

Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2022 7:00 PM
In-Person and Virtual Meeting

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

Also Present: Matthew Ferron, Michael Oates, Kelly Lawrence, Patricia Smith, Dan Birolini, Jane DeGrenier, Garry Pelletier, Matthew Plummer, Mike Perrone

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

Mrs. Miller opened the floor to public comment. She explained, "To speak during public comment, the speaker can come up to the microphone and state their name and address. There will be a time limit of three minutes per speaker. If anyone wants to speak via Zoom, raise your virtual hand, and I will call on you. I will alternate between in-person and zoom."

Public Comment:

Public Comment was given by resident Leslie Molyneaux-23 Water Street and resident Lisa Adams-919 Broadway. Separate statements were read by each resident. Please refer to the Hanover Public Schools website for the [March 23, 2022](#) School Committee Meeting for more detail.

Approval of Minutes:

March 9, 2022: Minutes have been tabled until the next meeting on April 13, 2022.

Report of the Superintendent:

Mr. Ferron shared the news the boys' hockey team won the Division III State Championship Sunday at the TD Garden. It was a great game. The way our community turned out not only for Sunday's game but for the whole season, he could not be any prouder. A group of young men represented the Hanover District with distinction and he is very grateful and happy for them. Thank you and Congratulations to the Hanover High School Hockey team!

On April 5th, 5:30-8:30 PM, the first Hanover Public Schools comprehensive K-12 Art Festival will be at the high school. There will be artwork, performances, singing, and a variety of events. It is sponsored by the Mass Cultural Council with the Hanover Cultural Council and FACE and under the leadership of Mr. Harden, the K12 Department Head for Performing Arts, Music, and Art.

- **2022-2023 School Calendar Vote Presented by Mr. Ferron:** A slight change from the previous calendar presented. We missed the observation of the New Year's Day holiday as it falls on a Sunday which means it is observed on Monday, January 2, 2023. This pushes out the rest of the calendar. The first day of school for students will be Tuesday, September 6th after Labor Day. Staff will report on Wednesday, August 31, and Thursday, September 1st. These first two days will be for professional development, meetings, and getting everyone reoriented. If we do not have any snow days, June 16th will be the last day. With snow days, the last day will be June 26, 2023. A vote is needed on the first and last day of school on the 2022-2023 School Calendar. The vote is on the first and last day of school and the traditional vacation and holidays. The rest of the calendar will evolve.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Miller inquired when Convocation will be. Mr. Ferron noted that we are still working out what will be the best structure. A meeting will be held with the Administration team and the HTA.

Mrs. Corbo inquired about the early release days and why there are so many. Mr. Ferron responded that we will look at the early release days but reminded them in the past there was an early release day every week. At this time, we have the first Tuesday of every month. Other opportunities will be looked into. It will be tricky as the rest of the early release days are due to Student Conferences. Nights cannot be added which is one reason for the early releases but that can be looked at. Decisions may need to be made. Mrs. Corbo asked if the reason we cannot add more nights is that it is a contractual issue? Mr. Ferron said yes. Mrs. Corbo expressed her concern about the number of early releases in November, January, October, and March. Mr. Ferron explained they are related to conferences. The first Tuesday of every month is professional development. If the Committee feels that is not a priority, it can be adjusted. Hanover has a choice to make. We have three sets of conferences every year including optional conferences at the end of the year. If the level of engagement is to be continued, we can either go back to the HTA and impact bargain an additional night or we can reduce the number of conferences. Mrs. Corbo wanted to be clear that this part of the calendar would be flexible and Mr. Ferron responded absolutely.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the *2022-2023 Public School Calendar* with the understanding that the conferences and half days may be adjusted as presented this evening. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The vote was carried unanimously.

- **2021-2022 Last Day of School Vote Presented by Mr. Ferron:** There was an adjustment to the calendar to recognize the Juneteenth holiday which falls on a Sunday. It will be observed on Monday, June 20th, 2022. There was no school because of three wind days and one snow day which pushes the last day of school to Friday, June 24th. A vote is needed for the last day of school for the 2021-2022 District School Calendar.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo commented that Hanover Day is that weekend and will need set-up time and if the school will work with them to make sure everything is cleaned up and ready. Mr. Ferron responded yes, as we have had to do that in the past.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the *last day of school for the 2021-2022 School Year* as June 24, 2022. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The vote carried unanimously.

