



HAMILTON-WENHAM
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
5 SCHOOL STREET, WENHAM, MA 01984 · TEL. 978-468-5310

School Committee Meeting
Zoom Virtual Meeting [Link](#)
Webinar ID: 986 6052 7109
Passcode: 628360
Wednesday, February 3, 2021
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Present:

Michelle Bailey, Chairperson
Michelle Horgan, Vice Chairperson
Dana Allara, Secretary
Anna Siedzik, Vice Secretary
David Polito
Peter Wolczik
Julia Campbell

Also Present:

Mary Beth Banios, District Superintendent
Vincent Leone, Assistant Superintendent to Finance and Administration
Mahala Lettvin, Recording Secretary
Brad Hill, Massachusetts State Representative
Alan Taupier, Director of Technology
Craig Genuardo, Athletic Director
Thomas Geary, Director of Maintenance, Facilities & Operations
Lea Tabenkin, District Nurse Leader, High School Nurse
Maribeth Ting, Wenham Public Health Nurse

1. Call to Order

6:00 PM

With a quorum present, Ms. Bailey calls the meeting to order at 6:02 PM. This meeting is held remotely, and recorded by HWCAM. Executive Session will be moved to the end of this meeting, but has not been cancelled.

2. Citizen's Comments

[Exhibit](#)

Any citizen wishing to speak before the Committee shall identify himself or herself by name and address. Speakers will be allowed three (3) minutes to present their material. After Citizen's Comments, the chat feature will be turned off. If members want to be recognized, they can use the raise hand feature.

Doug D'Agata, 16 Perkins St Wenham: Thanks Stacey Metternick for her role serving the community and for recognizing her limitations and stepping down from the School Committee. Mr. D'Agata is concerned about the pattern of dialogue regarding the length of meetings. He reminds the School Committee that members can step down at any time should they feel they are not able to fulfill their duties. Mr. D'Agata is concerned about the district's lack of a detailed reopening plan. He, alongside 180 others, signed the request for Dr. Carr to present her findings of the school building space analysis.

Stacey Metternick, 3 Dexter Lane, Wenham: Ms. Metternick urges the School Committee to analyze the district proposed budget and ask the necessary and difficult questions. She is concerned about the disproportionate focus on the central office, and encourages Superintendent Banios to lead the district with the curriculum background she possesses. Ms. Metternick notes that Wenham has reached the levy limit, and a closer analysis of the budget is critical. She urges School Committee members to think outside the box and come up with creative solutions. She also asks that the Superintendent begin attending the *Capital/Financial Subcommittee* meetings to collaborate on the work needing to be done.

Kathleen O'Connor (no address listed): Ms. O'Connor notes that alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a critical mental health crisis amongst students. Studies have shown that schools have a low transmission rate, and urges the School Committee to reanalyze decisions made last fall. Creative solutions need to be developed, including consideration of a different cohort model, or hiring an additional nurse. She asks that the comprehensive space analysis study be considered. She had hoped the item would appear on tonight's agenda.

Jennifer Carr, 5 Meridian Rd. Wenham: Ms. Carr explains that she has used the district's own data to conduct an in-depth [analysis](#) of bringing back all K-5 students back for in-person learning. She is concerned that she had asked for time to present this information, and this request was denied. Ms. Carr believes that this denial was based on the Chairs and Superintendent being fearful of contradictory information. She reminds the School Committee that their job is to do what is best for students, *not* to rubberstamp what the Superintendent puts forward.

Olivia Soolman, 30 Parsons Hill Rd. Wenham: Ms. Soolman, Youth Education/Action Committee Chair, Youth Board Member, sent an email to the Superintendent and School Committee this past weekend with a letter from the Hamilton - Wenham Human Rights Coalition, requesting annual unconscious bias training for district staff. Ms. Soolman reads the [letter](#) out loud. She confirms that she has a scheduled meeting with Superintendent Banios.

Paul Gamber, 16 Juniper St., Wenham: Mr. Gamber faces COVID firsthand as a practicing dentist. He reviews the studies and his experience, showing a very low transmission rate. He is concerned about the students, and believes the number one priority should be to return students to in-person learning. He also recommends folks watch "[Numb - A Short Film](#)" by Liv McNeil (3:20 minutes), which demonstrates the severity of the emotional impact of remote learning. Mr. Gamber is concerned about the district's lack of plan to return to in-person learning, and should this not be resolved, he would encourage parents to vote *no confidence* for Superintendent Banios to lead the district.

