

# MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

November 2, 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. Chair Ni advised that the Harbor Media was recording the session.

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.

### 2. Approval of Minutes

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

It was

**Voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on October 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. There were no questions or comments.

### 4. Superintendent's Report

4.1 Dr. Austin shared a PowerPoint presentation that provided an update on the COVID-19 Health Metrics for the town and school. Michelle Ayer questioned whether anyone has run a model to determine if a change from 6 foot physical distancing to 3 foot physical distancing

would impact the number of students and staff that are in quarantine. Dr. Austin advised that a model has not been run, but suggested that one of the risks of bringing additional students into the school buildings is an increase in the number of close contacts. Dr. Austin added that, although Hingham is “red” based on state health metrics, we have been able to remain in the hybrid learning model because the transmission has not been within the schools. Dr. Austin responded to questions from the community including the following topics:

- Whether there is a plan for COVID-19 testing for teachers or students and how the district can be sure that transmission is not happening within the schools. Dr. Austin advised that he is looking into a state program on COVID-19 testing.
- Whether the district is seeing COVID-19 cases outside of the sports cases that had been previously discussed.

4.2 Dr. Austin provide an update from the South Shore Educational Collaborative. The update provided budget projections and enrollment projections. Details were included in the School Committee packet.

4.3 John Ferris provided an overview of the budget calendar for FY 2022. He advised that the budget calendar was similar to what had been provided in prior years. There are meetings in November and December to obtain input from the Leadership team. There will be meetings of the Capital & Facilities Subcommittee and the Finance Subcommittee prior to the first meeting with the full School Committee on January 7, 2021. Additional budget sessions are scheduled for January through April of 2021.

Dr. Austin provided the Budget Guiding Principles to the Committee for a first read. Chair Ni advised that there will be a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen and Advisory Committee on November 10, 2020 regarding the financial forecast.

Liza O’Reilly requested that the administration review item #1 on the Guidelines that addressed only Social Emotional supports and suggested that there may also be a need to remediate instructional programming. She suggested that should be reworded to clarify that there is a need for both social/emotional and instructional content.

Michelle Ayer questioned the use of the term “status quo” budget. She recommended that the district be clear with the community and town departments that additional services and staff will be needed for the schools. Dr. Austin explained that the term “status quo” was used to express that the district needed to maintain prior funding and also add additional initiatives. John Ferris added that it also meant that we need to base the budget on the March 2020 enrollment as opposed to the reduced October 2020 enrollments. Ms. Ayer confirmed that the intent was to continue to deliver the educational services that have previously been provided, with additional enhancements.

Nes Correnti added that the district should consider the possibility that the district could remain under COVID-19 restrictions for the long term and how that will impact the budget requirements. Dr. Austin agreed that we need to prepare for that situation.

Libby Lewiecki agreed that the term “status quo budget” seems to suggest a level-services budget. She referenced a need for a Fine Arts Directors, the issue of high student/teacher ratios, and COVID-19 mitigation. She suggested that the community needs to be prepared for a bigger budget or a potential override request. She requested that the language in the Guiding Principles document be more aggressive.

Carlos Da Silva added that now is the time to address technology as part of the Operating Budget rather than the Capital budget.

Chair Ni agreed that the term “status quo budget” should be changed, adding that prior years of level-service funding made it difficult to deal with the COVID-19 situation. Chair Ni also requested that the district begin to address many of the items in the Guiding Principles now, rather than waiting for next year. Dr. Austin agreed that the district is not waiting to move on the identified priorities.

Comments from the community included:

- A group of parents have started a petition to increase awareness around the School Committee budget.
- A discussion of dates that the community would have the opportunity to provide input on the budget. John Ferris advised that in January there will be a number of School Committee meetings. Dr. Austin added that documents will be put on line. Chair Ni added that the public is also welcome to attend the Finance subcommittee meetings.

## 5. **Communications**

5.1 Dr. Austin advised that he continues to hear from parents that are struggling due to the current learning environment. He advised that he understands their concerns and that the district continues to do the best they can to offer the best education possible.

5.2 Student representative Carly Kennedy provided an update from the schools. There is a new program called Calm Classroom that allows the students to meditate and take a few deep breathes before going into second class of the day. Students celebrated Halloween by wearing costumes on Friday. Many seniors in the Spanish program took the Seal of Biliteracy exam, which tests proficiency. Class Officers are preparing for a virtual holiday fair. The Drama club will present their Zoom play on November 20 and 21. The Soccer team had Senior Night and also honored Mr. Teague. The Volleyball team raised over \$1000 for Breast Cancer Research. The field hockey team won their first game back after a two-week quarantine.

5.3 Other Communications. Carlos Da Silva advised that the Capital & Facilities Subcommittee received communication from the resident that abuts the Girls softball field regarding the number of balls that are hit into their yard. The Committee suggested that the district obtain quotes for the costs associated with putting up netting. Michele Ayer commented that a community member had creative ideas about recruiting for some of the current staff openings and that she would forward those ideas to Human Resources Director Susan D’Amato.

