

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

January 24, 2022

Remote meeting via Zoom Webinar

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Kerry Ni at which time she read the following statement regarding remote meetings.

CHAIR COMMENT: This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 temporarily amending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.

Members participating remotely: Chair Kerry Ni, Vice-Chair Michelle Ayer, Secretary Nes Correnti, Liza O'Reilly, Carlos DaSilva, and Tim Dempsey

Members not present: Jen Benham

Central Office Members participating remotely: Interim Superintendent Dr. Gary Maestas

Visitors: There was no sign in as this was a remote meeting.

Harbor Media was present remotely and indicated they would be recording

Adjourn to Executive Session:

On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Michelle Ayer

It was **voted**: to enter into Executive Session and to reconvene in Open Session, for the purposes of:

- 2.1. To discuss Superintendent contract negotiations with Dr. Margaret Adams
- 2.2 To discuss negotiations with the Hingham Education Association (HEA) Unit A regarding the reopening of schools
- 2.3 To discuss negotiations with the Hingham Education Association (HEA) Unit B regarding the reopening of schools
- 2.4 To discuss negotiations with the Hingham Education Association (HEA) Unit C regarding the reopening of schools
- 2.5 Approval of Minutes of the Executive Session held on January 5, 2022
- 2.6 Approval of Minutes of the Executive Session held on January 10, 2022

The public discussion of which would be detrimental to the Committee's bargaining position.

Michelle Ayer - aye
Nes Correnti – aye
Carlos DaSilva - aye
Tim Dempsey – aye
Liza O'Reilly - aye
Kerry Ni – aye

Return to Open Session:

Chair Kerry Ni called the meeting back to order at 7:00 PM, and again read the above statement regarding remote meetings.

Members participating remotely: Chair Kerry Ni, Vice-Chair Michelle Ayer, Secretary Nes Correnti, Liza O'Reilly, Carlos DaSilva, Jen Benham, and Tim Dempsey

Members absent: none

Central Office Members participating remotely: Interim Superintendent Dr. Gary Maestas, Assistant Superintendent Dr. James LaBillois, Director of Business and Support Services John Ferris, Executive Director of Student Services Dr. Suzanne Vinnes, and Director of Human Resources Susan D'Amato

Also present: Student Representative Elijah Webber

Jenna Manto from The Hingham Journal indicated she would be recording the meeting.

Action from Executive Session:

Chair Kerry Ni stated that the Committee was not yet prepared to act on the Memorandum of Agreement with the Hingham Education Association Unit C regarding the reopening of schools.

Approval of Minutes

- On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti
It was **voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on January 10, 2022

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham- aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos DaSilva - aye

Tim Dempsey – aye

Liza O'Reilly - aye

Kerry Ni – aye

Questions and Comments

- Heather Chisholm advocated for a return to normalcy for students referencing the social and emotional toll the pandemic has had on them.
- Lauren Burm asked if the town has a plan to have a vaccination clinic, to which Dr. Maestas responded that the Department of Health has applied to hold a vaccination clinic.

Superintendent's Report

Interim Superintendent Dr. Gary Maestas gave a report that included:

- An update on the vaccination rate among teachers and students in each school
- Details regarding the extended mask mandate by DESE, as well as changes to the test and stay model as it will be ending and new protocol of at home testing will begin. He explained that schools will be distributing tests to families, faculty, and staff once they fill out forms indicating they want to take part. He noted that this is not a requirement.
- Dr. LaBillois stated that information will be going out to families tomorrow offering them the opportunity to opt-in. Families will be asked to report any positive test results with the at-home testing.
- The Committee asked clarifying questions about the changes in testing protocol.
- Dr. Maestas clarified that there will still be symptomatic testing done by school nurses and he thanked all the school nurses for the many months of hard work and commitment.
- An update on the schedule of focus groups for strategic planning

Student Communications

Student Representative Elijah Webber had a message from the Unity Project detailing upcoming events for Unity Week to take place from January 31st to February 4th. He reported that the events will include an open-mic night, a movie night, a dance, and other events as a way to create a sense of community and have everyone be together.

Communications Received by the Superintendent

Dr. LaBillois added that there will be a Kindergarten registration information session for parents on February 9th via Zoom.

Other Communications

none

Unfinished Business

Budget Update

Chair Kerry Ni explained how the School Committee approaches the budget process, explaining that last year the focus was on recovering learning loss due to the pandemic. She noted that the focus this year is budgeting for what is already in place. Dr. Maestas explained that the School Department has worked to approach the budget, setting the direction for the future.

