**MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

September 9, 2020

**Remote meeting via Zoom**

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Kerry Ni called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. She stated that the meeting was being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to an Order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. Attendees were advised that the meeting and all communications during the meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. Any participant who wished to record the meeting was asked to notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.

Members Present: Kerry Ni, Carlos AF Da Silva, Libby Lewiecki, Liza O’Reilly, Michelle Ayer, Nes Correnti, Jennifer Benham

Central Office Present: Paul Austin, James LaBillois, Suzanne Vinnes, John Ferris, Susan D’Amato

Visitors Present: No sign in as this was a remote meeting.

1. **Approval of Minutes**

2.1 On a motion by Carlos AF Da Silva and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

**Voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on August 5, 2020 - 9:30 AM (Community Forum).

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

2.2 On a motion by Carlos AF Da Silva and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

**Voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on August 5, 2020 - 4:30 PM (Community Forum) with one change: to correct the time of adjournment to 5:47.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

2.3 On a motion by Carlos AF Da Silva and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

**Voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on August 5, 2020 – 7:00 PM (Community Forum) with one change: to correct the record to reflect that Liza O’Reilly was not in attendance at the 7:00 PM session.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

2.4 On a motion by Carlos AF Da Silva and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

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

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

2.5 On a motion by Carlos AF Da Silva and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

**Voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on August 10, 2020.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

2.6 On a motion by Carlos AF Da Silva and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

**Voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on August 19, 2020.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

3. **Questions and Comments**

Chair Ni provided time for questions or comments on topics that were not included on the School Committee agenda.

* When asked if children that were being home schooled were allowed to participate in PTO activities, Chair Ni confirmed that they were allowed to participate.



4. **Superintendent’s Report**

4.1 Dr. Austin provided a School Reopening update. He reviewed a PowerPoint presentation that addressed the following topics:

* Timeline of prior activity and events since May 2020
* Progress on the Learning Plan – a Phased-In Hybrid Approach
* Progress on the Memorandum of Agreement with the Hingham Education Association (HEA)
* An update on the Reopening of Schools, including a discussion on how the Cohorts were established
* Transportation Update
* Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Update
* Building Maintenance and Preventative Measures Update
* Financial Update, including COVID-19 Expenditures and Losses of Revenue
* Health Metric Update and the decision-making process on how and when to advance to the next phase of the Learning Plan
* Enrollment Projections, including current enrollments, withdrawals, home school applications, and the percentage of students opting for the remote-only learning plan.

Dr. Austin confirmed that the PowerPoint presentation would be posted on the school website. Liza O’Reilly commented that the 9th grade reduction due to private school enrollments was historically consistent and that Kindergarten numbers were typical of what Hingham previously experienced when only half-day kindergarten was offered, which can cause a challenge when projecting the next year’s First Grade enrollment.

Questions and comments from the community included:

