# Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes January 19, 2022 Virtual Meeting 7:00 PM

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

**Also Present**: Matthew Ferron, Debbie St. Ives, Michael Oates, Patricia Smith, Dan Birolini, Jane DeGrenier, Garry Pelletier, Matthew Mattos, Matthew Plummer, Mike Perrone, Kelly Lawrence

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

Mrs. Miller opened the meeting tonight will with Public Comment. She added that if anyone wants to speak via Zoom, they need to raise their hand and she will call on you. She reminded the community to state their name and address for Public Comment.

Public Comment: No public comment.

#### **Approval of Minutes:**

<u>January 5, 2022</u>: Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the January 5, 2022; *School Committee General Session Minutes* as written. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The motion carried unanimously. Roll Call Vote: Libby Corbo-Aye, Ryan Hall-Aye, Ruth Lynch-Aye, Pete Miraglia-Aye, and Leah Miller-Aye.

**Report of the Superintendent:** Mr. Ferron reviewed the items under the report of the Superintendent that would be discussed tonight. He added that yesterday morning they were made aware of a new opportunity for testing that the Department of Education is rolling out which may streamline some things for the school department. The hopes are it will cut down some of the challenges for our health services staff but also create some opportunities to increase testing options. Mrs. Smith will discuss the potential options. Mrs. Lawrence will give an update on a potential option for merging some FACE and the Town Recreational Department activities and programs which will be a positive change and opportunity for students and families.

## • Review of Peer Leadership Course Curriculum presented by Mr. Matthew Mattos and Mr. Matthew Plummer:

- o Mr. Ferron advised that this is the first time that can be recalled that the process had to be utilized as defined in our School Committee policy. He added that the *Hanover High School Faculty Council*, who were appointed to review the curriculum in this course, will use the department heads so that there is a cross representation of all subject areas with different years of experience.
- o Mr. Matthew Mattos and Mr. Matthew Plummer read the <u>HPS Faculty Council Findings</u> on the review process for the Peer Leadership Course and the ADL Training which you can find on the Hanover Public Schools website or by clicking the HPS Faculty Council Findings link above.
- o Mr. Plummer noted that the HPS Faculty Council Findings were signed respectively by the Council and the Administrators as follows: Maura Aborn, Korri Byron, Ann Coates, Laura Collins, Shayle Emerson, Ann Galotti, Matthew Harden, Matthew Mattos, Kelly Stukenborg, Susan Egan, and Matthew Plummer. He also added that the high school started the decennial step into the accreditation process and that he was aware that the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion is deeply embedded in the DESE social studies curriculum as well as in our mission statement. He continues to add that it is within principal one of the NEASC accreditation process

which not only does the social studies licenses depend on this work but also our accreditation as a high school.

Mr. Ferron added his gratitude and appreciation to the Faculty Council and Administration for providing the feedback and wanted to recognize Mr. Wade, Mr. Haggerty, and their students for their patients and professionalism during the review process. He noted that although there were differences in opinions on this specific issue, he did not want them to lose focus on the strength of this community and the countless acts of kindness, support, and love that are shown whenever someone is in need. Mr. Ferron sees these actions in the quiet heroes who have very different perspectives on this issue and are incredibly generous with their resources and time as many of you are watching this meeting tonight. He continued by saying that the Hanover Public Schools is not perfect but there is a spirit of kindness in Hanover that needs to be acknowledged and celebrated. He expressed his respect and support for the decision of the Faculty Council and noted we will work with the individual students and families involved to ensure the remainder of this year meets their needs and expectations for this course. He explained that this issue received a lot of attention and it is important to separate the review of the training component of an *elective* class and the larger issues related to how we ensure our schools are inclusive of all people and viewpoints. He continues to add that during the review process, he spoke with several parents, other staff members, the ADL, other Districts, and many community members regarding the concerns about having this class, the concerns about not having this class, and how we can move forward with this important work. Many citizen petitions, emails, community messages on the feedback page, and commentary at our School Committee meetings have been reviewed and there are strong feelings on this issue but there are some common themes. Everyone Mr. Ferron spoke with stated clearly; "They want Hanover to feel safe and inclusive for everyone" and everyone was in full agreement that bullying of any kind, especially identity-based bullying and exclusion is antithetical to the values of this community. He also added it was a great deal of support for teaching leadership skills at all levels and how this is critical common ground for moving forward with these conversations and the work required to ensure that Hanover Public Schools lives up to these expectations as a community. He mentioned how the district goals and programming are being evaluated and are led by the Anti-bias team so all are working with a singular purpose to ensure that every student and staff member at Hanover Public Schools feels safe, valued, and respected. This requires everyone to work together and listen to each other respectfully. Another common and important theme that was articulated is the need for clear and timely communication about the work being done in the district so all families are well informed about the programs and opportunities the students and staff can participate in or not in optional or elective activities. He articulates how there are policies and procedures in place to communicate with families on sensitive topics that allow for parents and students to make personal decisions over elective materials and programs. Clear communication and respecting these policies will afford families options if they do not want their student to participate in a particular activity and these decisions need to be respected and supported and Hanover Public Schools will commit to this level of communication and engagement. As this specific course and the ADL training component continue to be evaluated, any outreach endeavors will be referred to the School Committee for discussion before moving forward. He shared how this process has opened the door to further collaboration and communication. The advocacy that has been experienced over this issue for multiple stakeholder groups is reflective of the skills and engagement that this class is intended to provide.

