

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, February 8, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

REMOTE: _____ Regina Hill, Adam Emerson, Mike Mucci, Mike Henault, Nannette Reid, Bethany DeMarco

ABSENT:

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

103772 Call to Order

Chairman Mike Mucci called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

103773 Public Comment: - Chairman Mike Mucci asks that everyone who speaks to keep it to 3 minutes or less. We heard a lot from the community at the January 28th meeting. Various members of the community expressed their frustration about not being in person. Stated that the CDC announced schools can safely stay open without vaccinating teachers. The decision on when and how our child attends school depends solely on the School Committee. The Teachers and the School Committee can work on amending the MOA. They need to change the metrics. It was discussed by the School Committee to undertake this task. Would like the committee to agree that kids return to in person on February 22, 2021 no matter what the metrics are. Mike Mucci thanked everyone for voicing their concerns/frustrations.

103774 Approval of Minutes - January 11, 2021 & January 28, 2021

MOTION: _____ On Motion of Mike Henault and second Bethany DeMarco:

VOTED: To approve the January 11, 2021 & January 28, 2021 minutes. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous

103775 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager - Chapter 70 - we received \$30.00 per student which is an increase of approximately \$35,000. We are one of the district's that are held harmless because of declining enrollment. Transportation is an estimate from last year's reimbursement. We have reduced transportation cost with Dufour while we are in a remote model. Our reimbursement will decrease. Charter tuition reimbursement, large increase, assuming that all the pieces of the student opportunity act will come to fruition. There are a lot of pieces that go into. School Choice receiving, they carry our FY21 into FY22, which is \$272,573. School choice sending, we are sending 134 students out to other schools/ Charter school sending is another changing number. We currently have 69 students and their tuition is tiered. You are not paying the same amount for a student in 9th grade as you are in 12th grade. Any kind of increase we see within our budget, falls to the towns. This is the baseline and our starting point. See budget spreadsheet.

103776 Report of Sub-Committees -

A. Audit & Evaluation - See above remarks from Report of Business Manager.

103777 Communications -

A. S.C. Adams Vacancy Interviews:

Erin Milne - Lives in Adams, parent of a 3rd grader. Has been interested in joining the committee for a while. Has been an active volunteer in the district. Was the Adams parent representing the Regional Agreement and was part of the Superintendent search committee. Have established a great relationship with members of the district. Also, a career educator, a teacher at multiple grade levels, now director of assessment at MCLA. Public schools are very important to her. Being an educator and parent gives her experiences that will bring a lot of value to the S.Committee. Thanked the committee for considering her candidacy.

Mike Mucci had the pleasure of working with her on a subcommittee and commends her dedication.

Kerry Columbus- Thanked the committee for inviting him to join tonight. A father in this district, daughter just started kindergarten and son will start next year. Looking to be involved with the district. Has volunteered with T-ball, likes to be involved with the youth in this community or anything else that comes up that he can help with. This is something that I have been looking to be involved with being on the committee. Works at Berkshire Gas. Has experience working with groups and how to make things work smoothly, working with budgets. Like to have the opportunity to bring fresh ideas to the table. Understands that he will be stepping in as a newcomer and has looked through previous minutes and looked at the great stuff that the committee has been doing. Being a single father and trying to balance work with remote learning, aware of the struggles that a lot of parents face. This is a very trying time for everybody.

Mike Mucci thanked Kerry for his due diligence into looking at what the committee has been doing.

Mike Henault asked Erin that she mentioned the S.C. was a lever through which we can help fix gaps, seeing the constraints with our budget, where do you see HVRSD opportunities for growth and equities? There are a few different places to look that wouldn't necessarily be added costs. A large part of the equity fight is putting the sunshine where it needs to be. Specific things that could use some added attention, enrollment, school choice, student and parent surveys. Trying to make sure we meet the needs of all students in our district, not just some of them.