Citizens's Comments end at 6:28 PM.

3. Student Representative's Report

Ethan Howell presents the January 2021 Student Government Report, including details regarding fundraisers; Junior and Senior prom plans; gender inclusive gown choices; student awards; Spirit Week plans; etc.

4. New Business

A. Update on State Budget; presented by Brad Hill

Brad Hill, Massachusetts State Representative, appears at the meeting to provide an update on the state budget; district increase revenues; Student Opportunity Act; Pooled Testing; Chapter 70 aid; enrollment/budgetary issues; etc.

Ms. Bailey expresses frustration about the process of MCAS testing, noting that there are numerous unanswered questions remaining. She also is upset about the fact that teachers have been largely ignored, despite the overwhelming support, in prioritization in the vaccination schedule. She asks that Mr. Hill continue to advocate in this regard.

There is discussion regarding air purifier equipment and state allocated funds; governor's action on return to school; reimbursement for regional transportation; circuit breaker funds;

There is some discussion about what is mandated and what is not. Mr. Hill asks that Hamilton - Wenham submit a letter detailing the educational mandates that are a burden to the district, as many other districts have done.

School Committee members urge Representative Hill to continue advocating for vaccines for teachers.

B. Pooled Testing

[Exhibit](#)

Mr. Geary and Ms. Tabenkin explain pooled testing program and costs in the district, as detailed in the [exhibit](#). There is a lengthy discussion regarding training; supervision; costs; state funding/resources; transmission; type of testing; impact on time on learning; etc.

Ms. Siedzik reads a [letter](#) from David Smith, Hamilton Board of Health, into the record. There is some tension regarding Ms. Siedzik's frustration in not having been forwarded the letter, and Ms. Bailey's frustration about Ms. Siedzik's accusations stemming from not having received the letter. There is ongoing discussion about the pooled testing program and School Committee members' opinions on the program, as well as further details on the program.

I MOVE TO VOTE.

MOTION by Dana Allara; SECONDED by Michelle Horgan.

David Polito	YES;
Peter Wolczik	NO;
Michelle Horgan	YES;
Anna Siedzik	YES;
Julia Campbell	YES;
Dana Allara	YES;
Michelle Bailey	YES.

MOTION PASSES through majority (6:1) roll call vote of seven (7) members present.

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE PROCEEDS WITH THE STATE'S OFFER OF POOLED TESTING, WITH THE CAVEAT THAT WE RECEIVE FROM THE STATE THE ASSISTANCE THAT HAS BEEN REQUESTED ON OUR APPLICATION.

MOTION by Dana Allara; SECONDED by Anna Siedzik.

Peter Wolczik	NO;
Michelle Horgan	NO;
Michelle Bailey	NO;
Julia Campbell	NO;
David Polito	NO;
Dana Allara	NO;

Anna Siedzik YES.

MOTION FAILS (1:6); NO ACTION NECESSARY ON THIS ITEM.

C. Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Plan

[Exhibit](#)

Superintendent Banios explains the details of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Plan, as presented in the [exhibit](#).

There is lengthy discussion regarding the legal certifications; deadline passing; funding available; district’s actions/planned actions; etc. Ms. Seidzik would like it to be noted that she is not comfortable approving the plan as she does not believe the plan adequately targets marginalized populations. She also notes her discomfort with the lateness of the submission and the lack of the school committee’s involvement in developing the plan. There is ongoing discussion regarding these issues.

Superintendent Banios states that the proposal, as presented, is an initial iteration, and DESE understands that the actions outlined may change.

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE STUDENT OPPORTUNITY ACT AS PRESENTED IN THE [EXHIBIT](#).

MOTION by Dana Allara; SECONDED by Michelle Horgan.

Discussion: Mr. Polito asks about next steps should the plan not be approved. Superintendent Banios explains that there is a very low chance the plan would not be approved, as this is an initial draft with room for movement and improvement. Ms. Siedzik asks about potential consequences of legally certifying actions that did not happen (e.g. engaging the community), with Superintendent Banios responding that the Department did not indicate that would be a problem. Continued discussion regarding developing programs specifically for marginalized/vulnerable populations; evidence based items listed/suggested by DESE; options moving forward; strategic planning, etc.

Anna Siedzik	NO;
Dana Allara	YES;
David Polito	NO;
Julia Campbell	NO;
Michelle Bailey	YES;
Michelle Horgan	YES;
Peter Wolczik	NO.