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

Mrs. Miller expressed her appreciation and gratitude to the Faculty Council and Administration for their work on the on their work on this. She continued by thanking the community members, parents, and all those involved people who came to us and shared their voices, had their voices heard and engaged in this process. She added she thought it was a worthwhile process and hearing what came out of the process and that this is a pilot year, a review of the program most likely would have been in that process. Mrs. Miller fully endorses Mr. Ferron's statement and commentary on the work that was done. She is glad that this is was the conclusion as it takes into consideration all voices in this process.

Miraglia fully supports the recommendations and the decision to keep the ADL manual in place while the course continues to its conclusion. He continues by stating while the circumstances could be characterized as controversial, strong feelings have been heard and a number of important questions have been raised. He conveyed that he is very pleased with the outcomes and wanted to take stock in some of them as he feels they are very important. He continues by adding these are heavy topics and he says if you are doing it right, it should be hard to talk about but these topics are things that some of our best leaders need to be well versed in. He is proud that we can do this in Hanover and he is proud that this community has been able to raise the conversation with grace and civility. He added to his surprise never has this course been more talked about and never has the Anti-defamation League manual been more read in this town. He has heard from many parents about how they want their children to have the privilege of taking this course in the future. After considering all of this, he gave two words to Administrators, Instructors, Mr. Wade, Mr. Haggerty, and the students taking the course; "Keep Going!"

Mrs. Hall commented by thanking the faculty committee for their work and appreciates all that has been done to prepare the review. She noted that she spent time reading the petitions, emails, messages, and the manual, and she supports the continuation of this course this year and maintaining this offering as an elective at Hanover High School. She also noted that as a district we want to provide students with a variety of learning opportunities, and electives afford high school students that chance. Mrs. Hall shared that although she agrees with maintaining the course and the ADL training for the students that have signed up for it and are currently still enrolled in the course, she has significant reservations about the peer-led workshop aspect of this program. She added that she has the unique perspective of having been an adult supervisor in a student-led workshop with this program "A World of Difference", and found herself in the position of needing to interject herself respectfully into uncomfortable exchanges. As a result of her personal experience. She can say that there are issues that will arise, for both teachers and students, given the potentially sensitive topics and range of comments, questions, and the resulting conversations that these workshops can generate. Students leading the workshop and teachers untrained in the program may find themselves unable to safely navigate a situation so that all participants feel comfortable sharing their ideas and feel supported in publicly sharing their views. A negative outcome for anyone involved in such a highly charged discussion that will out way the good intentions of the program. Therefore, she appreciates and supports Mr. Ferron's statement about all further outreach coming to the committee for discussion before moving forward.