Mike Henault to Kerry: mentioned one of his contributions would be to try to make HVRSD better, what is one change you would like to make it better? Kerry: life after high school, a lot of kids run up debt, students don't understand the impact that this has on your future, credit score and the limitation low credit score has. Other districts try to bring in where they learn about the impacts of the decisions that are made after high school. Outside the box thinking, trying to prepare them for the future.

Adam Emerson thanked both candidates for stepping up and wanting to get involved. What is the greatest challenge and what is the greatest assets: Kerry: greatest asset is the community, close community, the turnout tonight shows you how people want to be involved. Greatest challenge: right now it is hybrid and remote learning, trying to figure that out. Trying to get everything for the school district to fall within that budget. Have to work within that budget, and trying to do that is a challenge.

Erin: community is a huge asset along with the professional faculty and staff and administrators. Every person she interacted with has had our students and community and the forefront. School funding is troublesome

Bethany: thanked both of them for coming to the meeting, regardless of what we decide, hoping that they continue to be active in the district.

Mike Henault stated that he listened to both candidates and both had great ideas.

MOTION:: On Motion of Mike Henault and second by Bethany DeMarco:

VOTED: Erin Mine to fill the vacant Adams seat until it comes up for election. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

Mike Mucci thaked Kerry for putting his name in the hat. Kerry congratulated Erin.

103778 Report of Superintendent -

A. District Improvement Plan - We are in challenging times and there is a lot to work on both short term and long term. Last year we started a plan to get everything in one place and what the challenges are. Tonight is an update on where we

are with this process. Looking to adopt a new DIP. Starting out, everything new has to have a purpose and outcome. This is a standards based plan.

Objective One: HVRSD promotes the learning and growth of all students by providing high-quality and coherent instruction, designing and administering authentic and meaningful student assessments, analyzing student performance and growth data, using this data to improve instruction, providing students with constructive feedback on an ongoing basis, and continuously refining learning objectives. Teachers will be provided with common planning for the purposes of learning together, analyzing students' work and data, designing lessons, curriculum mapping, and assessing the impact of practice on student learning. Leaders will implement protocols from the FAR Cycle for these meetings during this school year. Teams will work on pacing guides for curriculum, intervention programs, progress monitoring and curriculum maps. Provide learning experiences that include model lessons demonstrating effective use of progress monitoring and formative assessment data. The district will develop a plan for regular curriculum review and renewal; The district will inventory curriculum resources; Develop a general curriculum committee to review and update curriculum. Develop a Literacy Curriculum Subcommittee to vet new ELA curricula and plan implementation; Provide learning experiences to define and examine rigor in all settings; Currently engaged with the following DESE sponsored academies to provide high quality professional development and resources: Math Academy (middle school); Early Literacy Grant (elementary); PBIS Academy (high school); UDL - District Wide. The district will collect and intentionally use data to inform decision making academically and socially emotionally: District level student data analysis; school level student data analysis; classroom level student data analysis. Staff will meet 3 times during the school year to analyze benchmark data and create action plans to address identified student needs; Progress monitoring will occur to track progress of action plans: progress data will be used in the development of lessons; progress monitoring data will determine intervention groups; data analysis training so teachers can analyze data as soon as their benchmarks are complete to get their new groups going.

Mike Henault asked if there is anything of long term vertical alignment? Worry about vertical alignment between grades and long term thinking. Aaron stated they talked about it in our cabinet meetings. Had discussions with Nancy Love and what steps we need to take to further our work. Hope to work on over the summer and work on the vertical alignment.

Regina Hill asked that with the curriculum committee and making adjustments for the future, will they look at technology pieces? Aaron stated that they are looking at what we have, a goal is to have a district list of approved resources, it is important to say these are approved resources and what we are using to meet these goals.

Objective Two: HVRSD promotes learning and growth of all students through instructional practices that establish high expectations, create a safe and effective classroom environment, and demonstrate cultural proficiency. Each professional learning experience must have a learning together, taking action together, and/or a reflecting and assessing impact together component. Implementation of Character Strong as a district wide SEL program: time dedicated to the development of SEL skills district wide; consistent programming to address this important curriculum need; weekly SEL check-ins with faculty to model best practices; The following as been implemented in response to our needs: Vacation Grant (providing academic and SEL programming for targeted groups of students); Continued implementation of Panorama SEL surveys and mySabrs benchmarks to track progress in 5 SEL competencies; Utilized NBCC for outside advocacy and support with attendance and engagement concerns; Expanded supports for target groups with remote centers at middle and high school; Teaming: The school based ILTs will define the best practices to there is a common understanding among the faculty across all content areas including, providing support for math, science, ELA, social studies and specials; The district established a social emotional learning group to examine and expand practices relative to supporting our students emotional needs. Inclusive Practices: we will continue to refine our multi-tiered systems of support; we will refine inclusion practices; implemented platforms that will allow students to access individualized programming (kami, schoology, zearn, gizmos, character strong); UDL - train the trainer - masters level course available to all staff. Teaming: the district will establish a curriculum committee to examine curriculum needs, promote equity of access, and provide guidance in the area of updating curriculum; will examine curricula to ensure culturally proficient instruction is a focus across all grades and subjects.

Objective Three: HVRSD promotes the learning and growth of all students through effective partnerships with families, caregivers, community members and organizations. Family outreach: establish structures for communication and family engagement at the district, school and classroom level; communication at all levels will include curriculum information, operational updates, community resources, school and district functions. The district and building principals will survey all stakeholders (students, families and community members) to gather input on the effectiveness of our support systems and strategies; The Superintendent, Director of Special Services and building principals will implement Parent Advisory Councils/School Councils to solicit feedback from families and to actively engage these groups in assisting in district-wide planning. Community outreach: hold ongoing meetings and partnering with the following organizations: NBCC; DCF; United Cerebral Palsy/pediatric development center; Childcare of the Berkshires; Regional meetings (early childhood, foster care and homeless, Title III); Multicultural Bridge; ADL; Masshire; Mass. Rehab Commission; Berkshire family and individual resources; Northern Berkshire Juvenile Court; the family center and the family place.

Objective Four: HVRSD promotes the learning and growth of all students through ethical, culturally proficient, skilled and collaborative practice. Monthly benchmarks: leaders will examine progress on the District and School Improvement plans on a monthly basis; staff will examine student data points quarterly to assess student growth and progress; staff will examine and discuss feedback from surveys and develop actions in response to identified challenges; supporting instruction; examining research based best practices for teaching reading; job embedded professional development; establish universal expectations and practices for improved behavioral and academic outcomes; develop much needed math intervention programming Prek-8; examine and model best practices for meeting students' emotional needs.

Wanted to highlight and outline the important work we are doing. We are refining our practices and trying to find ways to meet the needs of our kids. Aaron stated that he needs the S.C. approval. Mike Mucci asked what are the differences from last year's plans? Aaron: we are data driven, our multi tiered systems of support. Making tier 1 as effective as it can be.

Mike Henault thanked Aaron for the work that went into this plan. Like that it is standards based and clear what you are prioritizing. Are there any metrics that you thought about building into with the success of the plan? Aaron referred to the left hand column of the plan (see attached DIP) there are sets of data that we will track in each of those areas. We do monthly checks in with the cabinet regarding the progress we are making.

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Henault and second by Regina Hill :

VOTED: to accept the DIP as outlined by Superintendent Dean. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

Aaron commended the principals for all their hard work they put into this.

B. Budget Goals & Timelines - February - Review and prioritize with cabinet; A & E review for suggested revisions; March 8th School Committee Hearing; March 2nd or 4th - A & E final overview and adjustments; March 29th School Committee budget vote; March 30th present to Cheshire; TBA to present to Adams.

C. District Office Lease - Had another meeting with the board of selectmen. They are looking to rework the numbers and footprint of our lease. We have to have some discussions around that. We have to look to see what our options are. We are waiting to hear back from them in regards to the increase in rent and footprint. The current lease expires in 2023. Since it wasn't signed by us, we technically don't have a lease. We have some challenges with this space, we do the best we can to make it work. They were putting utilities on the table in addition to increased rent. Currently, we do not pay for utilities Mike Henault stated that this seems like it was a symbiotic relationship based on what we were getting. Does the space fit our needs? It is probably a good idea of looking if the space is not ideal. Aaron stated that the space is a challenge.

