



March 15, 2021

Dear HPS Families,

Thank you to those of you who were able to attend last night's School Committee meeting, which included two important votes approving: (1) the School Department's FY '22 Budget and (2) plans to return to full, in-person learning at HMS and HHS. Additional details are outlined below and a full recording of the meeting will be available on the [Harbor Media School Committee playlist](#).

Please see the end of this email for a list of upcoming meetings (including three tonight). This year's town and school department budgets are especially important as our students and families begin to recover from the significant academic and emotional disruption caused by COVID-19 so continued community involvement is welcomed and appreciated.

3/15 School Committee Meeting Highlights

Below are details related to the two votes at last night's meeting.

The School Committee heard and voted to approve the [FY '22 Recovery Budget proposed by Dr. Austin](#). You can view a comprehensive overview of the budget requests and rationale [here](#). Highlights include:

- The proposed Recovery Budget is \$61,362,019, a \$4,631,034 or 8.16% increase over FY' 21.
- The initial budget proposal was a 10.13% increase over FY '21. The administration reduced the budget proposal to 8.16% by:
 - Using Federal ESSER II grant funding for Student Opportunity Act and HTSS positions in FY '22. (Note: this could create a funding gap in FY '23 because the district is using one-time money to fund these critical, ongoing staff positions.)
 - Increasing Full-Day Kindergarten enrollment assumptions from 225 to 275 students.
 - Accounting for known leaves of absence that have been extended for 2021-22.
 - Applying an out-of-district tuition reduction due to a student move.
 - Assuming the use of Federal grant money for the July rent for Foster North.
- The proposed budget is designed to provide the essential services required to enable our students to begin to recover from the severe educational disruption caused by COVID-19 (for more information, please see Assistant Superintendent Dr. Labillois's presentation on [the impact of COVID-19 on student academic and social/emotional functioning](#)).

- While the proposed budget is not designed to meet all of the needs of the district, it does include one-time funds to develop a five-year Strategic Plan. This will allow Dr. Austin the opportunity to comprehensively evaluate the needs of the district beyond the recovery period, address persistent achievement gaps, and ensure a quality 21st century education for all students in our community.
- The next steps toward a final education budget are as follows. The Education Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee will vote on a budget recommendation to AdCom. Both the Board of Selectmen and Advisory Committees will vote on total town budget recommendations, which will include the amount allocated to the School Department. Ultimately all town budgets, including the School Department budget, are subject to approval at Town Meeting, which is scheduled for Saturday, May 8 at Hingham High School (rain dates are May 15 and 16). Once Town Meeting makes a final decision on the School Department budget amount, the School Committee and Administration will work together to determine how those funds will be allocated.

The School Committee also heard and voted to approve Dr. Austin's [proposal for increased in-person learning at Hingham Middle School and Hingham High School](#). This will be a phased approach and families will be asked to commit to in-person or remote learning for the remainder of the school year. HMS and HHS will provide additional details in the coming weeks, but highlights include:

- For Grades 6-8 (Hingham Middle School):
 - On March 29, the current cohort A/B hybrid instruction model will be eliminated and all HMS students (non-remote) will attend school five days per week, for four and one-half hours (7:30 – 11:55). Blocks A through E will increase from 40 to 47 minutes each, and most students will be dismissed at 11:55 to continue to participate in their elective classes remotely. Students will be spaced at least 3' apart.
 - On April 26, upon return from April Vacation, all non-remote HMS students will attend school five full days in-person.
 - The school day will return to the pre-COVID time of 7:30am – 2:00pm.
 - Students will be spaced at least 3' apart, with spacing increasing to at least 6' apart during lunch, and educators may maintain at least 6' physical distance from students.
 - Blocks A – G will meet in-person, but some elective classes may be limited due to enrollment, resulting in individual schedule changes, which will be communicated to individual families by HMS directly.
 - Families will be asked to commit to in-person or remote learning for the remainder of the school year. Any changes after April 17th will be subject to space limitations and could take several weeks to implement.
- For Grades 9-12 (Hingham High School):

