

Hamden High School (HHS) School Governance Council

Meeting Minutes

March 15th, 2021, 6pm (on Zoom)

Members Present (alphabetical order): Evelyn Cumberbatch, Frank Dixon, John Donahue, Mark Gabriel, Nadine Gannon, Imani Gatison, Judy Goldberg, John Hannah, Frank LaDore, Elizabeth Marini, Jack Purdue, Nancy Restivo, Melinda Saller, Ann Stiltner, Greg Thierault, Mark Zarrillo

Members Not Present: Darce DeCosta, Andrew Hull

Guests Present: none

1. Welcome - Frank Dixon

- a. Frank D. welcomed members and opened meeting

2. Approval of Minutes – Evelyn Cumberbatch

- a. Eve asked for any input on February's minutes; Nancy recommended a couple changes; motion for approval, seconded, and approved; Eve will ask media specialist to post on HHS SGC website

3. Council and Administrative Remarks – Liz Marini

- a. Liz thanked subcommittees for meeting during the time between last meeting and welcomed their reports later in the meeting

4. Principals Update – Mrs. Gannon

- a. Return to in-person school; sent out email earlier today indicating opening of more in-person opportunities due to trend of Covid-19 infections and hospitalizations going down and increase in educators getting vaccinated, HHS is now in place where it can open up safely; due to governor relaxing some guidelines last Thursday, administration began working on plan right away; Superintendent Goeler also sent out email discussing re-openings; on Monday 3/22 will start bringing back seniors who are in jeopardy of not graduating this June, special education students, and ELL students; then on 4/12 rest of students can return; HHS sent out survey to parents and guardians to fill-out their preferences regarding how they want their students to continue learning; will keep informed of numbers coming back; focusing on re-engaging kids; sooner open up, better off kids will be
 - i. Frank D. asked whether there is enough teacher capacity to meet students coming back
 - ii. Ms. Gannon said that it may not be comfortable for all teachers, but they will need to return; the administration is doing everything it can to keep everyone safe; it is what State of CT is

doing; will support and protect teachers and students, but it has to happen

iii. Melinda asked if furniture has been moved yet, as this is big and important effort involved in re-opening

iv. Ms. Gannon said – yes, they are starting to move furniture around again

- b. Senior Activities: Ms. Gannon reported that the administration is also involved in planning what senior activities can be held, including Prom, graduation, and other in-person activities; she is confident that HHS can have some celebration for seniors; she held webinar last week for families to give thoughts and ideas of how can celebrate students; during that webinar, the governor lifted some of the guidelines
- i. Nancy asked when Prom will be held and what it will look like; later Frank D. asked how Prom will work
- c. Prom: Ms. Gannon said looks like Prom will be May 7th; Ms. Gafney and Dr. James are the advisors who are working on this; the students will decide where it is held; a survey was sent to the students and they are voting presently on where it will be held (football field, Quassy Park, or area where graduation was held last year); Ms. Gannon said Prom will include dancing to a DJ and other activities (like food, games, rides); the students can go in Prom attire and then change clothes into more casual clothes and participate in other activities; Ms. Gannon said that the nice things about Quassy is having whole park for HHS; Ms. Gannon said the students want to know if they can bring guests; many schools not allowing schools to bring guest; she is working with the Superintendent and the health department to see if bringing guests is an option
- i. Frank D. asked for Jack and Imani's opinions
- ii. Imani said some students were hesitant about Quassy and wondering about doing Prom and senior trip separately, but many are open to doing both together
- iii. Ms. Gannon said they are also thinking about a senior trip to 6 Flags as well as a senior breakfast
- d. Graduation: Ms. Gannon is looking for graduation to occur in the stadium; she is sending out notices for seniors to purchase cap and gowns; the link that the cap/gown company used had color attached to a gender; with HHS input, they took gender away from identification of color with gown; this was a huge deal for HHS in order to honor diversity of students