Mrs. Lynch commented that she appreciates the work of the Faculty Council and Administration. She noted this was a project that demanded a lot of attention and care. She commends them for establishing this process and standard in producing such an informative document. Mrs. Lynch supports this program because they are keeping it within our mission statement, core values and beliefs, and a 21st-century learning expectations of a Hanover high school student. She believes that any work that is done be critically focused on our goals and what our missions is so that there is consistency in the programs that we offer. She added that the strength of this program is the leadership skills that will be taught to these students and they are lifelong skills that our students need. She also added that it is critically important that we give them the strategies and skills necessary to become leaders. She agrees with Mrs. Hall's statement that some of the topics that will be discussed will be difficult and she believes it is critical that the adults involved in this process are well trained, experienced, and confident in teaching students those skills and helping them create an environment of comfort and acceptance. Mrs. Lynch was pleased to see the committee recognized the manual and there was no expectation that every one of the examples would be used. She explained that one of the challenges of the teacher is to know their class and to know which students will benefit from which activities and she believes there needs to be trust in the teachers and support given to carry this out. Mrs. Lynch commended Mr. Ferron for making it clear that every member of the committee spent a great deal of time listening, processing, and evaluating the comments, the statements, the emails, and the messages sent to the committee. A variety of different groups expressed their concerns and ideas. She continues by stating she thinks tonight as a decision has been made and it moves forward, it is her hope that the members of the Hanover community realize that the committee did listen carefully, evaluate, and think about

what people were saying to them. Mrs. Lynch observed at the last School Committee meeting, there were six or seven comments from residents that she found articulate, focused, clear, logical, the research was done, and they shared why they believed in the support of this program. She concluded by quoting Mr. Ferron; "There was no secret recipe to making this a reality and requires all of us to work together and listen to each other respectfully" and she believes the Hanover Community can do this as Hanover is a proud and loving community who care about the children and each other. This is the reason she supports this program.

Mrs. Corbo reiterated her appreciation and read the following statement: Like my colleagues before me, I wish to recognize and express gratitude for the work of our teachers and administrators conducting the curriculum review regarding the objections made by the petitioners. The subject of the review petition is an optional 3-day seminar on Peer Leadership provided by the Anti-Defamation League.

I wish to highlight the directive from the Commonwealth's Department of Education, as stated in the 603 CMR 26.05(1) regarding the District's obligation with respect to instruction on human and civil rights:

#### 26.05: Curricula

(1) All public-school systems shall, through their curricula, encourage respect for the human and civil rights of all individuals regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.

SHALL – is a mandatory directive. ENCOURAGE is not a passive word. It is an action word that goes beyond teaching and instruction to "help, stimulate or develop" respect for human and civil rights. Public schools SHALL use curriculum to ENCOURAGE respect for the human and civil rights of all individuals. This is our charge.

As a District, we comply with this mandate - not only because it is required by the State - but because understanding other cultures and perspectives builds empathy needed for our students to relate to and connect with others. That connection is needed for our students to be successful as they venture beyond the doors of our schools and the boundaries of our Town.

I acknowledge that human and civil rights, as illustrated by the debate over the ADL Peer Leadership Manual, can be controversial. The ADL Peer Leadership Training is used in over 70 districts in Massachusetts and ADL programming is a resource listed by the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education for Districts. No student is required to participate in the leadership seminar. We offer this course to provide students with an opportunity to explore these issues, develop leadership strategies and skills to assist them in navigating controversial, and sometimes difficult topics. The ADL Leadership Seminar is an optional way for students who desire greater exposure to these issues to engage in instruction, discussion, and debate. Giving students opportunities to expand their thinking and develop leadership skills is important and essential to fostering education. We provide these opportunities in many different optional forms including sports, art, theatre, clubs, and other activities in which students can choose to - or choose not to - participate. Consistent with the directive from the State, we also offer opportunities to encourage respect for human and civil rights. While we all wish these weren't issues in society – we can't wish away societal ills and we do a disservice to our students to expect them to remain silent about them. Promoting thoughtful and respectful discussion amongst students who opt into this activity is consistent with our duty as a district to encourage respect for civil and human rights and provides students with a space to discuss these issues with their peers in a supported environment. Curriculum is a framework for instruction. There is no perfect flawless curriculum. Rather we rely on Instruction to tailor the curriculum to the classroom and students. We trust teachers and their ability to adapt curriculum appropriately. Teachers provide context to curriculum. That is the essence of teaching, and it is not within the purview of this committee to trespass upon that instructional discretion. Removing opportunities for students is a request that must be reviewed with the highest level of scrutiny. In this instance, I agree with the assessment of the administration. I find the ADL Peer Leadership Training, inclusive of the Peer Leadership Manual, to be a valuable offering for our students. I am grateful for the committee's unified voice supporting the training moving

