

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

February 3, 2020

School Department Conference Room, 220 Central Street, Hingham, MA 02043

- 1. Call to Order** The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Michelle Ayer. She announced that the meeting is being recorded.

Members Present: Michelle Ayer, Nes Correnti, Carlos Da Silva, Libby Lewiecki, Kerry Ni, Liza O'Reilly and Ed Schreier.

Central Office Present: Paul Austin, James LaBillois, Suzanne Vinnos and John Ferris.

Visitors Present: Andy Hoey, Tony Keady, David Jewett, Rick Swanson, June Gustafson, David Anderson, Erica Pollard, Bob Curley, Donna McLellan, Jackie Sansone, Emma Quilty, Kevin Quilty, Elizabeth Wilcox, Paul Pawlowski, Derek Smith, George Danis, Jim Quatromoni, Elise Warhaftig, Monica Tesler, Katie Roberts, Mary Andres, Mary Eastwood, Tim Dempsey, Melissa Smith, Ray Estes, Al Rizzo, Frank Niles, Mike Lynch.

- 2. Approval of Minutes**

2.1 On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Liza O'Reilly,

It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting at the MSBA held on December 11, 2019.

2.2 On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Liza O'Reilly,

It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on January 6, 2020.

2.3 On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Liza O'Reilly,

It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on January 9, 2020.

2.4 On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Liza O'Reilly,

It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on January 16, 2020.

- 3. Questions and Comments** None

- 4. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Austin reported he has made progress and has collected a great deal of data for his entry report. The report will not be ready by February 24, 2020. Instead, he will give the Committee a mid-year update on his progress towards his annual goals at that meeting. He reported attending the Forecast meeting with Town officials and members of the School Committee. The numbers are preliminary at this point.

- 5. Communications**

5.1 Communications Received by the Superintendent: Dr. Austin noted that he had sent out a letter to HPS members addressing the coronavirus. Hingham Public Schools is following CDC guidelines and

continues to be vigilant. He noted that the flu season is in full swing and advised families to follow HPS health guidelines.

- 5.2 Student Communications: Emma Quilty reported that the wrestling team honored veterans at their match against Silver Lake. The boys and girls basketball teams had a double header to raise money for cancer research. The girls track team took second place at the Division III state relays, and the boys high jumpers and sprinters made HHS records. After the midyear exams, veteran Kevin Flike spoke to all grades and stated that an experience is worth nothing unless you share it. Devin Kushner and Aiden Murphy were accepted into the MMEA All State Festival. The Model UN club attended a conference at Harvard University and all juniors attended the Marshall Thurgood exhibit thanks to the PTO.
- 5.3 Other Communications: Chair Michelle Ayer noted that the Committee has received many emails about the budget and they are replying to each one. The Committee appreciates the community engagement.

