

## MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

February 8, 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 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, Suzanne Vinnes, James LaBillois, John Ferris, Susan D'Amato

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

#### 2. Questions and Comments

Chair Ni provided time for questions or comments topics that were not included on the School Committee agenda. Community member Matt Cosman read a statement that advocated for increased in-person learning. Community member Michael Salerno requested a concise and detailed plan for the reopening of schools. Lauren Burm questioned at what point a decision would be made if students would not return to school during the current school year. Eileen Bevins stated that she would like to see a Staffing Plan. David Del Sesto cited data from three studies to support increased in-person learning. Dave Beaulieu advocated for moving the reopening plan forward at a faster pace. Julie Donovan expressed concern that High School students have given up and requested that all parties spend increased time at negotiations.

#### 3. Communications

- 3.1 Student Communications: Student representative Carly Kennedy was not present at the meeting.
- 3.2 Superintendent's communications: Dr. Austin advised that he would hold his comments for the Superintendent's report.
- 3.3 Other Communications: Kerry Ni advised that the School Committee Office Hours would be canceled because the School Committee was attending a Joint Meeting with the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Committee.

#### 4. Public Budget Hearing

Chair Ni called the Public Budget Hearing to order at 7:19PM. She gave an overview of the budget process and steps that had been taken to develop the budget since the fall of 2020. Chair Ni advised

that the School Committee will ultimately recommend a budget to the Board of Selectmen and Advisory Committee, who will then present their recommended budget for the town to vote at Town Meeting. Massachusetts public law requires that the School Committee hold a public session regarding the budget, which is being held at this meeting. Chair Ni advised that it is the Committee's responsibility to listen and consider the public comments, but not necessarily respond to each comment. She advised that the Committee has not yet made their recommendation to the Board of Selectmen and that the community is welcome to attend that meeting when they do.

Dr. Austin and John Ferris reviewed a presentation that provided an overview of the Proposed FY 2022 budget. The presentation included:

- The Guiding Principles used in the formation of the budget
- An overview of the Proposed Budget. The total proposed budget for FY 2022 is \$62,282,816, which is a 9.79% increase over the prior year.
- A breakdown of the Recovery budget, which includes the level services budget plus the addition of academic and social/emotional supports and services for students as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Dr. Austin outlined the staffing positions included in the budget.
- The Adjusted Budget Summary
- Backup Sheets that provided a breakdown of the Budget – Regular Education, Special Education, and Vocational Education
- Budget changes that had been made since the original presentation on January 7, 2021
- A view of Recurring and Non-recurring budget items
- A view of the budget by the Summary Accounts
- An overview of Revenue Losses, Contracts, and Mandates that contributed to the needed increase.
- An overview of tuitions, fees, grants, and revolving accounts on the overall budget
- FY 2022 Offsets to the Proposed Budget
- The March 2020 Enrollment – which is the presumed enrollment upon which the budget was designed.
- Enrollment Estimates
- Enrollment History

Chair Ni opened the Budget Meeting for public comment.

- Priya Howell expressed concern that the budget was not enough to make up for the impacts of COVID, particularly in the area of literacy intervention and adjustment counselors.
- Elizabeth Moulds expressed concern over the timidity of the budget and encouraged the Administration and School Committee to advocate the Board of Selectmen to allow the schools to not just tread water but to actively improve the experience for children.
- Timothy Dempsey questioned if the new positions in the budget were multi-year positions or one-year positions. Dr. Austin responded and explained the recurring vs non-recurring expenditures.
- Rebecca Nidositko asked about the consideration of Aspen Consultants for Middle and High School scheduling and whether there were lines in the budget for space-related items, such as mobile classrooms, as a result of the pandemic. John Ferris advised that there was not.
- Jen Frisoli questioned whether there was sufficient allocation in the budget to allow for testing, identification of educational gaps, and intervention programs that would be accessible to all students. Dr. LaBillois reviewed the positions that would be added with this proposed budget to address achievement gaps and discussed the screening process at the

elementary level.