- i. Frank asked about spring sports (baseball, track) and whether they are up and running
- ii. Ms. Gannon said that presently winter sports (basketball, swimming and hockey) are going on in-person; in a couple weeks, spring spots will begin

5. Board of Education Report – Melinda Saller

- a. Melinda reported that the Superintendent presented the budget to the Board of Ed and it was approved and is being sent to the Legislative Council; it includes a 3% increase which just keeps all contracts at present levels and all present positions & programs funded; the Mayor is in full support of budget and he has been there every step of the way; now it is in the hands of the Legislative Council
- b. Melinda reached out to get a cost estimate on having student emails, to Karen Kaplan (?sp): should have an answer in next few days

6. Student/Teacher Committee- Imani Gatson and Jack Purdue

- a. Jack said that all forms have been signed and completed; so, the committee officially exists; so they can plan an initial small meeting and then spread word of the committee
- b. Imani said that she is excited to start this committee
- c. Liz said similar meeting is happening at HMS, called “Dragon Drop-in”, but not a single kid signed up for the first meeting; thus promoting this committee at HHS will be key

7. Sub-Committee Goals and Members – Liz Marini

Liz asked SC heads to present what recent discussions have been regarding goals

a. EDUCATION/SCHOOL COUNSELING – Greg Theriault

- i. Greg reported that they reviewed 7 goals from prior years; some were not relevant anymore and some they have continued; they want to be more focused and efficient with goals
- ii. They discussed the grading system during pandemic; and agreed that this has already been addressed
- iii. They discussed leveling and course level placement in order to maximize individual learning and equity; they want to look into this further
- iv. They discussed vertical alignment across buildings regarding leveling and transition between schools, especially from HMS to HHS

- v. They discussed issue of post-secondary planning and how it may be beneficial to start sooner to make senior year go smoother; will ask Mr. Cochiolla various questions when he attends a future SGC meeting
 - 1. Frank D. said that Mr. Cochiolla had something come up and couldn't attend; if have specific issues or questions can send them to Greg to compile to present to Mr. Cochiolla
 - 2. John H. brought up that ranking students but not letting them know their rank is not productive; if kids know where they are ranked it would help; he also said that wants to advocate for the HECA classed to be leveled at college level if they are college level classes
 - 3. Frank D. asked if Mr. Cochiolla unilaterally makes these decisions
 - 4. John H. said that Mr. Cochiolla made the decision unilaterally and had no conversations with teachers, students, families; he said this goes against office of Civil Rights; back in 2000 a committee was put together, but for whatever reason Mr. Cochiolla bypassed this
 - 5. Frank D. recommended asking Mr. Cocchiola this when he comes to meeting and also commented that he didn't know that anyone could unilaterally make decision in the decision

b. SAFETY/OPERATIONS/COMMUNICATION – Mark Zarillo

- i. Mark said they discussed focusing on post-pandemic transition and how district/budget will support this transition; they thought about a task force to look into this in real time as it comes up
- ii. Frank D. said they were throwing ideas around; if federal money comes down, what is priority of schools in terms of getting them ready; what does it look like and who decides this for each school
 - 1. Melinda said Operations Committee of the Board of Ed which is headed by Chris Daur; she recommended asking Chris Daur;
 - 2. Ms. Gannon said that prior to the start of school many things had to be updated (signage, Purell, ventilation systems, furniture removed/moved to allow for 6-foot distance; PPE ordered (gloves, masks)); they are now in process of looking at what to reorder; this goes through

the Operations Committee; she has weekly meetings with Health Department to discuss trends as to where we are and what we need;

