

***Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2023 7:00 PM
In-Person and Virtual Meeting
Hanover High School; Media Center***

Present: Mrs. Libby Corbo, Mrs. Ryan Hall, Mrs. Ruth Lynch, Mr. Pete Miraglia, and Mrs. Kristen Cervantes

Absent: None

Also Present: Matt Ferron, Debbie St. Ives, Mike Perrone, Kaitlin Morelli, Dan Birolini, Jesse Craddock, Jane DeGrenier, Jaclyn Rooney, Nancy Dutton, Kelly Lawrence

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM by Chair Corbo.

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment:

Mrs. Corbo opened up Public Comment with a reminder to the community that public comment is taken at the beginning of the meeting, at the end of the meeting, and before any item is scheduled for a vote.

Public Comment was given by residents: Leslie Molyneaux-23 Water Street and Lisa Adams-191 Broadway. Residents expressed their concerns and questions on different issues. Please refer to the Hanover Public Schools website for [February 1, 2023, School Committee Meeting](#) for more detail.

Mrs. Corbo asked if there were any additional public comments at this time. She added that a discussion of the Library Policy is part of the agenda and anticipates taking a vote tonight. They will be accepting comments before that vote.

Approval of Minutes:

January 4, 2023: The *January 4, 2023 School Committee Open Session Minutes* were tabled until the February 18, 2023 meeting.

January 18, 2023: The *January 18, 2023 School Committee Open Session Minutes* were tabled until the February 18, 2023 meeting.

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT:

Mr. Ferron is opening the floor to Mrs. Cervantes and Mrs. Lynch. Mrs. Lynch has requested to present the agenda items be taken out of order. There were no objections to the request by the Committee.

- **Policy Section C; Second Reading Presented by Mr. Matthew Ferron, Mrs. Ruth Lynch, and Mrs. Kristen Cervantes:**

Mrs. Cervantes reminded the Community when it is required to update a Policy, two readings will occur. A first reading, there is no vote, and a second reading, there is a vote. Section C was already brought to the Committee for discussion. Section C is exclusively about the role of the Superintendent and their expectations, relationship, et cetera. This Policy has not had any changes from the first reading. At the first reading, extensive feedback was given from people in the District and the MASC contacts on best practices across the State. Since the first reading, there has not been any additional feedback. The Policy Committee is requesting to vote in form.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Corbo to approve *Section C in form* as presented. The motion was moved by Mrs. Cervantes and seconded by Mrs. Hall. Roll call vote Peter Miraglia-Aye, Ryan Hall-Aye, Elizabeth Corbo-Aye, Kristen Cervantes-Aye, and Ruth Lynch-Aye. The motion carried unanimously.

- **Policy Section D; Second Reading Presented by Mr. Matthew Ferron, Mrs. Ruth Lynch, and Mrs. Kristen Cervantes**

Mrs. Lynch explained there are eighteen policies dealing with Fiscal Management of the District and Budget in Section D. She thanked Mr. Perrone, Mr. Ferron, and Mr. Miraglia for their input, advice, direction, and edits for the document. She explained it deals with budget planning, adoption procedures, grants, and audits in purchasing. A comment given to the Committee requesting them to look at Policy DBC, Budget Deadlines, and Schedules, which stated it; "The School Committee will also observe the statutory requirement of holding a public hearing on the proposed budget not less than seven days after the notice for this hearing has been published in a local newspaper." It is no longer required to publish the budget in the local newspaper so that part was removed.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo explained to the community who are not familiar with School Finance that a tremendous amount of finance is governed by State Law. She continued explaining the School Committee does not have a lot of flexibility in operating with the budget and how the allocation of funds are made. In some of these Policies, you will see legal references made in the Policy materials to the general laws.

Mrs. Lynch shared at the bottom of each Policy, the source is listed as either Hanover or MASC and often with a date. In front of you, you have the edited version of what is in place now in the Policy Manual so disregard the dates at the bottom. Once the entire Policy Manual is complete, MASC will edit the document and change the source and dates.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Corbo to approve *Section D in form* as presented. The motion was moved by Mrs. Hall and seconded by Mr. Miraglia. Roll call vote Peter Miraglia-Aye, Ryan Hall-Aye, Elizabeth Corbo-Aye, Kristen Cervantes-Aye, and Ruth Lynch-Aye. The motion carried unanimously.

