

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

January 11, 2021

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 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 and the Hingham Anchor were 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, Suzanne Vinnes, James LaBillois, 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 December 21, 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

2.2 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 December 22, 2020 (Joint Meeting with the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Committee)

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. Community member Wendy Driscoll read a statement that shared data regarding the hours of in-person learning among districts across the state and advocated for increased in-person learning for Hingham.

4. **Superintendent’s Report**

Dr. Austin shared the COVID-19 Health Metrics for the town and school. This week the town was classified as “red” with 58.6 cases per 100,000 persons, with a positivity rate of 5.29%. There were 37 positive cases in the school for the week, most of which came during the holidays while children were not in schools. Dr. Austin shared that the data is based on self-reporting. There are approximately 110 people in quarantine. Dr. Austin advised that COVID-19 testing for staff will start this week and that the Governor has indicated the possibility of COVID-19 pool-testing. Dr. Austin will further investigate the pool-testing option.

Principal Beth Wilcox provided an update on the opening of Foster North School (former St. Jerome’s School). The updates included the following:

- Maintenance Updates – deep cleaning has been completed, classrooms have been set up, signage has been placed, and the office and nurse spaces were set up.
- Technology Updates – technology wiring and smart boards are being set up
- Safety & Security Updates – the administration completed a walk through with the School Resource Officer, reviewed drop-off and pick-up processes and reviewed the Emergency Response Packet. The Administration will work with the Weymouth Fire Department to conduct the first Fire Drill within the first three days of school.
- Air Purifiers have been placed.
- Transportation information will be shared with the families the week prior to the opening.
- The Food Service process will remain the same as is currently in place.
- Scheduling of the required staff and administration is underway.
- During the week of January 25, 2021 there will be field trips to Foster North. Two busses will transport the children to Foster North, following the required social distancing protocols.
- There will be an Information Session for families via Zoom on Wednesday, January 20.

Michelle Ayer commented that the opening of Foster North is an important step forward for increased in-person learning and thanked Principal Wilcox for the work that has been done. Liza O’Reilly added that this will also benefit the students that remain at Foster because it will open up additional space for those that remain. Jen Benham said that she was happy to see that the pick-up and drop-off times were extended to allow parents additional time to travel to the school. Michelle Ayer thanked John Ferris for making the arrangements to obtain the building.

5. Communications

- 5.1 Student Communications: Student representative Carly Kennedy provided an update from the schools. The Student Council completed a video about COVID-19 to urge students to help stop the spread. The Student Council is also working on a video in honor of Martin Luther King Day to promote unity and awareness. The Debate Team has been participating in virtual debates. The Orchestra and Band held a virtual performance over Zoom. School groups, including the Class of 2024 and the Boys' Soccer Team, have been working to support the Food Pantry.
- 5.2 Superintendent's communications: Dr. Austin advised that the Education Commissioner sent a communication regarding COVID pool testing and he will be attending a webinar to learn more about the process. Dr. Austin also acknowledged that he receives a high volume of communications from the community and although he may not have the time to respond to each individually, he does read them all. Dr. Austin advised that, as of 1/11/21, the Kindergarten has started 5 days of in-person learning. The schools have also moved forward with alternating cohorts for Grades 1 and 2 attending school in person on Wednesdays.
- 5.3 Other Communications: Liza O'Reilly shared that parents have sent emails regarding steps taken by other communities to increase in-person learning. Ms. O'Reilly thanked the community for sharing those communications and shared details from articles that she has read. In one article regarding communities in Minnesota, she found that the health and safety protocols there were very similar to what Hingham is doing. She also referenced a communication from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees that indicated that many schools in Massachusetts have gone fully remote. Ms. O'Reilly shared a research report that provided results of a study that indicate a correlation between the rate of community spread and the risks of reopening schools. Chair Ni added that the Committee appreciates the public input and shared a recommendation that the School Committee offer a weekly virtual office-hour session that would allow for an increased opportunity for two way communication outside of the School Committee meetings. Libby Lewiecki added that the Community Outreach Committee has scheduled two "Coffees with the Superintendent" on February 3 and February 4. The Committee agreed that they would establish a schedule for the office hours and announce the schedule to the community.

