

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

March 21, 2022

School Department Conference Room
220 Central Street, Hingham, MA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Kerry Ni

Members present: 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 present: Interim Superintendent Dr. Gary Maestas, Assistant Superintendent Dr. James LaBillois, Director of Business and Support Services John Ferris, Director of Human Resources Susan D'Amato

2. 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:

- To approve minutes of Executive Session held on March 7, 2022
- To discuss strategy related to contract negotiations with the HEA
- To review per diem pay rates

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

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

3. Return to Open Session:

Chair Kerry Ni called the meeting back to order at 7:07 PM

Members present: 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 present: 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

Also present: Student Representative Elijah Webber and Executive Assistant Sherry Robertson

Visitors: June Gustafson, Joshua Ross, Matthew LeBretton, Susan Wetzell, Judy Kelly

Action from Executive Session

Liza O'Reilly, Chair of the Salary and Negotiations Subcommittee, explained the discussion regarding per diem rates for the FY'23 school year budget.

- On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Michelle Ayer
It was **voted**: To approve the per diem rates as outlined by John Ferris in the pay rate summary, rates effective July 1, 2023 except for the food service substitute and paraeducators substitute rates which would be effective immediately

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

4. Approval of Minutes

- Michelle Ayer made a motion to approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on March 7, 2022 and Nes Correnti seconded the motion. Liza O'Reilly noted the edits she had made on the draft that was in the packet. After a discussion, the Committee agreed to accept the changes.

On an amended motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti
 It was **voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on March 7, 2022, with the changes made by member Liza O'Reilly

Michelle Ayer – aye
 Jen Benham- aye
 Nes Correnti – aye
 Carlos A.F. DaSilva - aye
 Tim Dempsey – aye
 Liza O'Reilly - aye
 Kerry Ni – aye

- On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti
It was **voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee joint meeting with the Select Board and Advisory Committee held on March 8, 2022

Michelle Ayer – aye
 Jen Benham- aye
 Nes Correnti – aye
 Carlos A.F. DaSilva - aye
 Tim Dempsey – abstained
 Liza O'Reilly - aye
 Kerry Ni – aye

- On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti
It was **voted**: To approve the minutes of the School Committee joint meeting with ACES held on March 9, 2022

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

5. Questions and comments from the community included:

none

6. Superintendent’s Report

Dr. Gary Maestas gave a report that included:

- The mask optional policy is going well, and COVID numbers within the district are stable
- An update on the searches for principals for Foster Elementary and East Elementary
- An update on the search for a new Director of Business and Support Services
- A mention that the High School graduation this year will be June 4th at 10:00 AM
- A mention that the district has reached out to the Norwell School system in light of a tragic event involving one of their students this week

7. Communications

Student Communications

Student Representative Elijah Webber reported that the Student Executive Board headed by Luke McDonald organized a charity fundraiser this past week, “Sunflowers for Peace,” which raises money for the humanitarian effort to support citizens of Ukraine. He also reported that the GSA organized a walk out at HHS to protest the “Don’t Say Gay bill” in Florida and an anti-trans order that went into effect in Texas recently. He stated that hundreds of students in the High School and Middle School peacefully participated, and he thanked the students and administration for their flexibility, and support for students who participated. He mentioned the sense of community that was present and noted that this took place at the Middle School as well.

Other Communications

Chair Kerry Ni reported that emails from parents about the school budget, especially about the Fine Arts Director, continue to come in.

8. Unfinished Business

HPS Financial Forecast

Dr. Maestas mentioned the challenges of the budget process, especially the challenges that resulted with regard to staffing needs to fill the gaps in learning that were a result of the pandemic.

The Committee discussed the funds noting that there is time to determine spending before the end of the fiscal year. Liza O’Reilly asked John Ferris for a proposal on how the ESSER funds available will impact the proposed FY23 budget. Dr. Maestas noted the ESSER funds are purposeful and nice having flexibility to use funds in the future as there are unknowns on what needs there may be in the district.