- **Policy Section I; First Reading of Policy IA-IJ Presented by Mrs. Kristen Cervantes and Mrs. Ruth Lynch:**

Mrs. Lynch explained Policy I was divided into two parts which will be referred to as Section I, part one and part two. Part one contains about thirty policies. She presented an overview of part one and there will be an opportunity for questions at the second reading. She added many hours and days were spent discussing, analyzing, and asking questions. The Administrative Team, Mr. Ferron, Mrs. St. Ives, Mrs. Smith, The Wellness Committee, Mr. Oates, and SEPAC gave input. It was a collaborative effort.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo shared Section I; part one is posted online under the School Committee Public Document section. If anyone has any questions, they should reach out. She appreciated hearing all involved in vetting the policies.

Mrs. Hall shared some recommendations in Section IHCA, Summer School, and shared them with Mr. Oates. Her first recommendation was regarding the statement underneath the two paragraphs that said, "All these programs are subject to funding." She explained that ESY is not necessarily subject to funding and, for clarification purposes, should be noted. Mrs. Lynch and Mr. Ferron will clarify that in Section IHCA. Mrs. Hall asked Mrs. Hall to follow up with an email.

Mrs. Corbo asked if there were any commentary or feedback via the online forum. Mrs. Cervantes replied not on this particular policy.

Mr. Miraglia asked which policies part one covers. Mrs. Lynch responded it is from IA-IJL and includes IJL & IJL-R. He then asked if it was all sections up to the Library Policy. Mrs. Lynch concurred that is correct.

- **Policy Section I; Second Reading of Policy IJL / IJL-R (Library Materials) Presented by Mrs. Kristen Cervantes and Mrs. Ruth Lynch:**

Mrs. Cervantes explained that this is the second reading of Policy I; IJL/IJL-R. The Policy Committee is looking for a vote to adopt it immediately because of the need that was heard from our community feedback. The redline version of Policy I; IJL/IJL-R was posted on the School Committee website. She reviewed the changes and noted that they are in red.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo thought it was helpful to highlight the changes. She added that she is glad there is now a timeframe and includes the Superintendent being notified that the review is being done.

Mrs. Corbo reiterated that the Policy Committee is looking for a motion to vote to adopt. She explained that the procedure is to take a motion, if there is a second, it will move to discussion, public comment will be opened, and then a vote will be taken.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Corbo to vote to adopt *Policy IJL/IJL-R* immediately as presented. The motion was moved by Mrs. Cervantes and seconded by Mr. Miraglia.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo's opinion is when the request for review is because of graphic sexual content or that the basis for the challenge is the sexual material might be inappropriate for the age range of the school. The book should be removed from the shelf. At this time, if a parent fills out an opt-out form to withhold the material from their child and the book is still on the shelf, the child still has access to this material while in school. Mrs. Corbo wants the book to be placed on restricted access during the pendency of the review for that limited time. She explained that restricted access means the book should be removed from the shelf but will still be available in the catalog with access for students interested in checking it out. As a School Committee member, she believes that a balance needs to be made between academic freedom and the concerns of parents. Mrs. Corbo does not support the Policy as written. She concluded by saying if we removed the books it could be seen that we were not supporting on of our staff members and their judgment.

Mrs. Cervantes responded that the District worked hard to hire licensed Librarian specialists and they need to be supported. She added that if exceptions start to be made around sexually graphic or inappropriate sexual material, it will have to be defined as to what that means which is dangerous. She added that the transparency has been strengthened around the criteria, which is in this Policy, as well, as added the point that any new and weeding of material is going to be up to the Building Principals. Mutual decision-making will proactively prevent potentially having books that people might find concerning. She concluded by saying if we removed the books it would be seen that we do not stand by one of our staff members and their professional judgment; a precedent may be set for other policy items. As a School Committee member, one of our jobs is to stand by people hired and we hold them accountable. Mrs. Corbo agreed that was a fair statement. She hears those concerns. She is concerned that no one wants to define graphic sexual content which becomes an issue of judgment. When it's an issue of judgment, people can agree to disagree. Everyone has different experiences and comfort levels with that information and material. She is not saying that someone is not doing their job or does not have professional judgment. She explains that what one-person thinks is

appropriate may be different from what another person thinks is appropriate. She asked if deferring to someone's professional judgment then what is the point of the review process.

Mrs. Lynch commented they knew there would be discussion on what the comfort level is which is a sign of the influences of society at this time. One of her biggest concerns is that if one parent fills out a request for reconsideration, the book is taken off the shelf, and she questions if that is a sound educational move. What she sees as a compromise and value is the Reconsideration Policy Committee, made up of a variety of different people who will look at the book and read it over carefully based on the standards and the structure that have been established. It will not be one parent making that decision. Mrs. Corbo appreciated Mrs. Lynch's point but added that as a Committee member, she is uncomfortable with it and added that the opt-out is not sufficient.

Mrs. Hall is not trying to write a Policy that reflects a different message but she thinks that reasonable people can disagree on a topic and parents can disagree with choices that professionals make. She feels that removing the book during the review process is a safeguard for the students while creating a balance in the relationship with the School District and the parents. Hearing their concern, she feels a balance should be made. She asked what the harm is in leaving the book in the catalog but removing it from the shelf for the fourteen-day review. With the process now, after fourteen days, if the book is found not appropriate, we cannot go back and fix irreparable damage.

Mrs. Corbo added the distinction between a School and Public Library. At a Public Library, parents can choose not to have their child there unsupervised. With libraries at school, parents have to send their children, except for limited exceptions. There is a level of trust that needs to be maintained with parents. A level of deference and respect for their opinions. She is concerned about maintaining that trust with parents' concerns with material their children may have access.

Mr. Miraglia commented that his understanding is that you can check out a kindle in the Public Libraries and asked if it was the same in the School Libraries. A community member responded they do not have eBooks. Mrs., Corbo noted for the record and to the community that a School Librarian responded who was not on the microphone. Mr. Miraglia believes this is a good Policy with the addition of the opt-out which is not perfect but a good addition. He explained it is the way that a lot of the communities are going because it solves a lot of problems. He is in favor of adding more options for parents that includes the opt-out and adding clarity to the challenge procedure.

Mrs. Lynch added that the School Committee had one of the most difficult decisions that we have had to make in a long time and it was done in peace and calmness.

Mrs. Cervantes shared that Mrs. Corbo and Mrs. Hall shared a lot of parent feedback but the feedback they received most from parents supporting the book staying on the shelf rather than being removed. She also added that she does not know what she would do if/when that time comes with her children.

Mrs. Hall also added that she appreciates Mrs. Cervantes' comment and she has looked at it from both lenses. The graphic sexual content is what bothers her. If a parent brought something to her to safeguard her child, she would appreciate that.

Mrs. Corbo reiterates that the professionals that are involved in library selection should not take this personally as it is not meant as a personal attack on any judgment. She is proud of the Committee for having this discussion as a team on a hard issue. She opened up Public Comment reminding speakers to come up to the microphone and state their name and address.

Public Comment:

Public Comment was given by residents: Cathy Cambo-27 Brook Bend Road, Jennifer Varney, President of the National Library Association, Bob Melone-387 Old Farm Road, Kelly Puleo-40 Oakland Ave, Jenny Mansini-140 Dillingham Way, Lisa Adams-191 Broadway, Tracey Newman-339

Old Town Way, and Mike Cianciola-81 Old Town Way. Residents expressed their concerns and questions on this issue. Please refer to the Hanover Public Schools website for the [February 1, 2023, School Committee Meeting](#) for more detail.

Mrs. Corbo, Mrs. Lynch, Mrs. Cervantes, and Mrs. Hall addressed some concerns, responded to some questions, and advised on what they could.

Roll call vote Peter Miraglia-Aye, Ryan Hall-No, Elizabeth Corbo-No, Kristen Cervantes-Aye, and Ruth Lynch-Aye. The motion carried three to two.

REPORT OF FINANCE DEPARTMENT:

- **Budget and Free Full Day Kindergarten Update Presented by Mr. Matthew Ferron and Mr. Michael Perrone:**

Mr. Perrone shared that the Select Board had a meeting Monday night and the Select Board and Town Manager presented a budget. The school budget is \$35,031,299 which is a \$1,459,384 increase over our current budget. However, it is less than what was presented to the Board by about \$500,000 or so. Work will continue with the Board on balancing based on those numbers.

Mr. Ferron added the focus will be looking at over the next several months trying to find out how to balance expenses as payroll is in good shape and can be managed within this budget number as presented by the Town Manager. The extraordinary expenses being experienced this year are in the area of student services and transportation. Advocacy and support will be asked from the Committee in the weeks ahead. As soon as it is available, Supplemental Circuit Breaker's request for extraordinary relief for pothole funds will be filled as soon as possible. Districts are eligible to apply for it if their expenses exceed 125% of what was budgeted. The budget will continue to be worked on with the Town Manager, Select Board, and Ad Comm.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo made a statement that there have been some significant cost overruns this year for operational expenses related to mandated expenses for student services. Those expenses are likely to carry on into our operating budget for next year. This is the first time in a long time that we are looking at taxing the levy amount for residents and using the access levy as part of that just to maintain service-level operations. There is a substantial amount of free cash being used even though our budget request has not been met. It is about \$1,750,00 and that would not cover funding for full-day kindergarten. She continued by noting that most Town Departments have been coming forward with service-level budgets. Yes, it has been done to an extent with a couple of exceptions and those exceptions are transportation for special education, two new positions for the upcoming fiscal year that extend beyond our current service level, and free full-day kindergarten. In looking at the Town Manager's budget, there is a significant cost increase without including free full-day kindergarten. If we were to include and push for free full-day kindergarten tuition, the amount of free cash needed would be approximately \$2,250,000. Using free cash means that an unsustainable source of revenue and an unpredictable source of revenue to supplement and fund operational costs is needed. She asks the Committee for discussion to get an idea of consensus so parent(s)/guardian(s) and Administration can start planning for next year. As a Committee, this is a priority and is incorporated into the Superintendent's Goals. She continues that given the cost overruns and the significant amount of service level budget to residents and taxpayers being taxed and beyond, she does not feel it is fiscally responsible to continue to pursue free full-day kindergarten for FY '24. She finished by stating that it is incredibly regrettable but with the extreme circumstance, she does not feel comfortable pursuing free full-day kindergarten for FY '24.

Mrs. Cervantes summarized from the joint meeting with the Select Board that there is a potential misunderstanding that free full-day kindergarten costs \$2.5 million and that is why we would have to use that from free cash. She clarified that is not the case and the budget projections would still be around \$600,000 and multiple pieces did not get anticipated to get to \$2.5 million if we include free full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Miraglia agreed with Mrs. Corbo there is no way that we can take on free full-day kindergarten with the budget that has been allocated. If we did, we will be sacrificing services that we do not want to sacrifice. The only thing that I can offer up and will continue to advocate for is to look for options, in cooperation with Administration on the Budget Committee, is to look for options to decrease the \$600,000.

Mrs. Hall agrees at this time it would not be a fiscally responsible decision to make but she also agrees that it is a commitment that she wants to see happen. She added that she will continue to keep it on the forefront and work to chip away at it to see how we can bring it to fruition in the future.

Mrs. Cervantes added that she is aware of the expense of child care and if there was a better solution, it would be offered. She is in support, of moving forward with this not being in our budget for next year. She noted how it is an important value and an important investment for our young people and the conversation should continue and for the next three years.

Mrs. Lynch added that when she left the joint meeting of the School Committee and the Select Board, she believed that there was no way free full-day kindergarten was going to be worked in next year.

Mrs. Corbo reiterated with Mr. Ferron the position of the School Committee and the free full-day kindergarten. Mr. Ferron added it is regrettable but it needs to be taken off the table with the position the budget is in.

Report on Teaching and Learning:

- **HHS Program of Studies Presented by Mrs. Debbie St. Ives, and Mr. Matthew Plummer:**

Mrs. St. Ives invited the High School Team to present the *HHS Program of Studies*. Mr. Plummer presented the HHS Program of Studies explaining that every year at this time, the High School's *Program of Studies* with a definitive document with course changes and the specific rationales for these changes is introduced. He continued reviewing the updates and changes made to this year's *HHS Program of Studies*. The [HHS Program of Studies](#) document can be found in its entirety on the School Committee website under Public Meeting Documents. Please refer to the Hanover Public Schools website for the [February 1, 2023](#), School Committee Meeting for more detail.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo wanted to know why the peer leadership course and about some of the other electives that might be subject to reevaluation. Is there a target level of enrollment that is looked for in the electives? Mr. Plummer responded he cannot say there is a hard number but would like every other day electives to be full. Mrs. Corbo then asked if that was the enrollment that he was looking at for the peer leadership course and Mr. Plummer replied that he actually looked back in Aspen at all the iterations of peer leadership. Last year there was only two students who had selected this course, the previous year started with eleven but ended with nine, and the year before that there were only five students. Mrs. Corbo noticed that it seems that we are moving towards incorporating more assessed summer reading where children are responsible for reading during the summer and that translates into some assessment when they return to school. She inquired on what type of academic supports are available for students on IEPs during the summer. Mr. Plummer responded it is a concern and it needs to be evaluated. They are trying to figure out the best way to support

students that might need help during the summer.

Mrs. Hall commented on the new math courses and how excited she is to see the new addition of pre-AP, pre-calculus AP course, and AP Statistics. She also shared how happy she is to see the collaboration and discussion between the mathematics department and the science department. Recognizing how it is helping set up success for students by taking it to consideration the prerequisite skill and balance of level of courses.

Mr. Miraglia asked if there were any structural changes that are worth noting. Mr. Plummer noted that it has helped to have the Tuesday meetings with good collaborative conversations on how to make the schedule better. Mr. Miraglia asked if there are any cross on the course description. Mr. Plummer responded that the documents will be updated on an annual basis.

Mrs. Lynch thought the book was great. It clearly defines what courses are offered and what opportunity students have. She believes this is the most important publication that comes out of the District. Her only suggestion is to move the "What does a Hanover High School Student look like?" to the beginning of the program. Mr. Plummer agreed to move it.

Mrs. Corbo inquired about ASL. Mr. Plummer responded that they keep trying but it has been difficult.

Action Items:

- **Traffic Safety Committee Representative Appointment Presented by Mrs. Libby Corbo:**

Mrs. Corbo nominated Mr. Pete Miraglia as the Traffic Safety Committee Representative.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Corbo to nominate *Mr. Pete Miraglia as the Traffic Safety Committee Representative*. The motion was moved by Mrs. Lynch and seconded by the School Committee. Roll call vote Peter Miraglia-Aye, Ryan Hall-Aye, Elizabeth Corbo-Aye, Kristen Cervantes-Aye, and Ruth Lynch-Aye. The motion carried unanimously.

- **CAM Committee Representative Appointment Presented by Mr. Matthew Ferron:**

Mr. Ferron nominated Ms. Patricia (Pam) Manning as a CAM Committee Representative. Mr. Ferron added that one more representative is needed and those options are being looked into and he will advise.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Corbo to nominate *Ms. Patricia (PAM) Manning as the Superintendent and School Committee Representative on the CAM Committee*. The motion was moved by Mrs. Hall and seconded by Mr. Miraglia. Roll call vote Peter Miraglia-Aye, Ryan Hall-Aye, Elizabeth Corbo-Aye, Kristen Cervantes-Aye, and Ruth Lynch-Aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

Public Comment was given by residents: Leslie Molyneaux-23 Water Street, and Jenny Mancini-140 Dillingham Way. Residents expressed their concerns and questions on different issues. Please refer to the Hanover Public Schools website for the [February 1, 2023, School Committee Meeting](#) for more detail.

Mr. Ferron and Mrs. Corbo responded accordingly.

The next School Committee meeting is February 15, 2023. Expected agenda items will be: February 15, 2023: FY '24 Budget Update, Policy Section I; Second Reading of Policy IJL / IJL-R (Library Materials), HHS Program of Studies, other items TBD.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Corbo to adjourn the meeting at 9:44 PM. The motion was moved by Mrs. Hall and seconded by Mr. Miraglia. Roll call vote Peter Miraglia-Aye, Ryan Hall-Aye, Elizabeth Corbo-Aye, Kristen Cervantes-Aye, and Ruth Lynch-Aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Tahnee Warner

Tahnee Warner
Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary

Documents Used:

Appendix A Policy Section I, Second Reading of Policy IJL/IJL-R (Library Materials)
Appendix B Policy Section I, First Reading of Policy IA-IJI
Appendix C and D Policy Section C and D, Second Reading
Appendix E HHS Program of Studies