6. Public hearing on the FY'21 Operating Budget

- Call to Order of Public Hearing. Michelle Ayer called the public hearing to order at 7:30 p.m.
- Dr. Austin presented the administration's proposed FY'21 Operating Budget. The foundation of the budget is the HPS Mission and Core Beliefs which he read. The budget was developed to address the needs of students, the mission and vision of the school district, the priorities set by the school committee, the needs as determined by administration, and the needs of the community. Dr. Austin reviewed the budget numbers. The approved FY'20 budget was \$54,319,826. A status quo budget for FY '21 would be \$56,730,985, which would be a 4.4% increase. That increase includes salary steps, a financial allowance for negotiations with all six unions, and contractual obligations. The Superintendent's proposed budget is \$57,661,728. This represents an increase of \$930,743 over the status quo budget and includes administrative needs, HTSS needs, and regular education, special education and Pre-K staffing needs. He broke down the proposed budget by Regular Education (a 5.56% increase over FY '20), Special Education (a 8.21% increase) and Vocational Technical (a 8.88% decrease). He proposed this budget with a total overall increase of 6.15%. He identified Highly Critical Needs that will be on deck for next year and noted that the budget increase would be 6.78% if these items were included this year. The Special Education Director and the Fine Arts Director positions are included in the Highly Critical Needs category. Michelle Ayer thanked John Ferris, the staff, principals, department heads and others and spoke about the changing landscape of education. She noted that the School Department's responsibility is to prepare students for the future, which requires financial support. She also noted that all town departments have pressing needs and encouraged our town leaders to seek ways to grow new revenue. She then invited questions from the committee and the public. Carlos AF Da Silva shared his experience advocating for special education and fine arts and stated that it is disgraceful that of our 20 benchmark towns, Hingham spends the least per pupil. He thanked all of the parents who sent letters of support for the budget. He also noted that the whole community shares the problem of limited resources, and advocated working together to increase revenue.
- Comments and questions about the proposed FY '21 Operating Budget. Holly Constant spoke about students' mental health needs. Students face a number of pressures that lead to anxiety and depression. She noted that involvement in the arts is a way to support the mental health of our students because it helps them relax and decompress. Additionally, involvement in the arts requires a different way of thinking and allows students to work with their hands, build things, and be creative. It also provides an avenue to success for kids who are not academically inclined. To increase student involvement in the arts and to ensure that we meet the new state arts standards, we need a Director of Fine and Performing Arts. Resource teachers don't have the time to take on this role. HPS does not have someone dedicated to the curriculum and who will advocate for the Arts department. The faculty is excellent but they need support. Monica Tesler then spoke. She spoke in favor of the funding of a Fine Arts Director. It would really help

the most vulnerable students, those in special education. Many students in high school and on an IEP cannot fit an arts class into their schedule currently, forcing families to choose between an arts class and Strategies for Learning, where Special Education services are delivered. Music is known to have a huge mental health benefit. It is also demonstrated to aid students' attention in class. Everyone wants to address it but no one is leading the way. An Arts Director could spearhead solutions to this issue. Michelle Ayer commented that the scheduling piece is difficult. Tim Dempsey spoke about the need for a special education director but wants every position funded. The public is disappointed and sees the budget as milquetoast and not courageous. We know that a budget override won't pass. The editorial in the Hingham Anchor highlighted how underfunded we are. We will never make an argument for an override with a negative message. We need to figure out what we will do this year with a positive message about what we need to fund our schools to make us competitive with our neighboring towns. It's too late for this year but we need to get together as a community and find a way to get this funding. He encouraged the Committee and administration to communicate the budget needs to the community to get the support for better funding. Liza O'Reilly believes that a budget override may pass if the community, parents, and members of the board work together to educate the public about what our schools need. She noted that we now have a preliminary list of the things we need and we will get a better picture when Dr. Austin shares his entry findings. We need continuous community engagement, attendance at meetings, and communication with all of the decision makers in town. Other departments in town need more, too. An override might help that happen. She encouraged Tim Dempsey and others to solidify their vision and get it out there. Michelle Ayer noted that Hingham is attractive to many because of the great schools. If schools aren't so great, this is no longer an attractive place to live. Kerry Ni thanked everyone who came out tonight. Kerry Ni supports the Fine Arts Director and noted that the Arts are the original project based learning. She noted that the School Committee understands the need for more funding and supports it. It is important to work with other departments rather than against each other. Michelle Ayer stated supporting the schools is part of the social contract – you pay it back even after your kids are gone for the good of the community. Libby Lewiecki noted that if we were to position ourselves in the mid-range of per pupil spending, we would require a budget increase of more than \$12 million. The School Committee is not asking for this, but hopes the town will support the very specific needs that we are asking for. It is critical for Hingham to find a way to fund these needs. Chair Ayer thanked everyone for coming and praised how well the district does with the resources they are given. The pressure is large. Carlos Sa Silva encouraged people to attend an important meeting on February 11, 2020 between the Advisory Committee, the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee. The School Committee discussed what the presentation to the Advisory Committee and Board of Selectmen should look like. Ed Schreier asked what meeting will have the final vote. It will probably occur on February 24, 2020. The Town forecast includes a 6.15% budget increase for the School Department. In the past, the Committee has aimed to vote on the number agreed upon by the Board of Selectmen. The forecast for the Town would require \$1.7 reduction in spending. The School Committee recognizes the budgetary challenges of other town departments, we still have a great need. The Committee will need to keep educating the Community about our needs throughout the year, expressed a strong desire for our town leaders to discover new sources of revenue, and is willing to work collaboratively on this.