* A request for clarification on the health metrics that will be used to determine the reopening plan. Dr. Austin discussed that reopening will be impacted by the state data on health metrics and the trends in that data.
* A follow up question on the gray/green health metrics by the state and concerns over lack of detail in the reopening plan. Dr. Austin provided additional information on the dates when students will return and the instructional hours.
* Request for additional information on the negotiations with the HEA and the role of the School Committee in those negotiations.
* A question on when the decision was made that Kindergarten would be only a ½ day program. Dr. Austin advised that was decided a few weeks ago and that there is not the capacity for full day program. He commented that it was not ½ day, but more closely 2/3 of the day and it would not be fair to charge parents if the day was not a full day. The plan is to get younger children more time in the classroom as quickly as possible.
* A question on how confident the Superintendent was that we would start school on Wednesday, 9/16 and whether 16 hours/week is the goal for live instruction. Dr. Austin advised that the goal for live instruction was 5 days a week. Dr. Austin advised he had no reason to believe that school would not start on Wednesday, 9/16. Dr. Austin acknowledged the parent’s concern about news reports of events in other towns, and said that, although he cannot guarantee anything, he believes that there will be an agreement with the HEA.
* A question on whether the curriculum has been adjusted to account for the reduced hours in the classroom. Dr. LaBillois advised that the curriculum was being adjusted to accommodate for gaps that may have resulted from the school closure from March to June of the prior school year. He advised that there is not a significant decrease in instructional hours that will require the need to adjust the curriculum.
* A request to focus, at the High School level, on the scheduling of core subjects and desired electives rather than scheduling Physical Education. Principal Swanson spoke to the importance of physical education in the curriculum and the desire to honor the state requirements for Physical Education.
* A question on whose decision it is to get the students back into the classroom full time. Dr. Austin advised it was his decision, in collaboration with the School Committee. This will be discussed at the 10/19 School Committee meeting. Dr. Austin advised it was important to have adequate time before that decision is made to determine it will be safe to start in person. Dr. Austin advised that space, metrics, and transportation are the primary factors in determining the transition to the next phase.
* A question on whether there will be flexibility in drop-off times to allow for the logistics of dropping of multiple children at different schools. Dr. Austin advised there will be a protocol for this.
* A question on whether the administration had considered modular classrooms. Dr. Austin advised that all options have been considered, including modular units and tents. The speaker added that many community members did not have the option to pursue alternative options for education due to the late nature of the process.
* A question regarding the required staffing that would be needed for Phase 3, referring back to data that was presented in the original Reopening report. Dr. Austin advised that the reduction in enrollments will assist with the ability to meet the 3 foot spacing requirements for subsequent phases. Dr. LaBillois confirmed that the revised enrollment numbers should allow us to move to Phase 3 without requiring the original projections for additional staffing. Dr. LaBillois discussed the spacing issues at Foster School that result from having rooms without windows.
* A request to review the subsequent reopening phases on 10/1 rather than 10/19 and whether it would be beneficial to survey parents regarding transportation needs to help form decisions for the next phase. Dr. Austin advised that the COVID Response Team is reviewing metrics every week.
* A question on when families with students who have Individual Education Plans (IEPS) will be informed of how and when their services will be received, and how evaluations will take place. Dr. Vinnes advised that the placement of students in the A/B cohort is determined by the number of hours of services that are in the students’ IEP. Dr. Vinnes advised that teachers are currently scheduling all of the services that students need and the psychologists will be scheduling evaluations, as required. The community member expressed frustration over the lack of communication and the level of service provided after the school closure to students with IEPs.
* A request to advocate strongly for live streaming on days that students attend classes remotely.
* A comment to express disappointment that the 9th grade orientation was not held as an in-person event and a question on the number of hours of instruction and whether students will be expected to work independently as college students do. Principal Swanson reviewed the decision making process for the virtual orientation. He expressed that the orientation as planned would provide a common, unified, meaningful experience; followed by a self-guided tour of the school. Principal Swanson expressed his confidence in the teachers’ ability to make adjustments to the academic curriculum, as needed.
* A request for a map of the High School for 9th grade students. A question on why elementary students are bringing their electronic devices to school on the days when they have in-person school days, when the focus should be on live learning. Principal Keady responded that the devices are used for accessibility and to have them available as an option. Students often use the Google suite of applications and use these devices under normal school operations.
* A question on what the remote days will look like – live, pre-recorded, webcam, etc. Dr. Austin advised that the original plan envisioned that the remote days were going to be a blend of multiple delivery methods. Dr. Austin acknowledged that the community wants to see the details of the remote learning and that he hoped to be able to provide those soon.
* A question about school safety and the transition from fully locked buildings with one entry to a more open campus and whether the Hingham Police Department is providing guidance. Principal Swanson advised he has discussed this topic at length with the School Resource Officer, who has also been in contact with the Hingham Police. The High School will limit access through the back entrance and will have additional police coverage at the front entrance.
* A question as to why other towns have figured out how to reopen schools and Hingham has not. Dr. Austin acknowledged that he understood why the speaker felt that way, but disagreed that most towns have figured this out. He stated that he accepts the criticism.
* A request to focus on core academics (English, Math, Science, History) and possibly 1 or 2 electives, rather than Physical Education. Additional questions from the speaker included: Have the schools made cuts for budget savings? What happens if an agreement is not reached with the teachers union? A question on parking spots for seniors at Hingham High School. A question on the timeline for distribution of Chromebooks for High School students. A request to see a comparison of enrollment data over the last 5 years and a request to see how many Kindergarteners will be held back. Chair Ni advised that the Finance Subcommittee will be reviewing the finances. Dr. Austin advised that the policy on Kindergarten attendance has not changed.

4.2 Dr. Austin advised that the topic of Enrollment Projections was included in his PowerPoint presentation in agenda item 4.1 and there was no need for further discussion of this topic.

5. **Communications**

5.1 There were no communications received by the Superintendent.

5.2 Chair Ni shared that she and Dr. Austin had worked on an Op-ed that addressed the closure and reopening of the schools, with a call to action for the community. The intent is to submit the article to The Anchor and The Journal. There were no questions from the Committee.

6. **Unfinished Business**

6.1 The Committee had a second read on the general (interim) policies on COVID-19 related issues. Chair Ni explained that these policies provide Dr. Austin the authority to implement the School Reopening plan and to adapt as necessary.

The Committee first addressed the HPS General (Interim) Policy on COVID-Related Issues. There was no additional discussion by the Committee.

On a motion by Liza O’Reilly and seconded by Jen Benham,

It was

**Voted**: To approve the Hingham Public Schools General (Interim) Policy on COVID-Related issues (File 1.13 Supplemental).

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham – aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

The Committee further discussed the Face Coverings Policy. Chair Ni advised that there were edits made since the First Read. Chair Ni called attention to bullet #3 that states that face masks will not be required “while alone in an office or classroom with the door closed.” Chair Ni advised that there were differences at the Elementary and Secondary Schools regarding the sharing of rooms and discussed whether that third bullet should be removed. Liza O’Reilly advised that there was a similar statement in a preceding paragraph. The decision was made to remove the bullet to allow for the flexibility for the building principal to determine what works best in their building.

A resident and High School teacher spoke in favor of removing the bullet to allow the building principals the flexibility to determine the policy around mask breaks. She advocated for a mask policy at the High School that required that any mask breaks take place outside of the building. Liza O’Reilly added that there are sections in the policy on how to handle violations of the policy by students and staff.

