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March 9, 2021

Dear HPS Families,

Thank you to those of you who were able to attend last night’s School Committee meeting. Below are a few of the highlights from the meeting, as well as details for upcoming meetings regarding additional in-person learning at the secondary level and the School Department FY ‘22 budget. This year’s town and school department budgets are especially important as our students and families recover from the significant academic and emotional disruption caused by COVID-19.

**Upcoming Meeting Details:**

**Advisory Committee Meeting** (The Advisory Committee functions as the finance committee for the Town. Its reports and recommendations are included in the Town Meeting Warrant.)

Tuesday, March 9th @ 7:00 PM

Meeting ID: 833 3507 8021

Passcode:  615 953

Website: https://zoom.us/join

Items of interest include further discussion of Forecast, Financial Policy, Fund Balance, overrides and debt exclusions.

**Board of Selectmen Meeting** (Among its other responsibilities, the Board of Selectmen reviews and sets fiscal guidelines for the annual operating budget and the 5-year capital improvement program and makes recommendations to Town Meeting.)

Tuesday, March 9th @ 7:00 PM

Meeting ID: 929 205 6099

Passcode: 111222

Website: https://zoom.us/join

Items of interest include general budget discussions.

**Special School Committee Meeting**

Monday, March 15th @ 7:00 PM

Zoom information will be posted [here](https://www.hingham-ma.gov/agendacenter).

**Office Hours with the School Committee**

Tuesday, March 16th @ 7:00 PM

Meeting ID: 815 0036 8478

Passcode: HPS

Website: https://zoom.us/join

**3/8 School Committee Meeting Highlights**

Below are a few of the highlights from last night’s meeting. A full recording of the meeting will be available on the [Harbor Media School Committee playlist](https://www.youtube.com/c/HarborMedia/playlists).

Last night, the School Committee voted to approve a Memorandum of Agreement with the HIngham Education Association (HEA) Unit A (Hingham’s teacher’s union) regarding bringing grades 1-5 back to school full time and increasing in-person learning for students at HMS by bringing cohorts back on alternating Wednesdays. This agreement covers impact bargaining related to Dr. Austin’s proposed [phase 3 reopening plan](https://hinghamschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Item-6.2-Budget-Presentation_FY-2022_Final.pdf) presented on Monday, February 8. Highlights include:

* Elimination of the current cohort A/B hybrid instruction model for grades 1-5.
* Beginning March 15, students in grades 1-5 may commit to return to full day, in-person instruction with their originally assigned classroom teacher. While in the classroom for instruction, students will be distanced 3 feet.
* One mask break during the school day will be coordinated by the classroom teacher in an appropriate space, with 6 feet distancing. In addition to the mask break, lunch will be eaten at school, supervised by building staff. Students will be assigned seating, 6’ distanced from each other.
* Families must commit to in-person instruction and will not have the option to pivot between in-person and remote instruction. Students absent for reasons other than a positive COVID-19 diagnosis or quarantined under medical professional or public health official order will receive asynchronous work packets to complete at home during their absence.
* While we have had limited in-school transmissions and quarantines due to close contacts to date, the approved move to 3’ distancing may result in an increase to in-school transmissions and/or close contact quarantines. These events could require entire classes, grade levels, or buildings to close. Under these circumstances, the district may pivot to remote instruction for the duration of the quarantine/building closure.
* Remote-only instruction remains available for families who commit to this option.
* Remote students in each grade will be assigned to a new, grade-specific Hingham Public School teacher for remote instruction. In addition, to support the classroom communities that have been established since September, the current classroom teacher will also provide remote students with a minimum of 20 minutes per day live, synchronous connection with their current classroom. We believe this connection will foster a sense of community and provide much needed classroom based social interaction.
* The Committee recognized that this model is a disruption for our remote families, and multiple options on how to deliver remote instruction were considered. After careful review, it was determined that students' academic progress, access to instruction, and social and emotional needs would be best served in a single cohort remote classroom with a designated, experienced Hingham Public School teacher.

The School Advisory Committees (composed of the School Councils with the addition of a medical professional on each committee) at HMS and HHS continue to work through the logistics required to increase in-person learning in those buildings. Dr. Austin has requested recommendations from Principals Swanson and Smith this week and will present his proposals for more in-person learning at a special School Committee meeting on Monday, March 15th.

COVID cases remain low in Hingham and in our schools. Approximately 1000 students have enrolled in the pool testing program to date. The district has contracted with an approved third party vendor to conduct the testing. This program will begin on the following dates:

* On March 9th at HHS
* On March 11th at HMS
* The week of March 15th for grades 3-5
* TBD for grades K-2

The School Committee, joined by Mary Power, Board of Selectmen Chair, also approved 2020-2023 successor contracts for the Administrators Association and HEA Unit C (Custodians and Maintenance Workers Association. Because contracts covering salary have an impact on both the school and town budget, a BOS representative must approve them, along with the School Committee

Over the coming weeks and months leading to Town Meeting, the School Committee will be submitting Op-Eds outlining the budget process and budget requests to the [Hingham Anchor](https://www.hinghamanchor.com/) and the [Hingham Journal](https://www.wickedlocal.com/hinghamjournal/), so please stay tuned!

Thank you for your continued support and engagement.

If you have questions or concerns, please email your [School Committee members](https://hinghamschools.org/about/school-committee/).