- **Discussion of Policy IHAM-1 in Regards to the Health Curriculum and Notice to Parents Relative to Sex Education:** Mrs. Corbo thanked the Committee for allowing the agenda to be amended to add this item. She shared that this policy is somewhat general and vague and she would like the Committee to consider reviewing and possibly amending it in the future. She believes it needs to be more specific about what is expected in the notices being sent home to parents regarding the subject. She received the notices that have been sent out in the past and recently. She thinks the more in-depth the conversation becomes with students, the more developed the curriculum. She continued it is fine to tell parents that they can ask for more information or they can attend an information night, but if they do not know what is being discussed, they may not feel the need to do that. She also believes the curriculum is very different now but the notices have not changed to reflect those differences. She believes the role of the Committee is to be very transparent, clear, and concise with parents. The Massachusetts General Law, DESE's Policy, and our policy recognize how important this issue is to parents. In her opinion, the notices need to inform parents about what is going to be discussed, and going forward, this policy will be flagged as an issue, so that any notices that go out regarding the sex education class or health curriculum include major topics being discussed such as gender identity, issues of consent, etc. The parent will then know whether or not they want to take the time to attend the information session or to ask for more in-depth curriculum materials. The notice complies with our policy but the policy is very general. She requests that the Committee consider that if there are these topics be flagged for students in the email notice, aspen, or to parents. She is interested to hear the Committee's thoughts.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Miller noted that the policy review cycle is coming up soon and she agrees this should be added to the growing list of policies that need to be looked at. The MASC resources will be used to do the policy work. She agrees and thinks that at the beginning of the school year, all parents and guardians should be made aware of topics in this course. She reminded parents that they can opt out of any part of this, but added to opt-out, parents need to know what is being taught.

Mr. Miraglia wonders if the MASC Policy did an update on this. He added he believes overcommunication on this is the way to go.

Mrs. Hall adds she agrees. She continued by stating the intention is to notify parents so they have the opportunity to have those discussions on whether to opt in or out, want to know exactly what is being discussed so they can know what to ask for questions or if there is a concern then parents will have time to discuss beforehand. She expects that we want to be as clear, concise, and transparent as possible so that parents can make those decisions for their families. That is the intent of the policy and if we need to require it, so that it is clearer for the policy to be followed then we need to rewrite it.

Mrs. Corbo inquired if there was anything that could be provided to parents before Monday's meeting? Mr. Ferron asked if she received the email sent today? She did and thought it was more helpful but still wanted some issues flagged for families. Mr. Ferron asked the Committee to review the email that was sent out today with the attachments and the way the lesson plan is laid out and give their feedback. He will then work with Mr. Birolini and his team. Mrs. Corbo noted that she did see it and saw it included some illustrations that she thought were helpful and that is the type of information she was looking for. She appreciates the information that was sent out and thinks that it is helpful.

Mrs. Lynch wanted clarification on the email sent Monday regarding the Health Curriculum Night and if it was the latest email. Mrs. Miller asked if it had attachments and Mrs. Lynch replied yes. Mr. Ferron added that the email was sent today to the middle school families and was not sent to the Committee for deliberation. Mrs. Lynch continued by stating that when we are talking about something that just happened it is hard to be prepared to discuss. Mr. Ferron responded that he was asked to discuss the policy but was not asked to prepare anything for the Committee. Mrs. Lynch understood. Mr. Ferron continued that if the Committee thought this email was helpful, we can do more of it; but if you prefer something different then we can do less of this and more of something else. He wanted to make sure we were meeting the Committee's expectations. Mrs. Miller advised Mrs. Lynch that she did not have to have a comment on the email now. Mrs. Miller understands that Mrs. Corbo did not feel this document gave enough information to the parents and she is requesting when this type of information is sent out it be more detailed and specific. Mrs. Miller explained that it was because of the email that went out last week, not the one that was sent out today.

Mrs. Corbo emphasized that she did not believe that too much information could be provided. Mr. Ferron asked for clarification on if Mrs. Corbo is looking for the information in the body of the email versus attachments. Mrs. Miller added that more information needed to be on the website. Mrs. St. Ives added that she did look at the website and this is constructive feedback. She agrees that historically there is an email that goes out to parents and it explains these topics will be coming up and if additional information is needed. She also agrees with Mrs. Corbo that the topics are topics that every parent is going to want more details with specific information so they can make an educated decision for their child.

Mrs. Miller reminded everyone the Health Curriculum Parent night is Monday night which is set up by grade.