In response to a question from the Community about shared office space and the mask requirements, Chair Ni advised that the Committee did look at Mass General Hospital’s Mask Policy and that the Hingham Department of Health reviewed and signed off on the policy.

On a motion by Carlos AF DaSilva and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

**Voted**: To approve the Hingham Public Schools Face Mask Policy, as amended to remove the third bullet.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham – aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

7. **New Business**

7.1 The agenda item to review reappointments for the Foster School Building Committee and act as appropriate was tabled until the 9/21/2020 meeting to determine if this action is needed.

7.2 The agenda item to discuss a Memorandum of Agreement with HEA Unit B for a successor contract for 2020-2023 and act as appropriate was tabled until a subsequent meeting to allow time to complete technical procedures.

7.3 The Committee received notifications of the appointments for the 2020-2021 school year of Michaela Connolly, Grade 5 teacher at East Elementary School; Rachel Estremera, Special Education Teacher at HHS; Lauren Webber, Adjustment Counselor at East Elementary; Catherine Yindra, STEM teacher at HMS; Brenton Gammon, Industrial Technology teacher at HMS, Kaitlin White, Long Term Sub Family & Consumer Science at HMS; Sonia Keller ep Naeveke, Long Term Sub Grade 4 at South Elementary; Alyssa DeLuca, Long Term Sub Grade 4 at South Elementary; Stephenie O’Brien, Long Term Sub Grade 1 at South; Nancy Swanson, Long Term Sub Spanish at South Elementary.

7.4 The Committee received notification of the full year leave of absence for 2020-2021 school year of Ulrike Baigorria-Sinnott, Jennifer Brett, Dana Hanseth, and Elizabeth Rubertone.

7.5 The Committee received notification of advancements on the salary scale on September 1, 2020 of Mark McCulloch to M15, Susan Roy to M30, Kathryn Shapiro to M60, Erika Shinney to M60, Lauren Beischel to M15, Carol Lincoln to M60, Kimberly O’Brien to M30, Lauren LaPointe to M30, Amanda Harding to M30, Hillary Doolittle to M60, Stephenie O’Brien to M

7.6 The Committee received notification of the retirements of teachers Robert Kenney, Industrial Technology Teacher effective 6/18/2020; Pamela Sibbald, Teacher at East Elementary, effective 6/30/20; Michelle Barry, Grade 5 teacher at East Elementary effective 7/12/20;

7.7 The Committee received notification of the resignations of Paraprofessionals Emily Clayton (South), Kelly Donovan (PRS), Amanda Mendes (Foster), Carolyn McDonald (South), Jeff West (HHS), Kate Biagini (HHS), Laura Daly (HMS), Tutor Caroline Carver (Foster) and Teacher Emma Ethier (Science Teacher -HMS).

* 1. The Committee discussed the Home School Applications for 41 students for the FY’21. Dr. Austin advised that a number of the home school applications are labelled as “pods”, where parents have grouped together and hired independent teachers who will work with their own curriculums. Dr. Austin advised that the state has very little guidance on this process and he has asked the Director of Root Pods, LLC for additional documentation so that he can ensure the safety of the students. Dr. Austin confirmed that he does not anticipate any problems with approval, provided that he receives the documentation that was requested. Dr. LaBillois advised that, as a result of a Massachusetts Supreme Court decision, the Hingham Public Schools have very little oversight over home school process. Dr. LaBillois stated that upon initial discussions regarding the “pods” with Town executives, it was determined that these children are not a pod under the EEC guidelines. Dr. Austin stated that he was advised by the State Commissioner to ensure that the children are in a safe environment, so he has asked the director of the Root Pods, LLC to ensure that the building is safe and that they complete CORI checks. Dr. Austin also reviewed the situation with the HPS attorney. Dr. Austin confirmed that there are no concerns regarding the academic aspects of the Root Pods, LLC program.

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti,

It was

**Voted**: To approve the Home School applications of the students that are not included in the Root Pods, LLC group.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham – aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti,

It was

**Voted**: To provide provisional approval for the Home School applications of the students that are part of the Root Pods, LLC group, subject to providing the additional documentation requested by Dr. Austin.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham – aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

8. **Other items as may not reasonably be known 48 hours in advance of the meeting**.

None

9. On a motion by Liza O’Reilly and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

**Voted**: To adjourn to Executive Session, not to return to Open Session, for the purposes of:

1. Approving minutes of the Executive Session held on August 10, 2020;
2. Discussing strategy related to collective bargaining negotiations with HEA Unit A and B for the Memorandum of Agreement for the Reopening of Schools for the 2020-2021 school year;
3. Discussing strategy related to collective bargaining negotiations for 2020-2023 agreements with the Administrators, Custodian and Maintenance Workers, Cafeteria Workers, Transportation Workers and Administrative Assistants

the public discussion of which may be detrimental to the committee's bargaining position.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham – aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

The meeting adjourned at 9:44PM.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Libby Lewiecki

Documents Included:

