

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, January 11, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

103760 Call to Order

Chairman Mike Mucci called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

103761 Public Comment: - Teresa Daignault - acknowledged that these are very different times and challenging for everyone to find a way to do what is right for our students. It has become apparent for the need of in person and staying in hybrid mode and that it is sustainable. No cases in Berkshire County through schools. The catholic schools have not had to abandon in person learning. There is an MOA currently in place and should be modified, asking that the S.C. work with the superintendent to go in person learning. Encouraging the committee to continue with in person learning. Critical years are the early years.

103762 Approval of Minutes - December 7, 2020

MOTION: On Motion of Nannette Reid and second Mike Henault

VOTED: To approve the December 7, 2020 minutes. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous

103762 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager - None

103763 Report of Sub-Committees -

A. Technology: Regina Hill reported on the technology meeting. The district has distributed over 750 chromebooks to families and is working on a refurbishing schedule so we can regularly be able to replace old machines. Looking at a redesign of our website, hoping to get that in place before the next school year. The I.T. department worked on approximately 1,700 tech tickets between August and mid November. They have done an amazing job throughout this. Adam Emerson echoed Regina on the I.T. staffing and the amazing work they did.

B. A & E - Nannette Reid reported on Audit & Evaluation. She stated that Erika gave a preliminary budget for next year. Very preliminary. Went over the grants that were received for COVID remote learning. Because of the grants, we were able to purchase chromebooks, hotspots, air purifiers, the remote learning center costs, all had to be used by December 31st. Planning for next year. Mike Mucci: pleasantly surprised at the amount of grants that came in. Aaron: We continue to look at grant opportunities. It is a balance of short term and long term planning. Coming into this budget cycle, there is still going to be a lot of unknowns.

C. Policy: Mike Henault reported that they are looking at overlapping policies. Once that document is put together we will review at a future meeting. Looking at some broader community input.

103764 Communications -

A. BCAC Donation - 20 chromebooks - BCAC reached out and had some chromebooks that they would like to donate. We were able to get 20 books. We are grateful for their generosity.

MOTION: On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by Mike Henault:

VOTED: to accept 20 chromebooks donation from BCAC. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous

B. **\$1,000 Walmart donation** - Elementary Principal Becky Sawyer applied for and was the recipient of the grant. Principal Sawyer reported that she will meet with her leadership team to discuss on how to disperse the funds.

Mike Mucci thanked the administrative team for all their work in applying for these grants.

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

VOTED: to accept the \$1,000 walmart grant. Roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

103765 Report of Superintendent -

A. SLT regulations/impact - DESE adopted guidance around this. The district has to have 35 hours every two weeks. The district was given clearance on the guidance, as a district we average 37 academic hours per 2 weeks. Happy we cleared this but doesn't mean everything is perfect. Everyday we are looking at different ways to expand what we can provide for students. It hasn't been easy to hit the state thresholds through the pandemic. The guidance and benchmarks are moving targets as more was learned about COVID and the state rolled out new guidelines. Recently, the pool testing for COVID has become an option to get more in person in school. The secondary students are getting more time than the elementary. We began the process of self auditing. What can we do now and what can we do down the road. We are continuing to look at this. Some things we added is that at the high school we are looking at engagement and attendance. In the next 2 weeks we will be putting together a remote center at the high school to get more kids in the door. Remote for elementary is in place for elementary, which is now at the church. Even though we made that clearance we are still looking to improve time learning everyday. We are looking at the special ed depart, what are we going to do to increase what we do for students. Mike Henault stated that he is glad we are hitting the mark, but now we are fully remote again, any thoughts on how to increase more learning time for elementary while we are in remote learning? Can we do it in short time? Aaron: began those discussions on the elementary level. Comes down to more simultaneous learning opportunities. More zoom in opportunities on those off days. It comes down to relooking at the structure.

B. **Special Education Update** - Special Education Director Joshua Dickson reported to the committee. . We are looking at our current staffing and how to improve. One thing during pandemic, is the movement of staff. Some staff have left mid year. One area based on benchmarks is reading services. Rather than posting just for a special education teacher, we are looking at reading specialists. This allows more flexibility to special teachers. We are getting ready to prepare for our tier focused audit by state. This year we are looking at some special ed and civil right components. Making sure we have environments that are set up for all students. We need to look at our time on learning. We will be sending out, after winter vacation, a survey to families and staff looking at areas we need to focus on and where we need to improve. Will be going out within the next week or two.

Mike Henault asked if we are replacing fully licensed special education teachers with reading specialists? Curious about the plan using a reading specialist. Josh stated that not replacing as much as augmenting. Our current special education teacher candidate pool is thin. Our hope was not to put all of our eggs in one basket. If we had to, we could think creatively having a reading specialist providing reading and having our special ed. teachers to provide in other areas and also provide opportunity for our special ed. teachers to be more active in the classroom.

Adam Emerson asked how the survey is going to be delivered? Is it to establish a baseline or do we have data from previous years? Josh reported that we don't have a lot of information from surveys from prior Sped. Director. We are getting ready to look at curriculum options. Hoping that the survey can bring some light to any areas we need to improve on. The survey would be delivered both electronically and paper based. Also hoping to have options for translation so we can meet the needs of all of our students.

Mike Mucci stated that we are on a 2 week remote session, and feels like the schools are on islands. Every public school in Berkshire County is in full remote. We do a lot of things coming into the year, a lot of sharing of ideas, we are getting through christmas break,

are we doing any collaborative talks within the county? Aaron Dean reported that the superintendent group meets every week. At our last session, we had the commissioner on our call and discussed our challenges and the ever changing guidance. We had at least 5 changes on data and we need to stay on top of these. In regards to making decisions whether we are remote, we reach out to the public health nurse, meet with principals with what's our staffing like, and meet with our school nurses about what is going on with families. Had a number of students and staff that were impacted with cases. On Friday had called in 10 cases to DESE with our district. There are a lot of moving pieces. Looking at the recent increase in cases, everything popping up around us, seemed likely it would reach the schools. This is not something that we take lightly. Jan 25th is our next targeted date to go hybrid and hoping we can get there. Mike Mucci appreciated Aaron sharing this information.

103766 Chairman's Report - None

103767 Unfinished Business - None

103768 New Business - None

103769 Action Items - None

103770 For the Good of the Order - None

MOTION: On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by Mike Henault:

VOTED: To adjourn the regular meeting at 7:30 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>