6. Unfinished Business

- 6.1 Dr. Austin provided an update on the HPS FY21 Operating Budget. The administration is awaiting news on additional stimulus. John Ferris advised that there is an additional FY'22 budget meeting scheduled on January 14, 2021. Mr. Ferris advised that the timing of the budget planning may be a bit different this year as a result of COVID-19.
- 6.2 The Committee held a second read of proposed Sections D, G, H, and L of the Hingham Public Schools Policy Manual. The policies have been reviewed to ensure that they contain all the appropriate legal language, as well as best practices. The policies have been shared with the administration and HEA for input.

Section D is regarding Fiscal Management. The motion is to approve the section "in form", meaning that the individual sections will be approved and the Policy Manual will be adopted when all sections have been approved.

On a motion by Libby Lewiecki and seconded by Liza O'Reilly,
It was

Voted: To approve Section D of the Hingham Public Schools Policy Manual, in form; to be adopted once the Committee approves all sections of the Policy Manual.

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

Section G covers Personnel. Chair Ni stated that the Committee discussed that the Equity Initiative will impact district hiring so the hiring policies will be revisited once the Equity Audit is complete.

On a motion by Carlos A F Da Silva and seconded by Libby Lewiecki,
It was

Voted: To approve Section G of the Hingham Public Schools Policy Manual, in form; to be adopted once the Committee approves all sections of the Policy Manual.

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

Section H of the Policy Manual covers Negotiations. These policies were recently adopted so changes to these policies were minimal.

On a motion by Libby Lewiecki and seconded by Liza O'Reilly,
It was

Voted: To approve Section H of the Hingham Public Schools Policy Manual, in form; to be adopted once the Committee approves all sections of the Policy Manual.

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

Section L covers Education Agency Relations.

On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Libby Lewiecki,

It was

Voted: To approve Section L of the Hingham Public Schools Policy Manual, in form; to be adopted once the Committee approves all sections of the Policy Manual.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer 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 Heather Rodriguez gave a presentation on the 2020 College Board Testing and Placement Report. Ms. Rodriguez advised that the report addresses data from the Class of 2020 as well as testing that took place in the year 2020.

The presentation addressed:

- Future Plans of the Class of 2020 – Plans show that approximately 95% of students would continue on to Post-Secondary Education at either four year schools, two year schools, or prep schools. Other options included Employment (0.6%), Military (0%), Gap Year/Other Program (1.7%), and Undecided (2.9%)
- SAT summary – This is now a 1600 point scoring, and consists of Reading/Writing, Math, and an optional Essay section.
- An overview of test timing and number of questions
- A review of the Hingham SAT Mean Scores as compared to the state and the nation.
- An overview of the ACT test, which is scored from 1-36 and consists of 4 subtests – English, Math, Reading, and Science.
- A review of the Hingham ACT Mean Scores, as compared to the state and the nation.
- An overview of the Advanced Placement Tests, including a Five Year summary of the number of students, number of tests taken, and the number and percentage of students who scored with a 3 or above.
- The mean score for each of the Advanced Placement tests.
- A comparison of Hingham AP Results as compared to Benchmark Communities.
- Data on the number and percentage of National Merit Scholars.

Kerry Ni questioned if Ms. Rodriguez knew the percentage of students with disabilities who took the SAT and ACT exams. Ms. Rodriguez responded that the SAT and ACT reporting system does not provide that data so she would need to complete a manual investigation to obtain those results. Chair Ni also questioned the number of students with disabilities that took the AP Exams. Ms. Rodriguez advised that she does have the ability to obtain data on the number of students with educational plans that took AP classes. Chair Ni questioned the benchmarking data that shows towns with lower enrollment but a higher number of students who take the test. Ms. Rodriguez responded that she did not have data on the other towns and their AP requirements.

Liza O'Reilly questioned whether students are submitting test results to schools that have adopted a test-optional policy. Ms. Rodriguez responded that this year, due to COVID, many colleges provided a temporary waiver on providing test results. She added that students apply to an average of eight schools and may be applying to some schools that require tests and some schools that are test-optional. Ms. Rodriguez advised that the department is interested in seeing if the temporary waivers on providing test scores may be extended beyond COVID for some schools.

