, Stephanie Montegudo 49- Beckford Farm Road, Michelle Dailey-8 Great Acres, Sean Murphy-86 Jefferson Road, and John Flaherty-17 Cape Cod Lane. Residents expressed their concern with the *Mask Mandate* that DESE is enforcing and asked the School Committee to consider going against DESE. Please refer to the Hanover Public Schools website for the [September 29, 2021](#) School Committee Meeting for more detail.

Mrs. Miller thanked everyone for their comments and questions.

Mrs. Corbo asked when will we advocate DESE again?

Mrs. Smith is hopeful that the vaccination data can be gathered in the next week or two. She is expecting to submit the school spread data to Mass General Hospital shortly. We have a regular conversation with the COVID contact at DESE. We will continue to share this information with DESE and advocate.

Mrs. Hall: Will there be consistency among the classrooms for mask breaks?

Mr. Ferron: We are asking our principals to take an inventory and evaluation as to what is going on in their buildings. They will be communicating this information. Mr. Birolini and Mrs. Smith sent out information.

Mrs. Miller: Rainy days need to be addressed.

Mrs. Smith noted that when outdoor masks cannot be held outdoor, masks breaks should be given in the classroom preferably with the windows open. Indoor mask breaks should be five to ten minutes or less and students should be three to six feet apart if possible. If a student requests a mask break, they should be provided the opportunity. Students do not have to ask to have a drink of water. Every building has its method on how to ensure that students get mask breaks throughout the day.

Mrs. Corbo is concerned about the wording and instead of it stating “indoor mask breaks *may* occur; she believes this should state *shall be allowed*.” The other issue especially at the middle school level where students are seeing these mask breaks; she hopes that the message being sent out states “additional mask breaks are allowed.” The students are thinking these are the only times for mask breaks.

Mrs. Smith: this message went out yesterday with the DESE guidance. The message was to make sure that these breaks can occur throughout the day, not just the scheduled mask breaks. This is so that everyone in the district understands the expectation.

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for October 13, 2021, at 7:00 PM at Hanover High School. Expected agenda items will be: MASS Superintendent Academic Awards, Draft 1.0 of Superintendent’s Goals for 2021-2022, FY ’22 Budget Update, FY ’23 Capital Budget Items, Update on Literacy Initiatives

Motion by Miraglia to adjourn the open session at 8:45 PM. The motion was seconded by Lynch. Roll call vote: Ryan Hall – aye, Libby Corbo – aye, Ruth Lynch – aye, Pete Miraglia – aye, and Leah Miller – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

*Tahnee Warner*

Tahnee Warner  
Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary