

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

February 22, 2021

Remote meeting via Zoom

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Kerry Ni called the meeting to order at 7:03 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. **Approval of Minutes**

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

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee Meeting - Budget Workshop held on January 28, 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

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Jennifer Benham,
It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee Meeting (Coffee with the Superintendent) held on February 3, 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

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Jennifer Benham,
It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee Meeting (Coffee with the Superintendent) held on February 4, 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

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Jennifer Benham,
It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee Meeting held on February 8, 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

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Jennifer Benham,
It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee Meeting (Joint Meeting with the Board of Selectmen) held on February 9, 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

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Jennifer Benham,
It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee Meeting (Joint Meeting with ACES) held on February 10, 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. **Questions and Comments** Chair Ni provided time for questions or comments topics that were not included on the School Committee agenda. Community member Shaun Galvin gave positive feedback regarding the plan to bring students back to school, stating he would like to see the secondary students in-person time increased as well. Lauren Burm expressed disappointment relating to the Zoom Webinar format. Rebecca Nidositko also expressed disappointment in the meeting format and asked how many people were on the call. Chair Ni stated that there were presently 433 people on the call. Eileen Bevens asked that data as it relates to the progress of students in grade 7-12 be addressed. Community member Julie Donovan asked that more information be given regarding the return to in-person learning for middle and high school students.

Student Communications

HHS student Carly Kennedy stated that winter sports have concluded and acknowledged the Boys’ Hockey Team for becoming the Patriot League Champs. She acknowledged that the high school was awarded the Holmes award for the second consecutive year for the highest win percentage within their division. She noted that the Football season will be underway soon. She reported that the Hingham Historical Society has been donating artifacts to the High School for display in pop up exhibits for the whole school to appreciate. She reported that the model UN Club participated in a virtual conference with students from other countries to discuss the world’s problems and discuss solutions. Miss Kennedy also noted that the Student Council has raised over \$4,000 in recent weeks for the Special Olympics by participating in this year’s Polar Plunge.

4. **Superintendent’s Report**

Dr. Austin presented recent COVID-19 data and reviewed the recent guidelines provided by the CDC regarding the reopening of schools. The presentation included:

- CDC data regarding COVID-19 and children
- CDC recommendations on reopening of schools
- CDC recommended implementation of mitigation strategies based on community transmission
- How to implement mitigation strategies
- What mitigation strategies Hingham Public Schools are already implementing in the hybrid model
- Current data regarding COVID-19 cases in HPS

Liza O’Reilly suggested that a reminder be sent to parents that they can still sign their student up for pool testing, and noted that it is important to get as much participation as possible to aid with the mitigation strategies. Dr. Austin stated that there are presently more than 900 students signed up for the testing, and that the piloting of the program will be starting this week in two schools.

Comments and Questions from the Community included:

- Questions of the recommendations regarding social distancing regarding when distance will be 3 feet as opposed to 6 feet
- A suggestion that the school day be shorter to avoid lunchtime and the need to unmask
- A question as to whether the schools have enough space for the appropriate social distancing if all students returned to in-person learning

Dr. LaBillois presented data quantifying the impact of COVID-19 on Academic Skill and Social-Emotional Functioning. The presentation included:

- Recent assessment data of students at all grade levels
- Assessment data from recent years to determine the impact of COVID-19 on HPS students
- Presentation of data assessing elementary reading skills
- Data showing the increase in referrals for math intervention at the elementary level
- Data comparisons of both middle and high school grade distribution between 2020 to 2021
- SEL (social-emotional learning) data for elementary, middle, and high school students in HPS
- Data showing an increase in Special Education eligibility rates
- Discussion of areas of need (staffing, support staff, and materials) to address the concerns raised by the assessment data

The Committee asked whether the hybrid model may have had an impact on the teacher's ability to accurately assess the students' social-emotional well-being, and also asked about students' access to math support. The Committee also asked for clarification regarding the number of students that were referred for support in Reading. Dr. Suzanne Vinnes, Director of Student Services stated that without a solid tiered system of supports to address student needs as they arise, the number of students found eligible for special education services will be impacted.

The Committee asked what counseling services will be available to students upon the return to school. Dr. LaBillois noted that when students return, the counselling department will be concentrating on building a comprehensive system of support and will work to screen students to have the ability for proper intervention. The Committee inquired as to how data will be tracked over the coming years. Dr. LaBillois stated that there will be additional ways to monitor students in the coming years, and the added support staff will enable to help students make up skills in both math and reading.

5. **Communications**

Dr. Austin congratulated Hingham High School teacher Christine O'Connor, for having been selected by Nation History Day (NHD) to serve as a master teacher. Dr. Austin noted that Ms. O'Connor will work with NHD and Library of Congress staff to write and test a series of student guides.

6. **Unfinished Business**

Dr. Austin shared a presentation on the next phase of the Reopening of Schools. Dr. Austin reviewed the proposed plan which 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. Dr. Austin stated that the survey just went out this week.
- The Proposal for Grades 6-12, which will remain in a Hybrid Learning Model at the current time
- The Principals have created advisory committees to consider the advancement of in-person learning for the middle and high school grades based on community transmission data, and they will reevaluate weekly
- 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.

Comments and Questions from the Community included:

- A concern that not enough attention is being given to the oldest learners
- A comment that families need to be given notice well in advance regarding the students' return to in-person learning
- A question about what will happen if students have to quarantine after they have returned to school, and if the remote teacher will be the same teacher they have had all year

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

Voted: to accept and support the proposed plan of the Reopening of Schools

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

Dr. Austin reviewed a presentation 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 academic and social-emotional impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on students as shown by the data presented by Dr. LaBillois
- The March 2020 Enrollment – which is the presumed enrollment upon which the budget was designed.
- Enrollment Estimates
- Enrollment History

The Committee discussed the need for a Fine Arts Director. The Committee also discussed the need for school counselors, as noted in the data presented by Dr. La Billois regarding the impacts of COVID-19.

Chair Ni noted that Dr. Austin will be presenting the proposed budget to the Board of Selectmen on February 23, 2021, and suggested that community members with questions regarding the budget attend that meeting.

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

It was

Voted: to support the proposed budget as presented, to be presented to the Board of Selectmen and 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

7. **New Business**

Rick Swanson, HHS Principal made a proposal that involves obtaining a resource dog at Hingham High School. Mr. Swanson explained that the class of 2020 donated \$10,000 for the purchase of the dog. The proposal is for the dog to work with the School Resource Officer as an emotional support dog at the High School. A representative from Golden Opportunities explained the benefits of having a School

Resource Officer with a dog to comfort students and to help de-escalate certain situations. Animal Control Officer Leslie Badger described the steps that have already been taken to prepare for the addition of the dog.

Questions and Comments included:

- If more funds will be needed to cover the cost of the dog
- Questions as to whether the handler should be the School Resource Officer

The School Committee agreed to add this proposal to the next policy agenda.

8. Subcommittee and Project Reports

Michelle Ayer noted there is a Foster School Building Committee meeting this Wednesday.

Jennifer Benham notified the Committee that the next Foster School Council meeting will be on March 3, 2021. Nes Correnti stated that the Finance Committee attachment was a finalized report on the revolving account. Nes Correnti also noted that there is an upcoming talk on race and equity on February 25, 2021. Libby Lewiecki stated that the South Elementary School Council met during the previous week. Liza O'Reilly stated that the Middle School Council also met during the previous week and that they plan to meet weekly to plan the return to in-person learning, and also noted that she had a Master Plan Committee coming up this week.

At 11:16 P.M., 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.

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jennifer Benham - aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos AF Da Silva – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O'Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

Respectfully Submitted By:

Documents Included:

 [Agenda_2021_0222.pdf](#) 

 [Anotated SC Agenda 2-22-21.pdf](#) 

 [Item 2a 01_28_21 Minutes Budget Workshop IV.pdf](#) 

 [Item 2b 02-03-21 Minutes - Superintendent Coffee.pdf](#) 

 [Item 2c_2021_0204 Minutes_Superintendent Coffee .pdf](#) 

 [Item 2d 02-08-21 Minutes Regular School Committee Meeting.pdf](#) 

 [Item 2e 02_09_21 Minutes_Joint Meeting with BOS and Advisory.pdf](#) 

 [Item 2f 02_10_21 Minutes_Joint Meeting with ACES.pdf](#) 

 [Item 4 - HPS COVID Impact \(2.21.21\).pdf](#) 

 [Item 4 Health Metrics and CDC Guidelines.pdf](#) 

 [Item 5.2 National History Day Press Release.pdf](#) 

 [Item 6.1 Administration Proposal In Person Learning_v2.pdf](#) 

 [Item 6.2 - Budget Presentation_FY 2022_Final.pdf](#) 

 [Item 6.2 Draft SC Statement in support of FY 2022 Budget.pdf](#) 

 [Item 7.1 Resource Dog Proposal - Feb. 2021 \(1\).pdf](#) 

 [Item 8 Finance Subcommittee Attachment A_Revolving Accounts.pdf](#) 

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