## **Unfinished Business**

6.1 The Committee considered proposed resolutions 6-10 from the Massachusetts Associations of School Committees. The Committee was voting whether or not to support the resolutions at the upcoming Massachusetts Association of School Committee’s Conference on November 7, at which Carlos Da Silva will represent the Hingham School Committee.

**Resolution #6 (Retention of Medicaid Revenue)** reads as follows: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC urges the General Court to require that 100% of Medicaid reimbursements to cities and towns be provided in full amount to the public schools of each municipality, through a school district revolving account, to underwrite the cost of providing an adequate education.

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

It was

**Voted:** To support resolution #6 as proposed by the MASC Board of Directors.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham – aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

**Resolution #7: (Attempts by U.S. DOE to Direct Funding to Private Schools)** reads as follows: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC petition the Attorney General of Massachusetts to review and recommend to the Executive Office of Education and the MA Department of Elementary Education to review the formal language of such statutes that determine the distribution of federal funds to benefit economically disadvantaged students and further that the Attorney General provide legal guidance to state agencies in Massachusetts to implement such formulas based on the actual language and legislative intent of the statute should that be in variance with any “advisory” issued by the United States Secretary of Education.

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

It was

**Voted:** To support resolution #7 as proposed by the MASC Board of Directors.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham – aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

**Resolution #8: (Membership of a School Committee Member on the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education)** reads as follows: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC submit to the General Court proposed legislation that MGL Chapter 15, Section 1E be revised as follows: Section 1E. There shall be in the department a board of elementary and secondary education, in this chapter called the board, which shall consist of the chairman of the student advisory council established under this section, the secretary of education, in this chapter called the secretary, or her designee, and 9 members appointed by the governor. The 9 members

appointed by the governor shall consist of 1 representative of a labor organization selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; 1 representative of business or industry selected by the governor with a demonstrated commitment to education; 1 representative of parents of school children selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts Parent Teachers Association; 1 representative from a school committee from a list of three nominees provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and 5 additional members.

On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Libby Lewiecki,

It was

**Voted:** To support resolution #8 as proposed by the MASC Board of Directors.

Michelle Ayer – aye  
Jen Benham – aye  
Nes Correnti – aye  
Carlos AF Da Silva – aye  
Libby Lewiecki – aye  
Liza O’Reilly – aye  
Kerry Ni – aye

**Resolution #9: (Providing Equity For Sexual Orientation - LGBTQ+ Students, Teachers and Staff)** reads as follows: Therefore be it resolved that MASC file legislation and petition our federal legislative delegation to also file legislation which would have the effect of adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes in order to provide equity and support to our LGBTQ+ students, teachers and staff and petition our legislative delegation.

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

It was

**Voted:** To support resolution #9 as proposed by the MASC Board of Directors.

Michelle Ayer – aye  
Jen Benham – aye  
Nes Correnti – aye  
Carlos AF Da Silva – aye  
Libby Lewiecki – aye  
Liza O’Reilly – aye  
Kerry Ni – aye

**Resolution #10: (Relative to the Monitoring of Attendance of Students during the Pandemic)** reads as follows: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC advocate for legislation and regulation that protect the rights of parents to withhold their children from school for reasons of their health status or health risk and, further,

- That MASC advocate for regulations that hold districts accountable for the attendance of students provide appropriate exemptions for students who experience or require

extended absences from school due to health-related issues or concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and further,

- That MASC petition the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to waive all accountability requirements regarding attendance for the 2020-2021 school year, and
- That such regulations exempt districts from the sanction status on the basis of attendance when such absences are related to a public health crisis, including COVID-19.

The Committee discussed this resolution to clarify the language. Dr. LaBillois discussed the provisions for chronic absenteeism.

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

It was

**Voted:** To support resolution #10 as proposed by the MASC Board of Directors.

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 Committee considered the Home School application for student ES (Grade 4) for FY 2021.

On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Libby Lewiecki,

It was

**Voted:** To approve the Home School application for student ES (Grade 4) for FY2021

Michelle Ayer – aye  
Jen Benham – aye  
Nes Correnti – aye  
Carlos AF Da Silva – aye  
Libby Lewiecki – aye  
Liza O'Reilly – aye  
Kerry Ni – aye

- 7.2 The Committee received the Fall 2020 High School Coaching recommendations. Michelle Ayer questioned whether the stipends that are normally provided at the High School and Middle School for extracurricular activities will continue this year. Dr. Austin advised that they were just reviewed and most clubs will continue.

- 7.3 The Committee received notification of the appointments of the following Paraeducators: Elizabeth Alexakos (Foster), effective 10/1/20; Brooke Ashley (HHS), effective 10/6/20; Maria Cerio (HHS), effective 10/6/20; Sarah Decker (East), effective 10/21/20; Matthew Dwyer (HHS), effective 10/6/20; Adrianna Fredo (HHS), effective 10/6/20; Christopher Johnson (HHS), effective 10/6/20; Patrick Murphy (HHS), effective 9/16/20; Thomas O’Hanley (HHS), effective 10/6/20; Molly Rabinovitz (HHS), effective 10/6/2020; Andrew Rubino (HHS), effective 10/13/20.
- 7.4 The Committee received notification of the resignations for the 2020-2021 school year of the following employees: Paraeducator Judith Bowen (HMS), effective 9/17/20; Paraeducator Abbey Capodanno (East), effective 9/25/20; Custodian Brian Dugard (HHS), effective 9/29/20; Paraeducator Rebecca Gagne (East), effective 8/19/20; Paraeducator Meaghan MacTaggart (East), effective 9/15/20; Paraeducator Robyn Marshall (East), effective 8/21/20; Teacher Assistant Jeffrey Sewel (KIA), effective 9/13/20; Paraeducator Cindy Shea (Foster), effective 8/24/20; Paraeducator Christine Winchester (East), effective 9/16/20; Speech Language Pathologist Elizabeth Vuckovic (PRS), effective 10/8/20; Teacher Beth Howard (HHS), effective 9/14/20.
- 7.5 The Committee received notification of the retirements for the 2020-2021 school year of the following employees: Tutor Cynthia Driscoll (South), effective 9/25/20; Bus Driver Paul Mailloux, effective 7/10/20; Paraprofessional Carole O’Connor, effective 8/25/20; Paraprofessional Gail O’Neill, effective 8/7/20.

## 8. **Subcommittee and Project Reports**

Michelle Ayer provided updates from the SEPAC meeting, the Special Education Subcommittee meeting, the METCO Headquarters team meeting, and the HHS School Council meeting. She advised that Dr. Austin will hold a meeting with METCO families on 11/5.

Nes Correnti provided updates from the East School Council meeting. The Hingham Education Foundation will meet on 12/2/2020 to review grant applications. The Finance Committee met, with the full participation of the SC, on October 21, 2020; the next meeting is December 8, 2020. The Equity & Inclusion Taskforce is setting up meetings with the PTOs. Ms. Correnti advised there were two warrants included in the packet for the School Committee’s review.

Carlos Da Silva advised that the PRS School Council met on October 19 to begin to address the School Improvement plan; the next meeting will be on November 9, 2020. Mr. Da Silva provided updates from the Capital & Facilities meeting held on October 27.

Libby Lewiecki advised that Community Outreach Subcommittee has scheduled two “Coffees with the Superintendent” for November 6 at 9AM and November 12 at 7PM.

Liza O’Reilly provided an update from the HMS School Council meeting, the Salary & Negotiations Subcommittee, and the Master Plan Committee. The Master Plan committee will have a public presentation scheduled for December 16.

Kerry Ni provided an update from the Policy Subcommittee. She also provided an update from a meeting with the Town Forecast group. There will be a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen, Advisory Committee, and School Committee on November 10 at 7pm. The All Town PTO meetings

have been scheduled and the School Committee members can sign up to represent the Committee at upcoming meetings.

Liza O'Reilly requested information on two items – 1) how Hingham's benchmark communities fund their Kindergarten programs and, 2) how Hingham compares to its benchmark communities on health care contributions.

9. Other items as may not reasonably be known 48 hours in advance of the meeting. There were no items discussed.
10. On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

**Voted**: To adjourn to Executive Session at 8:50 PM, not to return to Open session, for the purposes of:

1. Approving minutes of the Executive Session held on October 19, 2020
2. Discussing strategy related to collective bargaining negotiations with HEA Unit A and B

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

Michelle Ayer – aye  
Jen Benham – (not audible)  
Nes Correnti – aye  
Carlos AF Da Silva – aye  
Libby Lewiecki – aye  
Liza O'Reilly – aye  
Kerry Ni – aye

Respectfully Submitted By:  
Libby Lewiecki

## Documents Included:

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-  [Agenda\\_2020\\_1102.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Annotated Agenda\\_2020\\_1102.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 2.1 10-19-20 Minutes.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 4.1 COVID-19 Health Metrics.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 4.2 SSEC Update.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 4.3 FY 22 Budget Calendar Proposed November 2.2020.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 4.3 FY'22 Guidelines Proposed November 2 2020.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 6.1 MASC Resolutions.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 7.1 Home School Application Student ES.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 7.2 Fall 2020 Coaching Appointments.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 8 Forecast Meeting - Per Pupil Expenditure\\_2020\\_0131.pdf](#) 

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  -  [Item 8 Forecast Meeting Monthly Analysis Spreadsheet Sept 2020 \(1\).xlsx](#) 

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  -  [Item 8 Warrants \(2\).pdf](#) 