- Kirsten Moore questioned the plan for bringing students back to school full time in the fall and questioned the impact of the declining enrollment with regard to state and federal funding as a results of families that opted to attend private school.
- Lyn Vanderhoven expressed concerns over declining enrollments. She also questioned the compensatory services and whether the district would consider a “push in” model rather than a “pull out” model so that children are not pulled out of the classroom so frequently.
- Timothy Dempsey advocated for the addition of a Fine Arts Director in the budget to allow the district to support the rebuilding of the program.
- Maura Gallagher advocated for allocating money in the budget for portable classroom and extra space, particularly at the High School, in the event that the COVID situation is not back to normal in the fall.
- Eileen Bevens questioned whether there was an assessment process for High School students, similar to the program that Dr. LaBillois explained for the Elementary students. Dr. LaBillois explained that they are working with the Secondary Directors to determine the best process to assess the impact of COVID on academic performance. There are screenings in place that assess the impact on social-emotional functioning.
- Kirsten Moore questioned whether there was money allocated in the budget for updated textbooks. Dr. LaBillois responded that there is an ongoing textbook review and a refreshing and renewing of textbooks.
- Dave Beaulieu advocated for including money in the budget for contingency purposes to address the possibility that the COVID situation is not back to normal in the fall.
- Lisa Carter advocated for smaller class sizes, particularly in light of the academic and social emotional impacts of COVID.
- Jen Frisoli advocated for collaboration with parent groups, such as the Supporters of Hingham Schools Facebook page, who are willing to support fundraising efforts to support the schools.

Chair Ni thanked the community for their input and advised that there would be additional opportunities for feedback.

On a motion by Libby Lewiecki and seconded by Michelle Ayer,

It was

**Voted**: To adjourn the public budget hearing and resume the open School Committee meeting.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – not audible

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O’Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

The public budget hearing was adjourned at 8:17PM.

## 5. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Austin provided an update on the COVID-19 Health Metrics. The Town of Hingham remains “yellow” based on the state’s color coding system, with 54.8 cases per 100,000 population and a 4.65% positivity rate. Dr. Austin commented that the numbers were going in the right direction and thanked the town for their vigilance. Dr. Austin reviewed the school data on weekly and cumulative positive COVID-19 cases and the numbers of student and staff in quarantine. Dr. Austin also provided results of Staff COVID-19 testing. Thus far, there have been 703 negative tests and one positive test. Dr. Austin provided an update on the upcoming initiative to provide COVID-19 Pool testing for students. In response to a question from the community regarding the benchmarking of the district’s COVID-19 cases, Dr. Austin explained that he regularly discusses cases with local superintendents.

Dr. Austin shared a presentation on the next phase of the Reopening of Schools. Dr. Austin advised that he was proposing a plan that he would like the School Committee to consider and then vote on at the next School Committee meeting, to be held on February 22, 2021. The presentation addressed the following:

- The impacts of COVID-19 and remote learning on students and why a change is needed at this time.
- Why it is appropriate to adjust the learning model at this time
- A proposal to launch Phase 3 of Full In-person learning for Grades K-5. The plan proposes that all Grade K-5 (non-remote) students return to full in-person learning on or before March 15, 2021, with grades 1-5 attending full days. Families would be asked to commit to in-person or remote learning. The district would ensure 3’-6’ distancing. The Elementary School lunch program will resume at 6 foot spacing in Phase 3.
- The Elementary Remote Learning Proposal will be finalized upon completion of a survey to families to determine the numbers.
- The Proposal for Grades 6-12, which will remain in a Hybrid Learning Model at the current time. An Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the Principals to consider the advancement of in-person learning.
- Supporting evidence for the proposal based on COVID-19 metrics and testing.
- Steps taken to mitigate and balance risk.
- Next Steps: Proposals are subject to negotiations with the Hingham Education Association (HEA). The proposal is subject to ratification by the HEA and the School Committee. Dr. Austin requested that the School Committee vote to accept the final proposal on February 22, 2021. Families will be surveyed to determine commitment to in-person or remote learning and to identify transportation needs.