On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Kerry Ni,

It was

Voted: To adjourn the Public Hearing and return to open meeting.

7. New Business

7.1 The Committee discussed the 2019 Annual Report. It must be submitted to the Selectmen by February 21, 2020. A draft has been circulated and Michelle Ayer and Dr. Austin will complete it and submit a

draft to the Committee members.

- 7.2 The Committee received a memo outlining the Program of Studies for 2020-2021. Rick Swanson articulated the substantive changes on that memo. Kerry Ni inquired about AP classes and the fees. The Department should ensure that no one is unable to take an exam because of the exam fees. This will be clarified in the new Program of Studies. Liza O'Reilly commented that the new English senior electives are good. The science sequence is very good. She inquired whether a sequence could be included for all academic subjects. Classes were retitled World Language from Foreign Language based on the state recommendation. The classes were renamed in the Program of Studies but the names were not consistent in all of the narratives. That will be changed before it goes to print.
- 7.3 The Committee discussed a proposed new Policy 6.5.1 Administering Medicines to Students. Kerry Ni explained that the nurses want to have Narcan available at their schools and while researching this, it was discovered that there is no existing policy for the administration of medicines to students, which the district is required to have. This is a first reading. Liza O'Reilly suggested removing "It is the policy of HPS." Dr. Austin spoke about the possibility of getting a stock of EPI Pens but there is an issue as pharmacies will not sell them to us.
- 7.4 The Committee reviewed an amended agreement for South Shore Educational Collaborative to admit Whitman-Hanson Regional School District students to the collaborative.

On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Kerry Ni,

It was

Voted: Pursuant to Articles VIII and IX of the collaborative agreement for South Shore Educational Collaborative, the Board of Directors of the Collaborative has approved the following amendment to that agreement: The Whitman Hanson Regional School District, acting by and through its school committee, is hereby admitted as a member of the South Shore Educational Collaborative and the preamble of the Collaborative Agreement shall be amended by adding Whitman Hanson to the list of members of the Collaborative. Approved by the School Committee of the Town of Hingham on this the third day of February, 2020

- 7.5 The Committee heard a report and discussed field improvements. Athletic Director Jim Quatromoni spoke about improvements and repairs to the Varsity Baseball and Softball fields. Both fields were constructed in 2013 with an infield mix designed not to drain, but is pitched. Unfortunately, due to faulty initial grooming and years of use, it is time to laser level and redo these fields. Poor drainage and pooling water creates days of wet fields that cannot be used. There are estimates and quotes in the packet. A quote for both fields to be leveled is under \$28,000. Currently, the fields maintenance person is trained to properly maintain the fields. Also, we need dugouts at both fields because rules require that everybody that is not participating in the contest must be in the dugout. We will need bids for design that would be roofed. Dugouts with roofs are also important for safety in the event of thunder and lightning. The anticipated cost is approximately \$10,000 per dugout. A third request is to replace the fence in the JV field. Jim Quatromoni expects it to cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000. John Ferris described the gift fund established to build the turf field and noted we received over \$1.1 million in 2011. The current balance is \$143,588. The softball scoreboard was funded out of this account during FY'20. He read the purpose of the fund – it was specifically set up for those fields. This is an appropriate use of this fund and fits within its definition. The Committee asked questions about location and the field hockey area. Ray Estes spoke on behalf of the Hingham Sports Partnership. Damage was done by not appropriately maintaining the fields after installation. Netting is an issue, too, with proximity of the field to neighbors. He opined that this should be included in the project,

too. The gift fund discussed tonight is comprised of private donations and it is more than five years old. Consequently, it should be used to fix some of the things that were not done originally.

On a motion by Ed Schreier and seconded by Carlos Da Silva,

It was

Voted: To authorize the Superintendent to receive bids for and expend up to \$90,000 from the HHS Fields Project Account to complete laser levelling, construction of four dugouts, and replacing fencing at the baseball and softball diamonds at Hingham High School.

8. 48 Hour Items: Dr. LaBillois told the Committee that his office will be conducting the search for the new Human Resources Director and asked if there was a member that would be willing to serve on the search committee. Kerry Ni volunteered. Dr. LaBillois thanked her.

9. Subcommittee reports:

- Nes Correnti reported that East School Council met on January 22, 2020 and discussed the parent/caregiver survey. Two focus groups will meet to further discuss the responses.
- Libby Lewiecki reported that the South School Council was buzzing along nicely. The next meeting will be on February 26, 2020. Upcoming HEF events include a February 2 coffee and conversation at Hingham Historical Society, a matching donation campaign, and an April annual fundraiser. The Community Outreach Subcommittee met and is working on FAQ for Foster School. Ray Estes is collaborating. She encouraged all members to reach out to their PTOs with budget information. There is a new contract to design a website with Sterling. There are 2 upcoming sessions for community conversations with the Superintendent.
- Liza O'Reilly reported that the Master Plan Committee will be discussing facilities. The Salary and Negotiations Subcommittee will begin negotiations with the HEA Unit A on February 10, 2020.
- Kerry Ni noted that Pam King has been appointed as the liaison between MASC and the School Department for the new policy manual development and that all the requested documents were submitted to MASC. The Policy Subcommittee discussed the Exchange Student policy and decided to table it until it is addressed during the MASC Policy Service process. The HMS School Council met and discussed safety, a technology survey, and ways to consolidate supplies lists for kids before they start school. At the South PTO meeting, Mini Grants and a surprise Read Across America guest were discussed. She thanked South School for posting a sign about kindergarten registration. Liza O'Reilly asked if we could put a sign on East Street near East School. Paul Austin commented that there will be a meeting with Hingham preschools tomorrow.
- Carlos DaSilva Long Range Planning met and discussed \$2.2 million in Capital needs. They met with Joe Andrews to discuss technology needs. The HHS Council met and discussed flexible block scheduling, graduation requirements, what could be changed about requirements, classes offered and expanding the freshman advisory program.
- Michelle Ayer stated that she, Nes Correnti and John Ferris met regarding the METCO budget and transportation in order to potentially increase the number of METCO children in Hingham.. Arts Emerson selected Hingham to have a one-woman show called "Mr. Joy." That will be on March 12, 2020. It's a terrific show that addresses race. There will be two shows during the school day for students and a free show open to the public that evening.
- Mr. Ferris is working with the owner of the space at Libby Industrial Park for TRACES. Hopefully, we will get the equipment moved in the next week or two.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Kerry Ni,

It was

Voted: To adjourn at 9:36PM.

Respectfully Submitted by:
Kerry Ni

Documents Included:

2-3-20 Agenda.pdf 

2-3-20 Annotated Agenda.docx 

Budget Hearing February 3 PPT.pptx 

Item 2.1 12-11-19 Minutes (MSBA).pdf 

Item 2.2 1-6-20 Minutes.pdf 

Item 2.3 1-9-20 Minutes.pdf 

Item 2.4 1-16-20 Minutes.pdf 

Item 4 Facility Dept December & January Report (1).pdf 

Item 4 Forecast.pdf 

Item 5 Community Health Letter 2-3-20.pdf 

Item 7.2 POS Changes for 2020-2021.pdf 

Item 7.2 Secondary Program of Studies.pdf 

Item 7.3 Proposed Policy 6.5.1 ADMINISTERING MEDICINES TO STUDENTS.pdf 

Item 7.4 SSEC and W-H.pdf 

Item 7.5 Athletic Fields.pdf 

Item 7.5 Revolving Account.pdf 

Item 7.5 Scoreboard Encumbrance.pdf 

Item 7.6 NYC Trip.pdf 

Item 7.7 Field Trip to Iceland.pdf 

Item 7.8 Peru Trip.pdf 

Item 9 Warrants Signed.pdf 