- On April 5, all HHS students (non-remote) will attend school five days per week on the current schedule (8:00 – 12:05). Students will be spaced at least 3' apart.
 - On April 26th, upon return from April Vacation, all non-remote HHS students will attend school five full days in-person.
 - The school day will return to the pre-COVID time of 8:00am – 2:30pm.
 - Students will be spaced at least 3' apart, with spacing increasing to at least 6' during lunch, and educators may maintain at least 6' physical distance from students. Overflow locations may be needed for some classes that cannot hold all students with 3' spacing.
 - The High School Administration is working on individual student schedules now and you will receive schedule updates from HHS as soon as possible.
 - Families will be asked to commit to in-person or remote learning for the remainder of the school year. Any changes after April 17th will be subject to space limitations and could take several weeks to implement.

- The School Committee supports the recommended phased approach as the best way to ensure a smooth transition to full days after April Vacation. Specifically this approach will:
 - Allow the time needed to work out spacing issues with student schedules and lunch.
 - Afford students the time they need to adjust to the “new normal.” School will be different than it was pre-pandemic and while most students have been attending at least two days per week since September, as many as 30% of HHS students have attended remotely. Phasing-in the return will ease the transition for all students.
 - Some electives, such as physical education and music, will likely require the use of outdoor space. By April 26, warmer temperatures and better weather will allow for a better experience for those activities.
 - Educators and staff are now eligible for the vaccine and many have secured appointments. By April 26th, we expect most staff will have received at least one dose or will be fully-vaccinated.

- The working conditions impacted by these plans are subject to collective bargaining with the Hingham Education Association (HEA). Working conditions must be negotiated in good faith and are subject to ratification by both the membership of the HEA and the full membership of the Hingham School Committee. The Salary & Negotiations Subcommittee, School Administration and the HEA negotiating team continue to meet weekly to collaboratively work through the considerable challenges of safely increasing in-person learning time.

- While there have been few 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 temporary remote instruction.
- It is the district's goal to provide transportation for students in grades 7-12, but we are not yet able to do so. However, transportation should not be an impediment to in-person learning. Families who require transportation should contact their principal.

The School Advisory Committees (composed of the School Councils with the addition of a medical professional on each committee) at HMS and HHS will continue to work through logistics to facilitate this critical step which enables all students in the district to return to in-person learning. The Committee thanks them for their considerable and thoughtful work!

Please be on the lookout for surveys from HMS and HHS later this week. Your prompt commitment to either in-person or remote instruction will enable administrators to begin their work on the necessary student schedule changes. Thank you for your continued support and engagement. As always, if you have questions or concerns, please email your [School Committee members](#).

Upcoming Meeting Details:

Office Hours with the School Committee

TONIGHT - Tuesday, March 16th @ 7:00 PM

Meeting ID: 815 0036 8478

Passcode: HPS

Website: <https://zoom.us/join>

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.)

TONIGHT - Tuesday, March 16th @ 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. You can view the full agenda [here](#).

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.)

TONIGHT - Tuesday, March 16th @ 7:00 PM

Meeting ID: 451-213-735

Passcode: 111222

Website: <https://zoom.us/join>

Items of interest include general budget discussions, transfer station revenue analysis and proposed fees, and Inside Town Finances Volume 10. You can view the full agenda [here](#).

Joint Meeting of the Hingham Advisory Committee - Education Subcommittee and School Committee

TOMORROW - Wednesday, March 17th @ 7:00 PM

Meeting ID: 841 2560 3045

Password: 912860

Items of interest include a discussion of the school administration's proposed FY 2022 budget and Town financial forecast, as well as a possible vote on the school budget amount to recommend to the full Advisory Committee. You can view the full agenda [here](#).

School Committee Meeting

Monday, March 22nd @7:00pm

Agenda and Zoom information will be posted [here](#) by Thursday, March 18th.