D. Follow up from 1/28/21 Meeting - We certainly hear and understand people's frustrations. Not easy on anybody. This is hard on families, teachers, and students. No easy decisions. We did begin discussions with ACTA. The Town of Adams remains in the red and that has been the biggest hurdle for us. We are one of 2 towns in Berkshire County that are in the red. People have to stop having gatherings in order to change this. Currently, our metric is the least restrictive in how it works compared to other districts. The biggest hurdle that we have as a community is that we are hanging on to red. It doesn't mean we shouldn't discuss the long term on how to get back into the buildings. We are looking at ways to make this work for everybody. As much as I would love to say there is a quick fix, there is a lot of work still going forward.

Mike Mucci: the adoption of a committee to provide some reasonable direction/guidance in opening the schools We are not in school because we have so many cases in Adams. Adams is in a unique situation because of town size. We are in a spot where the definition of red does not work out for us when we are just a couple cases over. We have some language in our MOA that addresses extenuating circumstances. Would like to have discussions now, would be proactive for this committee to do.

Mike Henault would like to have a formation of some kind of committee. ACTA has been a good partner in our reopening efforts. Watching surrounding districts, where School Committees are pushing their power and going against past practice, in those cases, negotiations have broken down. It has resulted in some unhealthy relationships. Being shut down for 34 positive cases and in the red seems like an extenuating circumstance, hoping we could iron out and get a committee together.

Bethany DeMarco reported she is on the negotiations committee, the communication with the union and S.C. has been a tangled web and this year Aaron introduced collective bargaining, really opened up a lot of great communication and mutual respect with the committee and teacher's union. We would be taking a huge step back with our union if we do something like Pittsfield has done.

Mike Mucci asked Mike Henault his thoughts on what should be done? Making the decision making body bigger. It is important that the Superintendent is on the committee along with Union representation, a health official. Aaron stated that some districts have 3 representatives from the district side, 3 representatives from the union side, which are all voting members, a health official or town member which are not voting members but can help you through the numbers. Aaron asked to form that as a proposal and he can bring forward in negotiations.

MOTION: _____ On Motion of Mike Henault and second by Nannette Reid:

VOTED: School Committee asks the Superintendent to open negotiations with ACTA to act upon a proposal to form a 6 person committee composed of the Superintendent, a cabinet member, and a member of the school committee along with 3 members of ACTA to give that committee the power to determine when the district can shift between learning models. Would like to include an invite to local health officials, The committee will meet weekly to discuss the community level COVID 19 data released by the Department of Public Health. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was 5-0-1.

Bethany DeMarco asked about pool testing. Aaron reported that he looked into it. There is a lot to it and would be tying up a lot of resources. This can be part of the discussion with the union as well.

103779 Chairman's Report - None

103780 Unfinished Business - None

103781 New Business - None

103782 Action Items - None

103783 For the Good of the Order -

Adam Emerson: thanked everyone that has been involved. Great that the community came out

Reigna Hill: We have a great plan that will accommodate everyone's needs and keep everyone safe.

Bethany DeMarco: It is nice to see so much participation tonight.

Mike Henault: thanked Erin and Kerry for stepping up.

Nannette Reid: Thanked Kerry for interviewing today and welcomed Erin to the committee. Thanked the committee for listening to the parents, families and towns and making the right decision and trying to get our children in the schools.

MOTION: _____ On Motion of Nannette Reid and second by Adam Emerson:

VOTED: To adjourn the regular meeting at 8:45 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary

Place: Per Governor Baker's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting G.L. c. 30a, Sec. 20, the public will not be allowed to physically access this School Committee Meeting. Members of the public can access this meeting via live stream by calling +1-408-650-3123 ; Access Code: 681-412-093 or <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/681412093>