Chair Ni advised that this is the first time the Committee had seen the presentation so that they would take fifteen minutes of comments from the community and then take the proposal under consideration. Michelle Ayer questioned if plans were being made to address transportation. Dr. Austin advised that the survey to parents will include transportation questions. Carlos Da Silva recommended that Dr. Austin accelerate the plan to start on March 1 rather than March 15. Mr. Da Silva also recommended for increased in-person learning for Middle School and High School students. Jen Benham also advocated for an acceleration of the plan for a potential start on March

1. Ms. Benham questioned whether the administration was considering alternating Wednesdays for the High School. Dr. Austin advised that this was not part of his current plan but the administration will continue to work on the plan for High School students. Liza O'Reilly thanked the community for helping to get the COVID-19 rates down and for sharing the plans of neighboring communities. Ms. O'Reilly added that the remote program should be aimed at students who need the program for health purposes. She agreed that accelerating the start date would be good, but only if all the logistics are in place on day one.

Chair Ni added that the Secondary students also need more in person learning and that she would like to move that along as quickly as possible. Chair Ni advised that she would set aside 15 minutes during this meeting for public comments, but that they would not be responding to questions as this is the first time that the Committee had seen the plan. Input from the community included:

- Advocating for a March 1 start date for Phase 3 for Elementary Schools
- Advocating for increased in-person learning for Secondary schools
- Disappointment that the plan does not have specific plans to bring the Secondary students back in-person.
- Requests to accelerate the planning/meeting process in order to get students back in school sooner.
- A request for details on the schedule of meetings with the HEA. Liza O'Reilly advised that they met with the HEA Unit A on February 8, 2021 and that the next meeting is scheduled for February 17, 2021.
- A question on how health professionals can become involved in the planning process. Dr. Austin advised that information would be posted when the details are worked out.
- A comment that the planning process is moving along at too slow a pace.
- A comment that the risks of children being in school is far outweighed by the risks of them being out of school.
- A request that the District be able to pivot quickly if the CDC changes its physical distancing requirements to 3 feet.
- A comment that the current COVID-19 prevalence in the schools is not high enough to justify keeping children out of school.
- A concern that meeting monthly to evaluate the return of the secondary students will only allow for two opportunities prior to the end of the year, and a request to accelerate that process to allow for a quicker return.
- A comment that high school students have less time to catch up and will be competing for college spots with students that have had in-person learning.
- A request to hear details of the Human Resources plan to hire the professionals needed to support the plan.

## 6. **Unfinished Business**

- 6.1 The Committee tabled the third read of the proposed Section I of the Hingham Public Schools Policy Manual. Chair Ni advised that the Policy subcommittee was continuing to work on the policies and they would bring the policies back to the February 22 meeting.
- 6.2 Liza O'Reilly provided an overview of the negotiations process with the Hingham Education Association (HEA). Ms. O'Reilly explained that the Salary & Negotiations Subcommittee negotiates with the HEA and makes recommendations to the full School Committee for a final vote. She explained that Open Meeting Laws allow negotiations to be conducted in Executive Session to protect bargaining positions. The District and School

Committee’s practice is to discuss agreements with union and non-union personnel in Executive Session and then to vote in Public Sessions. The School Committee works with the Superintendent and a Labor Attorney to strategize and participate in negotiations; the unions have a committee of their members and a Union advisor present for negotiations. The six units that the School Committee negotiates with are the HEA Unit A (teachers, nurses, and guidance), HEA Unit B (paraprofessionals), HEA Unit C (Custodians and Maintenance Workers), Food Service Workers, Bus Drivers, and the Administrators’ Association. The normal contract length for each of the agreements is three years. Ms. O’Reilly provided an update on the agreements for each of the six unions. In addition to the contracts, the School Committee negotiates additional agreements that may be necessary due to a change in working conditions. Ms. O’Reilly reviewed the Memoranda of Agreement that have been negotiated with the unions regarding the reopening of schools.

## **7. New Business**

7.1 Principal Richard Swanson provided an overview of changes that were made to the 2021-2022 Secondary Program of Studies. The Program of Studies contains descriptions of all courses, an overview of graduation requirements, and an explanation of the course selection process. Mr. Swanson reviewed two minor changes that were made to Literacy Courses and a Social Studies elective. A pre-recorded version of the Program of Studies night will be released after February vacation.

7.2 Dr. Austin presented the first draft of the 2021-2022 School Calendar. The proposed first day of school is the Wednesday after Labor Day, September 8, 2021.

On a motion by Carlos A F Da Silva and seconded by Nes Correnti,  
It was

**Voted**: To approve the calendar for school year 2021-2022 as presented.

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

7.3 The Committee considered a resolution to encourage state legislators to prioritize public school personnel for access to COVID-19 vaccine. Libby Lewiecki summarized the language in the proposal. Carlos Da Silva requested that an addition be made to the resolution to include “all school personnel” in addition to the educators as part of the vaccine rollout.

On a motion by Libby Lewiecki and seconded by Michelle Ayer,  
It was

**Voted**: To adopt the resolution, with the suggested revision, to encourage the State Legislators to prioritize school personnel for the COVID-19 vaccination.

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

7.4 Dr. Austin recommended that the School Committee approve the Home School application for Students GS (Grade K), RS (Grade 2), IS (Grade 2), JA (Grade 5), DL (Grade 2) for the 2020-2021 school year.

On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Nes Correnti,  
It was

**Voted:** To approve the Home School Applications for Students GS (Grade K), RS (Grade 2), IS (Grade 2), JA (Grade 5), DL (Grade 2) for the 2020-2021 school year.

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

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

Nes Correnti advised the Committee that she provided three updates in the packets from the December 8, January 19, and the February 2 Finance Subcommittee meetings. Appendix A is a draft document on the Revolving Accounts, which will be discussed at a future meeting. Ms. Correnti also included two signed warrants in the packet. The Hingham Education Foundation (HEF) met and discussed the fall grant cycle and the next round of grants. The Equity Task Force met and discussed the schedule of “Courageous Conversations”. Liza O’Reilly asked if the Finance Subcommittee would consider the fees that support each of the accounts and attempt to put some uniformity to the fee structure.

Carlos Da Silva advised that the Special Needs Athletic Partnership (SNAP) was meeting on February 9. Mr. Da Silva also requested that parents contact their legislators and the governor to advocate for the resolution that the School Committee passed at this meeting regarding prioritization of vaccinations for school personnel.

Libby Lewiecki advised that the Community Outreach Subcommittee was meeting on February 9 at 10:00 AM.

Liza O’Reilly advised that the Middle School Council will meet on February 22. The Master Plan Planning committee will meet on February 24 and will present to the Planning Board on March 8.

Kerry Ni advised that the Policy Subcommittee will meet to further refine Section I.

## 9. Approval of Minutes

- 9.1 On a motion by Carlos A F Da Silva and seconded by Jen Benham,  
It was

**Voted:** To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on January 20, 2021 with the Capital Outlay 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

- 9.2 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 January 20, 2021 with the ACES Subcommittee.

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

- 9.3 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 January 25, 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

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 January 25, 2021
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 to Executive Session at 9:41 PM.

Respectfully Submitted By:  
Libby Lewiecki

### Documents Included:

Name ↑
 Agenda 0201_0208.pdf 
 Anotated Agenda_2021_0208.pdf 
 Item 2a - 1_20_21 Minutes_Joint Session School Committee and Capital Outlay Committee.pdf 
 Item 2b - 1_20_21 Minutes_Joint Session School Committee and ACES.pdf 
 Item 2c - 01-25-21 Minutes.pdf 
 Item 5 - FY 22 - Budget Hearing February 8, 2021 PPT.pdf 
 Item 5 - FY 22 Budget Memo_2021_0202 Final.pdf 
 Item 7.1 - Section I Policy Manual.pdf 
 Item 8.1a - Program of Studies Memo 2021-2022.pdf 
 Item 8.1b - PROGRAM OF STUDIES 2021-2022-FINAL (1).pdf 
 Item 8.1c - PROGRAM-OF-STUDIES-2020-21-FINAL.pdf 
 Item 8.2 Proposed Calendar for 2021 - 2022 School Year Draft A.pdf 
 Item 8.3 Resolution In Support Of Expedited Vaccinations For Educators.pdf 
 Item 8.4 Home School Applications (3).pdf 
 Item 9 - Finance Subcommittee Update_1.19.21.pdf 
 Item 9 - Finance Subcommittee Update_2.2.21.pdf 
 Item 9 - Finance Subcommittee Update_12.8.20.pdf 
 Item 9 - Finance Subcommittee Update_School Enterprise and Revolving Accounts.pdf 
 Item 9 - Two warrants.pdf 