Mrs. Corbo wanted to share that she thinks the email that went out addressed her concerns and noted that she did have to raise those concerns before the email went out. She does feel that we can still do better.

Report of Finance Department:

- **Approval of the FY '23 Budget presented by Mr. Michael Perrone:** The FY 2023 School Department Budget Proposal for your review, consideration, and vote this evening. The proposed FY 2023 budget is \$33,571,915 for an increase of 6.5% over FY 2022. As presented in January, the proposed FY 2023 budget is a strategic budget that continues to support pandemic recovery to include known special education needs, maintaining appropriate class sizes, and returning to pre-pandemic staffing levels. As mentioned at our meeting on January 19th, there were additional personnel and program costs to the budget totaling \$794,000. The total amount has not changed, however, after the presentation of Dorsey Yearley's Special Ed Report, coupled with recent resignation/retirements of staff, the administrative team was presented with the opportunity to adjust our strategy for staffing and leadership structure. The change in structure affords us opportunities to better serve all of our students. Click the hyperlink to see the [Approval of the FY '23 Budget](#) presentation in full or visit the [School Committee webpage](#) on the Hanover Public Schools website.
 - The side-by-side changes are attached for your review and discussion.
 - The only other substantial changes are increasing the amount of Circuit Breaker and reducing the SpEd Reserve funds to balance the budget. We will discuss these in further detail at the meeting.

Mr. Ferron discussed the strategy shift on how to approach the SpEd Reserve process for the Circuit Breaker. The more Circuit Breaker can roll forward from year to year gives more latitude than the SpEd Reserve. The SpEd Reserve is for tuition. The circuit breaker can be used for anything related to Special Education.

Questions/Comments:

Mr. Miraglia when do we expect a vote on the SpEd Reserve? Mr. Ferron responded by stating whenever Mr. Perron and Mr. Oates determine the tuitions that came in after the budget was set. He noted that they will try to offset that as much as they can using Operating Budget sources. He continued by adding that there will be one to three tuitions that come in this year that are not budgeted. It will be very clear on what is brought to the Select Board and ask them to allocate those tuitions out of the SpEd Reserve. If we get that vote, then it will be brought to the School Committee to be voted on. Once we have the vote from both bodies, the Town Treasurer will release those funds.

Mrs. Hall inquired about only using SpEd Reserve for those tuitions that are identified after the budget is approved and using Circuit Breaker for everything else. Mr. Ferron replied that is correct.

Mr. Miraglia read the following statement:

I think the vote on this budget represents support in two important dimensions.

#1-A strong commitment to recovery from the pandemic, building new capabilities, and leadership for the benefit of both general and special education. What are we committing to? Budgets are about numbers but it's more important to understand the story- what this represents to your child's education. Mr. Ferron and Mr. Perrone have outlined very clearly all of the additional services and programs behind the increases. We are bolstering the social and emotional support that our students need coming out of the pandemic. We continue to recover positions we lost in the budget crunch in 2020. We are restructuring leadership roles and rebuilding the district leadership from department heads up to directors and assistant principals. This is the time to take bigger leaps in our ability to deliver excellence and I'm excited to see us not waste any time. Good leadership makes the difference between a district that struggles and one that excels. We have new services being offered that will keep more students with disabilities in the district - a win-win. Additionally, after getting a top to bottom review and recommendations on our special education program, this budget has the means to implement them.

#2-Confidence that through this budget process we got it right. Confidence in the budget. We are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to get the budget reviewed by three governing bodies; the School Committee, Select Board, and Advisory Committee. We've also met as a budget subcommittee before every meeting where the budget was presented. All of this has been constructive and collaborative. I would like to particularly thank the Advisory Committee, a group of volunteers like ourselves, for carefully reviewing, providing insights that we missed, and making this a stronger budget. But let's face it, this is a big increase AND carries with it perhaps as much uncertainty. We are counting on grants from the State and Federal governments that are not yet fully determined. We have special education costs that are still yet to be fully determined. We have open positions that we plan to fill but they may take time to fill because the labor market is strained. The purpose of the budget isn't to make sure we have everything laid down to the penny or worse pad it to assume the worst. Anyone who ever tried to manage a home budget like that knows how quickly mistaken that approach becomes. Rather the budget is a process to provide a living plan on how we balance all of the uncertainties. I think the administration did an excellent job on that task. They took inputs from every quarter and plotted a course that takes all of the risks into account. As an additional measure, given how unusual the circumstances are. We have also agreed to meet as a subcommittee quarterly to monitor all of the uncertainties mentioned above as they play out, and report back to the public on how we are doing.