Questions and comments from the public:

- Susan Wetzel spoke to say that it was difficult to hear what the participants are saying.
- Josh Ross asked for clarification regarding ESSER funds

Strategic Plan Update

Dr. Maestas reported that the survey has been sent to all stakeholders and asked that people submit it and share it with others. The first meeting with the full Strategic Planning Committee was moved back by one meeting to allow for more time for the survey results to come in. Elijah Webber stated that he would share the link with students.

Budget Update

Director of Business and Support Service John Ferris gave an update and provided new information regarding recent retirement notifications. Savings from retirements amounts to approximately \$326k for future budgets. The gap between the FY23 approved budget to amounts approved by Advisory is approximately \$525k. Mr. Ferris expects more changes from retirements over the next couple months. He expects the FY23 budget will be able to be met with the savings and ESSER funding.

Mr. Ferris noted he wants to look at the capital projects list. He noted the capital budget was over \$1.7 million. The town allocated approximately \$885k, of which approximately \$450k relates to ongoing technology expense. The remaining \$430k would be used to maintain ten buildings.

The Committee asked questions and discussed being able to meet all new positions that were added for FY23, and discussed revolving funds.

- Dr. LaBillois noted there were purchases of approximately \$180k for book needs coming out of the Equity audit. The cost of the books was put into the Equity and Inclusion budget needs however had not yet been allocated funds.
- John Ferris noted a reduced section and FTE relate to an employee that no longer needed to be replaced at Foster Elementary. An employee retired and Foster put into the budget an FTE to replace that teacher. Enrollment is down therefore the teacher did not need to be replaced.
- Mr. Ferris corrected an error of \$60k; there was a duplication of a substitute as the teacher.
- Nes Correnti noted balances in revolving accounts were higher at the end of FY21 than they usually are. This relates to one-time money received from the federal government relating to COVID recovery being given to the district. The district did not need to apply some revolving funds to the operating budget as the influx of federal money was sufficient to fund operations. Ms. Correnti noted the Athletic fees was higher. Typically the district keeps \$200k as a balance in order to help fund the turf field replacement. Balance is higher now. Also pre-school tuitions is higher than normal. John Ferris noted we could use more pre-school tuition balances to fund teachers over the next couple years. This would free up operating funds for additional needs. Kerry Ni noted school lunch balance is much lower than normal. John Ferris shared the government is still providing free lunch and the district has been able to sustain its Food Services with those funds. Liza O'Reilly suggested putting a notation that \$200k of the Athletic Fees relates to the turf replacement to show committed money; she also stated it could be pulled out and placed in its own account. Nes Correnti noted the notation may be a better alternative so that we do not legally restrict the use of those funds if ever Athletic Fees are needed for operating.
- Tim Dempsey clarified that the discussion is to help bridge the gap in the budget between what was proposed and voted on by the School Committee and what was approved by Advisory.

Questions/Comments:

- Matt Cosman asked when a decision will be made regarding the hiring of new positions, specifically the Fine Arts Director.

To Receive an Update on the Foster East Elementary School Principal Searches

To Receive an Update on the Director of Business and Support Services Searches

Discussed as part of the Superintendent's Report

9. New Business

Proposed Calendar for the 2022-2023 School Year

Dr. Maestas noted the challenges of working through the proposed calendar, stating that the administration is working with the HEA. The Committee discussed the two proposed drafts of the calendar.

Questions/Comments:

- Matt Cosman advocated to have schools be in session on election day.

METCO Kindergarten Fees

Michelle Ayer noted kindergarten fees are currently being charged to students entering in as kindergarten students. Hingham is only in its second year of allowing kindergarten students into the METCO program. She discussed that the METCO grant is paid by the state to cover the expenses of METCO costs, including kindergarten. The Committee discussed whether a vote for the METCO grant being used to pay kindergarten fees was needed. Nes Correnti asked whether the METCO Director should be able to dictate that the METCO grant she oversees pays for kindergarten fees, as she sees fit. Liza O'Reilly shared she believes a vote should be taken as kindergarten tuitions are on a sliding scale and the School Committee monitors the sliding scale; the METCO grant being used would be part of that scale.