forward. I echo Ryan's concerns regarding peer-led workshops and thank Mr. Ferron for recognizing that moving forward with those trainings will not happen without further discussion with this committee.

#### Proposed Merger of FACE/Town Recreation Department Programs presented by Mrs. Kelly Lawrence:

Mrs. Lawrence is pleased to share an update about a proposed merger of the Office of Family & Community Engagement and Hanover Parks and Recreation. FACE and Park & Rec have had a long-standing partnership. The partnership has grown from sharing a few students early on in our summer programs to a vibrant Blue Hills Ski & Snowboard Lesson Program and summer as we know it today. Throughout this partnership, there has been discussion on how the programs can better meet the needs of the students, families, and the community. The past two years have emphasized the importance of that collaboration and the goal to become a comprehensive community resource. The departments are stronger together than apart. It has been recognized that the benefits of consistency in best practices of processes, service, and care. The merger provides many benefits to the students and community including enhanced programming offerings for all ages as well as being able to explore programming for our youngest community members to our senior citizens, providing a continuum of service through one single organization. As self-funded programs, both are rebuilding after two years of being partially operational or non-operational. The need to move beyond a partnership is critical to financial solvency. Two years ago, it was shared with the committee the goal to create a database management system to streamline operations. It is now moving forward with providing more opportunities to meet the needs of the community. The timing is ideal to bring these two organizations together to provide the greatest benefit to the students, community, and staff. This is a multi-phased merger that will evolve. The priority now is Summer Programs. Families will be expecting a publication on February 1st. It will likely push that publication date out by a couple of weeks to ensure that one comprehensive document for offerings and a single registration is provided so it is done right. There are tremendous possibilities in this opportunity for students, families, staff, and our community.

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

Mrs. Miller expressed how evident it is that Mrs. Lawrence cares deeply and is always looking for ways to improve and provide more for the students and community. She is amazed in a short period Mrs. Lawrence was able to rebuild the program and was excited to sign her kids up again for these programs. Mrs. Miller was also happy to hear that the database is coming.

Mrs. Lynch asked what FACE saw as the biggest challenge with the merger? Mrs. Lawrence responded that we recognize this will take multiple stages that will need to be evaluated. At this time, the challenge is to be prepared for summer as our families will be looking for the summer programs in about two weeks. She continues to state that that date will be pushed off for a couple of weeks so the details can be worked out on how best to present this potential merger to our families and the community. Communication will be shared with all the information that is needed for families to make the decisions they need to make. Mrs. Lynch inquired about the programs for senior citizens specifically the ski lessons. Mrs. Lawrence replied stating that is a possibility that they will pursue.

Mrs. Corbo inquired on how this impacts the budget? She wanted to know if this would have a net increase, decrease, or is it budget neutral? Mrs. Lawrence answered stating that these are two self-funded programs so there will be no impact on the budget. She also noted that both organizations will merge and will merge as a self-funded organization that is completely supported through student tuition and fees which will remain the same. Mrs. Corbo added how this is such an incredible testament to the work done with this program and how it has grown under Mrs. Lawrence's leadership. Mrs. Corbo then asked if children want to participate in the counselor-in-training program or apply for summer employment, will they be applying with the Parks and Rec department or FACE? Mrs. Lawrence responded that FACE will be handling the hiring for the summer as they want to create a multi-disciplinary staff so staff can move between both programs creating more opportunities for students.