MOTION FAILS (4:3).

There is a brief recess called from 9:13 PM - 9:19 PM.

5. Finance and Operations

A. Technology (originally C)

[Exhibit](#)

Mr. Taupier reviews the technology budget presentation, as detailed in the [exhibit](#).

There is discussion about the updates to the district website, and Mr. Taupier’s anticipated administrative workload to have that project be successful. Discussion regarding servers; IPAD usability, etc.

B. Athletics (Originally B)

[Exhibit](#)

Mr. Gualdo presents the details of the athletic department presentation, as shown in the [exhibit](#). There is discussion regarding the gender equity in sports, with Mr. Gualdo noting that aside from the hockey teams (girls hockey is coop), user fees are no longer differentiated by gender. There is some discussion

about the possibility of combining the sports teams booster groups into a unified “Friends of the Generals” or some similarly structured group. There is ongoing discussion about user fee strategy and timeline, with Mr. Genuardo noting that he can shift the numbers as long as the bottom line number is approved.

C. Maintenance & Facilities (Originally A)

[Exhibit](#)

Mr. Geary presents the details of the maintenance and facilities department, as shown in the [exhibit](#). There is a brief discussion about purchasing strategy; anticipation of capital needs (e.g. air purifiers); FY21 budgeted projects; strategy in allocating revenue from state; etc.

D. Vote to Approve Tentative FY22 Budget

[Exhibit](#)

Superintendent Banios and Mr. Leone review the presentation, the tentative FY22 Budget, as detailed in the [exhibit](#). Review of the assumptions used to develop this tentative budget, including enrollment; state aid assumptions; staff leaves; and in-person learning.

There is discussion about procedural aspects of revising the budget, with a lengthy discussion about the details the School Committee would like to see changed, as well as a discussion about the status of the *Capital Planning/Financial Subcommittee* meetings.

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE COMMIT TO UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING AS PRESENTED EARLIER IN TONIGHT’S MEETING, AS PART OF THE FY 22 BUDGET’S \$200,000 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LINE ITEM.

MOTION by Anna Siedzik; SECONDED by Julia Campbell.

Discussion: Ms. Bailey explains that it is not within the purview of the School Committee to direct how funds are allocated within the district budget. There is an ongoing discussion about developing School Committee goals as a strategy to influence the budget. Goals will be developed at the School Committee workshop scheduled for 02/23/21. There is some tension and disagreement.

David Polito	NO;
Peter Wolczik	NO;
Dana Allara	NO;
Michelle Horgan	NO;
Julia Campbell	YES;
Michelle Bailey	NO;
Anna Siedzik	YES.

MOTION FAILS (5:2).

Mr. Polito clarifies that he is in no way voting against the unconscious bias training, however he does not believe the motion as made is the correct way to handle this action.

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE TENTATIVE FY22 GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES BUDGET OF \$37,652,010, THIS AMOUNT INCLUDES GENERAL FUND OPERATING EXPENSES, AFTER OFFSETS, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$37,076,516 AND GENERAL FUND DEBT SERVICE EXPENSES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$575,494; FURTHERMORE THE GROSS OPERATING EXPENSES OF THE DISTRICT, BEFORE OFFSETS, HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED BY THE DESE DEFINED CHART OF ACCOUNTS ACCORDING TO THE “SUMMARY BY DESE CATEGORY” CHART INCLUDED IN THIS BUDGET PRESENTATION, AS DETAILED IN THE [EXHIBIT](#).

MOTION by Dana Allara; SECONDED by Michelle Horgan.

Michelle Horgan YES;
Anna Siedzik YES;
Julia Campbell YES;
Peter Wolczik NO;
David Polito YES;
Dana Allara YES;
Michelle Bailey YES.

MOTION PASSES through majority (6:1) roll call vote of seven (7) members present.

Chairperson Bailey asks if the School Committee prefers to reconvene this meeting at a later date. With members indicating an interest to move forward with the meeting, Ms. Bailey states that she will begin asking to continue the meeting in 30-minute increments beginning at midnight.

Discussion regarding how to alter the budget. Ms. Horgan recommends asking district administration for two (2) alternative budgets, which was the request made last year. There is ongoing tension and disagreement and some discussion about whether the townspeople will approve the budget.