- 7.2 The Committee held a first read of Section I of the Hingham Public Schools Policy manual. Section I deals with Instruction and is a large section of the Policy Manual. Dr. Austin and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees' Field Manager have been involved in the discussion. The policies have also been provided to the Administration and Hingham Education Association (HEA) for feedback. There were no questions or comments regarding Section I. Because this was a first read, this section will be included on the next School Committee Meeting agenda.
- 7.3 Dr. Austin provided the recommendations for the 2020-2021 High School Winter Coaches. Dr. Austin thanked the coaches for the time dedicated to the students. Liza O'Reilly questioned which teams were impacted by COVID-19 quarantines. Principal Swanson advised that the Boys' Hockey team is currently under quarantine as a result of a member of an opponent's team that tested positive the day after a game. Girls' Basketball and Girls' Hockey had both experienced a quarantine earlier in the season.

8. Subcommittee and Project Reports

Michelle Ayer

- The Foster School Building Committee met the prior week and will meet again this week.
- Dr. Austin hosted a virtual coffee with the METCO families last week.
- The Special Education Subcommittee will meet on January 19, 2021.

Jen Benham

- The Foster School Council met on January 6, 2021 and will begin to work on the goals for the School Improvement Plan at their next meeting.

Nes Correnti:

- The Hingham Education Foundation met and gave an update on the grant payout.
- There was an Equity Professional Development session.
- There are warrants available in the School Committee packet for review.

Carlos Da Silva:

- Mr. Da Silva contacted the chair of the MSBA to thank her for the inclusion of Foster and Plymouth River in the MSBA programs.
- Mr. Da Silva provided an update on communication with Legislatures and advised that he received a possible opportunity to apply for a grant for Cybersecurity Training. The information was forwarded to Dr. Austin.
- The Capital & Facilities Subcommittee met and are preparing to attend the Capital Outlay Committee Meeting with a Capital budget of \$2.2M.
- The Plymouth River School Council met and are working on the School Improvement Plan. They are seeking a parent that would like to join the School Council.
- SNAP (Special Needs Athletic Partnership) is meeting on January 11, 2021.

Libby Lewiecki:

- The Community Outreach Subcommittee scheduled four virtual Coffees with the Superintendent for the month of February. They are scheduled for February 3, 2021 at 9am, February 4, 2021 at 7PM, February 10, 2021 for the Senior Center, and February 23, 2021 for Linden Ponds residents. The Community Outreach Subcommittee will meet on January 13.
- The South School Council meeting is scheduled for January 20.

Liza O'Reilly:

- The Master Plan Committee met on January 6, 2021 and read through the full draft of the report. The plan was scheduled to be presented to the Planning Board on February 1, 2021 but that may be postponed.
- The Middle School Council will meet on January 19.

Kerry Ni:

- The Policy Subcommittee will meet on January 12 at 9:30AM.

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

There was no discussion under this item.

10. 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 December 21, 2020
2. Discussing strategy related to collective bargaining negotiations with HEA Units A, B, C, D & AA

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

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O'Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted By:
Libby Lewiecki

Documents Included:

Name ↑

 Agenda_2021_0111.pdf 
 Anotated SC Agenda 1-11-21.pdf 
 Item 2a - 12_21_20 Minutes.pdf 
 Item 2b- 12_22_20 Minutes Joint BOS_Advisory_SC meeting 
 Item 4 Superintendent Update_2021_0111b.pdf 
 Item 6.2 Section D Index.pdf 
 Item 6.2 Section D.pdf 
 Item 6.2 Section G.pdf 
 Item 6.2 Section H.pdf 
 Item 6.2 Section L.pdf 
 Item 7.1 - 2020 CEEB School Committee report.pdf 
 Item 7.1 Class of 2020 Testing and Placement presentation.pdf 
 Item 7.2 Section I Policy Manual.pdf 
 Item 7.3 - Winter 2021 Coaching Appointments.pdf 
 Item 8 - Four Warrants S122220, S010521, S122920, S011221.pdf 