- a. Frank D. wondered if it is just dictated from higher up
- b. Ms. Gannon said she interacts with health experts and district administration; guidance of local health departments can be different between areas; she said that Chris Daur and facilities director are the people to talk to regarding these issues
- c. John H. said that important to plan for adequate hydration
- d. Ms. Gannon said has cases of bottled water; will make sure have enough hydration
- e. Frank D. commented that some of this is legacy issues; he is more confident that local school staff has some input in what is occurring in the school and not just getting dictates from higher levels

c. MENTAL HEALTH/SUPPORTS – Ann Stiltner

- i. Ann said the SC met a couple of times; with Eve, Nancy and John H.; they discussed what has been done in past few years
- ii. The SC reviewed the many supports and mental health resources; a lot of things going on for students and families;
- iii. Thinking about goals for subcommittee:
 1. Creating a list of the supports and resources that is accessible to students, families, teachers and staff
 2. Also want write a letter to the Board of Ed summarizing recommendations
 - a. John H. added that Central Office should think about having MH staff to inform discussions that they are having; historically had a MH resource
- iv. The SC would like to do a staff appreciation project; so, drafted letter to reach out to local businesses to donate gift certificates to give with letters/cards of appreciation
 1. Liz said that as students transition back to school; making them aware of MH resources that are available will be very beneficial

d. SCHOOL PROMOTION/SCHOOL CLIMATE - Liz Marini and Mark Gabriel

- i. Mark G. discussed PBIS; last year HHS started PBIS initiative and many teachers did work-shops, then pandemic hit and so much work put on back burner; wanted to bring fun and community type-things like a basketball tournament and culture day; at basic level, the PBIS structure offers a tiered system of interventions and communication; at bottom stage it is intervening and fostering better climate; Mark said that this could help make reopening really work; it's important to help make sure students have a smile on their face when they return; so, now are getting back into PBIS teams; next meeting is next week: building and building on what they were doing before to build up the community
- ii. Liz said had a 2-pronged goal: 1) try to make sure that when students transition back, they feel HHS is a fun and joyful place to be, and that they feel connected to and present in building, maybe with different fun activities and cultural days; 2) help students who are feeling overwhelmed and disconnected; so help them to feel connected and give them a space to talk and vent, such as with Jack and Imani's project; they also discussed various ways to use social media platforms (like TikTok) to connect students and teachers
- iii. Jack said Liz pretty much covered it: he recommends focus on Unity and bringing people back to form connections that have been broken over the last year

8. Old Business – Frank Dixon

- a. Frank D. brought up the Equity Initiative that John H. wanted to bring up; looking at where to put it; either own separate item or put under the Education and School Counseling SC; asked John H. what does he need from SGC
- b. John H. asked for the SGC to approve the creation of a student advisory committee – to broaden and make more inclusive the input from diverse students
- c. Frank D. asked who at school would coordinate the student advisory committee and who would present the issues that they bring up to the SGC
- d. John H. said that he will meet with Ethnic Minority Advisory Committee later this week and will discuss who could coordinate this and then come to SCG to bring issues that come up there
- e. Frank L. said that could be under School Promotion & Climate

- f. Frank D. wanted to make sure that the SGC is OK with someone coming regularly from the Ethnic Minority Advisory Committee to the SCG to express these ideas and giving them a regular platform in the SGC
- g. A discussion ensued of whether part of present SC
 - i. Eve wondered if there could be a separate “Equity: “ subcommittee on the SGC that is headed by a member or members of the SGC but that could hold meetings that are open to other members of the HHS community in order to get diverse input
 - ii. Frank D. wondered if a subcommittee could be headed by a non-SGC member; and he saw no reason why not; he is on a number of boards and they do this
 - iii. John H. said he would volunteer to be a liaison with the Ethnic Minority Advisory Committee; he would talk with that committee and report back at the next SGC meeting

9. New Business – Frank Dixon

- a. Frank D. asked about Liz whether Kim Washington will join the SGC meetings
- b. Liz said she spoke to Ms., Washington; Ms. Washington is supportive of the SGC, but she is already overcommitted; she may be able to sit-in on some SGC meetings, but she couldn't commit to this

10. Adjournment – Frank Dixon

- a. Frank said some closing remarks; then motion to adjourn was offered, seconded, and approved

Next SGC meeting: April 19, 2021, plan for Zoom meeting (for time-being)