

Summary of April 2020 Board of Education Meetings

Cougar Pride

In the midst of Covid-19 there's always good news to share. HKIS 5th graders, Lawton Duch and Josie Rimmer, placed 2nd and 3rd place, respectively, in a National poster contest called "Beneath the Sea Ocean Pals" which focuses on keeping the oceans safe from plastics and pollution. They will be honored in a ceremony in New Jersey in October. In addition, seventh grade HKMS classmates: Bryce Leiberman, Michael Perry, Chase Smalley, Mitchell Kelsey and Sawyer DiMatteo created a social media website called Brighter Days For All.com. They are focused on spreading positivity to others during this time through uplifting stories and kindness challenges.

RSD 17 2020/21 Budget

Budget Workshops- In April, the Board continued to consider additional adjustments to the Budget. The Superintendent proposed changing the school calendar to reduce the number of student days from 182 to 180. By converting all early release days into full school days, instructional hours would remain the same. Savings would be realized in transportation and staffing. The Superintendent also proposed deferred hiring, purchasing technology this year instead of next, and additional adjustments to the district's late busses and after school monitors. The budget continues to remain below the 19/20 gross budget. The BoE researched the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) which is the maximum amount a school budget can be reduced from the prior year's budget. The Board will be able to vote for a budget that is lower than last year, by taking advantage of the MBR exemption.

Joint Meeting with Haddam and Killingworth Leadership- The third Joint Meeting this year with the Leadership of both towns occurred in April to share progress on the budget, answer questions, and listen to feedback. Community Input on the Budget is still requested by the BoE through boepubliccomment@rsd17.org.

Covid-19 Effects on RSD17

Distance Learning - Distance Learning continues with nearly 100% engagement from the students. Administration sent out surveys to parents and teachers to gather feedback on everyone's experience. Over 900 parents and teachers responded with feedback that was helpful in planning for "Phase 2" which moves students to new instruction and content, increases teacher presence, and refines schedules for students as well as their parents who are supporting them at home.

Grades- District Administration, in consultation with the BoE Curriculum Committee, made recommendations to the Board on grading students during distance learning. High School and Middle School students will continue to earn letter grades, but will be given the option of choosing to be graded on a pass/fail basis for each course. Additionally there will be no final exams. Kindergarten through fifth grade, who do not normally receive letter grades, will receive a progress report on effort and performance with a descriptive narrative from the teachers.

Last Day of School/ Graduation - The Board of Education set the last day of school for Monday, June 15th, but held off on a formal recommendation for Graduation. Subsequently, Gov. Lamont declared that school buildings would not reopen for the remainder of the school year. With state guidance on large gatherings still unchanged, Senior Celebrations are delayed. HKHS Principal Hayward has been working along with school seniors and Faculty, and is hopeful to host Senior Celebrations, including Commencement and Prom, this August.

Capital Improvements:

HKHS Field House - The architectural plans will be presented to the State in May. After this final review, work should commence. The project will begin with the removal of the bleachers and remediation.

On our Website

You can review the latest changes to the Budget under "Board of Education" -> "BoE Schedules and Minutes". A Budget FAQ with Community Input Emails can be found under "Board of Education" -> "Budget and Updates".