#### • Health Update presented by Mrs. Patricia Smith:

Community and school case counts remain high, but we have begun to see a decrease in positive tests and isolations over the past week. We hope that this is a trend that will continue. Please refer to the COVID-19 Dashboard for the most up-to-date information. As Mr. Ferron mentioned, DESE issued new protocols yesterday that strongly recommend school districts emphasize surveillance and symptomatic testing and discontinue contact tracing in schools. The rationale for making this change is that data accumulated throughout the pandemic continue to demonstrate that close contacts in school are very unlikely to contract or spread COVID-19. 98% of tests from the State-wide test and stay program were found to be negative. This number is consistent with our data. DESE also referenced a study out of California that demonstrated the secondary transmission rate in schools was 0.7 - 1.5%. Before I go into the details of the new protocol, I'd like to take a moment to thank the entire health services team; the nurses, administrative assistants, and our health paraprofessional, for their incredible effort, especially over the past month, in collecting and documenting the test and stay and contact tracing data that helped the State reach this important milestone. The DESE - New COVID-19 Testing Option, which is posted on the Hanover School Committee webpage and the DESE website, involves maintaining our current pooled testing and symptomatic testing program and adding an at-home testing component. If the Hanover Public Schools choose to adopt this new protocol, staff and families who are interested in participating in weekly at-home testing will be asked to complete an opt-in survey. Test kits will then be distributed to students and staff to take home. We would recommend that families take the test on Sunday evening or Monday morning so that it is offset during the week from pooled testing. However, participation in pooled testing is not required to participate in at-home testing. Families and staff only need to verbally report positive tests to their school nurse and those results are not reported to the State or the local board or health. We will maintain the information in the student/staff electronic medical record, and de-identified data is shared weekly with DESE. The goal is to utilize State and local resources to focus on understanding who is symptomatic and potentially infectious and enabling them to isolate at home to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to others. If the district opts into this program, schoolbased contact tracing will be discontinued. However, school health staff may contact trace certain situations at their discretion. Additionally, household members of a positive person will continue to be subject to quarantine and testing protocols, as this is a much higher risk group. The health services team supports this new protocol and views it as an evidence-based step forward towards a more normal learning environment in schools. We still have a long way to go, and we will continue to monitor and document our findings as we move ahead. DESE stated in the webinar today that this new protocol will remain in place until April 22 and will be reviewed at that time.

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

Mrs. Miller reiterated the appreciation and thankfulness for Mrs. Smith's staff as they have been working overtime and extremely hard. She was impressed with the collection of data from Mrs. Smith and her team that matched with the State's data. Mrs. Miller inquired about the past process that if a student or staff had COVID-19 in the past 90 days, they were ineligible for pool testing and wanted to know if that was the same for the new process? Mrs. Smith responded by stating no, it is not the same process. They are eligible for at-home antigen testing. She explained that PCR testing is so sensitive that it can detect very small amounts of the virus which can be present for months after active infection. The antigen test is only positive for a higher level of infection for months after an infection reflecting a person who is most likely to be actively infected and infectious.

Mrs. Hall asked if someone can enroll in pool testing and home testing and if that is what we hope they do? Mrs. Smith replied by stating it is encouraged for families to register for both programs so we can get the information twice a week. Families can register for either of them, both, or opt-out. The new process is in place of the Test and Stay Program. She expresses the rationale is that there is so much infection in the community, everyone should think of themselves as potentially exposed and should be tested regularly which would impact further spread in the community. Mrs. Hall wanted to know if this was the protocol that would eliminate contact tracing

within the schools so that no more students would be identified as a close contact. Mrs. Smith agreed there would be no more contact tracing, Test and Stay, and quarantining students who have been exposed in school.

Mrs. Lynch asked for clarification regarding the results not being sent to the State for a student who tests positive. Mrs. Smith said that was correct. If a person has a positive test at home, it is asked that they reach out to the school nurse and instructions would be given for isolation. It does not go any further than that and is not reported to the State or the local Board of Health. It is documented in our electronic medical records and ensures that the person is isolated at home. The only de-identified data is reported. Mrs. Lynch also inquired if the process is that if someone tests positive at home, has symptoms, isolates, and does not contact the doctor, there is no tracking or tracing of those who have tested positive. She continues by asking if it is a fair estimate that the numbers could be a lot higher than they currently are. Mrs. Smith answered that they certainly are higher than what is reflected in the State database and she believes this is the future of how the pandemic will be managed.

