

# MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

January 14, 2020

## Remote meeting via Zoom

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Kerry Ni called the meeting to order at 7:01PM. 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 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. On a motion by Carlos A F Da Silva and seconded by Nes Correnti,  
It was

**Voted:** To approve the minutes of the School Committee Meeting held on January 7, 2021.

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. Dr. LaBillois presented a review the Hingham Tiered System of Supports (HTSS) program that was intended to give context to the FY'22 budget requests for academic and social emotional needs. Dr. LaBillois' presentation included:

a. The focus of HTSS model

b. The foundational principles of the HTSS model

c. The three tiers of the HTSS structure for both Academic and Social Emotional systems

d. A review of the implementation timeline of the HTSS Social Emotional System

e. The request from the Counseling Department for 3 additional Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees to support the existing HTSS structure. This includes 2 FTE Elementary Adjustment Counselors and 1 FTE Guidance Counselor for the High School.

f. A review of the implementation timeline of the HTSS Academic Systems

g. A review of the Current Staffing levels across the schools for Reading Specialists, Math

Specialists, English and Language Arts Tutors, and Math Tutors.

- h. A review of Pre-Covid realities regarding intervention systems, data that was used for decision making and target areas of support, and achievement gaps. A review of the Post-Covid realities. Dr. LaBillois advised that the quality of the intervention systems is directly related to the strength of the general education program.
- i. The Proposed Staffing Levels for the FY'22 Budget to support the HTSS program needs. Dr. LaBillois reviewed the requested additions across the school district for Reading Specialists, Literacy Specialists, Writing Specialists, Math Specialists, Interventionists, and Math Para educators.
- j. Proposed General Education Staffing, including the addition of 0.25 FTE for HHS English, 1.0 FTE for HMS Science, 1.0 FTE World Language Spanish, 0.2 FTE World Language Chinese, and 0.6 FTE HHS Computer Science.
- k. Next Steps, which include Academic Data Analysis and Social Emotional Data Analysis. Dr. LaBillois discussed the current academic and social emotional screenings that are taking place across the district.

Dr. LaBillois' presentation was followed by questions and comments from the School Committee:

- Liza O'Reilly commented on enrollment issues at the High School and advised that the issue has not been previously addressed and that she is glad that it is being addressed now. Ms. O'Reilly questioned the use of the term "right-sizing" in relation to the Strategic Plan and the current enrollments. Dr. LaBillois explained that he defines right-sizing as providing the appropriate academic and social-emotional supports to the students that we have today and focusing on quality of instruction and quality of intervention.
- Jen Benham said she was pleased to see the request to restore the High School Computer Science program and questioned if the district anticipates an increase in demand due to the fact that some course were not offered this year. Math Director Dave Jewett responded that the courses build upon one another and that he feels this will provide the right staffing. He added that having a pipeline of students signing up for the course helps to balance the enrollment over future years.
- Michelle Ayer commented that Hingham has a reputation for being a high-achieving district and requested that Dr. LaBillois present one area where he sees a gap. Dr. LaBillois offered that once the district began to screen for social emotional issues, the data showed an increased need for student supports. There is a widening gap between the students' needs and the ability to provide the services. He also offered that there are gaps in academic achievement and we needed to ensure that we set all students up for success and provide them the gift of choice and options.
- Chair Ni asked if they felt like the High School was adequately staffed as there were no additions for the Tiered System of Support at the High School level. Dr. LaBillois explained that the needs at the High School are different. The current focus is to get the infrastructure for K-8. Dave Jewett added that the some of the support is enabled by allowing for smaller class sizes. Chair Ni also questioned whether our benchmark towns also have tiered systems of support in place. Dr. LaBillois advised that the state requires that we have an intervention model, although the details of that model can differ from one community to another. Chair Ni questioned the caseloads of the guidance counselors (currently at 250) and the impact of that caseload on post-graduation planning. Heather Rodriguez offered that the caseloads have been increasing and are at the highest levels the district has seen in quite a while. She added that smaller caseloads would allow the counselors to have more time for each of the aspects of their job.

Chair Ni accepted questions from the community. Questions and comments included:

- Appreciation for the detail on the academic side of the HTSS system. A question regarding the caseload for counselors at the Middle School. Heather Rodriguez advised that there is one counselor for each grade at the Middle School and a fourth counselor who handles some of the added processes (i.e. Evaluations). Dr. LaBillois added the Middle School also has Adjustment Counselors in addition to Guidance Counselors.
  - A question on whether there was a working hypothesis on the expected impact of COVID-19. Dr. LaBillois advised that he was hesitant to answer without seeing the final data, but he would guess that there may be bigger academic deficits among younger learners, and bigger social emotional impacts among the older learners. Dr. LaBillois advised that the data analysis should be available in mid to late February. Michelle Ayer added that we also need to consider the economic and career impact on parents.
  - A question on per-pupil spending and how it compares to benchmark schools. The community member believed that the school budget is austere and questioned why the town is not spending more money on the schools. He suggested that parents are supplementing the education, which may not be possible for all. The community member was in support of the schools receiving more resources and questioned how to advocate for the schools. Chair Ni advised that the School Committee's responsibility is to allocate the funds that are provided by the town. The actual budget is voted at Town Meeting. Libby Lewiecki added that it is important to educate the community on the district's budget request.
  - A question on whether parents would be surveyed on the children's social-emotional health. Dr. LaBillois advised that there was no current plan to survey the parents, but requested that parents partner with the schools in helping to identify children that are struggling and may need additional supports.
4. John Ferris, Director of Business and Support Services, reviewed a presentation on Services and Facilities for the FY22 Budget. The presentation addressed:
- a. The overall budget, which is a 10.13% increase over the prior year, an increase of \$5,747,235. Based on the prior presentation by Dr. LaBillois, Mr. Ferris advised that he will need to add one additional Elementary Writing Specialist into the budget, which would move the increase up to approximately 10.3%
  - b. The breakdown of the staffing additions to the FY'22 budget.
  - c. A review of the Level Services budget including loss of revenue from revolving accounts and non-discretionary spending as a result of COVID-19 and whether these were recurring or one-time impacts to the budget.
  - d. Mr. Ferris reviewed the key impacts to the specific budget functions that will have the major changes, including Function 3300 Transportation, Function 3510 Athletics, Function 4220 Plant Maintenance, and Function 7000 Non-instructional Equipment.
  - e. The state of Building equipment and infrastructure, with an overview of preventative maintenance that would be required at each of the buildings, and identification of additional space requirements for the district.
  - f. Requirements for student transportation
  - g. Requirements for Energy costs for FY22
  - h. Athletics – the impact of the diminished revolving fund account on the funding of athletics.
  - i. A review of Capital Projects, which total approximately \$2.2M. Dr. Ferris advised that the he would like the School Committee to vote to authorize the Capital and Planning Facilities Subcommittee to present the proposed Capital Outlay Committee at the upcoming January 20, 2021 meeting.

Mr. Ferris responded to questions from the School Committee:

- Liza O'Reilly recommended that the district advocate to the Finance Committee that the revolving accounts have been impacted by Covid through the lack of gate receipts and other impacts. She suggested that the School Committee look at increasing the Athletic Fee for next year. Ms. O'Reilly stated that the fee was originally intended to cover 30% of the budget, which is no longer does. Chair Ni asked about the timing for a study of Athletic fees, which Dr. Austin advised would take approximately 3 weeks to complete.
- Chair Ni asked how to determine ownership of Buildings 12 and 179. Mr. Ferris asked if the Master Plan would address this. Liza O'Reilly advised that the Master Plan does not address individual buildings but discusses establishing a joint planning facilities building committee to look at plant maintenance. She added that the plan that was approved at Town Meeting would have an inventory of buildings.
- Chair Ni asked if Mr. Ferris could quantify the amount of money saved through the transportation program to help highlight measurements that the district has taken to mitigate costs.
- Carlos Da Silva questioned the appropriate timing for the district to consider the move of \$400,000 from the Capital Budget to the Operating Budget for Technology items in order to free up the money for preventative maintenance of the infrastructure. He requested that this item be addressed as soon as possible. Mr. Ferris suggested that it be included in the Strategic Plan. Mr. Da Silva also mentioned that at some point a free Full Day Kindergarten should be included in discussions.

5. Mr. Ferris advised that he has provided a list of Capital projects to the School Committee for review, which he shared and reviewed at the meeting. The report provided a 5 year plan, in which projects have been assigned to a defined year. The total for the FY'22 Capital comes to approximately \$6.4M, but Mr. Ferris is estimating \$4.2M as a placeholder for the MSBA for Plymouth River School Accelerated Repair, resulting in a \$2.2M capital request.

- Mr. Da Silva advised that the review of the Capital budget emphasized the need to move the Technology expenses from the Capital Budget to the Operating Budget. Mr. Ferris advised that the district will present \$2.2M to the Town for Capital but we will not receive that full amount. Chair Ni added that if Technology expense was moved to the Operating budget, the district would need to consider how to pay for it in the Operating Budget.
- Liza O'Reilly questioned replacement costs for boilers and asked whether the Capital & Finance Subcommittee has considered the use of alternative energy sources to support the town's effort to become carbon neutral.

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

It was

**Voted:** To authorize the Capital & Facilities Subcommittee to present the proposed Capital Budget of \$2.2M to the Town Capital Outlay Committee at a meeting scheduled for January 20, 2021.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye  
Libby Lewiecki – aye  
Liza O’Reilly – aye  
Kerry Ni – aye

6. Other items as may not reasonably be known 48 hours in advance of the meeting. There was no discussion for this item.

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

It was

**Voted**: To adjourn at 9:24PM

Michelle Ayer – aye  
Jen Benham - aye  
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:

Name ↑



Agenda Budget WorkShop II 1.14.21.pdf



Item 2 - Minutes from the 01\_07\_21 Budget Workshop I.pdf



Item 3 - Dr. LaBillois Budget Presentation (4).pdf



Item 4 - Capital Budget Updated 1.13.21.pdf



Service and Facilities Presentation -FY 22 revised 2021\_0115.pdf