- On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Michelle Ayer
It was **voted**: To modify the full day kindergarten tuition's sliding scale to use METCO grant money to be applied for the tuition for any METCO student attending full-day kindergarten

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

SSEC FY 2023 Proposed Budget

Dr. Maestas noted that he attends Board meetings at the South Shore Education Collaborative monthly, and that the SSEC proposed FY'23 budget is in the meeting packet. He recommended that the Committee vote if they support this proposal. John Ferris noted the FY23 budget includes a three percent increase in tuition. He noted there would be grants available to offset the increased costs.

- On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti
It was **voted**: To approve the proposed member tuition increase of four percent and non-member tuition increase of six percent for the fiscal year 2023 for South Shore Educational Collaborative

Michelle Ayer – aye
Jen Benham- aye
Nes Correnti – aye
Carlos A.F. DaSilva - aye
Tim Dempsey – aye
Liza O'Reilly - aye
Kerry Ni – aye

Spring Coaching Recommendations

Dr. Maestas stated that the spring coaching list is in the packet and there will likely be a few more additions from the Athletic Director, as the season is just getting underway.

Homeschool Application

Dr. Maestas recommended approval of the home school application that is in the packet, as he reported it meets the necessary requirements.

- On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti
It was **voted**: To approve the home school application for a student in grade 5 for May-June 2022

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

10. Subcommittee and Project Reports

- Tim Dempsey reported that the Special Education Subcommittee will meet next week. He also noted that the Hingham Education Foundation has a meeting this week, and will be having an event at South Shore Country Club on April 30th.
- Jen Benham reported that the Policy Subcommittee will meet this week and the first Capital and Facilities master plan committee meeting will be this week as well.
- Carlos DaSilva reported that the Climate Action Planning Committee (CAPC) met. They recommended to the Select Board and Town Administration to contract **Energyzt** to assist the Town with the development of a climate action plan. The Sustainability position has been recommended by the Select Board and the Advisory Committee. Next meeting is on the 24th. South Elementary School Council is meeting tomorrow.
- Liza O’Reilly reported that the Wellness Subcommittee is still waiting for reports from some of the booster groups and that once they get them, she will do a further follow-up report on all the work they are doing. She also reported that the Salary and Negotiations Subcommittee will be planning a meeting before April 12th which will be a joint meeting with the Select Board and Advisory Committee.
- Nes Correnti reported that the Finance/Capital & Facilities Subcommittee had a meeting last week and that there are signed warrants in the packet.
- Kerry Ni reported that the PRS school council met on March 14th and that she wasn’t able to attend, but that Principal Lamothe mentioned that the building committee has chosen some of the colors for the external façade of Plymouth River School.

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

Executive Director of Student Services Suzanne Vinnes wanted to answer a question from earlier in the meeting, stating that the district has 12 full time students at the South Shore Educational Collaborative.

12. Adjourn

- On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti
It was **voted**: To adjourn at 8:38 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

Documents Included:

 03.07.2022 Minutes.docx 

 03.21.2022 Agenda revised.pdf 

 03.21.2022 Agenda.pdf 

 Budget Update March 21 2022 (1).pdf 

 Item 4.2 Minutes of Joint meeting with SB, Advisory, Captial Outlay 3.8.22.pdf 

 Item 4.3 Minutes of Joint meeting with ACES 3.9.22.pdf 

 Item 8.3 Revolving Accounts March 22.pdf 

 Item 8.6 2022-2023 DRAFT Calendar- Option A (Base Roll Over).docx.pdf 

 Item 8.6 2022-2023 DRAFT Calendar- Option B (Monthly PD - conference releases).docx.pdf 

 Item 9.2 FY23 Proposed SSEC Budget.pdf 

 Item 9.3 Spring Coaching Recommendations.pdf 

 Item 9.4 Homeschool Application grade 5.pdf 

 Item 10 Warrants for SC meeting 03.21.2022.pdf 

 KIA Rates Proposal March 2022.pdf 

 Proposed Rates for FY 2023 (1).pdf 