There is no question that the increase this year of 6.5% to the operating budget is worthy of scrutiny. And having walked through every step of this process, my message to the Committee and everyone here is that it has received the scrutiny it deserves. In closing, this budget has my support. It is an opportunity to build and improve our educational capabilities at a time when we most need them and has my confidence that we can manage it as we go forward.

Mrs. Miller agrees with Mr. Miraglia's statement and also thanks Mr. Perrone as this was a herculean task. Mr. Perrone responded that it was a team effort.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the *School Budget for FY '23 in the amount of \$33,571,915* as presented this evening. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The vote carried unanimously.

- **Transportation Contract Extension presented by Mr. Michael Perrone:** Mr. Perrone is requesting approval to accept one of the two options years with the transportation. It is for \$1,189,636.20 for K through 8 transportation and a \$25,670.00 for the midday K runs for a total of \$1,225,306.20. That is roughly a \$35,000 to \$36,000 increase. We are recommending that we accept the first-year option on the contract.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo asked if there was any backup in the packet and what this increase was for? Mr. Ferron apologize for the lack of backup but that the contract was already signed and settled. The Committee has the option to extend that a year out. The other option would be to go out to bid but he strongly recommends that we do not do that. Mrs. Corbo asked what the \$36,000 increase was for. Mr. Ferron answered busses, salary, gas, and maintenance. He added this is a typical increase.

Mr. Miraglia asked the total contract value and Mr. Perrone responded it is a little over \$1,200,000.00. Mr. Perrone reminded the Committee when they first voted on this total contract, all those numbers were in there. We just have the option of going with year four. In year five, we can bring the same thing back. The three years are up on the original contract, but it did have two option years and those were in the original contract. The numbers have always been there.

Mrs. Miller noted that it would be more if we went out to bid now. Mr. Ferron and Mr. Perrone agreed.

Mrs. Lynch added the last time they did go out to bid, the approach was very thorough and had several proposals submitted. She continued stating Ingles was the best and continues to serve the community well.

Mr. Ferron apologized for the lack of clarity. He explained that it is the contract that the Committee has previously approved and an extending option one of two options. If preferred, it can be paused until the next meeting.

Mr. Miraglia asked if it was about a 3% increase. Mr. Ferron said yes. Mr. Perrone added the increases have been pretty much the same for each year. He explained that from 2020 - 2021, it was \$29,000.00 and from 2021-2022, it was \$36000.00. The following year it goes up by \$19,000.00 which is less. Mr. Miraglia shared that the increase makes sense to him and is surprised it is not higher. Mr. Perrone added that there is a fuel escalator that is not as aggressive as it was thought it would be. He explained that the fuel escalator is only \$200 to \$300 a month but if we did a fuel escalator now it would be a lot higher.

Mrs. Corbo inquired if this included the high school busses. Mr. Ferron said this extension of the contract is for K-8. The high school busses are small and there are also athletics and fields trips that as well. Mrs. Corbo asked if they are going up separately and Mr. Perrone responded it goes up to \$3000.00. Mrs. Corbo discussed that the parents pay for the high school bus and trying to figure out what impact the increase is going to have on them. Mr. Ferron replied none and there is no reason to raise the fee for the high school buses. They are not proposing any fee increases at all for next year.

Mrs. Hall asked for confirmation that this vote would be for extending this one year of this contract, but we have the option of one more year. Mr. Perrone confirmed Mrs. Hall's inquiry.

Mr. Miraglia inquired if this was year two out of the three options. Mr. Ferron clarified this is year one of the options but next year will be up for renegotiations.

Mr. Ferron wanted to mention that Ingle Bus has been working with us and have done everything possible to be accommodating through all of the chaos and confusion the last two years and we worked with them to keep them afloat when things were going sideways when schools were closed.

Our partnership has been give and take and that is reflective of a generation and a half of them serving these communities.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to *extend the First-Year Option of our Transportation Contract with Ingle Bus* as presented this evening. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The vote carried unanimously.