Mr. Miraglia expressed his appreciation for all that Mrs. Smith and her team have done and continue to do to keep the children in school.

#### **Report of Finance Department:**

• FY '23 Budget Update – Version 2.0-Presented by Mr. Matthew Ferron and Mr. Michael Perrone:

Mr. Perrone and Mr. Ferron reviewed the <u>FY '23 Budget Presentation Update - Version 2.0</u> that can be found in full on the Hanover Public Schools website.

#### **Presentation Outline**

- FY 2023 Budget Approval Schedule
- Variables Impacting Budget Development
- Community Expectations
- Supporting Strategic Objectives
- Grant Summary
- Circuit Breaker Funds Spent
- FY 2023 Proposed Budget 1.0 Summary

#### **Variables Impacting Budget Development**

- COVID-19 Variability/Recovery Efforts (on-going)
- Six months remain in the current school year
- Town's annual financial capacity to support operating budget (property tax levy limit) and use of free cash to support schools
- Variability of State aid (Chapter 70)
- Access to Federal Funds (ARPA, FEMA, etc.)
- Variability of Circuit Breaker (CB) reimbursement rate
- Variability of State and Federal Grants
- Unknown obligations: Special Education tuitions, long-term staff absences, and mental health supports and counseling needs

#### **Community Expectations**

- Excellent schools have been identified as a top priority by Hanover resident
- High expectations including:
  - Excellent academics for students of all abilities (experienced teachers, quality resources, exceptional college acceptance rate, innovative technology, stable class sizes)
  - Excellent Student supports (Special Education services and comprehensive counseling/mental health services)
  - Safe schools (innovative security protocols, secure facilities, support from HPD)
  - o Excellence (and variety) in athletics, arts, enrichment, clubs, and activities

o Mr. Ferron commented that this is the most uncertain we have been with the budget because of the many variables and needs we have as COVID-19 continues such as challenging mental health needs for families, students, and staff, increasing special education needs, what Federal grants may be renewed or not renewed, levels of State funding, State financing State grants, etc. There is a good plan in place and direction and continue to work with the Town Manager and his team. This will be the process over the next several months and we are not anywhere close to a final budget so this is a macro-overview of what we are planning.

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

Mrs. Miller asked since we have the town technology budget within the school budget how much of those increases will affect us? Mr. Ferron yes but it is minimal.

Mrs. Corbo inquired about the town's budget presentation with the Advisory Committee for the board of selectman and the town has a 4% increase. She asked if there was a disconnect between what the schools' anticipated needs and what the town is budgeting for as it seems it is a bit short on the numbers and wondered if there was a discrepancy. Mr. Ferron responded there is a gap. He added he talks to the Town Manager daily and we will need to collaborate with this Board, the Select Board, and the Advisory Committee. He added there is no misunderstanding and it is very clear that we have a significate gap that we need to close and there are opportunities that will be looked into.

Mr. Miraglia shared how he has gone through the budget with Mr. Ferron and Mr. Perrone. He explained that yes there is a top-level number that is a big increase but that it is important for everyone to look at slides six and seven of the presentation to understand what these programs are and their importance. He added there are revenue and needs and services changes at the same time. He encouraged anyone to reach out with questions. Mr. Ferron added that he and Mr. Perrone are available to the committee for any questions or concerns.

**Report on Teaching and Learning:** No items at this time.

#### **Other Ouestions/Comments:**

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2022, at 7:00 PM. Expected agenda items will be: FY '23 Budget Update – Version 3.0, Health & Safety Update; HS NYC Field Trip, and others TBD.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 PM. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The motion carried unanimously. Roll Call Vote: Libby Corbo-Aye, Ryan Hall-Aye, Ruth Lynch-Aye, Pete Miraglia-Aye, and Leah Miller-Aye.

Respectfully Submitted by:

### Tahnee Warner

Tahnee Warner Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary

Documents Used:

FY '23 Budget Update – Version 2.0 DESE – New COVID-19 Testing Option Faculty Council Findings on the Peer Leadership Curriculum List of Concerns Regarding Peer Leadership Curriculum NEASC/DESE Supporting Documents Appendix A