Kerry Ni reviewed the timeline of February 1st to have a joint meeting with the Select Board and Advisory Committee; February 7th to present the budget documents to the public at the regular School Committee meeting; and February 8th to present the budget at a joint meeting with the Select Board and Advisory Committee.

To review the HPS policy EBCFA - Face Coverings and the DESE extension of the statewide mask mandate

Chair Kerry Ni explained that Policy requires reconsidering when DESE makes a change and that the HEA requires a meeting when Policy changes are made.

Jen Benham, Chair of the Policy Subcommittee shared the policy and read the language from DESE regarding the 80% threshold to apply for a waiver of the mask requirement. The Committee members discussed the recent vaccination numbers and the time frame for applying for the waiver.

There were questions and comments from some members of the community that included:

- Lyndsey Kruzer asked why the removal of masks was a bargaining requirement, to which Kerry Ni explained that while it wasn't a bargaining requirement last year, it is this year.
- Kerry Erick asked what happens on February 28th with the expiration of the mask requirement. Dr. Maestas explained that DESE can choose to extend it at that time, based on public health data
- Barbie Lynch asked how the percentage is reached and Dr. Maestas clarified that the 80% refers to the entire building and noted that at East Elementary, there are Preschool students who are not yet eligible for vaccination.
- Matt Cosman encouraged the School Committee and the Union to work together toward a clear goal to be able to better communicate to students what will happen

Chair Kerry Ni stated that they would like to apply for the DESE waiver, and would like to assemble the medical team that had advised them earlier this year, to get answers to people's questions.

- On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Jen Benham
It was **voted**: To authorize the Superintendent to apply to DESE for the 80% mask waiver for Hingham High School and Hingham Middle School as soon as the threshold is met

Michelle Ayer – aye
Jen Benham- aye
Nes Correnti – aye
Carlos DaSilva - aye
Tim Dempsey – aye
Liza O’Reilly - aye
Kerry Ni – aye

Strategic Plan Update

Dr. Maestas stated that they will be having more focus groups next week with stakeholders and that a survey will be send out asking people to fill it out if they are not able to attend a focus group session.

New Business

new COVID-19 testing option announced by DESE on January 18, 2022

Dr. Maestas had reviewed this new testing option earlier during his report, and he clarified that the test-and-stay model is now finished and is being replace with the testing to be done at home.

Subcommittee and Project Reports/Warrants Signed

- Michelle Ayer reported that the High School Council met this week. She thanked Elijah Webber for the details about Unity Week and noted that the Unity Council members gave a recent talk to the faculty at Hingham High School. Michelle Ayer also reported that the High School is going to be hanging heritage flags of over 60 countries to represent the students and staff. She also reported that the Foster School project continues to move forward, and after the MSBA vote in August, the plan would be for a special Town Meeting vote in the fall for funding.
- Jen Benham stated that there was a SNAP meeting this month and that a recent information session was held to discuss the search for a permanent principal for the Foster School.
- Nes Correnti reported that the Sustainable Budget Task Force has continued to meet regularly and that the Finance/Capitals & Facilities Subcommittee with the Full School Committee is meeting next week for the Capital Outlay Committee meeting to prepare for the budget presentation. She also reported that there was a recent meeting of the Equity and Inclusion working group.
- Carlos DaSilva reported that the South School Council recently discussed tool box training for parents and that the Climate Action Committee will be meeting tomorrow.
- Tim Dempsey reported that the Special Education Subcommittee has an upcoming meeting, and that School Committee office hours will be at the beginning of February.
- Liza O’Reilly reported that the Middle School Council met today and that the Salary and Negotiations Subcommittee is working on finalizing the contract for Dr. Margaret Adams the incoming Superintendent. She also reported that the Wellness Subcommittee is in the process of receiving information that had been requested from supporting groups.
- Kerry Ni reported that the Plymouth River School PTO had a recent meeting at which Dr. Maestas was a guest speaker. She stated that if anyone on the committee wants to be part of the Foster Principal search committee, to let Jen Benham know this week.

Other items as may not reasonably be known 48 hours in advance of the meeting:

none

Adjourn

- On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti
It was **voted**: To adjourn at 8:19 PM

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham- aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Carlos DaSilva - aye

Tim Dempsey – aye

Liza O'Reilly - aye

Kerry Ni – aye

Respectfully Submitted By:
Nes Correnti

 01.24.2022 Agenda revised.pdf 

 01.24.2022 Agenda.pdf 

 Item 4.1 01.10.2022 Minutes.docx.pdf 

 Item 8.2 2022-0110mask-requirement-extension.pdf 

 Item 8.2 EBCFA Face Coverings.pdf 

 Item 9.1 2022-0118new-testing-program.pdf 

 warrants signed.pdf 