Report on Teaching and Learning:

HHS Program of Studies: Mrs. Miller advised the *HHS Program of Studies* (POS) has been tabled until April 13, 2022, School Committee meeting for approval. Mr. Ferron asked Mr. Plummer if the email was sent out yesterday to families about the *Program of Studies*. Mr. Plummer confirmed. Mr. Ferron explained that although this has been tabled it is just about done. What you see on the website is the POS and maybe a couple of minor changes to some electives and we are looking hard at our enrollment at the high school for next year. People can feel confident that the courses they are selecting and the course selection process is no different than any other year. If courses are not fully enrolled then we do not run them. He does not expect that the program the Committee sees in two weeks looks much different than what is presently on the website.

Questions/Comments: None at this time.

Action Items:

- **HMS Gettysburg Field Trip Request presented by Mr. Dan Birolini:** Mr. Birolini thanked the Committee for the opportunity to request an 8th grade trip to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He apologized for the late work and last-minute trip; however, they were trying to figure out opportunities for the 8th graders to have a great end of the year. Before the mask mandate on buses, they were looking for opportunities around Massachusetts where they could have an overnight, etc. There was nothing grade-specific for them without day trips being expensive. This Grand Classroom trip is an overnight stay in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania from June 7, 2022, to June 8, 2022. They will tour the battlefields of Gettysburg National Military Park with local specialist guides and explore the Gettysburg Museum and historic Cyclorama. There will be dinner and a DJ at the hotel and they will spend the day enjoying Hershey Park. Mr. Birolini is asking for support and would be happy to answer any questions.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Miller thanked Mr. Birolini for all the work that was done and was happy he did not give up.

Mrs. Lynch inquired if other communities or towns have used Grand Classroom. Mr. Birolini noted that we have used them in the past and that Hingham has used them. They do a lot of small and big trips.

Mrs. Miller is concerned about cell phone use on the trip in bedrooms, etc., and wanted to know if guidelines or rules could be created for cell phone use or social media. Mr. Birolini explained that they have had cell phones in the past with minimal issues but understands her concerns. It is something he will look at as he does not have a plan right now. Mrs. Miller thought it would be helpful and could be used going forward.

Mrs. Corbo spoke about the funds raised for Camp Squanto. She asked if those funds were built into the price or could a scholarship be created for students who can't afford this. Mr. Birolini replied that we do have a little bit of a scholarship buffer. The trip is \$460.00 and we reduced it by \$91.00 per person for everybody. Several parents have reached out to support another student or two. Grand Classroom will also help parents with payment plans. Mrs. Corbo thought that if there were a little box, I will pay full price and put my Squanto Funds towards another child's trip. Mr. Birolini said that Grand Classroom collects the payments directly so that would be challenging. He also noted that they have a field trip fund that could collect that and use it.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the *8th grade Middle School Class Trip to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania* as presented this evening. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The vote carried unanimously.

Other Comments:

Mrs. Corbo has asked what the status of community service was as it has been raised a few times and the end of the year is coming to a close. Mr. Plummer responded that we will continue with the current community service this year but Mr. Mattos will revisit community service next year. Mr. Plummer clarified that they are not requiring them to do community service but some of them are still submitting for them. Only NHS is required to do community service. Mr. Ferron believes it is time to revisit this and we will send communication over the next few days.

Mr. Miraglia just saw the notice on the Superintendent evaluations is due by next Friday. Mrs. Miller responded yes and if the Committee has any questions to reach out to her. If more time is needed, she may give an extension.

Mrs. Lynch thinks the amount of time we have spent at meetings in the past is still haunting us and we are far behind on so many things that everything is coming at us fast and without the time for us to review and respond.

Mr. Ferron commented that it is warranted that the entire faculty and leadership team is being asked to do a lot more than they were asked to do a couple of years ago. Things are harder, coming faster, more complicated, and we do not have more people doing it. It is difficult to get some of these things done in a way that we have traditionally done. We will try to do and get better and that is part of our planning. Our team has been asked to do a lot of things that we have never had to do before.

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2022, at 7:00 PM. Expected agenda items will be: Wrestling State Champion: Anthony Mann, HHS Peru Field Trip Feedback, FY '22 Budget Update, HHS Program of Studies, and others TBD.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 PM. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Tahnee Warner

Tahnee Warner
Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary

Documents Used:

2022-2023 HPS District Calendar 2.0
2021-2022 HPS District Calendar
IHAM-1 Parental Notification Relative to Sex Education
FY '23 Budget
HMS Gettysburg PA Field Trip Request

Appendix A
Appendix B

Appendix C
Appendix E