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE DIRECT THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT AND ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT TO LOOK AT THE TENTATIVE BUDGET WITH POSSIBILITY OF REDUCING THE BUDGET TO 4% AND 4.5%.

MOTION by Michelle Horgan; SECONDED by Julia Campbell.

Peter Wolczik YES;
Anna Siedzik YES;
Julia Campbell YES;
Dana Allara YES;
David Polito YES;
Michelle Horgan YES;
Michelle Bailey YES.

MOTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY through roll call vote of seven (7) members present.

CHAIRPERSON BAILEY INQUIRES IF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE THE MEETING.

Dana Allara YES;
Julia Campbell YES;
David Polito YES;
Peter Wolczik YES;
Anna Siedzik YES;
Michelle Horgan YES;
Michelle Bailey YES.

THE MEETING WILL BE CONTINUED UNTIL 12:30 AM BASED ON UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE OF SEVEN (7) MEMBERS PRESENT.

There is discussion regarding addressing the remaining agenda items, with the School Committee agreeing to meet on 02/20/2021 at 6:00 PM, one hour prior to the joint meeting with the towns.

(From Superintendents Report, Item B)

Vaccination Planning

[Exhibit](#)

Maribeth Ting, Wenham Public Health Nurse, reviews the vaccination planning, as detailed in the [exhibit](#). She encourages everyone to receive the vaccination as quickly and efficiently as possible. The survey that went out showed an overwhelming majority of district staff are interested in receiving the vaccine.

6. — Policy

7. — Chair's Report

8. — Superintendent's Report

A. Enrollment Report

[Exhibit](#)

9. — Committee Reports

A. Capital Planning/Finance Subcommittee

B. Policy Subcommittee

C. Negotiations Subcommittee

10. — Consent Agenda

A. Warrants

[Exhibit](#)

- Voucher No. 18
- Voucher No. 1034
- Voucher No. 1036
- Voucher No. 1038
- Voucher No. 1039
- Voucher No. 2968
- Voucher No. 2972
- Voucher No. 2973
- Voucher No. 2974

B. Minutes

- November 18, 2020
- December 9, 2020
- December 16, 2020
- December 17, 2020 Joint Boards Meeting
- January 6, 2021
- January 12, 2021

[Exhibit](#)

[Exhibit](#)

[Exhibit](#)

[Exhibit](#)

[Exhibit](#)

[Exhibit](#)

11. Topics for Future Meetings

The School Committee will meet at 6:00 PM on 02/10/21 to address the agenda items not covered this evening:

- Policy;
- Chair's Report;
- Superintendent's Report, including enrollment report;
- Committee Reports;
- Consent Agenda.

12. Vote to Adjourn

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADJOURN THE 01/20/2020 MEETING AT 12:20 AM, TO ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR PURPOSE #2, TO CONDUCT STRATEGY SESSIONS IN PREPARATION FOR

NEGOTIATIONS WITH NONUNION PERSONNEL AND FOR PURPOSE #3, TO DISCUSS STRATEGY WITH RESPECT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, AND NOT TO RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION THEREAFTER.

MOTION by Michelle Bailey; SECONDED by Julia Campbell.

Dana Allara	YES;
Michelle Horgan	YES;
Anna Siedzik	YES;
Julia Campbell	YES;
Peter Wolczik	YES;
David Polito	YES;
Michelle Bailey	YES.

MOTION PASSES unanimously through roll call vote of seven (7) members present.

Respectfully submitted March 5 2021 by Mahala Lettvin, Recording Secretary.

Per Governor Baker’s order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A § 20, the public will not be allowed to physically access this School Committee meeting. The School Committee reserves the right to implement additional remote participation procedures and will notify the public of these procedures as soon as practicable. Please click here to read the Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, § 20.

**Zoom App Information: If you plan to participate, download the [Zoom.com](https://zoom.us) application now. The option to download will also be available at the start of the meeting. When opening the Zoom App, select “Join Meeting” in the upper right corner and enter the Webinar ID: 986 6052 7109 Passcode: 628360. The community should ask questions via the “chat” function within the Zoom application during the Citizen’s Comments section. During the Zoom meeting, participants will be given instructions on how to provide their comments. Unfortunately, we must limit the in-person conversations to just the Committee members. However, for the benefit of all, the School Committee meetings will be available on our local cable channel, HWCam, and [HWCam.org](https://www.hwcam.org), for review a few hours after the meeting has ended. Members of the public can access the meeting via YouTube HWRSD live stream link the next day.*